

5 Sacred Lessons Only Grief Can Teach You by Katie T. Kennedy Contributing Writer to Crosswalk

1/21/21 [5 Sacred Lessons Only Grief Can Teach You](#)

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Grief is a complicated subject. On one hand, it's simple and easy to understand because we all experience loss. Yet on the other, it's extraordinarily complicated because grief manifests differently in all of us and our losses are unique.

When I sat down to write this article, I thought it would flow easily out of me because I have experienced quite a bit of grief in my life and spent hours in counseling processing loss. I thought putting down all the lessons grief can teach us would be straightforward.

What I realized is that everyone's grief journey is very personal. What I observed from a loss might be the opposite of what you are feeling. When it comes to feelings of grief, so many emotions can arise.

We can also grieve over things other than death, as we learned this past year. We feel the loss from canceled trips and activities, our normal routines, changes in a job, family we can't see, illness, etc. The feelings associated with all the scenarios mentioned might be similar, yet each one can teach us something different and recovery times may vary.

I struggled to find commonality between all the different scenarios because I didn't want to discount anyone's loss. Grief doesn't have a one size fits all approach to healing, nor will we all learn the same thing. Our stories and makeup are unique, and God is working in us differently, healing our individual wounds.

I'm not a counselor nor an expert on grief. What I know about the subject I learned the hard way; through my own loss, visiting a counselor, reading books on the matter, and seeing what the Bible said about grief.

All that said, I believe there are a few lessons that only grief can teach us. Sometimes we can only see them when we've come out the other side. When you are in the valley of grief, it's hard to see the silver lining. **Here are 5 lessons you might discover.**



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1. Grief Teaches Us How to Relate

Encountering our own suffering helps equip us to empathize better with others.

God can use the pain we endure to help others. We can identify with them, support them, relate to them, and assist them through a tough time. We might not have the perfect words, because honestly, there are no perfect words when you have just buried a loved one.

We can share authentic compassion in whatever way that might look like. It might be listening to them as they talk through their current feelings or share stories of their lost loved ones. Maybe you love them by bringing them a meal and let them know you are thinking of them. It could also mean sharing a loss of your own, if appropriate, so they know you understand where they are. You can provide hope that they too will get through this.

I lost my mom to suicide when I was twenty. When I encounter people today that have also lost their mom, we immediately have a common bond. They completely understand the significance of that loss in my life, and I understand theirs.

It's actually quite amazing how being vulnerable can quickly put you on the same page with someone.

You never know how God will use your story, your loss in a way to help others. Even today as people grieve death, jobs, and multiple changes, you can sympathize that yes, their feelings are real, and you understand their loss. It makes people feel heard.

Grief provides an opportunity for people to connect in a unique way.



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2. Grief Teaches Us Perspective

I attended a funeral this summer for a young boy that left us too soon (at least that's how it felt). I don't dare doubt or judge God's plans, but sometimes it's hard to understand them at the moment.

As you sit in a pew for a funeral and hear scripture, sing songs, and listen to testimonies from the closest family members, you are filled with an array of emotions. You grieve their loss and can empathize with the family members and the pain they are experiencing.

Grieving naturally slows us down and allows us to appreciate the people that we are surrounded by. We might realize we are taking things for granted. There is nothing like death to recalibrate your life. You are instantly reminded of what is critically important in your life.

I know when I come home from a funeral, I hug my kids a little tighter and for a little longer. Their screaming and yelling doesn't irritate me quite as bad.

As hard as it is to comprehend, our days are numbered on this earth and we are not promised tomorrow. "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." ([Proverbs 27:1](#))

We can plan and organize our lives and fill our days. As the days pass, we naturally start to take our loved ones for granted. When life is paused with death, we are forced to stop and take account of our life.

We also have to consider that our life is short on this earth and experiencing a loss can be a good opportunity to make sure we are spending our days the way God intends us to.

Are we making the most out of this short time on earth?



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3. Grief Teaches Us about Our Emotions

Grief will bring up a plethora of emotions. These feelings can be overwhelming and debilitating. They can keep us from thinking properly and making sound decisions.

In order to move through grief, we have to acknowledge the wide range of feelings we might be experiencing. If we decide to avoid, ignore, and stuff our emotions inside, they can manifest in negative ways.

When I lost my mom, I was in college. I was young and didn't know how to deal with the emotions I was facing so I ignored them. I wasn't comfortable discussing my loss, and others didn't know what to say to me, so I avoided the subject.

