

# **Voices: The shadow of grief**

October 9, 2019

Six years seems like forever. Six years seems like yesterday. There is no timetable for grief.

Our family is coming up on six years since we suddenly lost my mom. I was not acquainted with grief. I didn't know how to grieve.

That may sound crazy coming from someone who led a church, preached sermons at funerals, and walked with congregants through their grief. I did the best I could with concepts I learned from seminary and books, but I did not have the personal experience. I was like Job's friends speaking words I thought were meaningful instead of just sitting and grieving, too.

That all changed the night of Oct. 15, 2013.

## **The questions of grief**

In the last six years, I have picked up the phone countless times to call. I have forgotten she is gone. It's easy to do when you live five hours away. I can disconnect from the reality of her absence. I have become adept at burying grief, but it always comes back.

We finally began to go through her things in the last few months. The dust collected on the pictures reminded me she is not there. The tarnish on the silver that hasn't been cleaned since she left reminded me of the things she left behind, including us. The boxes her things are collected in represented the things she held on to and loved, what mattered to her but are not her.

There are still moments when I wonder why. Why could she not live one more year and at least see her granddaughter born? Why is she not here to celebrate with us? Why do others waste the time they have been given

while I have no more time? In the beginning, I wanted answers. I demanded answers.

I have no answers. That's the biggest lesson grief has taught me. We don't have every answer. We don't know why certain things happen. We won't know what God is up to all of the time.

Before grief, I had verses to quote; now, I have hugs to give. Before grief, I was ready with platitudes; now, I am ready with presence. Before grief, I wondered inwardly why they couldn't have faith; now, I have compassion because sometimes it is hard to believe. Before grief, I thought time made things easier; now, I have learned grief comes and goes, and there is no way to know when it will overwhelm.

## **Shadows and light**

Last time I was home, riding the backroads of Northeast Texas to the cemetery where Mom is buried, passing through the shadows of the overhanging trees and into the light of the late morning, around every curve God reminded me this is the journey of life in a broken world.

The shadows—what Psalm 23 calls the valley of the shadow of death—seem so dark. In those moments, we can't see where we are going. Our eyes haven't adjusted, and we cling to whatever we can find to help us take the next step. It is easy to be overwhelmed by this darkness.

But the light always comes, the morning always dawns, the Good Shepherd leads us to green pastures. The glory of the light might blind us initially, but the beauty soon comes into focus.

I still don't feel like I have it all together. The waves of emotion and loss still flood my heart. Grief is still hard.

I don't have all the answers, but I trust the light of God's love, his presence,

and the hope of his promises. I trust him because of Jesus, the light of the world shining brightly in the darkness all around.

To those of you walking through grief, keep going. We are in this together. To those of you ministering to those in grief, give freedom for questions and emotions, and make sure we know you love us and are with us.

We will all walk through the darkness of grief. May God grant us eyes to see the light of his love and grace bursting through the shadows of grief around every curve.

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