

Autumn



Reflections

Grief and Faith

By Jeanne Shaffer

Loss and grief impact every aspect of who we are—our bodies, emotions, minds and spirits. Grief can be responsible for a variety of physical symptoms and is often accompanied by strong emotions.

It is not uncommon while grieving to long for a sense of meaning; to wrestle with difficult and often unanswerable questions that challenge our spiritual beliefs. Grievers need to allow themselves time as they find the courage to struggle with their doubts, fears and anger. They need to find someone who will understand and accept their struggle unconditionally.

Johanna Turner writes in *Grief and Faith, Spiritual Paths Through Loss*, “Faith happens when—despite pain, sadness, isolation and evil in the world—we believe anyway . . . Faith lights the way to answers when they exist and gives us courage to accept that some questions may have no answers. Faith is the companion that accompanies us on a journey where the only promise given is that we do not make the journey alone. We hold on to faith as tightly as we can; when we can’t, faith holds us.”

A Gentle Prayer for Healing

God, accompany me through these difficult days
like a friend on a long walk,
quietly alongside me,
allowing me to feel all that I feel.
Wrap your love around me
like the warm embrace of a hug.
Teach me to be gentle with myself,
to let the tears flow when my eyes become full,
to rest when my body is tired,
to seek gentle listening ears
when my spirit is lonely,
And to look to You
when my soul is empty.
Help me embrace and not fear
the grief that fills my life at this time.
May I take care of myself as I would
nurture a child in my arms with the food of
gentle nourishment and a drink of patience.
Grant me the gentle way through healing.
Amen.

Mary Kendrick Moore



Something To Think About . . .

