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PMN 346 Personal Spiritual Formation (NA)

March 09, 2023

Grief Journal Paper:

It was the year 1996, I was on a bus going from work. It was around Christmas time, being an avid reader, I had three books in my hand, I had borrowed from a friend, I had a new bedspread, a bag with market food and my pocket book. I reached my stop, rang the bell to signal my stop. The bus stop and was in the process of coming off the bus, nearing the entrance my books fell to the floor. I saw the most gorgeous fingers I have ever seen returning the books to me. A number was given. A relationship was born.

During the development of the relationship. I learnt that He had a child and I have one of my own. I also discovered that I met a backslider, which excited me, because for the life of me I could not find a man that was interested in church. I knew then that this man would be my husband. About a year into the relationship, the child a girl, started visiting, I would have her every holiday, until her Mom asked me to keep her "Until I sort out myself". The day never came. I did not know it could be possible to love a child so much, as if I birthed her, until I met that little baby, three (3) years old at the time. She was my second daughter, there was no step to it. She even became jealous of my birth daughter, when she came home. My daughter was going to school in the city. Which after a while there, she found out she did not have to be.

I showered her with the love only a mother could give. She had my full attention; her father was even jealous at times. She grown into a beautiful young lady, inside and out. All the little kids close

to where we lived, five (5) regular ones, would come home with her after church, she would let them bring a change of clothes, feed them, shower, change them out of those church clothes and place them.

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in front of the television, with cartoon on, at the annoyance of her father, who wanted to watch Sunday sport. To add salt to his wound, he had to give her money to buy ice cream from “Creamy” for all of them. She was a very industrious and tidy child, both in her appearance and surroundings. She was well mannered and everyone one around her loved her. She was not academically incline, but she had great skill in cooking and baking. She would enter competitions for her school with her bake products. It was no surprise when she graduated from high school, she got the award for the most outstanding student in Foods and Nutrition.

After she graduated from high school, I migrated to the United States, and she was left home with her dad. We applied for a visa for her. She came and visited but would not stay even though we wanted her to. She came here in 2011 and went back home. I was at work one day, when her father called and told me she was in an accident. At the time she was in another parish. I asked him if he went to see her, he said no, because only her leg was broken, and she will soon be out of the hospital. That was the Tuesday of that week. The following Thursday, he called me and told me that he was on his way to see her, as she has gotten worse and they said she has asthma. I told him I did not know if she has asthma. The next morning, he called me and said, she was transferred to a larger hospital, has her breathing got worst and she was on a ventilator. I had prayed before, I have always prayed for their safety, going out and coming in. I started the intercessory prayer. The church was praying, everybody we knew was praying. One of her maternal Aunt went to stay nearby and visit along with the father every day. They prayed and also encouraged her to pray, because she could hear them, just was not able to

speaking. I cannot remember a time before when I have prayed so earnestly and desperately. My faith was at an all-time high. I trusted God and know he would come through for me.

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The following Saturday morning, I did not hear from my husband. I called him and asked why he didn't call me to tell me what was going on. He went to the hospital and told me she had responded favorably. As she was indicate to the nurses that her breathing was not bothering her as much as the discomfort in her leg. We felt a great relief. We started to thank the Lord. We were there comforting each other, when he said, "Joan, I will call you right back" there was urgency in his tone. When He came back, I asked, what happened. He said her heart stopped, but they revived it. He said he was going to spend some time with her and hanged up.

About an hour after he called me, he asked me if I was alright. I said I was trusting God. He then said to me, "She is gone", I will never forget those three words as long as I live. They left a scare in my heart. My heart was torn that day. Each time I repeat them, old wound would be torn afresh. He started, crying. I have never heard my husband cry all those maybe fifteen (15) years I have known him. Now my heart was tearing apart for two reason, the loss of my beloved daughter and the pain of my husband.

