**INTRODUCTION**

 There is no reason to think that this book is more appealing than any other. Yet it is my attempt to deal with my own tragedies and to share what little knowledge I have on the subject. I understand the importance of being ready to die, and the wonderful existence in paradise where the righteous reside. Howbeit, it is the reality of having to walk without one’s significant other.

 I believe that love is the key in all our relationships. The boyfriend or husband who treats a woman with disrespect is undeserving of companionship. God has made these beautiful creatures to be cared for, admired, and cherished in every way. We build our marriages with the intent of sharing our souls with one another. We accept our spouse as having flaws for we know without a doubt how many have we carried on our backs.

 This is more than a manuscript dealing with death. It is my attempt to tell the story of “us!” It is my desire to memorialize a mother, wife, daughter, and friend. For I wish to forge a path through the thick forest of our existence that we so often hide. If death is inevitable then we must not only prepare ourselves for it, but be prepared to feel the hurt, pain, and discomfort that comes with the deaths of those we love.

 Judy captured my heart from the first time I gazed into her brown eyes. She became the better half of me. She made me experience love in a way that only a Christian spouse could do. I will miss her, dream of her, and carry her memory to the grave.

 Years ago, Kris Kristofferson wrote this beautiful love song entitled, *Loving Her Was Easier Than Anything I’ll Ever Do Again*. One stanza reads, “*Waking in the morning to the feeling of her fingers on my skin. Wiping out the traces of the people and the places that I’ve been. Teaching me that yesterday was something that I never thought of trying. Talking of tomorrow and the money, love, and time we had to spend. Loving her was easier than anything I’ll ever do again*!”

 The lyrics to that song bear more meaning for me today than ever before. And that is what songs were meant to do. They stir up our emotions and make us experience the life and feelings that particular songwriter wanted to convey.

 The time I spent with Judy on this earth was a love song in the rough. We hopefully penned a tune that will encourage others. It was the story of two young people who fell in love, grew in love, and ended the song with a eulogy.

 As loving her was the easiest thing I ever did. No doubt losing her was the hardest.

**THE RIDE**

**Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep**

Do not stand
    By my grave, and weep.
    I am not there,
  I do not sleep-
I am the thousand winds that blow
I am the diamond glints in snow
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,
I am the gentle, autumn rain.
As you awake with morning’s hush,
I am the swift up-flinging rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight,
I am the day transcending soft night.
  Do not stand
    By my grave, and cry-
  I am not there.
    I did not die.

(A Poem by Mary Elizbeth Frye)

 It was July 25, 2022, at 9:15 AM that I met the police officer at my door informing me that Judy had just been in a car accident. The officer explained that she had been transported to a Ft. Wayne hospital by helicopter. From Paulding, Ohio, the hospital would be a forty-five-minute drive.

 There is not much thinking on a drive such as this, I spent the whole time in prayer hoping that she would survive. I had served the Lord for forty years as a minister. So often I had preached about people being prepared and making them see how wonderful it will be to enter Paradise. Howbeit in my mind on that day I pleaded, begged, and cried for Jesus not to take her. I would have exchanged my own life for hers, but God said, “No!”

 I arrived at the hospital about 10:00 AM. I was met by the Chaplin who took me to a private room next to the ER. I kept asking him if Judy was still alive. He would try to be encouraging but remained silent concerning her condition. Nearly an hour later, the doctor came and gave me the news that my wife had expired. He said that a neurologist, a heart surgeon, and himself had worked desperately to save her. They had even opened her chest to massage the heart, but to no avail.

 I was taken to the room where Judy’s body laid lifeless. A breathing tube was still down her throat and a sheet was laid over her body. I stayed for just a moment and left. I was distraught and could not, would not, accept the reality of the situation, it was like I was in a nightmare, and I was doing everything I could to wake up. However, this was a real tragedy that I had to face.

 How often I have thought about that morning and the long ride. In our selfishness, we want God to answer our pleas with a positive response. It was Jesus Himself who taught us to accept whatever answer God gives. He was in the garden of Gethsemane pleading for His Father to “take this cup” from Him. Three times He cried, “*Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt*” (Mark 14:36).

 What is God’s will? But a mysterious attribute that no human can understand. Solomon proclaimed, “*All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness”* (Eccl. 7:15). The wise king said exactly what I was feeling about the death of such a special lady. Why did she have to die and so many wicked people that I had crossed paths with were allowed to continue their evil lives?

 There were two rides taken that terrible day. The one hurrying to the hospital with the hope of Judy surviving. And the ride back home feeling the pains of sorrow and the terror of surviving without Judy.

 I dreaded having to speak to the kids about her death. They would ask questions that I was neither able, nor willing to answer. I wanted the world to stop turning. I wanted the trumpet to sound, Michael to shout, and the Lord to return. I, who so often preached on hope, felt hopeless. Was this in God’s ordained plans to leave me in darkness? To suffer the loss of the person who stood beside me through thick and thin. The one who shared my sorrows, my joys, and my disappointments was laid out on an embalmer’s table being prepared for the last viewing of her physical presence on this earth.

 There is great sorrow for a person such as I who spent endless hours in an embalming room. All those things that are kept private from the families haunted my soul. It wasn’t someone else’s loved one being embalmed and then casketed for viewing. This was my wife!

 How often had we watched the sun rise and set? How many times had we smiled at each other as the children opened their gifts, or sang their songs in school concerts, or even enjoyed the smell of fresh barbeque? When you truly love someone, it brings meaning to your life. It opens a world of possibilities. For the journey to heaven is taken by Jesus leading while you hold the hands of your loved ones. At this moment in my life there was no hand to hold, no lips to kiss, and no neck to hug. How would I be able to sleep in the same bed where we gazed into each other’s eyes and spoke of our future together? That future had been ripped from my soul, and all I had to offer the world was the tears of a broken-hearted preacher dreading the endless nights of loneliness and dread.

**THE TEARS**

**Silent Tear**

Each night we shed a silent tear,
As we speak to you in prayer.
To let you know we love you,
And just how much we care.
Take our million teardrops,
Wrap them up in love,
Then ask the wind to carry them,
To you in heaven above.

(Author Unknown)

My upbringing was typical for those raised in the baby-boom era. “*Children cry, but men don’t*” was the philosophy many homes lived by. If tears were to flow, you entered your closet and cried. When my grandfather died, my father entered the restroom and shed his tears. I can recall listening to him in agony through the bathroom door. I don’t know where this philosophy came from. No doubt it was unhealthy and crippling. For as the years passed, and sorrow was more openly accepted as a shared emotion, it was easier to heal quicker.