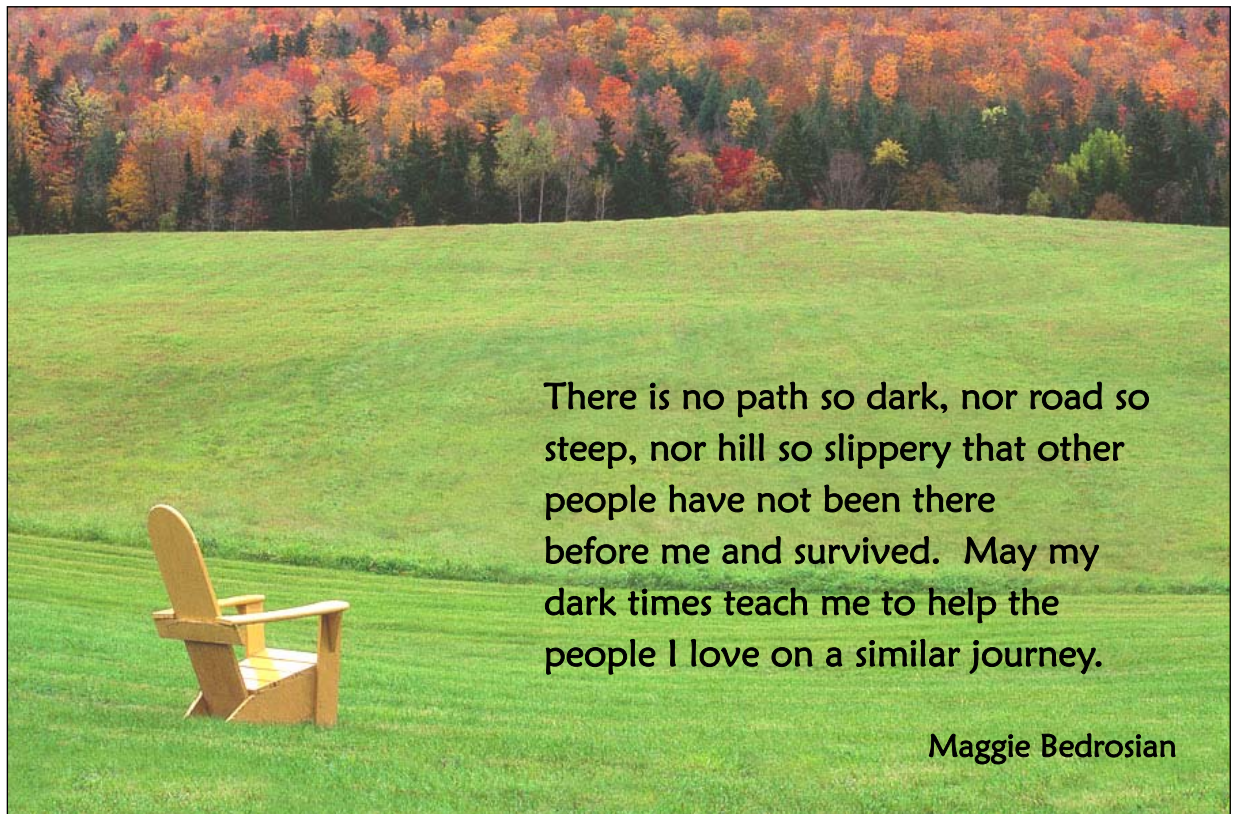
By Doris Tenelshof

Zig Zigler is well known as a great motivational speaker - an upbeat optimistic person. All that changed in 1995 when he lost his 46-year-old daughter. In his writings, he has said that it is impossible to describe the grief he felt. The great optimist was shattered and broken. He was numb. He wept often and at unexpected times. During this time he would walk and weep. It was during one of those heart-wrenching walks he realized that his daughter was fine, it was he who was not. He knew he must do something to work through this time in his life.

In his book, *Confessions of a Grieving Christian*, he shares his feelings about this time in his life and some of the experiences that helped him along in his journey through grief. He is kind enough to include stories of how others were there for him and his family during their time of sorrow. A dear friend wrote a letter to the Zigler family and in the letter is this sentence,

“For the Christian, death does not end with a period or a question mark. It ends with a comma . . .”

I read and re-read that line. A comma signifies there is more to come, something will follow. It tells us that there is no completion in death because there is a continuation with God. The bonus is that the continuation is for the one who has passed **and** for those of us who remain and experience His sustaining presence. What a comfort!



Why Are The Casseroles Always Tuna



A Book Review By Doris TenElshof

Darcie Sims is a psychotherapist and grief management specialist as well as an author. She is also a bereaved parent. Her son died as a result of a brain tumor. In her struggle to deal with her son's illness and death, Darcie attempted to hold to her sense of humor and has tried to share it with others. Now, several years later, it is easier for her to find the laughter she thought she may have lost forever.

The title of her book brings a smile. Anyone who has experienced a serious illness or death knows that friends respond by bringing food. It may be hard to find the right words, but brownies or a casserole (even tuna) express feelings of care and concern. And sometimes, when a friend delivers that tuna casserole, memories of happier days are also shared.

Ms. Sims points out that the journey through the *Valley of Death* is painful and no friend can make that trip for us. But we have an option as to how we choose each step of that journey. Life can become good again and love can create new spaces in the heart. The empty space left by the one who died is never replaced., but the new spaces created can be filled with joy.

Even in her humor, the author does not minimize grief. Although one is able to find new happiness, that happiness is different because it has been robbed of innocence. The important thing is that we need to focus on the LIFE rather than the DEATH of our loved one. Only then can actual healing begin. She suggests we cry all we want—but laugh too. Make joy happen!

The author points out the different ways in

which a mother and a father journey through grief. Mothers cease being logical and become forgetful about almost everything—except the garbage! They are eaten up with self-inflicted guilt. Dads, who are known for always being brave, strong, busy and capable of fixing anything are now helpless. This is the one thing they cannot fix. This is the time when the tears of all should blend as we hold onto one another.

“We are a family circle—broken by death, mended by love.”

Why do we hurt for so long? The author's one word answer is simply, “Because.” She includes the following poem:

Just Wondering

The memory winds of Spring came calling today.

Icicles melting. Ruts in the road.

I thought I was beginning to thaw

And then you whispered across my mind,

And I remembered.

And it was winter again.

There is much delightful humor in this book, but it is also a teaching tool that always turns to a positive. Darcie maintains that we must at some point pick up those rose-colored glasses and put them on. While to do so may sound silly, it gives us a change in perspective. We do not deny our pain, but rather search for some brightness in our dark moments.

Ms. Sims challenges us to not wait for joy to return to our lives . . . but rather look for it! Yes, there will be rocks ahead, but there is also a path.

The Elephant in the Room

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting,
so it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with,
"How are you?" and, "I'm fine"
And a thousand other forms
of trivial chatter.
We talk about the weather.
We talk about work.
We talk about everything else-
except the elephant in the room.

For, you see, it is a very big elephant.
It has hurt us all.
But we do not talk about
the elephant in the room.
Oh, please, say her name.
Oh, please, say "Barbara" again.

*By Terry Kettering
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There's an elephant in the room.
We all know it is there.
We are thinking about the elephant
as we talk together.
It is constantly on our minds.

Oh, please, let's talk about
the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about her death;
Perhaps we can talk about her life?
Can I say "Barbara" to you
and not have you look away?
For if I cannot, then you are leaving me
Alone . . .
In a room . . .
With an elephant.

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