

AFTER LOSS

courage and healing through God's grace

Lynelle Watford

Rising Higher Gift Book Series

As a collection of thoughts and selected scriptures, read these pages slowly, ponder, and apply as needed. Let the words, like a slow rain, soak deep into your soul.

You may not have chronic rheumatoid arthritis, serious eyesight challenges, or the grief of losing a son to suicide as I do, but I trust these scriptures will minister to your heart as they do mine.

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After Loss: courage and healing through God's grace
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<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/overcoming-the-obstacles-of-cerebral-palsy-part-1-of-2/> accessed 10/2/20, used by permission.

In Ambushed: “Tremors of Life: Ministering at a Time of Loss, Crisis, and Trauma,” Dr Norm Wright, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM-7I_dCSVk, accessed 9/9/20.

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Loss 101

Loss steamrolls its way into our lives. Decimates our world. Leaves our minds in a fog. Pain and confusion beyond comprehension slam into our beings.

Whether it was a relationship or a comfort ripped from our hearts, we suddenly realize how precious that existence was to us.

Walk with me as we journey through deep loss. As we navigate through the pitfalls of grief. As we choose courage and healing.

*Be strong, and
let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD!*

Psalm 31:24





Shock

Loss. Deep, devastating, all-encompassing loss.

It sucks you in, chews you up, and spits you out.

It blankets you in mind-numbing shock, yet torments you with shards of memories—images, words, and emotions.

It hurtles body, soul, and spirit through what you were never created to experience—or survive. Your mind freezes, unable to comprehend such enormity. Your emotions whirl from intense grief to anger to frustration to ... nothingness. Your spirit struggles, in vain, to get a grip, to trust God.

You are on a journey. Every excruciating step, sometimes forward, sometimes back, leaves you gasping for breath. Looking for hope. Wondering if you can go on.

You want a way out. Now. But none exists. That realization may fuel rage, deliver you to despair, or engulf you with helplessness.

All seems lost. All, that is, except for Jesus.

*Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.*

Psalm 30:5

Jesus is our peace.

Jesus holds
our eternal destiny.

Jesus is our refuge.

Jesus loves us as
His special creation.

Jesus will never leave us.

Jesus is enough.

Jesus. Is.

Emotions, Emotions

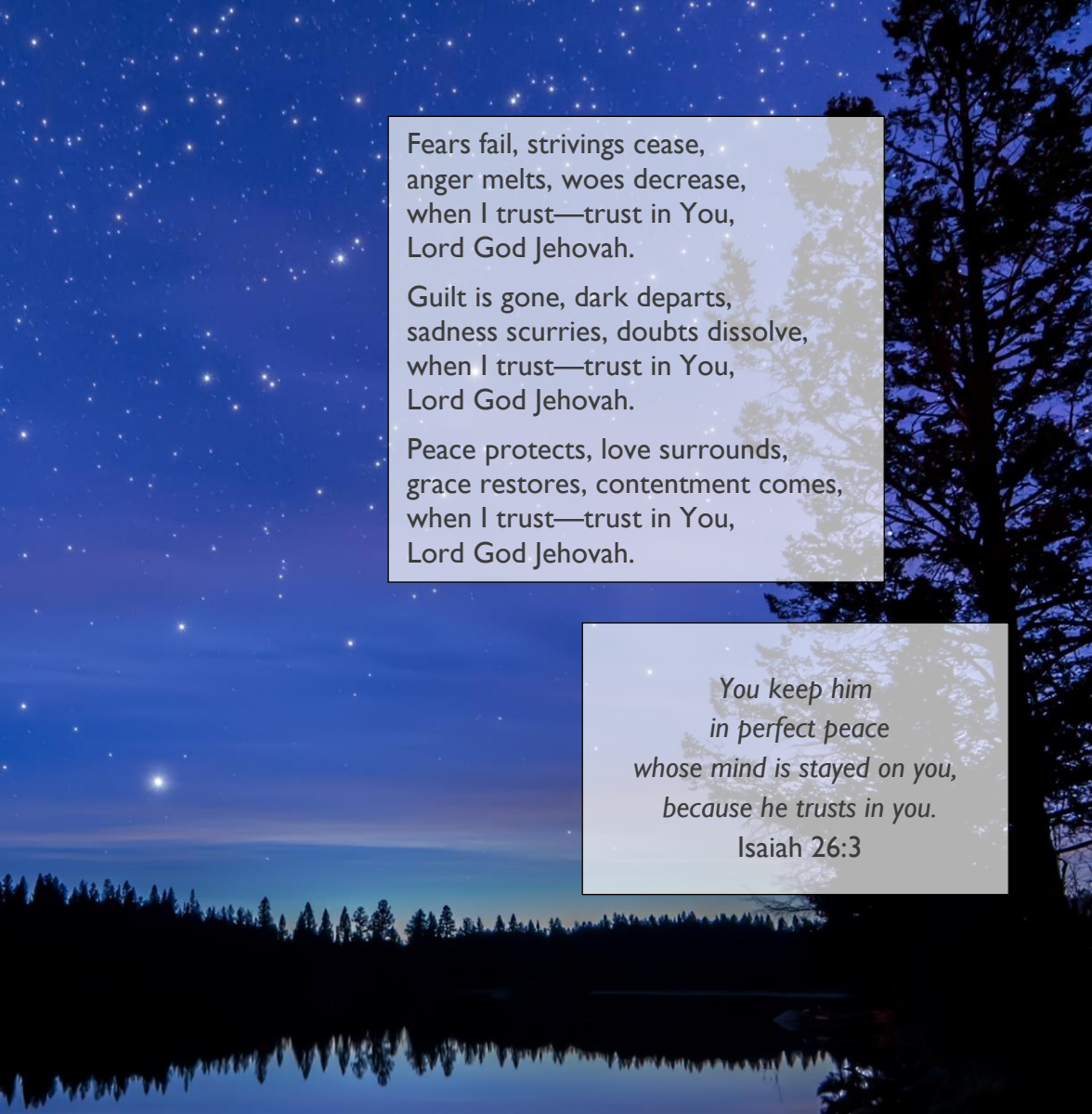
Emotions whirl in times of
loss. Sadness. Anger.
Discouragement.
Hopelessness. And on it goes.