 I could not tell you how many tears I have shed over Judy. Sometimes I wake up nights padding her side of the bed while the tears are flowing. At times I’ve had to walk away from a conversation with a friend over something said that stirred and emotion. I ponder if I will have a day without watering my bed. David proclaimed, “*I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears”* (Psa. 6:6).

 I am afraid that if the tears stop flowing so will the memories. There is that little part of me that desperately seeks to keep her memories from fading. Will I wake up one day not recalling what she smelled like, what she looked like, or the sound of her voice?

 The psalmist wrote, “*Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book*?” (Psa. 56:8). The reference here is to the "lachrymatories,” or tear bottles. These were the means in which the ancients captured the tears for their loved ones in bottles and buried them with the deceased. In my case, my lachrymatory would have to be a barrel.

 When my children were young, I often held them when they cried. Their sorrow and pain were mine also. I don’t know if those hugs helped, or my silence comforted them. I just knew that with the tears came the healing, and it was love that beckoned forth the sunshine!

**THE VOID**

**The Void**

When death arrives at one’s door

Will it create a void?

Will it darken the memories

And smother a loved one’s joy?

Will it cast a shadow so,

That it taunts our burdened souls?

Or will it simply linger on,

To exact the highest toll?

Yes, death creates a void,

A Chism between those we miss.

Albeit when we leave this world,

All fears will be dismissed!

 The feeling of loneliness is very hard on the soul. You lay in a bed where one side is empty. Everything you touch, smell, and see invokes a memory. You spend your days crying and pondering if it will ever get better. You play the role of one adjusting to the reality of the situation, but the dreams are constant and depressing.

 When one glimpses into the book of Genesis, one views God’s concern for man’s loneliness. All that God had created was beautiful. And Adam, the pinnacle of God’s creation, was not complete. Jehovah said, “*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”* (Gen. 2:18). Why did God make this statement? The previous verse explains, “*But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him”* (Gen. 2:20).

Adam had God, the angels, and the entire animal kingdom, but he was missing something! He didn’t know what he needed. God understood there was a void that had to be filled. And the answer would be Eve. The most beautiful creature in the garden.

 The bible points to the woman being deceived by that evil serpent in Genesis chapter three. The bible also makes it clear that Eve was deceived, but Adam disobeyed God knowingly (1 Tim. 2:14). When it came to owning up to his transgression, Adam said, “*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat*” (Gen. 3:17).

 Adam knew what it was like to be alone, and willingly transgressed over his passion for his wife. Though he pointed at Eve as the person to blame in the incident did not take away the fact that he needed Eve.

 As we look at the couple after being cast from the garden, they continued to worship Jehovah. They shared in the joy of birthing a child and in the many different joys and tragedies that man would continue to face. The great tragedy after the garden event was the death of Abel at the hands of Cain. No doubt they both loved Cain and Abel.

 The bible says after Cain is cursed and forced to wander, *“And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew*” (Gen. 4:25). This is not written to propose that Seth, whose name means “anointed,” took the place of Abel. This third child merely filled a void. Not one of substitution but one who would continue the seed.

 No void can be filled with a substitution. It will remain in every part of your being for the rest of your earthly existence. That child, spouse, or family member took up space in your heart. One does not seek to replace it but to accept it and move on.

**THE FUNERAL**

The funeral is over,
And everyone has gone home.
It’s just me and my thoughts now,
And I’m sitting here alone.

The house seems so quiet,
and I’m not sure what to do.
I can’t remember how I lived
Before the day that I met you.

Maybe I should just stop thinking.
And take myself to bed.
I’ll crawl beneath the covers,
And lay down my weary head.

Tomorrow is a new day,
The first of many that I’ll face
Without you here beside me,
Without your strength, your wit, your grace.

I’ll try to carry on
Or at least I’ll try to exist.
Until one day you reach for me,
And guide me into death’s mist.

 I was a funeral director for several years in North Dakota, Montana, Tennessee, and Georgia. As such, it did not prepare me for Judy’s. I had been to my parents, sister, and many other funerals, but burying your spouse is different. At my wife’s funeral I first honored her wishes of having her cremated. Yet we still had a funeral with her body present. It is my recommendation for a physical viewing simply to aid the family members during their grieving process.

 Funerals are difficult for several reasons. First, the family viewing is **exasperating**. These were my children viewing their mother lifeless in a casket. This beautiful person that shared holidays and special events is gone. They all remembered how she cheered them on at sport’s events, and the tears she shed when they walked down the aisle during graduation. Those memories saturate your mind while others express their condolences.

 Also, **expect** statements which may irritate you. The ability to control one’s emotions and actions is not an easy thing to do. At Judy’s funeral some replied, “*I lost a spouse, so I know how you feel*!” I can empathize with their loss, and even accept their attempt to comfort me, but no two deaths are ever the same. Judy died in a horrendous crash that totaled the vehicle and damaged her internal organs. I don’t know if she suffered, nor do I know her thoughts as the car crashed into an embankment? I just know that I lost a part of myself that day. She was my equal. Judy was my best friend. She was indeed my beauty queen.

 Funerals are **excruciating** to go through as well as **entropic** for the family. Every person has his or her own ideas on how the funeral should go. Some will complain about the words that are spoken by the preacher. Others show their uneasiness for being present during this torturous period.

 There are many who feel that a funeral needs to be centered on the dearly departed. They don’t want a sermon but a eulogy. Howbeit, whatever praises are said should have been made while that person walked among us. No! A funeral sermon is for the living. It is that last ditched effort for the deceased to plead with those left behind (Lk. 16:27, 28). For a true minister of God will preach, not to itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3), but to bleeding hearts which need the Lord’s grace.

**SAYING GOODBYE**

**If Only**

If only we could see the splendour of the land
To which our loved ones are called from you and me
We’d understand
If only we could hear the welcome they receive
From old familiar voices all so dear
We would not grieve
If only we could know the reason why they went
We’d smile and wipe away the tears that flow
And wait content.

(Author Unknown)

  *I Never Had the Chance to Say Goodbye*

 I remember the night my father passed. It was early in the morning when my mother called. I was the minister for the church in Austinville, Virginia. That morning in 1989, I heard my mother say, “*Your daddy’s gone*!” I asked, “*Where did he go to*?” Then there was silence. The next words I heard were, “*He died*!”

 There were a billion things going through my mind but the one that yielded the most hurt was my absence. I did not get the chance to give him that last hug or tell him how much I loved him. He was my mentor, my hero, my father.

