

When We Grieve

Feeling spiritually grounded in times of pain ...

It is as natural for a child as for an adult to ask for a prayer “to please cure” someone they love.

How do we reply when we believe God does not reward nor punish nor intervene to set aside the workings of nature?

First, we need to hear that request as a cry of pain, an expression of helplessness. We can show them we hear and care. Rabbi Kushner tells us “God ‘answers’ such a cry not by sending a miraculous recovery, but by giving the one who cries out enough strength to bear this burden however heavy it may become.”

The reply to the grieving one can be to find the means by which you and your family can feel strong enough to face whatever comes. That’s when we counsel moving ahead slowly – one tiny step at a time. Find comfort in thinking of what you are grateful for, what gifts of life you have learned to appreciate and for the wisdom of those care givers who surround you.

If you can find comfort in doing everything that you can do, and in witnessing the way others are reaching out, these things will give you strength enough to accept even the worst, and be grateful for the smallest of blessings. “Then, indeed, your prayers will have been answered.”

The story is told of Ella’s family who realized her lung cancer was terminal. Her daughters collected scraps of fabric from the sewing room where their mother had made wonderful creations. In the hospital room they arranged the scraps in an album and invited Ella to reminisce about each piece. By doing this they found a way to strengthen themselves for what would lie ahead. They made memories that will bring tears of grief and joy in the days to come.

There will be times when each of us need the space to grieve alone, to have opportunity to focus on the pain within and to give expression to our pain. But we cannot stay in retreat or in denial for long. Our incompleteness needs to be fulfilled as we reach out to others, and as we discover the many ways the depth of God’s compassion is made known to us.

(written by Joyce Sasse)