The changes tire and confuse
us. Feelings whip us about like
dead leaves on a chilly
November day. Will the day
ever end to temporarily stop
this emotional beating?

Emotions are valid, but they
don't have to rule our lives. I
know this in my head. Some
days I believe it in my heart.

When emotions fling me
about, I cling to God and His
Word for all I am worth.

And do you know what?
Emotions that had just tossed
me across the room like a
limp rag doll, slither away.



Fears fail, strivings cease,
anger melts, woes decrease,
when I trust—trust in You,
Lord God Jehovah.

Guilt is gone, dark departs,
sadness scurries, doubts dissolve,
when I trust—trust in You,
Lord God Jehovah.

Peace protects, love surrounds,
grace restores, contentment comes,
when I trust—trust in You,
Lord God Jehovah.

*You keep him
in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you.
Isaiah 26:3*



*Who redeems your life from ruin;
who crowns you with
loving-kindness and tender mercies;
Psalm 103:4 MKJV*

Life Goes On

It can be infuriating. It can be healing.

Tummies need feeding. Socks need washing. Vehicles need gas.

Loss binds us to a moment in time while life grinds on.

Responsibilities force us out of bed and keep us interacting with others. Daily duties provide structure in our newly-decimated world.

After a loss, we need time alone. Our damaged emotions may need extra quiet or pampering. But we also need to stay in the stream of life.

One woman, abandoned by her husband with six children under her care, put it this way, "It's good that life has to go on. It is brutal and yet is God's grace."

It is God's lovingkindness that physical needs urge us to invest in life, errands force us to get out in fresh air, and duties compel us to make our body move.

Yes, it is God's grace. Grace for our healing.



Tears

Tears bathe my cheeks. My weeping is a window to my soul engulfed in grief. Waves of pain crest and break. How will I survive the suicide death of my son?

The loss, with all its hideous facts, scorches me. Like touching a hot stove, it can only be endured for a moment. I escape. Distraction. Diversion. Regain enough strength to confront reality.