 There was that rough and tough side of him as a soldier retired. At the same time, he was a man with morals, and a love for the Lord. My whole family responded to the gospel in 1966 at the congregation in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

 He was the kind of a man who could be stubborn. Howbeit, when he was convicted about something, he did what was necessary to move in a positive direction. That is why he was such a wonderful servant for the Lord. He did not hesitate for a second to inform another how Jesus built one church and he was proud to be a member of it.

 Let’s jump forward twenty years later, March 18, 2009. At that time, I had just taken a position in Sacramento, California. I had left my wife behind to care for my sick mother who was dying of cancer. We had it arranged that once I received the phone call that she was nearing the end, I would fly back. I so desperately wanted to be there when my mother left this earth.

 When Judy called, I immediately booked a flight and headed to Indiana. My son picked me up at the airport in Indianapolis. It was a three-hour ride from the airport to Goshen, Indiana. For nearly an hour in the car Adam was quiet. I finally asked, “*What’s wrong*?” His reply came with a sigh, “*Your mother died right before your plane landed*!”

 It was hard enough for me to be absent when my dad died, and now I missed my opportunity to be by my mother’s side when she expired. How could I have been there for so many saints as they passed and then failed to be there for my parents? How many hands had I held, and prayers prayed in the presence of someone about to meet his or her maker? Now twice I had missed the chance to say goodbye!

 Thirteen years went by before my wife died in that fatal car crash. I was awake that morning when she drove off, and for the life of me it is hard for me to think of what words I said to her before she left. I know I told her that I loved her. Yet if I would had known, I would have said, “goodbye!” And without a doubt, I would have held on to her and never let her go.

 Three times my last “goodbye” had been taken from me. Life is all about the scars we bear from things we should have done, could have done, but didn’t.

 How is it possible to say goodbye when that chance was taken from me? This was the most difficult thing to accept. It was the hurdle that smothered the flame within my soul. I wasn’t there when the car hit the embankment. I wasn’t there to hold her hand when she took her last breath. I wasn’t there to tell her goodbye.

 Did I abandon them? Did I somehow fail those who knew me best? Friends tell me not to burden my spirit with such thoughts. Nevertheless, these thoughts are like a shadow that never yields.

 The problem with saying “goodbye” is in the acceptance of one’s emptiness. I have discussed the void, but with it comes the guilt. You come to a junction in your existence where those shared desires are now abandoned. This is the inevitable terror that comes with the death of those we love.

 I keep reminding myself of the death of David’s infant child. The Bible reads, “*Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me*” (2 Sam. 12:20-23).

 David’s grieving for the child was questioned by his servant. On several occasions in the Old Testament, the mourning period was thirty days. This was true of Moses and Aaron (Deut. 34:8; Num. 20:29). The king’s grieving took place during the time of the child’s illness. After the report of the child’s death, David bathe, clothed, and dined. Why? Because he realized that though there was no hope in seeing his son in this life, he would see his son in the next.

 I felt a little more selfish than David. I didn’t want to wait. I wanted Judy back with me. I wanted to hold her hand, feel her warmth, and watch another sunset with her. She had plans to visit her grandson in Kansas. She was looking forward to the holidays. She shared her excitement in the prediction of a hard winter. She loved the snow and cuddling in a warm blanket sipping hot chocolate. She was a beautiful lady with the heart of a child when it came to the things she admired.

**WHAT BECOMES OF THE BROKEN HEART?**

**A Rendezvous with Death**

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath”
It may be I shall pass him still.
I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows ’twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear…
But I’ve a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

(A Poem by Alan Seeger)

 One of the wonderful songs from Jimmy Ruffin was, “*What Becomes of the Broken Hearted.”* One verse reads, “*As I walk this land with broken dreams, I have visions of many things. But happiness is just an illusion filled with sadness and confusion.*” Though this song speaks about a man bearing the heartache of a failed relationship, it still appeals to all who are brokenhearted. The concept of “broken dreams” is haunting. My wife and I had plans to travel and to enjoy the little time we had left in this world. I dread the reality of walking alone. I suffer the misery of how dreams so quickly turn into nightmares.

 So, what does become of the broken hearted? First, the road that one must travel is by **choice**. The poem by Robert Frost entitled, “*The Road Not Taken*,” has always been one of my favorites. That last stanza of that poem reads, “*I shall be telling this with a sigh, Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.”*

 Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians, *“But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not”* (Phil. 1:22). Paul is speaking of his desire to die versus his efforts to live for the purpose of encouraging the brethren.

 After someone close to you dies, it is not uncommon to have the feeling of hopelessness and the desire to leave this world. Suicide should never be and option, nor should our loneliness be allowed to drive us to solitude. The road best traveled aims at drawing closer to God. Tell God how you feel! He hears and sees you. He also has the shoulder to lean on and bring you through your misery.

 This leads to the second necessary action of the broken hearted, **communication**. It is clear that No one but God truly knows how you feel. Everyone reacts to sorrow differently. Some become introverted whereas others have the need to be around people. After Stephen was stone, the bible states, *“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him”* (Acts 8:2). These men shared their sorrow with one another. There something powerful in one who can lend a shoulder. Never forget that grief is shared. Not one person should have to grieve alone. There will always be others who care about you, weep with you, and caress you when sorrow overtakes you.

 Third, the **cure** for the broken heart is the word of God. There are many verses that can aid one in overcoming the sorrow (Psa. 9:9, 18:2, 23, 27:4, 5, 34:18, 147:3; Isa. 25:8; Matt. 5:4; Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 5:7; Rev. 21:4). The sacred word causes us to pass through the storms that seems to cloud our world from seeing clearer skies. You may think that a cure for such sorrow is impossible. You may even be angry at God refusing to open His inspired book. Howbeit, one should never forget that He is the only one that promises to dry our tears and bear our burdens (Rev. 21:4; Matt. 11:28-30).

**THE STORM**

**The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls**

The tide rises, the tide falls,
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
Along the sea-sands damp and brown
The traveler hastens toward the town,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
Efface the footprints in the sands,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;
The day returns, but nevermore
Returns the traveler to the shore,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

(A Poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

 I have often wondered what the worse part of experiencing the death of a loved one would be. Some propose that it is the death itself, or even the funeral; but I’m inclined to believe that it is the storm that arises after the family and friends have left, and you sit in an empty house where silence becomes your enemy. The voice of Judy echoed in my mind. The songs she sang, and the words she spoke were sweet but sad memories of a time that has now passed. Would I forget those songs, or her laughter, or her voice? Would her memory fade? I have hundreds of pictures detailing our life together. However, the moments withheld from the camera are the ones that tell the story.

 Love is not all about traveling together or experiencing life together. Love is about growing old together and learning to love the little things along with the big things.

 Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth, “*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*” (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Every happily married Christian mirrors these words from this gifted saint.

