



## GOOD GRIEF

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When I was 18, my dad unexpectedly passed away from an aneurysm. He was 46, the same age I will be in a month. His sudden death right on the heels of starting my freshman year of college shook up the very safe and predictable world I had lived in. By nature, I am a list-maker, a rule-follower, and I live my life with a literal check-off list for the day. To lose my dad in such a shocking and unexpected way turned my whole world upside down. I could not make sense of it, categorize it, or put a label on where this event would belong in my otherwise well-ordered life.

As a Christian, it was even more confusing to make sense of the fact that if God was sovereign and all-knowing, how could He let this happen? At that time, no one suggested that I see a counselor. In fact, it was only 3 years ago (27 years after his death) that I started receiving counseling due to recurring waves of grief, depression, and exhaustion. I did not know that I had permission to truly grieve my dad's death, let alone grieve in front of others. I was afraid to express my pain and sorrow for fear of upsetting my mom who was a widow at the tender age of 45. I often felt ashamed talking about my grief for fear of having others think I wasn't strong enough to pull through this. I did my best for years to stuff the grief in. I don't recall talking much about my dad's passing with my brother

or my mom as we all were just doing our best to deal with his sudden loss in our own unique ways.

I have spent the past few years doing the hard, but necessary and healthy work of working through my grief. I thought I had ironed many things out, but the COVID pandemic has most certainly been stirring up some old and painful memories, bringing grief back to the forefront. In talking and listening to others, I know I am not the only one.

Those who have lost ones to Covid-19 are grieving; those who are currently battling this disease, whether as a patient or a frontline medical worker, are grieving; those struggling with loneliness and isolation are grieving; those experiencing racism and hate crimes are grieving; students are grieving the loss of graduations and celebrations and the regularity of school. Even those of us who have been spared these are experiencing the small but real daily grief of missing personal touches like hugs, handshakes, and face to face interactions.

God is no stranger to grief and pain because He endured the most gruesome suffering of death on the cross in order that He might put an end to the world's suffering for all eternity. In John 16:33 it says "I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will

have suffering in this world. Be courageous. I have conquered the world." In our pain, we can entrust our tender hearts to Jesus, our Suffering Savior who has won the victory.

This time around, when waves of grief wash over me in unexpected ways, I am letting the tears flow. I am inviting them in and allowing myself to sit in the grief because it helps me to know that Jesus sits with me. I am clinging to God's promise that those who sow with tears shall reap with shouts of joy. (Psalm 126:5) He has kept track of all my sorrows, he has collected all my tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8) and one day He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. (Rev 21:4)

I can't wait for that day. Until then, I grieve, but not as one without hope.



Linda is wife to Pastor Paul Kim and mother to Micah (19), Kylie (14), and Jonah (11). She cultivates relational beauty within our church body and also cultivates physical beauty by working as a Stitch-Fix stylist for men, women, and children.