

Assignment Title: Grief Journal

Name: Maylene Christiani
Campus Location: Alliance Theological Seminary/New York City

Course Title: Personal, Professional, and Theological Foundations for Ministry
Course Number: SF505
Semester & Year: Spring, 2023
Professor: Dr. Ronald Walborn
Date Submitted: 03/07/2023.

Introduction

Grieving was something I never learned how to do in the traditional way, with long hours, days, or months of emotional turmoil, as is often associated with grief. I took everything in stride, moving from one loss to the other with no feelings of grief, because it was God's will. I grew up in a religious home, with my mom who was an Anglican and my father's side of the family who were Methodist. As a child it was thought that nothing happens unless God allows it to happen. Now I understand that it was a belief of God's providential reign. This belief guided my actions when I was forced into sexual activities at the age of fifteen and became pregnant one year before completing high school. Later I was faced with a greater loss when my husband, the same man I knew from age 15, died suddenly at age 37. I was thirty-two years old with four young children between ages eleven and seventeen. Economic loss came in and top the chart because of teenage pregnancy, and early widowhood.

My father died suddenly at age forty-nine of a massive heart attack, leaving my mom and seven children behind. I was only four years at the time and did not understand the loss until I grew up and realized that I did not have a daddy to run too, like my friends. My mom was a strong minded individual, so she ruled the home with an iron fist, and no relationship. Everything I learned about my body was from my friends, and one of my aunts. As the second to last child for my parents, my older sibling acted like my parents. My first loss bought out the resilience in me that stood against ridicule, shame, and rejection. I told myself that God is with me and there is no need for me to cry and bring my self down. There were no tears to cry, although I hated the thought of having to miss graduation. What happened next will forever be with me, I believed I was more angry than sorrowful. I kept asking the Lord, why all these evil things had to happen to me, when I tried to live a Godly life from childhood.

First Loss

I was fifteen years old and a promising high school senior with one more year to graduate. I was a very religious minded young girl who felt that sex was for married couples only, based on what I was thought in Church. I feared God and did everything that I knew would be pleasing to him. If I told a lie, it would bother me so much that I couldn't sleep properly until I confessed. I was very friendly and when this young man approached me and told me how much he loved and respected me, I trusted him. We would talk and take walks around the village unknowing to my mother. The first day we were alone he forced himself on me, taking my innocence. I was very upset and decided that I would not see him anymore, at that time I was not aware that I could become pregnant. But he knew what he had done and told me that I could be pregnant, and I was.

The first emotions I felt was shame and disappointment, I could not bear to face my friends and family. The thought of not being able to complete high school was devastated, so I stayed in school until I was four months into the pregnancy. During this time, I was bombarded with negative verbal assaults from my mother and siblings. Although none of them took the time to teach about life, they all through me under the bus. From being called the best child, I was now called the worse and an embarrassment to the family. My boyfriend's mother told my mom that I should abort the child and go back to school. My mother refused and said, "not under this sun, this may be her only child, and abortions are not of God." I had no say about any of the decisions made concerning me or the pregnancy. Through all of this I could not cry, I told myself that God will see me through, because it was His will. Because my mom worked a live in job, I was sent to live with my boyfriend's mother so that she can take care of me.

Every day, I was faced with a new situation that my mind found hard to process. I was under so much pressure, to switch from childhood into adulthood, clueless as to where I was heading. Looking back I believed that I had probably blocked out the hurts and pain because it was too unbearable. I kept holding on to my faith in God. During those early years I was exposed to a Pentecostal Church called the Full Gospel Fellowship. I was intrigued with the bible stories and how the disciples prayed, and how God answered them. I was now seeing persons who truly believed that God still answers prayers and miracles still happens. And a miracle was what I needed, because I had loss so much in so little time. To make matters worse, only when I moved in with my in laws that I realized that my boyfriend was not the person I thought he was. He was nineteen years old at the time, but he was an alcoholic, gambler, chain smoker and womanizer.