**AVOIDANCE**

**The Dash**

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning to the end.

He noted first came the date of the birth and spoke the following date with tears.
But he said what mattered most of all was the dash between the years.

For that dash represents all the time that they spent life on Earth.
And now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash.
What matters is how we live and love, and how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard. Are there things you’d like to change?
For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough to consider what’s true and real,
and always try to understand the way other people feel.

Be less quick to anger and show appreciation more,
and love the people in our lives like we’ve never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile,
remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read with your life’s actions to rehash,
would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?

(A Poem by Linda Ellis)

In one’s emotional grief there are certain things to be aware of and avoid. First, avoid **judgmental thoughts** about your loved one. I have preached many funerals. Some for Christians who represented the best in us all, and others who were wicked and spent their lives making others miserable. Every person will stand before the judgment bar of Christ (Rom.14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). Once a person passes, he or she has been judged, and the punishment or rewards are given.

 Second, avoid focusing on the **failures** of the departed. A person stands before God and answers for their works. Job proclaimed, “*Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity*” (**Job 31:6**). In the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel interpreted the word TEKEL and stated, “*Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting*” (**Dan. 5:27**).

 Jesus speaking on the cost of discipleship was confronted by one of His disciples who proclaimed, *“Suffer me first to go and bury my father”* (Matt. 8:21). Note the Lord’s response, “*Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead”* (Matt. 8:22). Several commentaries state that the Greek brings out the thought that the man’s father was dying and had not expired. This would not matter one way or the other because the emphasis was on prioritizing and faithfulness. There is nothing more important than obeying the request to, “*Follow*,” and placing the mission of Christ above anything and everything!

 Next, avoid the **blame game**. When a loved one passes in a horrific accident, it is typical to blame oneself. I thought that day about Judy, “*If I would have driven her to the appointment*,” or “*I should have insisted that she stay home because she didn’t feel well*!” I truly felt that her death was my fault. There were things I could have done to stop this terrible incident.

 At times we turn to the failure of others for the death of those we love. There are times when the fault will rest on a doctor for failing to diagnose correctly or fall short in performing some procedure. Howbeit, I have found that most doctors do their best to heal their patience but even they understand that the outcome rests in the hands of the Almighty.

**MEMORIES**

**Farewell**

Farewell to Thee! But not farewell
To all my fondest thoughts of Thee;
Within my heart they still shall dwell
And they shall cheer and comfort me.
Life seems more sweet that Thou didst live
And men more true Thou wert one;
Nothing is lost that Thou didst give,
Nothing destroyed that Thou hast done.

(A Poem by Anne Bronte)

 What is a memory? Scientists define it as the “faculty of the mind where data is stored, encoded, and retrieved.” There is much more to the definition than what the scientific community may believe. For those who truly trust in God, memories become guideposts to our healing. We look at these episodes in the past as good or bad. For those bad memories, we seek a change and a closure. And for those good memories, we continually bring them forward to immortalize our loved ones who have departed from this world.

 Solomon exclaimed, “*The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot”* (Prov. 10:7). How often has my mind wander back to the many times I held my wife’s hand in worship? We served God as a couple. She was raised up in a Christian home. And I was blessed to have parents that stood firm for the Lord’s church and His doctrine. We had both admired our upbringing, and the memories that came from our childhood.

 David said, *“When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches”* (Psa. 63:6). The psalmist speaks of his focus on God as he laid in his bed. Many of the tears that flowed down the king’s cheeks were from the memory of those he lost. When the wise king heard of the death of his son, the Bible reads, “*And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”* (2 Sam. 18:33). Though Absalom turned on his father, and brought much misery to him, David still loved him. That is the wealth of a father’s love!

**HOW CAN I LIVE WITHOUT YOU?**

How great my grief, my joys how few,

Since first it was my fate to know thee!

– Have the slow years not brought to view

How great my grief, my joys how few,

Nor memory shaped old times anew,

Nor loving-kindness helped to [show thee](https://dailytimepoems.com/lovely-valentines-poems/)

How great my grief, my joys how few,

Since first it was my fate to know thee?

 **The Excitement & Heartache**

One of the last memories I have of Judy was the night she became very ill. I called the paramedics who took her to the hospital. Judy was a diabetic and was insulin dependent. That night she acted drowsy and then fell to the floor. The paramedic thought she overdosed so he gave her Narcan, a drug they use to revive addicts. Of course, it had no affect on Judy. The hospital realized she needed an MRI, and since the one they use would not arrive until the next day in a trailer, they sent her to another hospital. The hospital she was transferred to had so many people wanting an MRI that it took them two days for her to receive one. It was then that they confirmed that she had Sepsis.

 A day and a half later the hospital released Judy. For the next three days she suffered from terrible headaches, but she refused to go back to the hospital. The rest of the story I have told concerning the accident and that terrible hour in the hospital receiving the horrific news.

 The accident, the hospital’s treatment, and that long wait for me to hear the news was nothing compared to her missing out on seeing her grandson. Before she became ill and was taken to the hospital, my son in Kansas City purchased tickets for Judy to fly there and stay with Grayson for a week. She bought a travel bag and laid out all these items for her trip. The joy in her eyes was like seeing a child open his or her gifts on Christmas morning.

 Even while she laid in her hospital bed, she did not want to forfeit her time with Grayson. Yet in despair, she had no choice. It is heart-breaking to see joy turn to sorrow. To be so excited about something simply to end up in despair.

**FADED PHOTOGRAPHS**

Faded photographs, [covered](https://www.definitions.net/definition/covered) now with [lines](https://www.definitions.net/definition/lines) and creases

Tickets torn in half, [memories](https://www.definitions.net/definition/memories) in bits and pieces

Traces of love, long ago, that didn't work out right

Traces of love.

Ribbons from her hair, [souvenirs](https://www.definitions.net/definition/souvenirs) of days together

The ring she used to wear, [pages](https://www.definitions.net/definition/pages) from an old love letter

Traces of love, long ago, that didn't work out right

Traces of love, with me tonight.

I [close](https://www.definitions.net/definition/close) my eyes and say a prayer

That in her heart, she'll find, a [trace](https://www.definitions.net/definition/trace) of love [still](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) there,

Somewhere, oh.

Traces of hope, in the night, that she'll come back and dry

These, [traces](https://www.definitions.net/definition/traces) of tears, from my eyes.

 The song, Traces, was written by Jane Morgan in 1969 and was sung by the Classic IV and the Letterman. Though it speaks of a love affair that did not work out, it is a song that many of us, from that era, can relate to. There are bits and pieces scattered throughout the house which are reminders of her life. And the photographs, there are so many that it would be difficult to count. They can be divided into various periods of our time together on this earth. More than likely, especially after I’m gone, they will be dispersed, and then fade from existence.