The incompetence of the medical staff in my country, did not know of the danger of fat embolism, and did not know to give her blood thinner, which caused my daughter to carelessly lose her life. The grief was unbelievable, it was like someone put a dagger in my heart and was slowly turning it. I began to question my shortcomings, I began to assess myself, I began to remember the things that I had done, that was not pleasing to God and wondered if I did not confess them all. I told myself God was punishing me. I started to reason with God. I said, "Lord you said to train up a child in the way he should

go.” I took her to church, she was involved in everything as a young person going there. She was made to live in my house decently and in Christian order. I asked the question, “where did I go wrong.”

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You said “ask and it shall be given” I asked, and you still took her. I was beyond grief. My friends called me. They did not know what to say, they just stayed there for me to talk.

Another feeling that came to me, was that I wasted my time caring for her, because at the start of womanhood, when she was just about to come into her own, have a career, marry, have kids, we did not get to see any of that. She was just gone. I struggled the most that she did not get an opportunity to give her life to the Lord. I said, Lord, I prayed for their salvation and now she is gone and I do not know if she did. There were so many things to grieve about. I cried for a long time. I would remember something we did together and I would just have a moment of crying. This went on for a long time. I would be at church and the children group would be singing and I would start crying, because I remember when she was a part of the children’s choir, back home.

One night I had a dream, about a year after she died. She was a happy child, so whenever she would be telling a story, she would be skipping and dancing around. I saw her in my dream doing the same thing. She said, “Mommy I passed the test and I have to go, because I am going up higher” I woke up praising and thanking God. My husband did not understand until I told him what happen. Even thou cessation of the grief did not come yet, I felt a little better, that she had made it in.

The question is asked, “how do we still love God in the midst of our pain?”. I was still loving God, but the experience gave me an unhealthy fear of Him at the time. The devil wanted me to feel that God was out to get me for something that I had done. When I prayed for the other children, he mocked

me, he said, "See, you prayed for that one safety too and a drunk driver killed her". What made it hard was that I felt like my prayers were stopping at the ceiling. As if I had a Job and Jesus moment, even though it was not so severe. I could not find God anywhere. I could not feel His love and His presence near me. I began to notice and ask Him to let me feel Him. I cannot remember the time when He came

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to me and said "I have one son and I gave Him up for you and you have two (2) more children and behaving as if I do not love you. From then on, I began to heal. I learn all over again that I can come to Him with any problem that I have. I may not know why he took our daughter, we will surely understand it in the by and bye, but since then we have proven God so many times, in so many things and learn that He is true to His word, when he says, ".....I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee...." (Hebrews 13:5-6). Knowing that God is with us through all of our troubles and trials is the best thing. He says in "(1 Peter 4: 12-13) "Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" Verse (13) says, "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

What made it bearable was when the Spirit of God spoke to me, how God gave up His only begotten son for my sins. I understand the grief He must have felt, even to turn His face away from Him, when He was on that cross. I feel honored to suffer a little of it. As the lesson taught, I face the grief, I talk about it to God, my husband, friends and family members. I testified about it. I am comforted to know that I do not have to act strong all the time. I am allowed to grieve whenever the feelings come and that do not mean that I do not believe what God says.

Going through this experience has enable me to help another from an informed place. As I write this paper I am standing in the gap as a vessel receiving the overflow from a nurse who is standing with a family who is about to take their thirty-three (33) years old son off life support. They are pouring

on her, and she is giving me the excess to carry and lift up to God. It touches old wounds, but because of my experience, I am able to pour in her, so she can help them. Unbelievable the young man and my daughter were in the same Primary School class.

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The thing that changed me, I learn that God loves me despite everything, and things will happen beyond my control. In the human we do not want to have those type of experience so we can help someone who is going through the same thing, but we have to understand that if we give ourselves to God and say "Lord use me as you please" then we have to prepare ourselves to be used by Him. He says in his words. "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. With the temptation He will make a way of escape." (1 Cor. 10:13). We must learn to believe in Him and stand on His promises.

The value of going through this loss is, there is a song that says, "If we never had a problem, we would not know God could solve them." By (Andrae Crouch). There is also no testimony without a test.