

# GAME WARDEN CHAPLAIN'S CHAT



## "WORDS OF LIFE"

The longer we live, the better the chance at participating in this emotion given to us by the Lord. The word for this Newsletter is the work "grief." At each level of age, we experience grief in different ways. When I was a child and didn't get my way, grief would be the emotion that I suffered. When I got older and older, the emotion for not getting my way changed to sadness, disappointment and then resignation. Sometimes people don't grow emotionally so that anything they experience that is difficult continues as grief, no matter their age. But this word doesn't mean not getting our way. This is a gut-wrenching, life-altering emotion. This is the emotion we feel when those closest to us die; when a catastrophic event happens and we have no way of dealing with it other than grief.

When I pastored a church down in Orange, TX., I was able to see grief in others up close and personal. I remember once when I was there during Hurricane Ike. I was serving as a Chaplain with the Texas Army National Guard who were, interestingly enough, billeted in the gym of the church I pastored. I continued to serve as Senior Pastor, but also continued some of my duties as Pastor while most of the duties fell to my Pastoral Team. I was so grateful I had them!! Every day, I would put on my uniform and go out with the National Guard as they helped people with homes underwater, chase down caskets that had floated above ground as the water seeped into the soil, or served MRE's and POD's (Points of Distribution). One day, as I was loading water into someone's trunk, I heard a Sargent calling for me. I looked up to see him standing next to a car with the window rolled down. I hurried over as fast as I can to see what the trouble was. As I walked up to the car, I noticed a lady in the driver's seat, hair all mussed-up and her head laying on the steering-wheel. I knelt down to do what most people wanted me to do—pray for them. That's not really what she wanted. As she spoke between sobs her story became clear. She had lost her house, had no insurance, lived far away from an estranged sister who was the only person she had left and, most of all, had lost her beloved dog in the flood. She really had nothing left, not even her little animal to help her in such a grievous time. She wasn't just feeling grief, she was wearing it all over her. With no friends close in town and nobody to help, all she had was her grief.

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What do you do for a person in a situation of grief? We often dismiss it minutes or hours after we help someone deal with it, but they continue in it and it sticks with them every minute of every day. Sure, time helps distance ourselves from it, but why do we have it at all? Why did God make us to grieve? In reality, it is one of our most important emotions. It gives us a clarity of life's importance. We are never meant to stay there. It begins the healing process. Its not the end of it. If you are grieving, remember that its because you have loved. But whatever you have loved and lost would want you/us/them/her to not stay, but move forward. Life is not over! What was lost was only lost physically. It lives on in us.

# “Watching Ourselves”

Bob Pierce had advanced leukemia, but he went to visit a colleague in Indonesia before he died. As they were walking through a small village, they came upon a young girl lying on a bamboo mat next to a river. She was dying of cancer and had only a short time to live. Bob was indignant. He demanded to know why she wasn't in a clinic. But his friend explained that she was from the jungle and wished to spend her last days next to the river, where it was cool and familiar. As Bob gazed at her, he felt such compassion that he got down on his knees in the mud, took her hand, and began stroking it. Although she didn't understand him, he prayed for her. Afterward she looked up and said something. “What did she say?”



Bob asked his friend. His friend replied, “She said ‘If I could only sleep again, if I could only sleep again.’” It seemed that her pain was too great to allow her the relief of rest. Bob began to weep. Then he reached into his pocket and took out his own sleeping pills, the ones his doctor had given him because the pain from his leukemia was too great for him to sleep at night. He handed the bottle to his friend. “You make sure this young lady gets a good night’s sleep,” he said, “as long as these pills last.” Bob was ten days away from where he could get his prescription refilled. That meant ten painful and restless nights. That day his servant hood cost him greatly. But even in the midst of his suffering, God had infused a supernatural sense of satisfaction that he had done the right thing. Doing the right thing sometimes hurts. *Lee Strobel, God’s Outrageous Claims, 95*

# “Family Foundations”

## I’ll Always be There for You!

It’s a fascinating story that comes out of the 1989 earthquake which almost flattened Armenia. This deadly tremor killed over 30,000 people in less than four minutes. In the midst of all the confusion of the earthquake, a father rushed to his son’s school. When he arrived there he discovered the building was flat as a pancake.