**THE FEARS**

It is quite natural to fear the eternal state of a loved one who has passed. No matter how righteous and fruitful that person was in life, Satan does his best to make you ponder on the “what if?”

 In Luke 9:57-62, three men gave excuses to our Lord because they could not follow Him immediately. The second brought up the need to go bury his father. Through his insistence and urgency, he missed out on the opportunity to follow the Lord. And at first glance, it seems shocking what the Lord replied, “*Let the dead bury their dead*!”

 As a preacher, I never stopped my ministry because of Judy’s death. Sadly, I simply failed in allowing the dead to bury the dead. No doubt I need to move forward and believe me I have tried. Judy was more than just a wife to me. She was more than a mother or a Christian. She was my best physical supporter, and the queen of my world. God gave this woman to me, and then seemed to yank her from my life like a rusty nail embedded in a plank of wood. This brought me to my first fear I had to face: **the fear of being punished by God**.

 I thought how David had to pay the penalty for his adulterous affair with Solomon’s mother (2 Sam. 12:1-14). God consistently punished people, nations, and individuals in the Old Testament. Could it be that He was punishing me? I wasn’t an adulterer, a murderer, or a vile sinner. At the same time, I’ve never felt worthy of the Lord’s forgiveness. This is most likely a feeling that all of the saints experience.

 Second, **the fear of one’s failings as a husband and a Christian**. Judy and I had our difficult times, sad times, and times of failures. Like myself, she wasn’t perfect. The acceptance of our imperfections allowed the bond between us to grow stronger. When one speaks about love being unconditional, it solidifies the fact that hard times will come.

 If one was to ask me if I was a good husband? My reply would be, “*Asks Judy in paradise*!” For how often have marriages failed because of one’s misconceptions about the marriage relationship? The husband may feel that “*bringing home the bacon*” is enough. The wife may believe that doing the housework and minding the children makes her a good wife. It isn’t these philosophical mundane acts that make for a good marriage. It is the love that blossoms through time, patience, understanding, and endurance.

 The rose has little beauty when it is just a bud. Yet when that flower blooms and glistens in the sunlight bringing forth nature to her doorstep, it is a wonder to see. Good marriages are not all about good people, but about a love that rises to the surface when the seas are raging, and clear skies are in a distance.

 Third, **the fear of the future**. I never dreamed of having a future without Judy. We held each other’s hands so tightly in life, how could I ever hold another woman’s hand? It may happen in the future, but I avoid such thoughts presently. Doris Day sang a song, “Que Sera, Sera.” One stanza reads, “*Whatever will be, will be, the futures not ours to see*!” I sang this song quite often as a child never understanding the true value of those words. Since Judy’s death, I can’t stop singing that tune.

 On the Sermon on the Mount Jesus exclaimed, “*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*” (Matt. 6:34). John Gill wrote concerning the phrase, “*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*,” “This proverb is thus expressed in the Talmud, **דיה לצרה בשעתה**, ‘sufficient for distress’, or ‘vexation, is the present time’; which the gloss explains thus, ‘sufficient for the vexation it is, that men should grieve for it, at the time that it comes upon them’'' (John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible)*. The simplest way of putting it, “*Why worry about tomorrow in which you have no control over*!”

 Every person on the planet faces the reality that there may be “no tomorrow!” From a simple ride to the beauty parlor, Judy would have never thought that this ride would be her last! She left me paralyzed concerning whatever future I may have.

 Fourth**, the fear of being alone.** I can remember criticizing a minister for jumping into a relationship just a few months after he lost his wife. I realized now that the judgment I made was based on my lack of understanding and prejudices. There is no set limit of time before a person should begin dating. Abraham married three years after the death of Sarah (Gen. 21:1). Others like Jacob, David, and many of the Old Testament characters were polygamist. So, the idea of remarriage would not enter the picture.

 With this thought, we turn to the writings of Paul. Let’s look at two passages:

“*Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man*” (Rom. 7:2, 3).

“*The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God*” (1 Cor. 7:39, 40).

 Paul makes it clear that the question is not “When?” but “If?” The surviving spouse has the right to marry or not marry. However, it is specified that if the widower marries, he or she must marry “only in the Lord!”

 A third question that should be asked focuses on the “who?” The choice the person makes after the death of his or her spouse has eternal consequences. Not only is a widow to marry in the Lord, but to make sure the new union is approved by God. The same passages we use for first time marriages must also be obeyed by the widower who wishes to marry again (Matt. 5:31, 32,19:1-9).

 A grieving widow will experience the loneliness of being without his or her significant other. There will also be the loneliness in a house now silenced. Some choose to sell and move on. Others find solace in residing in the same home they both worked so hard to maintain. Many of those items that seem to torment you by reminding you of the past, will eventually be found to be aids in your healing.

 I love the story of Isaac taking a wife. The Genesis account reads, *“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death”* (Gen. 24:67). At death, Sarah’s tent was a gloomy reminder of her being absent. When Isaac brought his wife to that tent, it then became a place of new beginnings.

 I cannot stress this enough for friends and family to be there for that person who is grieving. Don’t commit the one grieving to be the one who initiates the communication. His or her heart has been broken and their world has been torn apart. So often one’s solitude makes them a stranger to others. Your attention is prompted by sacrifice and charity. Don’t try to understand that person’s emotional instability, but just simply be there for them.

 Fifth, **the fear of forgetting our loved ones**. I can still smell the aroma of her cappuccino she ordered from McDonalds. Then there was the sweet smell of her perfume, her painted nails, and her special lip gloss. The beauty of a woman is not only seen in the clothes she wears, but by those little things whereas she goes out of her way to please her husband. I am so glad that God created such lovely creatures to bring compassion to our lives.

 Will I one day forget all these things? Will the fragrance of her existence vanish from my thoughts? While typing this manuscript, I stare at the last picture that Judy, and I took together. I remember how cold it was, but she still insisted on having our pictures taken out in the snow. I wasn’t happy concerning her decision. I never liked the cold. And she was quite different in that respect. She loved the ice on the trees and the snow on the ground. Winter was her favorite time of year.

**WHERE DOES THE SPIRIT GO AFTER DEATH?**

 **Ancient Greeks & Romans**

 Both the ancient Romans and Greeks believed in an afterlife. The Greeks taught that souls could return to earth as ghosts. However, most spirits when to an underground kingdom called Hades. This place of spirits was ruled by a god named Hades, and he had a queen named Persephone.