Seventeen years after my mom's death, the emotions I had stuffed away started bubbling up in negative ways. I realized it was time to dig up those feelings with the help of a Christian counselor. She helped me process them in a healthy way.

As I acknowledged my pain and suffering and turned it over to the Lord, He mended my wounds. God helped me get to a healthier place once I stopped running from the pain and faced the reality of the circumstances.

Our feelings can keep us from moving forward if we do not acknowledge their existence.

As we experience loss, we can learn to better recognize how grief affects us individually. As I acknowledge feelings of grief, I try not to judge them. They are neither good nor bad, just are. I let them have their place, and eventually move on. Moving on might mean days or years depending on the gravity of your loss.

The emotions that arise from grief are normal and can help you become more familiar with yourself and how God made you.



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4. Teaches Us How to Accept Help

If you are like me, you hate to ask for help, at least I used to. I so desperately wanted to be able to handle everything myself.

Age, children, and experiencing

loss have made me learn that is ok to accept help from others. I'm not sure why we resist help. We often jump at the opportunity to offer assistance to others, but having that help come in our direction can make us feel inadequate.

Grief can put you in a place where your day-to-day responsibilities feel extraordinarily difficult. When this happens, it's ok to accept help from people that are offering. Or, if you stay in that place of sadness for too long, maybe it's time to ask for help from a Christian counselor.

When I lost my mom, I didn't fully grieve her loss because I didn't know how. I didn't want to talk about my feelings because it was too painful. I did my best to ignore and numb my feelings.

Years later when I went to a counselor and I had to face my past head-on. My grief and a few other unhealthy habits had caught up to me. I had three little kids and was diagnosed with mono (God's way of slowing me down).

I had no choice but to accept help from my husband, family, friends, and my kids. I was physically and mentally unable to follow through on my daily responsibilities. As you know when mom is out of commission, there is a large void to fill and in my case, everyone chipped in to help out, especially my husband who filled most of the void.

It's ok to accept help, and sometimes it takes a loss to get us to the point of having no other choice. It's also a way God can bring his people together and allow us to serve each other, and Him.

Don't be ashamed to say yes to help if grief is weighing you down. When you are well again you can return the favor to others in need.



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5. Grief Teaches Us Dependence on God

I think most people would agree that it is during our worst trials that bring us closer to the Lord. No one welcomes loss, but unfortunately, we are all forced to face it at some point.

There is only one thing that can truly comfort us during our suffering. The world will tell us there are many ways to make us feel better. Some of them might work for a temporary period of time but there is only One that is truly able to comfort us, help us, and eventually help us move through our grief and get us to the other side.

It is in our deepest suffering that we have nowhere else to go and we cry out in desperation for His help. When we learn this deep dependence on God hopefully it will stay with us once life resumes to normal. God can get us through the toughest of times if we ask and learn to look to Him for help and comfort.

Corrie Tin Boom comes to mind when you look at someone who experienced massive loss. She went through horrible hardship in a concentration camp during WWII. She lost family members and barely got out alive.

God not only healed her multitude of wounds, but she went on to help others who were tormented from the war. She eventually had to forgive and shake hands with a man who was a guard at one of her concentration camps.

If God can heal her wounds and use them for good, He can do the same in our lives. Her great suffering taught her relentless dependence on God which she took with her the rest of her life.

While we don't relish tough times, sometimes it takes these unfortunate situations to truly put our faith in Him.

The way we grieve has changed a lot since Biblical times.

In the Old Testament, people grieved for months wearing a specific attire so everyone around them could identify that they were grieving. The Bible tells us when Jacob died, "the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days" (Genesis 50:3).

Nowadays, you might wear black on the day of the funeral but after that, you walk around in normal clothes and the people you encounter have no idea the loss you are feeling inside.

The lessons we learn from grief can be hard ones. Author and speaker Bob Goff quotes, “What brings us to tears, will lead us to grace. Our pain is never wasted.”

Grief can teach us quite a bit about our own emotions, how to relate to others, when to accept help, and reminds us of the big picture. Most importantly, we can learn to further trust in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[Matthew 28](#): 20 says, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus is with us through everything. He will teach us what we need to learn from grief and any other trial we encounter. May our grief not be wasted.

Katie T. Kennedy *lives in Richmond, VA. She is married to a wonderful husband Jonathan and they have three girls. She is a writer, blogger, and employee of the family business. After a mid-life spiritual transformation, she discovered her love of writing. She loves to travel, read, be in nature, cook, and dream. She would love to connect with you online at www.katietkennedy.com, [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#).*