



GRIEF

LIVING AT PEACE WITH LOSS



June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart

GRIEF

Living at Peace with Loss

JUNE HUNT



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Grief: Living at Peace with Loss

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Dear friend,

I know what it's like to feel intense grief—a penetrating grief that cannot be escaped or denied. I also know about *unexpected grief*—those times when grief catches me off guard, particularly when “out of the blue” a painful memory floods my mind, raining tears upon my soul.

How well I remember traveling to Indiana to speak at a conference that began with a buffet dinner. As I was standing in line, I noticed a younger woman attentively serving the plate of an older woman with a walker. I couldn't help but notice the tender affection between this mother and daughter. Immediately, a wave of grief swept over me. Tears filled my eyes. I quickly left the room. I cried.

Simply put, that mother/daughter scene evoked precious memories of my mother and me, my mother who, just four weeks before, we buried. Never again would I have the privilege of serving her, seating her, sitting with her. Never again could I hug her, kiss her, hold her. Oh, how I missed her.

Unexpected grief can occur anytime and anyplace, especially when we see something that reminds us of someone dear to our hearts—someone no longer in our lives.

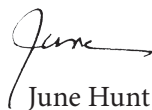
Grief finds us at unexpected times, like the time I walked into a card shop, saw a bird's nest, and all

of a sudden, felt my eyes fill with tears. I had to turn and walk out of the store. Again, that familiar wave of grief flooded my soul. Although many months had passed since my mother's death, the moment I saw the bird's nest, I thought of her. She loved what the nest represents: security, family, intimacy. Once for Mother's Day, I designed a bracelet for her that contained the birthstones of my three siblings and me closely nestled together inside a gold nest. Whenever I found a bird's nest (which was rare), I would get it for her and she would be utterly delighted. That day, in that card shop, I had found another endearing nest—but it was too late. The time had passed, and my heart grieved.

Periodically you, like me, will go through seasons of grief. After you lose someone or something immensely meaningful, you need to *expect moments of unexpected grief*.

No matter the heartache, realize that God is with you in the midst of your grief. And when you allow Jesus Christ to have control of your life, you can truly live at peace with your loss.

Yours in the Lord's hope,



June Hunt

*“Weeping may remain for a night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.”*
(Psalm 30:5)

GRIEF

Living at Peace with Loss

Why are people so drawn to Jesus, especially when their hearts have lost all hope? Why do they assume He will sympathize with their sorrows? Why would He grieve over their griefs? The answer is simple: Jesus was no stranger to grief. He was slandered and scourged, belittled and beaten, criticized and crucified. Yet the Bible says,

**“When they hurled their insults at him,
he did not retaliate;
when he suffered, he made no threats.
Instead, he entrusted himself
to him who judges justly.”
(1 Peter 2:23)**

When you see someone being insulted, when you hear someone being slandered, when you watch someone suffering, you know that person not only *understands grief*, but also *feels grief*. When Jesus lived on earth, His onlookers saw the unjust insults hurled at Him, heard the unjust slander spoken of Him, watched the unjust suffering imposed on Him. Therefore, they knew He was one who could both understand their grief and care about their grief.

- ▶ If you feel, “No one cares about my pain”—Jesus cares!
- ▶ If you think, “No one cares about my sorrow”—Jesus cares!
- ▶ If you believe, “No one cares about my grief”—Jesus cares!

*“Casting all your care upon him,
for he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7 NKJV)*

People are drawn to Jesus because Jesus cares, and that is why you too can turn to Him.

**“We do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize
with our weaknesses,
but we have one
who has been tempted
in every way, just as we are—
yet was without sin.
Let us then approach
the throne of grace with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy
and find grace to help us
in our time of need.”
(Hebrews 4:15–17)**



DEFINITIONS OF GRIEF

Who has not questioned the reason for pain and suffering in the world? Certainly some people have become hardened by their losses, while others have become softened; God used their grief to cultivate in them tender, understanding hearts.

