

Sadness and Loss

Week 3 - Part 1

Dear Friends,

Satan is always on the hunt. He waits at the sidelines of our life, ready to pounce and strike when we least expect it. He throws twists and turns our way to try to steer us away from our one true creator. Sometimes our lives can be flipped upside down, sending our thoughts into places we never dreamed of. For me, this journey happened over 18 years ago.

My husband and I were happily married for three years before we got the baby bug. We both had finished college and moved home from Indianapolis with the hopes of starting our family. Well, for us, starting our family did not happen the way we expected. We endured almost seven years of infertility with painful exams, difficult procedures, numerous blood tests and countless ultrasounds. A variety of drugs were shoved my way either orally or through injections. My body could handle the different treatments but my mind struggled. Why was God doing this to us? Why was he doing this to me?

With each passing year, I swirled lower and lower without even realizing it. After getting a positive blood test confirming I was pregnant, we were filled with so much joy and hope, only to have it taken from us a week later. Life was getting very hard and the thoughts of not having a child seemed more and more possible. Our relationship struggled because I was so sad and felt so guilty for putting my husband through this. I didn't realize I was pushing him away, as well as my God. Infertility is a very lonely road and my road was getting darker and darker by the month. I just remember at one point, calling out to God in frustration and sadness. I literally yelled at Him while driving my car, not understanding why I was picked to go down this path. I was the a good girl. I always followed the rules and did the right thing.

The following Sunday in church, something changed in me. I had come to the realization that I had a great life, with or without children. I could let the loneliness and self pity swallow me up or I could live the life He wanted me to live. I could enjoy my marriage or allow it to dissolve away. I could look at all the joys and blessings in my life with clear eyes by God or I could use Satan's eyes and feel anger and resentment. That day in church, I changed my vision. I wanted to live a life filled with His love, grace, and mercy.

Well, needless to say, a year later I was pregnant with our first of three children. I still mourn the loss of my children through miscarriage but I am filled with the joy of seeing them in heaven someday. God took a broken, lost, and resentful woman turned her into a proud, loving, and faith-filled woman of God! I trust in Him so much more than I did before. I knew my desires and he faithfully fulfilled them! Do I still question His ways? Yes, at times, but my faith is so much stronger that I put it in His hands and just wait.

Signed, A GFF

Have you been in her shoes? Do you desire something so badly that not having it leaves you deeply saddened and alone. Do you feel inadequate, or the shame and guilt of not being able to accomplish something you have dreamed of your whole life? Does the loss of a child or someone you love bring you intense grief? God does not intend for our sorrows to keep us in a state of loneliness and despair. He plan is to use our pain and suffering to draw us to Him. Take time to highlight and/or journal your thoughts as you read our GFF's story. What do you think God has to say about these ideas and feelings? We will spend the next few days looking into His word to uncover the truth.

Sadness and Loss

Week 3 - Part 2

The world says our sadness and grief should keep us isolated and bring us to a place of darkness, but God confirms that our sadness is something real that can be used to grow us closer to him. Grief takes time to heal but with each new day, as we hand it over to God, he is able to help us stand for longer periods of time. The world wants us to think hopeless thoughts in our sadness but God says our hope should be focused on Him! He is our helper in discouraging times and He will never leave us, even when we feel alone or push others away.

Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again - my savior and my God! -Psalm 42:11 NLT

I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:

The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!" - Lamentations 3:20-24 NLT

Sorrow is better than laughter, for sadness has a refining influence on us. - Ecclesiastes 7:3 NLT

Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. -John 14:1 NLT

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. -Psalm 34:18

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. -Romans 5:3 NLT

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." -Matthew 11:28-30 NLT

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has annointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. -Isaiah 61:1-3 NIV

Sadness and Loss

Week 3 - Part 3

As we reflect on the story of our GFF this week (see March 13th blog), we see a woman barren in her womb, broken by circumstance, and the threat of bitterness looming in the air about her. We see a woman whose heart is breaking and just when she begins to lose all hope, she meets face to face with God. He meets her at her deepest point of need, offering comfort, peace and a love that not only extends from his throne in heaven but is revealed in the blessings around her here upon this earth. She is loved by her husband and blessed with family and friends. The Lord didn't change her situation and he made no guarantees of bringing the child for which she so dearly longed. But, He did change her perspective. He gently bent down, enfolded her face in His mighty hands, and turned her downcast face to see Him- to see the God of Gods, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords! (Add Hallelujah's, Amen's and a round of applause here!) The Lord is near to the brokenhearted!

