

Dealing with Loss

By Pastor Sharon Tidd

My world seems to revolve around losses in recent days. My cousin's son went to heaven late last year. Yesterday would have been his 23rd birthday. Theirs is a great loss! And I have been feeling their pain and sorrow. My Mom has been struggling with the loss of my Dad (who went to heaven last October), and that loss seems to have been exacerbated lately by her moving into my place and giving up her home (all things familiar). I have been feeling her pain and sorrow.

All of us are experiencing loss in new, unanticipated ways in these days as we've had to isolate for weeks on end. I'm an introvert who should be revelling in this, but it's hard, even for me. The losses seem to be piling up, don't they?

Because of COVID-19 we've lost many things ... freedom to come and go as we please, the smiles (or frowns) of the people around us, the ability to quickly run into the store to buy a jug of milk, hugs and kisses from extended family and close friends, hand-shakes and simple touches naturally given in friendly conversation, a cup of tea and conversation at Tim Horton's with friends, walks in the park without having to side-step to keep our distance, hair-cuts by professional stylists/barbers, in-person worship gatherings and Bible studies, fireworks, plays and concerts, social get-togethers of all kinds. Some have even suffered the loss of work, finances, health! The list goes on and on.

For me, surprisingly, the thing I'm missing most is movies at the theatre with my son. It's not that we did that all that often, but it was a special treat whenever we did ... and it's been over two months. I'm not sure when that privilege will be restored. Some things are returning slowly to pre-COVID ways. Others will take a lot longer. And many will never be exactly the same again. All of this represents loss and there is a grieving that has to take place.

So what losses are you grieving in these days? And how are you grieving them? Are you finding healthy ways to reflect on those losses, whether temporary or permanent, and process them ... on your own or with a trusted confidant? Or are you stuffing them or masking them?

Job was a man who experienced great loss. His story is given in the Book of Job, found in the Old Testament. He was a righteous man who revered God, and Satan (God's enemy) was granted permission from God to tempt and try Job, which he did, with great enthusiasm. Job lost his expansive herds and flocks, his servants, and all his children. Job's response upon receiving word of these losses was to worship God, saying:

*"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
may the Name of the LORD be praised."
(Job 1:21)*

The Bible also says that "in all this, Job did not sin (do wrong)". (Job 1:22; 2:10)

Can you put yourselves in Job's shoes? Think about it, in his situation, those would not have been easy words to utter before God. I know I would have struggled to do so. Yet Job's words are true, and certainly worthy of reflection, especially in times of loss like we are facing presently.

All that we are, all that we have, are gifts from God's hand. He gives and blesses us continuously. Sometimes He chooses to take away what has been given. He does so from the fullness of His wisdom. He knows our hearts better than we know ourselves. He knows what we really need much better than we do. His taking away is actually for our good, an act of love, though it may feel anything but in the moment. And so He is to be praised in the good times and in times of loss. Job recognized this and affirmed the goodness of His LORD. He chose praise and worship even in the midst of His loss. Can you and I do the same?

I encourage you today to reflect on what has been lost during this period. Don't deny those losses. Don't de-value them. They may not be as significant as the next person's, but they matter. Grieve them and mourn them well. But in the process, continue to give praise to the LORD who is with you and cares for you. Trust that what He has allowed to be taken from you during this period, for the sake of others who are most vulnerable, is a gift that He can use to shape and mold you into a more loving, caring, compassionate member of His Kingdom.

And take heart, most of these losses are temporary! One day I'll be able to see a movie with my son again, eating popcorn and drinking Coke! And one day you'll likely be able to return to doing those things you love that you've had to sacrifice during this period. Restaurants are already opening up ... so go out for dinner with the ones you love and celebrate the goodness of God! It will be good for you and good for those who are getting back to work, finally!

Every loss we are experiencing in these days is a reminder of the great blessing that God has already poured out on us. Perhaps, in our receiving in the past, we failed to give true thanks. It's never too late! He gives boundless love, inexpressible joy, and undying hope to all who believe in His salvation. Praise be the Name of the LORD!