

CHIEF

MINISTRIES

March 2023

Greetings in the name of the Lord. As I sat down to write the newsletter this month, I am reminded that this marks two years since Chief's graduation to his heavenly mansion. Life and death of the ones we care about still go on, but it is important to realize that we are just visiting this realm, our home is not here but in heaven. Does that mean we don't miss those who have passed on absolutely not, we miss the things we, used to have, enjoyed with and the things we were yet to experience with them. Which is the segway into this month's topic. Grief and where is God in it and what is the purpose of it.

Grief is a powerful emotion caused by the loss of someone or something we loved very much. Grief is part of the cost of loving and engaging with life. Each of us will experience times of grief because death and loss are part of this transitory life. Most of us relate grief to the death of a loved one. However, we can also experience grief over the loss of a job, a pet's death, betrayal by a spouse, our own loss of health or mobility... the list goes on and on. Sin's presence in the world makes grief a common experience for us all.

Though God never intended for our hearts to suffer grief, He gave us His Word to help us through it. Psalm 34:18 says, *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* God understands our grief and promises to be with us, to comfort us with His Word, and give us a *"peace that transcends all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7).

Numerous characters in the Bible experienced deep loss and sadness, including Job, Naomi, Hannah, and David – even Jesus mourned. John 11 explains that after Lazarus died, Jesus went to where he was buried and wept with the other mourners. Even though Jesus knew He would soon raise Lazarus from the dead, He nonetheless felt the immense grief of losing a friend. He knew our Father never intended death for us, and to see it ravage those He loved broke His heart. Jesus truly is a high priest who "empathizes with our weaknesses" and who desires our prayers in times of need (Hebrews 4:15–16).

According to Romans 8:28, *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."* (NIV).

Grief, loss, and pain are inevitable parts of life. But did you know that God uses these things to help you grow? He does it in three ways.

1) God uses pain to get your attention. C. S. Lewis wrote, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain." Pain is God's megaphone. You rarely change when you see the light. You change when you feel the heat. Proverbs 20:30 says, *"Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways"* (GNT).

2) God brings good out of bad. One of the most famous verses in the Bible is Romans 8:28: *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him"* (NIV).

When you experience a loss, it's an opportunity to grow in character. You can't control the pain you go through, but you can decide whether it's going to make you bitter or better. You can decide whether it's going to be a stepping-stone or a stumbling block. You have to remember that, even in your pain, God is working for your good.

3) God prepares you for eternity. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18: *“These little troubles are getting us ready for an eternal glory that will make all our troubles seem like nothing. Things that are seen don’t last forever, but things that are not seen are eternal. This is why we keep our minds on the things that cannot be seen”* (CEV).

You’ve probably heard it said before that you’re not taking your car to heaven. You’re not taking your smartphone and your clothes to heaven. You’re not taking your career to heaven. But you are taking your character. You are taking *you*.

God is more interested in your character development than in your comfort. Why? Because you’ll have plenty of time to live free from pain and sorrow in heaven, but now is not the time for that; this is the get-ready stage. This is the learning stage. This is the warm-up act. God uses your troubles here on Earth to get you ready for an eternal glory. That’s a comfort.

When you’re in pain, you need to ask, “What is God doing?” Is he trying to get your attention? Is he trying to bring good out of bad? Is he preparing your character for heaven?

No matter what, you can trust that God will use your pain to help you grow.

The Bible says God actively works through your circumstances. But you cannot judge your situation apart from God’s wisdom. In other words, you must leave it up to God to interpret your circumstances. Only he is capable of understanding all the facts, and only he sees the significance of every detail. That’s why it is so important that you test it all by his Word.

If you feel overwhelmed or confused about a decision, it might be because you’re so caught up in in your own, limited way of thinking, that it blocks out God’s voice. The Bible says, *“God is not a God of disorder but of peace”* (1 Corinthians 14:33 NIV). He is not the author of confusion. So, if you’re feeling confused, guess what? It’s not God’s voice speaking in your life.

There will be times you come up against enormous financial, spiritual, or physical barriers. That’s when you need to confess, “God, there are mountains on either side and an impassable barrier in front of me.” And then you wait for God to respond and assure you that he’s got you exactly where he wants you to be. He will make a pathway where there seems to be no way. Psalm 77:19 says, *“Your road led through the sea, your pathway through the mighty waters—a pathway no one knew was there!”* (NLT)

When you don’t know what to do, God will guide you. He didn’t design you to go through life on your own ingenuity and power. You don’t have to just hope you can figure things out.

God wants to lead you on the right path, and he will do that when you surrender to him and his guidance. When you’re frustrated because God doesn’t seem to be answering your prayer for guidance, what do you think he wants you to do? What have you learned through those kinds of experiences in the past? How has God used your pain to show you his purpose for your life? Why do you think God sometimes lets you get to the point where there seems to be no way out of a difficult circumstance?

You may not be in the valley of the shadow of death right now, but you may be in another valley. Valleys are the hard places on your journey, where it’s easy to doubt or overlook God’s goodness. But you can always trust that God walks through the valleys with you. And he’s promised to bring you through to the other side. Psalm 23:4 says, *“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me”* (NIV).

Here are three truths to remember when you are in the valley:

1) You are not alone. God is with you.

The shadows in your life are evidence of the presence of light. How do you deal with a shadow? You turn your back to the shadow and look at the light. Jesus said, *“I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won’t be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life”* (John 8:12 CEV).

The Bible says that God is light and that in him there is no darkness at all. You need to stop focusing on the dark things that scare you: those bills, health concerns, or worries about parole, your children, or aging parents. When you move your focus off your fears, you can focus on the Father. And just a key nugget to remember: God is NOT the author of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

2) God has a good purpose for your valley.

God cannot do evil. Even when you're facing problems, conflict, grief, fear, or failure, God is at work, creating good from your valley. Romans 5:3-5 says, "*We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*" (ESV).

3) The reward will last forever.

You're going to be rewarded for remaining faithful to Christ in the valley of failure, in the valley of fear, in the valley of conflict, in the valley of grief, and in the valley of trouble. You'll be in heaven less than a minute before thinking, "Why did I complain so much? Why did I worry when I was going through those valleys? God was right there with me all the time, and he was good to me all the time." The Bible says, "*For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!*" (2 Corinthians 4:17 NLT).

So, pour out your heart to the Lord and tell Him all that grieves you. Ask Him for His healing touch and the ability to look at your pain with the right perspective. Through His eyes and from His perspective.

In addition to looking to God and His Word for comfort and perspective, we should share our pain with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Fellow believers have the ability to "*mourn with those who mourn*" (Romans 12:15). Cultivate strong spiritual relationships. Having a group of believers who will listen, love, and provide camaraderie and guidance is very important, and in prison it is not easy to be vulnerable with one another, but even there God can make a way where there seems to be no way. Seek His guidance and He will reveal all you need.

When we share our stories with God and others, our grief is weakened. Jesus would say to us, "Place who you are and all that you have in My hands. Your broken life. Your story. Your fragility and failure, your pain and distress. Put it in My hands. You'll be astonished what I can do with it."

Believing for a great harvest and spiritual growth in 2023. Praying for you all! Blessings always!

Ms. Chief (aka Ms. G)

If you want to know more about CHIEF Ministries or would like to be a part, please go to www.chiefministries.com

Christ's Heart In Every Felon