This story, though written only weeks ago, could have been taken directly from scripture. Hannah, a woman of Old Testament days, shares her story on the Holy pages of 1 Samuel. As you read her account, you will also feel her brokenness, her ache for a child. An ache not only felt in her empty arms but from within the depths of her soul. And you will see a woman, just like our sweet GFF, whose eyes are turned to the Lord. She leaves the pages of scripture having brokenness replaced with joy in the Lord! God is near the brokenhearted... and that's the truth!

1 Samuel 1:1-20

1 There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite[a] from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. 2 He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

3 Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. 4 Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. 5 But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. 6 Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. 7 This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord,

her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. 8 Her husband Elkanah would say to her, “Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don’t you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?”

9 Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord’s house. 10 In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. 11 And she made a vow, saying, “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.”

12 As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14 and said to her, “How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.”

15 “Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. 16 Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.”

17 Eli answered, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.”

18 She said, “May your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

19 Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. 20 So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the Lord for him.”

Sadness and Loss

Week 3 - Part 4

In our story this week (March 13th Blog), our GFFs situation was painful. Loss, uncertainty, and brokenness tried to define her.

It's as if we believe that our circumstances determine who we are and what we are worth. But Dear Friends, this is not God's truth. The truth is that He determines who we are and what we are worth. We are his children, dearly loved and adored! Our worth is determined by the infinite value of our Savior who shed his blood on the cross for us. WE MUST STOP LETTING OUR CIRCUMSTANCES DEFINE US!

**Being barren doesn't mean we are empty.
Being divorced doesn't mean we are a failure.
Making a mistake doesn't mean we are a mistake.
Experiencing grief and sadness doesn't mean they are my forever home.
Feeling lonely doesn't mean we are alone.**

The truth is... God is always good-even when our circumstances are not! It's a matter of perspective. Read the following verse presented in various translations. This verse simple, beautiful, and so true. Changing our perspective begins with a conscious choice followed by the continual training of our minds to focus on truth. So let's get started..

Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul?
Why are you crying the blues?
Fix my eyes on God - soon I'll be praising again.
He puts a smile on my face. He's my God.
Psalm 42:11(Message)

**Why am I so overwrought,
Why am I so disturbed?
Why can't I just hope in God?
Despite all my emotions,
I will believe and praise the One who saves me, my God.
Psalm 42:11 (the VOICE)**

Why are you in despair, O my soul?
Why have you become restless and disquieted within me?
Hope in God and wait expectantly for Him, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.
Psalm 42:11 (AMPLIFIED)

***What other verses can you find to help keep your eyes on God?**

Sadness and Loss

Week 3: Part 5

Although we can't all relate to feelings of barrenness, we can all relate to loss. And even though there are some of us who have no problem bearing children, we all have something in life that we are longing for. Hannah's story is so closely related to our friend's story, and because God's Word is living, we can find a way in which relates to our personal story, as well. What are you longing for in life? What are you ready to leave at the altar once and for all? What is that one thing that you are ready to hand over to God and trust that no matter what happens, in the end, you know without a doubt that God's plan for you is perfect? It's what Hannah did! After many years of heartbreak and longing she was ready to trust God with what she could not control. She was ready to hand over her deepest desire trusting God would either deliver it or show her His faithfulness through something else. Friends, if your desire is to live in God's will then He will give you the desires of your heart. It may not always look exactly how you envision but His plans for you are way beyond what you could ever imagine on your own!

After a week of God's promises stating He will be there for you in your deepest need, make sure to continue writing your favorite scripture on your notecards or in a journal. **Choose a very special one to commit to memory this week.** As we begin to write His Words on our hearts, His promises will begin to change our lives. We will live differently and defeat Satan one promise at a time!

Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. -Psalm 37:4 NLT

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. -Ephesians 3:20 NLT

No one has ever seen or heard of a God like you, who does such deeds for those who put their hope in him. -Isaiah 64:4 GNT