My whole life turned upside down, my only hope was in God. I was hurting, scared and angry, but I kept in all on the inside. I blamed myself for not being more careful, and allowing this person to get the upper hand over me. I had no high school diploma, no job and no one to turn to. My family was angry with me and insisted that my boyfriend should provide for me. By this time, he was busy drinking and partying and having a good time, while I was at home with the baby. His mom criticized everything I did, either I did not mop the floors properly or scrubbed the floor shine enough. There was always something that displeased her, and she would carry on and on. My boyfriend was always on the road, from work, he would come home take a shower and head right on out the door until late at nights. I was tired and overwhelmed and could not see a way out of the bondage. I stayed strong and pray for deliverance for God to open a door for me, that I could get a job and go back to school. Through all this there was no grief, in my mind I had messed up so I needed to fix it. It was my fault, and I should have known better as far as I was concerned.

During the next six years, I was still in the same situation, with three more children and no job. I began to think oh well, that's it for me, I would probably remain a stay-at-home mom with no educational accomplishments. We were not yet married after four children, and his behavior got worse. He would often spend all of his salary on his lifestyle and left me and the kids to fend for ourselves. As I kept praying and spending time with God my faith grew stronger and stronger and crying and weeping over my situation became harder. When my last child was three years old, I got my first job. By then I had started doing some classes with a pre-university program. In the country where I grew up in South America, (Guyana) once a student becomes pregnant, they were kicked out of school. So for me to get that job without a formal education was a miracle all by itself, but God was faithful and remains faithful today.

Equipped with a Job, I continued to pursue after God and a higher education. God answered my prayers one glorious day when a visiting preacher spoke a prophetic word over my life. We were having a crusade and I participated in a prayer and fast for God to intervene in my family. The first day I went it was a bit uncomfortable because in my mind I was not qualified to be there, after all I was in a common law relationship and not baptized. But God single me out and told the man of God that the father of my children will show up that night for the crusade and he will receive salvation. That night for the first time my children's father showed up for the crusade, gave his heart to the Lord and got baptized, Praise the Lord! Three months after we were both baptized and married. The hurts and pain over the years never surfaced long enough to produce any grief as to the loss of my childhood. For me God had prevailed on my behalf, why look back and cause myself pain? I truly believed that I was ok, then a few years later tragedy struck again. This time I really should be grieving, but nothing came I had no feelings of pain, because God was in control.

Second Loss

Everything was going smoothly, my husband was delivered from alcoholism, chain smoking and gambling. He had stopped visiting clubs, late-night parties, and became the perfect husband and father anyone could desire. He grew to love the Lord and was an ardent witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, sharing of how He saved and deliver him. He served the Lord wholeheartedly and train up our kids in the knowledge of the Lord. Nine years after our marriage he was invited to go and work with his cousin's husband in the Islands. He was excited and gave up his job and travelled out to the Islands. The kids and I were left behind, it was his intention to bring us up once he had settled down. Unfortunately, nine months after settling down in the Islands a vehicular accident occurred and he lost his life in an instance. The children were all in school and I was faced with the task of raising them on my own. He left no inheritance behind and whatever he had saved, diminished in no time. Again, I could not cry, my emotions were locked up inside of me.

As I listened to the lectures on grief in class this semester, realization hit me that I had endured so many losses in my life which were never grieved over. I felt that I did not only prevent myself from expressing grief, but I was also projecting it unto my kids. Telling them the same thing I was thought, God will be mad with you if you go crying and complaining to him. After all, nothing happens unless He allows it, and if God allows it then he has a reason for doing so. I was so wrong, God already knows our heart, and He wants us to be real with him so he can heal us from the inside out. The well is beginning to trickle, I am not there yet but as I begin to remove the layers the well will overflow. Even as I am drafting this paper tears are already welling up inside of me. The first thing I need do according to my counsellor is to give myself permission to grieve the many losses in my life.