 In ancient Roman mythology, a departed spirit would meet Mercury who was a messenger god. He would escort the deceased to the Styx, the river one would have to cross to reach the underworld. It was there that they paid Charon, the ferryman, to bring them across the river. Once cross, the spirit would meet Mino, Aeacus, and Rhadamanthus, the gods of the underworld who judged the dead. If found to be a person of status or one worthy of honor, he or she would be judged worthy to travel to the Fields of Elysium. Whereas ordinary spirits would travel to the plain of Asphodel.

 If a person committed crimes worthy of punishment he or she was sent to Tartarus. This was the Roman hell where the Furies would torture them until the debt had been paid. Once the gods determined that the debt had been fully paid, they could move one. ([allabouthistory.org](https://www.allabouthistory.org/ancient-romans-faq.htm)).

 **Navaho Beliefs**

 In general terms, the Navajos believe that the human soul is immortal and will cycle through birth, death, and rebirth. Some Navajos hold the believe that the soul remains in the body after death and travels to the underworld, where it is judged by the gods. If one is found to be pure, he or she is reborn into a new body. If not, it is destroyed. Others hold the belief that choosing to be reborn is up to the individual. He or she can make the choice to be reborn or remain in the spirit world.

 It is a uniform believe among the Navahos that how a person lives affects what happens to their soul after death. Those who lived honorably and respectfully will have a good afterlife. In opposition, those who live poorly in the physical world will experience a bad afterlife (<https://www.indiancountryextension.org/the-afterlife-according-to-navajo-beliefs>.

 **The Japanese**

I do not want anyone to think that I am an expert concerning death according to Japanese mythology. I did spend two and a half years on Okinawa trying to understand their culture.

Shintoism and Buddhism are Japan's two majority religions, with many people practicing a combination of the two. Shintoism is basically Animism, the belief that everything has a spirit, in this case, kami. Shintoism is also polytheistic. They believe that various gods rule over different aspects of the physical and spiritual worlds.

 Yomi, which is that dark and gloomy world of the dead, is one of three realms, with the other two being Takamahara, located in the heavens, and Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, located on earth.

 Yomi, or Yomi-no-Kuni, is dark and shadowy, polluting the souls that end up there. It is [the realm of the dead](https://www.cbr.com/trek-to-yomi-japanese-history-shinto-mythology/) which is beneath the earth and ruled by the goddess Izanami no Mikoto, who along with her twin brother and husband Izanagi, gave birth to the islands that make up Japan. As myth reads Izanami physically died giving birth to a fire kami, either Kagu-tsuchi or Ho-Musubi depending on the legend. Her spirit then traveled to Yomi, where she rules as goddess. Besides this, not much is known about it.

 Obon, **a** Buddhist celebration held in the summer, is the season of ghosts. It is during this celebration that the Japanese believe that their departed loved ones can reunite with their families. Empty chairs at the supper table are meant to seat those who have returned from the spirit world.

***Hindus***

 Speaking to a Hindu about the afterlife is confusing. The Hindus belief about death is centered around reincarnation; the belief that when someone dies, the soul is reborn as a different form. They believe that when the physical body dies, a person soul remains and continues to recycle until it settles upon its true nature.

 The Bhagavad Gita, the Hindus holy book, details the cycle of life after death. Once the soul becomes detached from mind, intellect and false ego, then it is liberated. It is in this state that one can see **Krishna** (the supreme god of the Hindus) directly. This process of liberation is defined as one becoming dissociated from both gross and subtle bodies while getting fully attached to the Lord Krishna. This is the basic instruction in Bhagavad Gita.

 Howbeit, what happens to the soul immediately after death? Immediately after death, the soul is not clothed in a physical body but in a vaporous thumb-sized structure called the ***linga sarira.*** This is immediately seized by two servants of Yama, the **god of death**, who carries the soul to his or her master.

 Before a pooja (prayers for the deceased) is said the remains must be cremated. Women in the Hindu religion are considered to have a delicate hearts which can leave a disturbing image for a long time.

 It is in the **Bhagavad Gita**, an important Hindu script, were the afterlife is detailed. Here, Krishna says that just as a man discards his old clothes and wears new ones; similarly, the soul discards the old body and takes on a new one. In earlier times, Hindus never believed in heaven and never prayed to attain a permanent place there. The earliest conception of an “afterlife,” says, Vedic scholars, was the belief that the dead reunite with Mother Nature and live in some other form on this earth– just as Wordsworth (an English poet) wrote, “*with rocks and stones and trees*.”

 In Hinduism, the concepts of death and the afterlife go hand-in-hand with the concept of **impermanence**. Hindus believe that worldly happiness is impermanent, and they call it “**maya**,” which means “an illusion.” Hinduism teaches that the human body is impermanent and changeable; it fades in death (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism)*.****Muslims***

 To the Muslim there is a life after death and before Paradise. Muslims describe it as **Barzakh.** It’s the period between living in the grave and the Day of Judgement when God resurrects all souls. In this life, souls can connect and speak to each other. Believers don’t suffer any physical pain in the realm. They have the pleasures they need.

 For the righteous, they can smell or even hear the Garden of Paradise, but they aren’t there yet. Some describe it as a “*dreamless sleep*” where the faithful can wait comfortably. The Qur’an writes: *and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised* (23:100).

 For the unbelievers and sinners, the **Barzakh** isn’t a pleasant place. Physical pain is felt by them. The most common punishment is by fire. In Muslim’s teachings, the eternal flame is never quenched. The infidel’s grave is squeezed so strongly that their organs exit from their extremities while animals feast on their flesh.  Top of Form

Bottom of Form

 Muslims believe that the souls rests until the Judgment day. It will be on that day that God holds every person accountable for their actions whether they be good or bad. That day is called the Apocalypse or the end of the world which is taught in both Judaism and Christianity.

 When Judgment Day arrives, there is still hope for the sinner who believes in one God. For those who believe in more than one God, they will not be forgiven, and the price they pay is their souls casts into eternal punishment. The Qur’an says: *Your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind in spite of their wrongdoing* (13:6). For some souls, they may spend time in hellfire. Once their punishment ends, they can rest in Paradise.

 Concerning Paradise, the Islamic Qur’an vividly describes Paradise as a place where real life begins for the true Muslim believer. Muslims focus on Paradise throughout their lives. One’s physical possessions in life are simply passing pleasures. It is by fasting, faith, and almsgiving that assists the souls in Paradise.

 The Qur’an reads: *There will be two Gardens containing all kinds (of trees and delights); In them (each) will be two Springs flowing; In them will be Fruits of every kind, two and two. The Fruit of the Gardens will be near* (55:46-60). For Muslims, Paradise is the goal, better than life itself with eternal pleasures. Mortal men are not fully able to imagine the pleasures and beauty of this place for the righteous.

