

# How To Recover from a Loss

I have not suffered any losses in my life which I would consider a great loss—not the loss of a child, spouse, or parent; not even the loss of health, marriage, home, or job.

So, without presuming to speak for those recovering from suffering and grief, let me attempt to offer a few things from Scripture that may help in the aftermath of such terrible loss.

## **Take a break**

Our lives are crazy, and have no provision for trouble. Our budgets don't have enough padding for a flat tire much less a disaster, and our schedules don't have enough time for a long checkout line much less a major catastrophe.

It is simply impossible to process a loss and grieve while trying to maintain the modern schedule of getting up early, rushing to work with no breakfast, coming home late through traffic, shuttling kids to multiple activities, eating fast food, keeping ahead of a few household chores, and finally collapsing into bed way too late.

When tragedy comes barreling into our lives, it is important to take a break. One must pause, gather himself, digest what has happened, consider big decisions, reevaluate priorities. One must mediate and pray. One must eat and sleep. Just as an athlete cannot keep playing until his broken foot heals, a human being cannot run the rat race until his heart mends. Only then can he come back stronger and resume normal activities. This is harder when there are mouths to feed; but ask the church to pitch in for a week or two or more, so that you can restore your own spirit.

In Matthew 14, Herod the tetrarch put to death John the Baptist. He had been imprisoned for a long time, but his execution was a sudden surprise.

His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus. Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself (12-13).

Jesus needed time alone to think about John and His own future. We are not made of tougher stuff than Jesus. Take a break!

## **Count your blessings**

It's so easy to say, cheerily, "Count your blessings!" when sitting on the sidelines of a tragedy. It may even sound unkind. To the sufferer, it seems like the grief is shown on a 70" big screen TV,

while the blessings are confined to an old cell phone. Squint if you have to, but do your best to think about the good that is present.

The prophet Jeremiah, while trudging through the smoking ruins of Jerusalem, gave a glimmer of blessing when he testified,

This I recall to my mind,

Therefore I have hope.

The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease.

For His compassions never fail.

They are new every morning.

Great is Your faithfulness.

"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,

Therefore I have hope in Him (Lam. 3:21-24).

Even in the darkest hour, God has something lovely for His people. "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:18).

### **Spend time with your friends**

God "heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3) but often those blessings come through other people. God tells the church, "rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15).

Bereavement happens at a different pace for different people. There is a time for seclusion, and a time to get back out into the world again, to talk it over, and to be with people that put a smile on your face.

### **Help others**

It is a blissful distraction from one's own troubles to get involved in the troubles of another. This might not be possible anytime soon, but look forward to the time when your suffering can bring you the experience, knowledge, and strength to bless others. As Paul says in 2 Cor. 1:3-4, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are

in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

In fact, this may be one of the small victories in suffering, a glimpse into God's greater purpose in our personal losses.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

—John Guzzetta

### **Christ Liveth in Me**

If someone asked you, "Who is your role model; who is your hero?" what would be your response?

For many of us, depending on the context of where we were standing at the time the question was asked, it might be a sports figure, a titan of industry, a great statesman, or a family member who overcame tremendous odds.

If we thought about it for a while, or if we were standing in Bible class, most of us would probably, eventually, settle on Jesus Christ.

Which is, of course, the way it should be. Jesus Christ is the way and the truth and the life. He is the perfect example of everything we should be on a daily basis. We should strive to be Christ-like in our behavior.

But now, what if you reversed the question? What if someone asked you, "Who looks up to you as a role model?"

That's actually nerve-racking to consider, isn't it? Especially when you start to realize just how many people there are. Younger members of the church look up to you. The kids in your Bible class look up to you. Fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters look up to you. Your children look up to you. Older people, too. Friends, students, teachers, acquaintances, and even strangers look up to you.

And each and every one of them needs to see Christ living in you! Why? Because for many people in our circle, our example will be their first introduction to the faith of Jesus Christ. We need to be able to join our words with Paul's: "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

Our friends can't see Jesus; but they need to see Jesus living in us. How important it is, then, that we do not let our guard down or make excuses for even a moment!

—with thanks to Eric Crump