

Assignment Title: Grief Journal

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Grief Journal

Part of the process of healing thyself and others comes from better understanding the pain at hand. Often when we endure some loss or pain, we are quick to dismiss it or try our hardest to get over it. For, what reason do we have to ponder and endure this pain when there are better things ahead. I do not like to feel pain and try to always be optimistic and happy for myself and those around me. However, I have noticed that often, I endure sometimes of pain that I can't only wish away. I know that everyone experiences losses and that it's a part of life, but only recently have I really started to focus on grieving. One such significant loss in my life involves the passing of my grandma. It happened just over two years ago, but it's a pain that I still deal with today. With the anniversary just passing a few days ago, I'm reminded of how I missed her so.

My grandma passed away, but as I start to grieve, I also begin to remember all the details about her. More than just the thought and memory of her, God guides my senses to her. I still have fond memories of seeing her cook in the kitchen alongside my grandfather. Cutting up many of the different vegetables and grains, she was looking to add to our meal. Even though I am well into adulthood, the fondest memories of her happened throughout my teenage years into adulthood. I can see her cooking and dicing up onions and peppers, making each slice delicately. As I start to think about it more and more, I can remember the taste of her cooking from the spicy meats to arroz con pollo to rice and bean meals. The seasonings and flow of her food always brought me to a happy place because I loved her cooking so much. I reminisce about her smell and how she still smelled wonderfully—the aroma of fresh powder with just a hint of light perfume. My Abuela was known for always putting in an effort into how she looked, and I always loved her taste in smells. When she would leave one room and enter another, I could tell

she was there just a few moments before. When I come across certain perfumes, I'm reminded of her and how she carried herself. My grandma was on the heavier side, but I was soft and comfortable. When in times of distress, I would run to her and hug her, knowing that she would embrace me with open arms. I can hear her voice even now soothing me or also making jokes at my grandpa's expense. Yet, all these memories ultimately take me back to the main issue and that being my grandma in all her glory is no longer with us.

My grandma was taken away from my family and me much earlier than I would have wanted. While she was elderly, I strongly feel that she had several more years left for her. She died due to a sudden health emergency and died during the surgery. Only two years ago, I still felt and remember that day vividly. While I know that God is with her now, I still miss her. As stated in psalms, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). It was a while before I reached out to God-given what it occurred. I only recently started to reach out to God and ask for guidance as I began to think about these events. As I thought about it, I realized that God was pushing me to think about my grandma's essential memories to start the healing process. The emotional pain that I feel is great because it continues to resonate within my body and soul. Our lives are what should outlive these pains, and the memories are what we will use to carry on. As such, there are two distinct memories that I can think of.

The first memory revolves around the summer holiday. Holidays were some of the most essential things we enjoyed together as a family. The fourth of July was one where we celebrated religiously as a tradition. It was a time when the entire family would come over to the house and barbeque. It was always a scene straight out of the movies, but it was our scene. Everyone knew

their part, ragged on each other where possible, and came together under my grandma, who was also our matriarch. She was the glue that held our family together both at functions and all other times of tribulation. It was even a time where everyone could relax because we knew that no matter what happened, my grandma would always know what to do. It also showed how much we depended on her even though we were all capable adults and did own other things. These holidays created an environment where all the family would see the greatness of my grandma from her cooking, to the decorations to the storytelling. It is also a painful reminder that now every holiday, especially the fourth of July, going forward. As each new holiday comes, I make sure to pray and thank God for another holiday and the blessings He has for our family. “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion” (Psalm 145:8).

Another memory that I have that impacts me the most came for one summer day. It’s a memory that I still hold onto because of the sorrow it caused. One day my younger brother was outside dealing with a group of men. While at first it started off calmly, things escalated quite quickly. My grandma being the matriarch her the commotion and quickly ran outside to de-escalate the situation. Unfortunately, in the rush to get outside she tripped and fell back hitting her head. I was the first to see her after she fell and all I could see was moaning and gushing blood from the back of her head. At that moment I thought the worst and believed that my grandma was gone. I remember screaming and yelling for anyone to come and help as I was so shaking, I didn’t know what else to do. My uncle came running in and quickly dialed 911 and waited for the longest time in my life for them to come. My grandma survived but for the days she was in the hospital I hoped and prayed for her to recover. This occurred when I was a teen, but I knew that the only thing I could do was reach to God and as for His help. Even when my

grandma was on the floor and before the ambulance arrived, God was by my side. I wasn't fully in tune with the Lord but I somehow felt a slight sense of comfort knowing that she was going to be alright. As I think back to this moment, it was the Spirit of God that held my hand as I went through the traumatic scene. It was the beginning of a journey that I would eventually take, and I didn't even know at the time.

The day my grandma passed was one of the hardest days I've ever experienced. She had complications during the surgery, as stated before, and ended up not making it. My mother had a breakdown right there in the hallway and was inconsolable. I saw the look of the eyes of my other family members and knew what had to be done. I needed to be healthy for everyone and take the lead in taking care of everything. It was difficult for me because I was the one to see her last breath but had to keep it together to inform everyone else of her passing. If it was not for God's grace helping my mother and me through this I'm not sure how the night would have turned out. I remember God being by my side once more, similar to how He stood beside me when my grandma fell. I felt God place His hand on my shoulder, and with that, I knew He had my grandma in good graces. It was at that moment I regained my strength and could carry on throughout the rest of the night. As stated "My God turns my darkness into light" (Psalm 18:28). I knew that what ever would come into my path, God was there for me.

After the passing of my grandma, I, alongside my brother, was in a dark place. The Spirit of God leads me to a better place after placing more faith in Him. Reading scriptures was an excellent path to start on, but I always wanted more in getting close to God. I sought out on a way of getting closer to the Lord as I knew I would be saved. I'm glad I got out of that dark

place, and for a time, I was even able to convince my brother of doing the same. While I had bouts of sadness, my brother suffers from full-on depression. God helped me reach out to my brother and lead him down a better path. While my brother eventually fell off that path, I know that I'm not alone in the battle with him. As time passes with the grace of God, things have gotten a lot better. I find myself in a happy place often and have realized how much praying helped reach those highs. Any day I feel pessimistic, I take some time to reach out to God and ask for strength to deal with whatever the world throws at me. While my grandma is gone, I know that the grief I feel is putting me on the right path to move on but not forget what she meant to me.

Realizing the grief that I went through placed me on a path that created a much better sense of who I was. I was once a very pessimistic person, but as I thought more about it, I recognized together with God, I could accomplish so much more. I had military training and test I needed to pass recently but felt overwhelmed and cynical. I didn't believe that I had it to pass, and worse, it was around the same anniversary of my grandmas' death. I remembered how I found the strength in God and prayed the night before. I did not pray for a miracle to pass but prayed that I would find the strength in myself to overcome what laid before me. I knew that "my flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psalm 73:26). My grandma's death would cause me pain, but I started to comprehend overcoming that pain gave me the strength to overcome other things in life.