 To the Muslim, life is predestined. Allah knows our past, present, and future. Muslims must live a faithful and kind life to reap the rewards of Paradise. (https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islam)

 **The Teachings from the Messiah**

 I have shown only four teachings from various groups concerning the afterlife. This was done with a purpose. For many of the beliefs culturally passed on have roots in the Bible. Like the belief in Hades, Tartarus, and eternal judgments somewhat reflect the teachings in Judaism and Christianity.

 Hades (Matt. 16:18) is mentioned in the New Testament as a place where departed spirits reside. And Tartarus (2 Pet. 2:4) is an area in Hades where punishment is administered to the lost. As we noted, the Greeks and the Romans used these terms.

 In the gospels, Jesus also spoke of spiritual realms where final judgments of rewards and punishments are administered. The place where the righteous will eternally call home is heaven. And the place where the final judgment condemns one to a fiery pit is called Gehenna (Matt. 5:22; 7:13, 10:28; Jas. 3:6), which is often translated as hell in the Kin James Version.

 Let’s trace the Lord’s teachings on the moment of death, and the spirit’s departure. First, we must define death. We are not talking about a person’s reminiscence about an out-of-the-body experience describing what they perceive to be heaven. James tells us that death is when the spirit exits the body (Jas. 2:26). And we see that departure in the cases of the rich man, and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31.

 Some argue that Luke sixteen is a parable. However, why does that matter? A parable is a teaching that uses simple truths to lead to a moral conclusion. One must not neglect that in the teachings on the rich man and Lazarus, it is unique that Jesus uses names and specifics unlike any other parables. That would force one to conclude that this is not a parable but Jesus pulling back the curtain and showing His disciples what happens after death.

 In this story you find four characters stated and one hidden. The four named are the rich man, Lazarus, Abraham, and the angels. The one hidden person would be Jesus. For the rich man and Lazarus both would stand before the judgment bar of the Almighty.

 The narrative begins by speaking about this poor beggar named Lazarus being fed, along with the dogs, at the rich man’s table. He had terrible sores that were licked by the dogs to give him some relief from his misery. The rich man, howbeit, was “*clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day*” (Lk. 16:19). His mistreatment of Lazarus was the prejudicial view of the rich man believing this poor man was beneath him. He placed him in the same category as the dogs.

 Upon their deaths, the rich man was simply buried, and his soul went to Hades. Whereas Lazarus went to Hades by being carried by the angels. One must keep in mind that Hades is simply the place where all the dead are taken. Hades itself is divided into two halves: (1) Paradise, and (2) Tartarus. For Lazarus, he was carried to Abraham’s bosom, which was Paradise. Jesus told the thief on the cross, “*Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise*” (Lk. 23:43). And after his resurrection, Jesus exclaimed to **Mary** **Magdalene, “***Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God”* (John 20:17).

 It is soundproof from the examples of the thief on the cross along with Mary Magdalene that Jesus did not go to heaven when He died. And for the Christian it would make sense that the Second Coming would transfer the righteous from Paradise to Heaven.

**HADES**

Paradise

Lk. 23:43



THE GREAT GULF



Tartarus

2 Pet. 2:4

 So how does the Second Coming fit into the picture. Let’s note two passages: one from Paul,

and the other from Peter:

*“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words*” **(1 Thess. 4:13-18).**

“*That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”* (**2 Pet. 3:2-13**).

 Let’s digest what is being presented in the holy scriptures. Take note:

1. The Lord descends from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.
2. The Dead shall rise first.
3. The living will then rise along with the dead. Underline where it says, “caught in the skies together.”
4. They will both meet Jesus in the air.
5. The Lord will come as a thief in the night.
6. The world will be burned up.

 What happens to the wicked when Christ returns? In the Parable of the weeds, when the servant came to the householder to inform Him of the tares growing with the wheat and his belief that they should be pulled, the Landowner said, “*Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn”* (**Matt. 13:29, 30**). Later when Jesus explained this parable to His disciples, stated, “*The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity*” (**Matt. 13:41**). Jesus said, “*For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes*” (**Lk. 6:44**).

   It was John the Baptist who said about Jesus, “*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable*” (**Lk. 3:17**). Jesus confirms this when He stated, “*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned*” (**Jn. 15:6**).

GEHENNA

THE LOST DEAD

TARTARUS

****

THE RIGHTEOUS

**HEAVEN**

THE SAINTS

1 Thess. 4:17

THE WICKED



2 Pet. 3:10, THE EARTH

Luke 12:5

THE SAVED, 1 Thess. 4:16

**PARADISE**

**GEHENNA**

DEATH, Rev. 20:14

THE GREAT GULF

****

THE LOST

**TARTARUS**

HADES Rev. 20:14

**HADES**

**THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF**

 What Mortuary College does not teach on the five stages of death? It was a model created by Kubler and Ross (Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth (1969). *Questions and Answers on Death and Dying*. Macmillan). This was a book authored by Elizabeth-Kubler Ross, a Swiss American psychiatrist, over fifty years ago. Hence, I want to make it clear that this writer feels that this model is outdated. I believe that the new generation grieves so much differently than my generation. However, if discussing these five stages can be helpful to some, then I feel obligated. Keep also in mind that the creator of this model never suggests that everyone will go through all five stages, neither is their any order in which they may take place.

 ***Denial***

 The first stage of grieving is “denial.” We do this to minimize the suffering of the human soul after a death first occurs. And for the one who has been diagnosed with a terminal illness, he or she may deny the diagnosis. In my case, I did not actually experience this fully. I may not have wanted to accept the reality of the situation but there was no denying it after viewing Judy’s body in the ER.

 Looking back, Judy was always concerned about her many ailments. She was a diabetic. She had rheumatoid arthritis, only one kidney, and her eyesight was beginning to fail. We also knew that her last few years of life were a constant reminder of her coming demise.

 We had both suffered denial in our advancing years. I believed that somehow, someway, modern science would find the cure to diabetes, and other ailments that we both suffered. Sadly, we both felt that I would leave this world first because of my cancer and heart disease.

 ***Anger***

 The second stage is anger. This anger may be directed at God, one’s loved ones, the doctors, or friends. Without a doubt, I can relate to this response. I have felt angry thus far in my grief. My anger relates to the two hospitals that let her down along with my anger of losing my wife.

 I have sometimes been angry that the world keeps on turning and friends and relatives have gone back to their lives. It is like they have once recognized my pain and then moved on. I do accept that realizing how I have done that very same thing many times.