Only days before His own death, Jesus traveled to the grave of Lazarus to comfort his two sisters in their loss. Jesus was not only *deeply moved in His Spirit*, but He was also weeping with Mary and Martha. It may seem paradoxical that Jesus—the Son of God, the one who turned water into wine, the one who multiplied the loaves and the fishes, the one who raised Lazarus from the dead—could not avoid grief in His own life. But the prophet Isaiah foretold that Christ, the coming Messiah, would be a man who would understand grief well for, indeed, He was ...

**“A Man of sorrows
and acquainted with grief.”
(Isaiah 53:3 NKJV)**

WHAT IS Grief?

- ▶ **Grief** is the painful emotion of sorrow caused by the loss or impending loss of anyone or anything that has deep meaning to you.

“Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief.” (Psalm 31:9)

- ▶ **Grief** begins in your heart as a natural response to a significant, unwanted loss.
- ▶ **Grief** is a God-given emotion that increases with knowledge about the sorrows of life. The wiser you are about the grief that people experience, the more you yourself will grieve.¹

“With much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.” (Ecclesiastes 1:18)

- ▶ In the New Testament, the Greek word *lupe* means “pain of body or mind.”² When Jesus told His disciples He would soon be betrayed and killed, they were “*filled with grief*” (Matthew 17:23).

WHAT IS Mourning?

- ▶ **Mourning** (also called grieving), is the process of working through the pain of sorrow that follows a significant loss.

“Joy is gone from our hearts; our dancing has turned to mourning.” (Lamentations 5:15)

- ▶ **Mourning** is a normal, healthy process that lasts for a period of time. God uses mourning in order to produce the ultimate healing of deep distress and sorrow.

“You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.” (Psalm 30:11)

- ▶ **Mourning** evokes compassion and expressions of comfort from others. When Lazarus died, Jesus and many others came to comfort Mary and Martha.

“Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.” (John 11:19)

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *abal* means “to mourn or lament.”³ Jacob’s favorite son was Joseph. When Joseph’s brothers told their father, Jacob, that his favored son had been killed by a ferocious animal, Jacob went into deep mourning for days and ultimately years.

“Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.” (Genesis 37:34)

WHAT IS Chronic Grief?

While we are grieving, a prevalent problem may be that we don't want to talk about our grief or let others see our sadness. We don't want to appear weak, so we mask our emotions! Yet if we delay sharing our sorrow, our healing will also be delayed. If we are going to be “authentically human,” we need to be able to share the truth about the heaviness in our hearts. If we have chronic grief, we are emotionally stuck, and we need to be set free. That is why Jesus' words about truth are so freeing, even when applied to grieving.

**“You will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free.”
(John 8:32)**

- ▶ **Chronic grief** (or incomplete grief) is an unresolved, emotional sorrow experienced over a long period of time as the result of not accepting a significant loss or not experiencing closure of that loss.⁴

“The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish.” (Psalm 25:17)

- ▶ **Chronic grief** can also be an unresolved, deep sorrow experienced over a long period

of time and characterized by misconceptions that result in a failure to move through the grief process.

MISCONCEPTION: “My grief will never end.”

CORRECTION: You will mourn for a season, and then your grief will end.

“[There is] a time to mourn and a time to dance.”
(Ecclesiastes 3:4)

MISCONCEPTION: “If I cry, I’m not strong.”

CORRECTION: Jesus was strong, yet He wept after Lazarus died.

“Jesus wept.” (John 11:35)

King David was strong, yet he and his men wept after Saul and Jonathan died.

“They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan.”
(2 Samuel 1:12)

MISCONCEPTION: “If I feel deep sorrow, I must not be trusting God.”

CORRECTION: Christ, the Messiah, never failed to trust God, the Father, yet He was called “*a man of sorrows.*”

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.”
(Isaiah 53:3)