

42.3 The High Price of Love

It is safe to say that most want to love and be loved, if not all of us. Loving is part of the image of God that He has placed within each of us. Love is the chief characteristic of God (**1 John 4:8**). God directs us to love Him (**Deuteronomy 6:5**). He also wants us to love others (**Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:43-48**). Love is so important that Jesus says it is the chief characteristic of His disciples. **John 13:35** (NKJV) reads:

³⁵ *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

Yet, love is risky. God risked His Son by expressing His love for us on the cross. Jesus risked our rejection of His ultimate love. As He stated in **John 15:13** (NKJV):

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

We risk the pain of loss if we dare love. The person we love may reject us. The person we love may leave us either by choice or by death. As a result, some people choose not to love. In this way, they will not have to risk the grief of loss. Henri Nouwen once said:

“Every time we make the decision to love someone, we open ourselves to great suffering, because those we most love cause us not only great joy but also great pain. The greatest pain comes from leaving...the pain of the leaving can tear us apart.

“Still, if we want to avoid the suffering of leaving, we will never experience the joy of loving. And love is stronger than fear, life stronger than death, hope stronger than despair. We have to trust that the risk of loving is always worth taking.”

God can love everyone in the world (**John 3:16**). You and I may have sympathy or empathy for people, but we don't have the same capacity as God. We have a smaller circle of family and friends whom we love.

I tend to put Bible characters on a pedestal and view them as superiors. Upon further review, we can see that they were people just like we are. They had the same emotions we do. They felt grief, too.

David is an excellent example of grieving. He grieved the loss of his newborn son after his sin with Bathsheba (**2 Samuel 12:15-23**). He also grieved the loss of his rebellious son, Absalom. Notice **2 Samuel 18:33** (NKJV):

Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: “O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!”

Many other people in Israel may have died the same day as Absalom. David may have been sympathetic but did not feel the same kind of loss as in losing his son. David grieved the loss of a son as most parents.

There is another layer of grief for David and perhaps us too. David lost the presence of his son, and he lost the opportunity to restore a proper relationship with Absalom.

Maybe you have had an estranged relationship with a loved one who died. You may have attempted to restore your relationship, but things never worked out. Now your loved one is gone. You mourn their passing and grieve that you cannot mend the relationship. You have grief upon grief.

Benjamin Franklin experienced the rift of the broken relationship with his son, William. Benjamin took care of his son and groomed him for the printing business. However, the two fell out over the cause of liberty. Benjamin, of course, was a proponent of liberty and the American cause. As Governor of New Jersey, William disagreed with his father and wanted to remain loyal to the Crown. Both men experienced grief in the loss of their relationship as a result.

David felt the twofold loss of the death of Absalom and the loss of the potential restoration of their relationship. Benjamin Franklin felt similar things with William. Maybe you have, too. Grief is the price we pay for loving and losing.

In this painful time, the question I have is, "What do I do about it?" I need practical suggestions to help me deal with my issues of loss and guilt. Emma Boucher offers some suggestions in an online article entitled "7 Strategies to Process Grief."¹ Among the suggestions she has are:

1. Look back in "kind sight." Give yourself a break so that you don't spend the rest of your life mourning something you cannot fix.
2. Practice self-nurture. No one but you can take care of yourself. You are the one to care the most about you. Eat, drink, exercise, rest, and engage in life.
3. Manage triggers and flashbacks. Grief doesn't end in a few days or even a few years. There will be some triggers that bring back memories of your loved one – good and bad. Take control of those times. Allow yourself to grieve if necessary and try not to give into the temptation to punish yourself for what "could have been."
4. Access Social Support. This may be family, friends or even counseling. Give yourself permission to lean on those who can and will help you.
5. Recreate or reconnect with your purpose in life. We all have a general and ultimate purpose of serving God. You have a specific way in which you can do that. Go after it and find fulfillment in life by looking ahead as David did after his and Bathsheba's baby died.

These are great suggestions. Let's be sure to base our efforts on who God is. **Psalm 9:9-10** (NKJV) reads:

⁹ *The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
A refuge in times of trouble.*

¹⁰ *And those who know Your name will put their trust in You;
For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.*

As we recognize who God is, let's appeal to His mercy and compassion. David took this approach and poured out his concerns to Him. We read in **Psalm 31:9-10** (NKJV):

⁹ *Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble;
My eye wastes away with grief,*

Yes, my soul and my body!

¹⁰ *For my life is spent with grief,*

And my years with sighing;

My strength fails because of my iniquity,

And my bones waste away.

In addition to pouring out our concerns to God, let's hear Him in His word. The scriptures can "make us wise to salvation," according to **2 Timothy 3:15**. We need to pay attention to them and do the next thing before us in faith. The biggest challenge at losing a loved one is to live our remaining life with purpose. You have a purpose, and you can be productive. Act as you have the opportunity and are able.

Keep The Light of Love Burning!

¹ Boucher, Emma. "7 Effective Strategies to Process Grief." *Beyond Good Health*, 29 July 2015, beyondgoodhealthclinics.com.au/7-effective-strategies-to-process-grief/.