

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. 2 Corinthians 5:19

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On June 10, 2008 Dewayne Wood, our friend and colleague, died due to complications from a seizure. Words cannot express our loss and grief. Weeks before his passing Dewayne emailed me (Gordon) the first draft of his essay to be used for this newsletter. In the days after his death life felt like rummaging through the debris from a tornado. Remembering that he had sent me this essay only weeks earlier was like finding an untouched family portrait in the debris. Among his many gifts to me I consider this one of his most beautiful as hard as it is to read it in the wake of his passing. I trust his unedited essay will help you grieve in a richer and more redemptive way.

THE DIRECTION OF GRIEF: REMEMBERING

By Dewayne Wood

The direction of grief moves toward restoration. In Jeremiah 31, a passage about full restoration, God deliberately recognized loss first and did not overlook it. This passage is not just about hope alone, but, it acknowledges the tension that life has been taken and it will be restored. Jeremiah shows us that restoration begins from a place of scattering. The children of Israel are either on their way into exile or already in exile when they received this message about full restoration.

Grief starts in such an awkward place; a disorganized, often

confusing place. Grief is provoked by loss. From the death of a loved one to the loss of a dream, loss is varied in its experience. It often comes as a surprise, someone described it as a "gasp," where your breath is knocked out of you. Or, loss is known by its gnawing, relentless ache that cannot be ignored or identified. Confrontation with death creates disillusionment and disorientation, a scattering. Even if you see death coming from a distance there is still a gasp when it arrives. Life is changed and grief gives voice to that change. Healing begins from a place of scattering and grief begins with recognized loss.

By entering into your loss, you become more human, more available to God. Grief blows into flames the embers of hope for life without leaving unacknowledged the pain of where you are now. Grief does not

you remain in a place of waiting for an answer only God can offer you. (The process of grieving opens you up to a more meaningful encounter with God. It is there in the rawness of this place that God becomes not someone who you just meet on Sunday, and Someone that I only use to help me feel better about my sin with, but I begin to ache over larger things with God. My eyes were focused on small things that I could control and sorrow has helped me see that I do not trust a big God who allows such difficulty to happen.)

Grief ushers us into a meaningful encounter with God as backwards as that sounds. The direction is not an answer to the pain we thought we wanted. God meets you in the grief with Himself. The meaningful encounter

with God centers on receiving His kindness in the midst of the tension of Hope and Loss together. In the Message, Jeremiah 31:1-6 states clearly that "Israel, out looking for rest met God out looking for them!"

Israel would be coming from exile through the wilderness, loss, looking for God; met God out looking for them, hope. The hope is not an answer or even a better life but it is that God is out looking for you and the grief is the path into the wilderness. This is reminiscent of the prodigal coming home finding his father running to meet him with a robe and a ring of sonship.

As we begin to trust our grief though we do not like where

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act like you should be somewhere you are not, like you need to get over your mourning. It does not demand that you feel happy or say that you should replace/alter your sadness, rather it does the opposite, and it acknowledges your loss, as a necessary part in healing. Loss reminds you this is not your home and grief helps you endure it and therein lays its value. It does not let up or answer the why's and how's which often would suffice our understanding; but rather grief helps

it takes us into such deep tension, we find that sorrow is on the opposing team of death; in fact it is grief that speaks the truth most clearly that death is not suppose to be a part of this life. Death is not just a cycle of life but rather evidence that something truly is wrong. When your sorrow begins to feel the injustice of Death; you are also opening up to a hope for Life that can only be answered by God. It is engaging this larger difficulty with Christian grief that we listen to the cadence of home, the drumbeat of heaven. A whisper, an echo "I am the one who will make this right, I will be your God and you will be my people." Your grief matters and in the tension of hope and loss, you begin to hear Cadences of Home. The familiar ring is the voice of God "out looking for you." Sorrow opens you to the dual reality of real loss of life and real longing for life. It does not disguise it.

Sorrow helps us remember God's name where we have forgotten Him. Good and Just.

It is difficult to believe that grief can journey through all of that confusion to help find rest. What I am finding is that grief helps me remember who I have forgotten and that I long for Him to meet me in the middle of the sorrow. Grief helps me to quit striving so much to figure it out and simply be sad for my loss and long for God to make it right again. Grief exposes the tension of this life, and faith in Christ creates in you the imagination for restoration.

Hear what Roger Edwards wrote as he defined Christian grief. "there is just one honest way to respond to loss. That way is to grieve. But, in order for it to take

us to a good place, it must be a particular kind of grief; it must be Christian grief. It is to face the truth about death while maintaining a hope for life. This kind of grief allows the coldness of death, and the longing for life to co-mingle inside the heart. It is a painful coexistence, pulling and tearing, but ultimately healing." Ache mingled with hope, nothing less.

