

WITH TEARS IN OUR EYES

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To all those
with whom I have shared
earth's sorrow and heaven's victory
at the death of a loved one

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1

WITH TEARS IN OUR EYES

“Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

John 20:15,16 (NIV)

Mary was crying. It had been three days since her world had been turned upside down by the death of her beloved Jesus. Now the disappearance of his body from the borrowed tomb had reopened the fountains of her grief. Down her cheeks streamed hot tears. So heavy was her grief that, at first, she didn't even recognize the risen Lord as he stood behind her that glorious Easter day.

Notice what Jesus didn't say to Mary. He didn't tell her, “Stop crying.” Instead, he asked, “Why are you crying?” Her reason seemed real; her loss immense; her tears justified. But then through the fog of her grief and the mist of her tears, she heard him speak again. “Mary,” the risen Savior said to her. Only one word. But, oh, how he said it! The love with which he spoke her name brought an end to her tears and gave hope for the future.

Of course we cry when we lose a loved one. Whether it finally comes after a long siege or suddenly strikes out of

the blue, a loved one's death stops us in our tracks. How can we go on without that spouse or child or parent at our side? How can we even think of picking up the pieces when life has been so severely shattered? What else can we do but cry? And those tears are important. They are the means God designed for us to release the inner pain and relieve the inner hurt. Sooner or later the tears need to come. And the sooner the better for us.

Mary's tears flowed for three days until she heard her Savior's voice and saw his loving face. For us, the time span may vary. But the antidote is always the same. When the risen Savior's voice breaks through the fog of our grief, the bitterness will drain from our tears. Only then will we be able to view our loved one's loss as victory.

So let the tears come. But don't let them block out the risen Savior's voice as he asks with loving concern, "Why are you crying?" and comforts us with the assurance, "Your loved one lives, with me, in heaven."

Prayer

Lord, you know how hollow I feel and how deeply I'm hurting. My loved one is gone. What am I going to do? How can I go on? Please, Lord, through your promises, show me your loving face and speak to me with your caring voice. Send your Spirit to take the bitterness out of my tears with your promise that those who die with faith in you have eternal life. Amen.

2

JESUS KNOWS

“Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.”

John 16:22 (NIV)

She was too numb to do anything other than go through the motions. Sudden death had ripped her husband from her side. Robbed of the one she loved so dearly, she withdrew inside herself. While making the burial arrangements, visiting with friends at the funeral home, and sitting through the church service, she had maintained her composure fairly well. Later that evening she broke down. “What’s wrong with me?” she sobbed in the stillness of her empty home. “Why am I falling apart?”

Nothing was wrong. The grief process is very normal. It’s not a sign of weakness or a lack of faith. Rather, grief is the price tag on love. The more we love, the higher the cost. How can we pretend that nothing is wrong? How can we just keep rolling along in life when we’ve lost loved ones? Regardless of whom we’ve lost or how they were taken, grief will come. There is no healing without it. Just as the rainbow comes only after the shower has fallen, so healing comes only after grief’s pain.

Nor can anyone tell me how to grieve. It’s a process that, like our fingerprints, is unique to each one of us. How long my tears will flow, in what way the grief will show, how fast