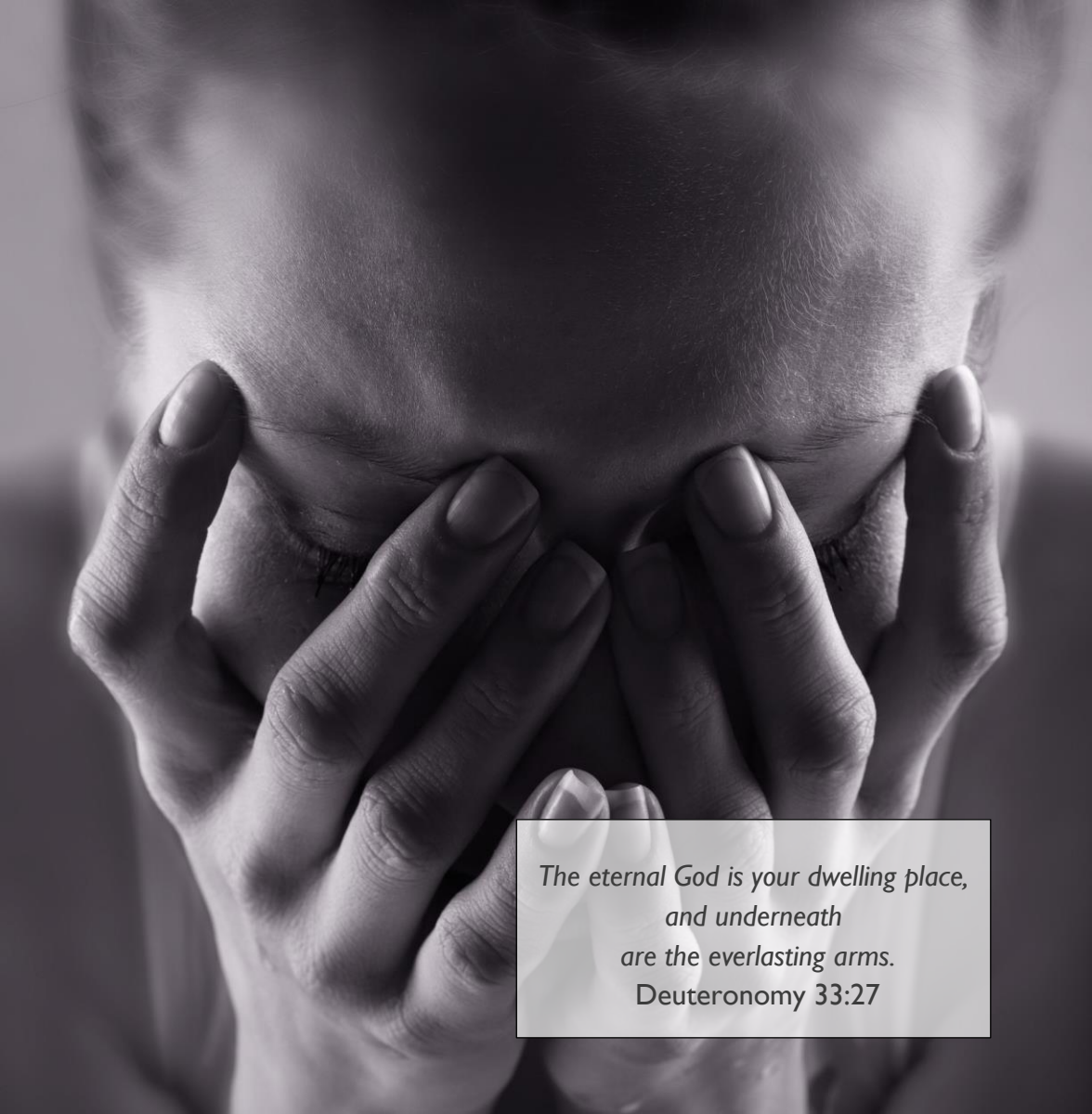
Somewhere in the cycle of painful reality and blessed diversion, I look up. "O God, help me! I cannot do this."

I cling to His comforting arms, strong and eternal, awash in my tears.

There are not enough tears to flow
there are not enough flowers to grow
there are not enough winds to blow
to take away my grief.

There are not enough days and years
there are not enough cares and fears
there are not enough silent years
to remove your memory.

There are not enough mountain peaks
there are not enough rivers deep
there are not enough enemies' feet
to stay God's comforting arms.



*The eternal God is your dwelling place,
and underneath
are the everlasting arms.
Deuteronomy 33:27*



Struggle to Understand

“I just don’t understand!”

I don’t understand how it happened. And I certainly do not understand why. Our 20-year-old son’s suicide death is beyond my comprehension.

In John 10, Jesus told a story about a sheepfold, a shepherd and his sheep, and a thief. The people did not understand the point.