Standing there looking at what was left of the school, the father remembered a promise he made to his son, “No matter what, I’ll always be there for you!” Tears began to fill his eyes. It looked like a hopeless situation, but he could not take his mind off his promise.

Remembering that his son’s classroom was in the back right corner of the building, the father rushed there and started digging through the rubble. As he was digging other grieving parents arrived, clutching their hearts, saying: “My son! My daughter!” They tried to pull him off of what was left of the school saying: “It’s too late!” “They’re dead!” “You can’t help!” “Go home!” Even a police officer and a fire-fighter told him he should go home. To everyone who tried to stop him he said, “Are you going to help me now?” They did not answer him and he continued digging for his son stone by stone.

He needed to know for himself: This man dug for eight hours and then twelve and then twenty-four and then thirty-six. Finally in the thirty-eighth hour, as he pulled back a boulder, he heard his son’s voice. He screamed his son’s name, “ARMAND!” and a

voice answered him, “Dad? It’s me Dad!” Then the boy added these priceless words, “I told the other kids not to worry. I told ‘em that if you were alive, you’d save me and when you saved me, they’d be saved. You promised that Dad. ‘No matter what,’ you said, ‘I’ll always be there for you!’ And here you are Dad. You kept your promise!”



The news today seems to, sarcastically, imply that all fathers are disengaged. To be sure, too many fathers are. But, family counselors have seen a great uptick in how many fathers have started to become more and more engaged. Its harder, for some reason, for fathers to be as engaged as mothers. They have certainly shamed fathers over the years. However, the mothers have been a great example to fathers, lately, as they have followed mothers’ examples. Remember, fa-

thers, you are the ones who will give your children a picture of their Father in Heaven and His love for them. Don’t let them down. No matter what kind of trouble they are in, dig through the rubble and find them. They are counting on you!

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## What is the role of Belief in Grief?

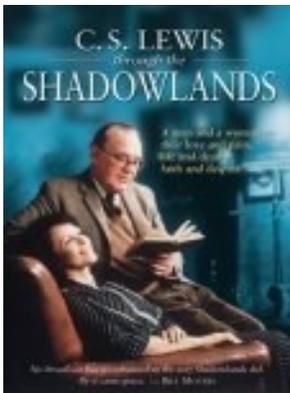
Grief and belief...

Questioning your God or religious beliefs after a tragedy is a normal reaction, with no easy answers. Let your doubts surface. You will work through your spiritual crisis as your grief progresses and resolves.

On the other hand, bereavement may actually strengthen your beliefs. Embrace your spirituality and religious rituals. Prayer and faith may give you support and help you through the roughest spots when nothing else works.

"Letting go and letting God" is a sign of strength and wisdom, not weakness.

Meditation, prayer, yoga or Tai Chi can create a soothing restful oasis during your heavy days.



Did you find comfort at church before this happened? Then continue attending church services, and stay in touch with your church "family".

I would like to suggest a good book to read that deals with both grief and how a spiritual faith can help one get through a very difficult time.

Shadowlands is both a book and a movie (Amazon has it) that was made from the book. It is the story of one of the great Christian philosopher from Oxford University in England. He has written many books and this book is particularly a story of how he found love late in life but after a brief time with his wife, Joy, they find she has cancer.

It is important to know that he once led the Atheist movement on the Oxford campus but after a dramatic experience, this very intelligent and gifted man gives God his life and from then forward he becomes one of the great apologists of the Christian faith.

Having gone through life, then dealing with the loss of his beloved Joy, he contends that grief is such an important part of our life of faith. It is a difficult story but it is a timeless story of love, loss, grief and then coming through on the other side.

You are never alone in grief. There is One who loves you more than you know. Allow Him to weep with you.

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