

# Voices: ‘Beautiful people do not just happen’

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I cherish the following words of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, first shared with me by a college professor: “The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and deep concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.”

Kübler-Ross was a pioneering expert on the topic of death and is most famous for her theory on the five stages of grief.

At first, it seems puzzling: a person studying death and loss asserts that painful experiences actually contribute to beauty—soul beauty. Yet, we instinctively know this to be true.

When I reflect on people who are instrumental in my life, there is a common thread of loss and suffering that enables them to speak and listen with wisdom.

Stan is one of those people in my life. In college, I was a mission intern for Stan one summer in Haiti. He and his wife lost their daughter and experienced a pain I cannot fathom. Even so, while the 19-year-old me talked with him about my insecurities and fears, he listened intently and responded with a calmness and honesty that continues to move me.

Stan shared how God allowed him to have a “front row seat to life.” God, his Father, gave him a place to watch the Holy Spirit work through all of life’s beauty and brokenness. Stan continues to lead innovative and community-driven missions initiatives all over the world. He is one of many

beautiful people in my life, and I am thankful to know him.

I recently wrote a devotional that included Psalm 126, and I cannot get the words out of my head and heart: “May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves” (Psalm 126:4-5).

These words are a prayer: “May those ...” They are a petition for God to bring joy from tears and to bring a harvest from painful sowing.

Tears to joy. What a powerful truth. We pray. We hope. To God. In Christ.

“Beautiful people do not just happen.” Selah.

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