Jesus approached His message from another angle, explaining Himself as the Good Shepherd.

One day Jesus, my Good Shepherd, ended my struggle to understand with this thought: “I don’t have to.”

In His time on earth, Jesus gravitated to the desperate, destitute, and debilitated with a heart of kindness.

I can trust a God like that. I can rest in His promises.

Now when the thought comes, “I just don’t understand!” I remind myself, “But I don’t have to.”

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

Proverbs 3:5

Jesus ended my
struggle to understand
with this thought:
“I don’t have to.”



Pour & Lift

After discovering her infant son had cerebral palsy, Lisa grieved. “I closed every curtain and I mourned for about two days. And what I cried about was, I needed to mourn that I lost the normal baby.”


In times of loss, God invites you to pour out your heart to Him. To express every hidden thought and feeling. To express the anger, frustrations, hopelessness, resentment, sadness, and all the rest.

After unburdening your heart, you need to fill it. To take a few minutes to let God lift you up. Contemplate a psalm. Sing a favorite praise song. Or listen to music rehearsing God’s goodness and faithfulness. Let Him restore you and infuse you with courage.

Continuing her story, Lisa said, “After those two days, I opened every curtain and I opened my heart.”


“And I chose to get up and praise God that day,” said Lisa, concluding her narrative.

(From Focus on the Family broadcast, June 16, 2020, Overcoming the Obstacles of Cerebral Palsy (Part 1 of 2), Lisa Sexton, [No Such Thing as Can’t](#) by Lisa and Tyler Sexton.)



*Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.*

Psalm 62:8



*Forgive,
and you will be forgiven*
Luke 6:37

Blame Is Not a Game

Sometimes I was angry with anyone connected to the loss of my son. That included me. Hindsight revealed what I could have done to help prevent the loss and what others did and didn't do that contributed to the tragedy.

Over the years, I released blame. I forgave myself and others. I told myself I had done my best.

But before forgiveness came, there came a day I contemplated turning my back on God.

After all, He was responsible for the deep grief that consumed me. He could have prevented the storm that destroyed my son's life.

But He didn't.

In my anger, I thought, "If that's how He's going to treat me, I can just walk away!"

I considered. A fundamental change must ensue. No one to pray to, no absolute truth to rely on. I would betray myself and my deepest needs. Abandoning my faith would be spiritual, mental, and emotional suicide. To cut the cord would sever me from God and all I am since my life is interwoven with His.

The horror snatched me from the brink.

I still get angry with God sometimes. Even give Him the silent treatment. But I won't walk away. My life is entwined with His forever.

Marathon Endurance

My husband and sons were long distance runners—5K and 10K—not sprinters. The length of the run affected their training.

Grief is a marathon. To finish, endurance is required.

1. Attend to needs—physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual. This is not selfishness. Unless you stay in the race, you will not be there for others.
2. Dose your pain. Grieving gobbles energy. You need breaks. Enjoy healthy escapes for pleasure or projects. If your loss is the death of a loved one, it is not betraying that person to be happy. Sadness does not connect you to your loved one. Love does.
3. Choose courage. Resolve to be a survivor, not a victim. Decide to persevere in God's strength. Rest when you falter. Keep your eyes on the goal.

Focus on these areas in your race to the finish line. Jesus came to give us life abundant. And that may be best appreciated with the backdrop of pain and loss.

Grief is a marathon.
To finish,
endurance is required.



*I came that they may have life
and have it abundantly.*
John 10:10



Unchanging God

Praise songs poured salt on my wounds. Testimonies of God's intervention swirled confusion in my mind. Exclamations of "God is so good!" following favorable prayer outcomes wounded my soul.

Crushing loss shook me to the core. Everything shifted--down to bedrock values and faith.

Could a good God have allowed this devastating loss? I wondered.

It didn't make sense. My loss would not be dismissed with platitudes, for crushing reality wrenched each breath. That led me to put God's goodness on trial.

Yet I didn't want to live in anger and bitterness.

My theology—my faith—should not change based on my circumstances, I reasoned.

I decided to trust God is good, even when life turns dark. Like the child who may not understand the good intentions of loving parents, I could not understand God's ways. But I chose to accept them.

My soul settled with healing. And, again, I offered praise and enjoyed the testimonies of others.

You are good and do good; teach me your statutes. Psalm 119:68