We grieve the loss of a loved one, we continue to grieve because we are reminded about how much we want Jesus to come and make it right. It is this tension that makes room for laughter, for healing, for restoration. Grief creates space for restoration. Laughter is a

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great biblical picture of restoration. This laughter does not forget grief or sorrow but flows from it and is strengthened by it. God's laughter at death is restoration, it is the resurrection of Christ; it is healing. As we struggle to agree with God, death that at the very beginning seemed so powerful and ominous now seems lighter. Laughter is really seeing beyond the difficulty without denying the difficulty. This is why we can take sin seriously and not be overwhelmed by it and alone in it. We see restoration and it fills us with joy. This joy must be birthed from where you are; those eyes to see come from loss. Then we say with St. Paul: "oh, death where is your victory, where is your sting?" Paul saw beyond death, Paul saw restoration the same restoration Jeremiah was envisioning. Laughter or restoration is ultimately the di-

rection of grief. A New Testament picture of this is in Hebrews 12:2 where it says: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The joy set before him is the ultimate restoration He was aiming for; that was his joy. All the while scorning the shame of the cross or death, Hope and Loss – this type of laughter was not a giggle but one of severe confidence. Scorning its shame – Jesus endured the shame of death believing that the curse of death would be broken, in other words grief that leads to restoration. This is the life of Christ, a man of many sorrows that leads us all to ultimate restoration. Christ saw beyond the difficulty and did not deny the difficulty. And He sat at the right hand of God the father.

CONCLUSION

Though seemingly an odd beginning to restoration; grief is seen as an important aspect of remembering God. The backwardness of the gospel finds itself at work in your sorrow and memory; it is through your grief healing is encountered. John Donne, the poet, restated what St. Paul said but a little differently: so let these words encourage you: "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;... One short sleep past, we wake eternally, And Death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die." Oh what a glorious day as we remember the resurrection of our Lord and pray together, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come quickly."



Dewayne said grief begins with 'recognized loss.' Most of us who were his friends or clients are still in the process of 'recognizing loss.' To help you remember and grieve we wanted to post some thoughts from those who are grieving his passing...

- And those are some things that Dewayne helped me learn how to walk in with dignity. I am forever grateful that I got the privilege of learning from him. I hope in this... if what he often said to me is true, then we are not orphaned. We are not orphaned. He was a good man. A "beautiful man" as his precious wife exhaustedly whispered in so many ears over the past few days. And I believe her. And I believed him too. So there is hope in death.
- He has helped me tremendously over the past 8 months to dredge up the past and finally deal with some things that had to be dealt with so that my heart could once again be alive...now it's so much alive that this hurts so bad. I will miss him too, I know we all will. He was a dear friend.
- He was delighted with my honesty. That was Dewayne. Brennan Manning wrote that an honest man is rarely if ever offended. That was Dewayne. All the while always pointing back to Jesus and the grace we all struggle to understand. Before my friendship with Dewayne, God's love to me was like an object I held in a completely dark room with only groping hands to help me understand it. But Dewayne dimmed the lights and I began to see for the first time what this love, this grace really looked like and was far greater than I had imagined. Thanks, brother.
- I too was a client of Dewayne's. He was the first person, in forty years on this planet, to listen to me and to try to understand me, not to minimize my pain, or be grossed out or offended by my sin.
- He cried with me. He laughed with me. He sat and waited with me and helped me learn how to navigate the gift of feeling, being a man of deep feeling himself. Dewayne was a protector of the thread of the gospel that I and my friends cling to. There is a small group of men and women in my life that I can trust to be solid when my world turns fluid. He was one of them. And now my pool is one man short. One man less rich.
- Dewayne Wood has walked with me for the past 2 years into the darkest and most difficult details of my story. He helped me to look into the deepest places of my sorrow and pointed me *always* to Jesus, in the midst of it all. It was under his discipleship, that I began to risk dipping my toes into the process of vulnerability. He walked *with* me into places of sorrow that I was terrified to enter into. And it is with the deepest sorrow now that I step once again into the realness of my grief. I will always be grateful for his courage in counseling. He never wavered from his commitment to Truth. He helped me to enter into my difficult journey out of Darkness and into Light with authenticity and grace. He was patient and gentle and enormously kind. I'm so thankful to have had the privilege of knowing him. Thank you, Dewayne, for bearing with me consistently in love. For always reminding me that Jesus is my defender. For never being grossed out by my sin. For hearing my worst and not turning away. Thank you for helping me see Christ in me. You were a beautiful picture of Him to a wounded and terrified young woman seeking help. I can say today, with a new found dignity, that I will miss you so much. I look forward, with much longing, to the day that I can have full understanding of the truths that you planted in my heart for me to draw from. I feel a deep, deep sadness that the Lord took you home, but it is without shame that my tears fall.

DAYMARK UPDATE

Please remember to pray for Dewayne's wife Cheryl, his parents, Buddy & Carol and his sister Regina. As you are able please also pray for Daymark as we gain the strength to consider and move towards a future without Dewayne. Finally, the Board of Directors of Daymark would like to pay Dewayne's salary to his wife Cheryl for the next few months. If you would like to assist us in that goal you can make a gift to Daymark Pastoral Counseling and attach a note that you would like it to be directed towards the continuance of Dewayne's salary. Thank you!

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