 We began discussing about anger by naming four different groups. Let’s take a moment and discuss each one separately. **First,** it is not unusual to be angry at God when bad news befalls us. Whether it be the person who has been told he or she has a terminal illness, or if you received the horrifying news that a loved one has passed, our minds revert to the defense mechanism of anger.

 People who are sitting on the sidelines often criticize another for showing their anger toward God. Sadly, many of them have never been through the horror and demise of losing a spouse or a child. This anger is not manifested because you have lost your love for God. How many people, at one time or another, showed anger toward a parent?

 Keep in mind that anger is a natural reaction when we hear and see things that break our spirits. These various ignited anger issues often begin at a young age in the home. And in most situations, our experience with anger is seeded by things not under our control.

 **Second**, it is not unusual to get angry at the doctor who informed you of the news concerning your diagnoses or the passing of your loved one. With the stream of medical doctors coming from foreign countries, they also bring their mannerisms and philosophies. I find many of them to be insensitive and somewhat obnoxious.

 Let’s just be honest! Even many of the American doctors are part of this new generation that are more concerned about draining their patients bank accounts. The atmosphere of that profession has changed from the friendly country doctor to the pool of specialized medical practices that focus on outrageous charges and trial and error treatments. I truly believe that a good doctor will do what he or she can to aid in the healing of a patient. And I know that there are many great doctors who have saved millions of lives.

 So I note that the whole system is not corrupt. However, hospitals are ruled by insurance companies. These careless, insensitive, and money hungry leaches have turned the medical world into a mockery. The creation of Obama Care became the catalyst for the ruin of many homes. Judy’s medical bills escalated because of her illnesses. And the Obama Care insurance that she afforded paid less than thirty percent leaving us with a debt of over fifty thousand dollars.

 In the defense of some hospitals, the larger ones took only what we could afford and wrote off the rest. The smaller hospitals showed little empathy toward the death of Judy and acted as greedy debt collectors.

 There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Judy’s passing was a direct result of the lack of attention giving to her by the doctors and nurses. She went into the hospital nearly a week before her death and was released still suffering from pains and headaches.

 It is reported by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) that over 1.7 million people get sepsis every year. Sadly, nearly 270,000 dies as a result of it. Judy is just one more victim of this infectious culprit.

 **Also,** anger may at times be shown toward family members. It is natural for one to love their families no matter how dysfunctional they may be. Many families do not have the necessary tools to deal with crisis, so they revert to blame and insult.

 A person who loses a mother or father may aim his or her insults at the surviving parent. “Why didn’t you see this coming?” “Why didn’t you take her to the doctor sooner?” With the blame comes the anger. The “what ifs?” will always be a constant reminder of our insecurities which deter us from thinking rationally. We must never forget that the “*rain falls on the just and unjust*” (Matt. 5:45).

 It has always been the case that death will either draw a family closer or create a wall of division. Each individual member of a family must be determined to be builders and not destroyers. This means that one must watch his or her words and their actions.

 I love my blood family, but I am closer to my church family. I will never put blood relations over my brothers and sisters who will be holding my hand here on earth and in heaven. Those in the body of Christ will never allow negative feelings to emerge out of selfishness or anxiety.

 The bible says after the death of Stephen, “*And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him*” (Acts 8:2). And it was Jesus who proclaimed, “*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*” (Matt. 5:4). Then Paul would write to the brethren at Corinth, “*Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*” (2 Cor. 1:4). When you place all three passages side-by-side you see a pattern of compassion and commitment to those who are grieving.

 **Next**, one can easily become angry at friends.

  ***Bargaining***

 The third stage is bargaining. This involves the hope that the individual can avoid a cause of grief. Usually, the negotiation for an extended life is made in exchange for a reformed lifestyle. This has more of a response from the one who is dying, or those who are witnessing someone with a terminal illness.

 As a child, I remember attending auctions with my father. It was mesmerizing to hear the auctioneer. He rambled with such eloquence and quickness that you could not help being glued to the podium. The whole reasoning behind his actions was to sell a piece of merchandise quickly receiving the best price. This is somewhat comparable to bargaining with God when faced with uncontrollable events. We somehow perceive that we can bargain with God. We become the auctioneer, whereas He is the one bidding.

 It is not unusual at all for a person who is terminally ill to promise God changes in his or her lifestyle if God can take away this disease. It may also come from a mother pleading with God to save her dying child.

 On that road trip to St. Lutheran’s Hospital, I bargained. I was willing to give up everything in this life for Judy to have hope. I pleaded with God to take my life, and not hers. However, Judy’s day of death had already been marked in God’s calendar book. If I would had only known, I would have done my best to keep Judy home!

 ***Denial***

The fourth stage is denial. The denial may come from the one dying not accepting the inevitable or for the one who witnessed the death not wanting to accept what has taken place. This can be a dangerous stage of grief. When we accept reality, we can maintain some balance. For the one dying, it gives him time to do what needs to be done spiritually.

 After Judy died, it wasn’t that I didn’t accept her death, but in my mind, I anticipated her return. Every time the door creaked, I felt she was walking through the door. When a car was pulling into my driveway, I somehow believed that at any minute she would walk in, give me a kiss, and asks about my day. Now I knew it wasn’t so, but anyone who has lost someone so close, our minds create this dream world where hope is not abandoned. Somehow, we want to believe that God has released them from the grave just for the purpose of aiding our healing.

 So often it is denial that creates ghosts. We want to believe that our loved ones can walk among us. In First Samuel, chapter twenty-eight, the disquieted king Saul wanted to seek counsel from the wise prophet Samuel. The problem was the man was dead. So, hearing about a witch from Endor, he travelled there and requested a séance. As she went through the fallacy of bringing back the spirit of Samuel, he appeared.

 In verse twelve of that chapter, it reads, *“And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul”* (1 Sam. 28:12). It is noted that this woman was a deceiver and realized she did not have the power to perform such a task. And secondly, she realized that the king would be obligated, no matter promises he had made, to execute her.

 Jehovah told the delivered Jews, “*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*” (Exodus 22:18). Even further, “*There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee”* (Deut. 18:10-12).

 Whatever we wish to say to our loved ones we to do it while there is still breath within them. There are no ghosts. We are not able to communicate with those who have gone on before us. They will not come to our bedrooms at night. They are gone, and we have no power to get them back.

 I heard a song many years ago that expressed this very fact about those we have lost. The words to the song, “*Gone Away*,” reads:

Gone, Gone, Gone away,

We just can’t get them back,

There’s no way!

Marilyn Monroe, she had herself a screen,

Martin Luther King had a dream,

John, Bobby, Ghandi and his band,

They’ve all gone to some foreign land.

They’ve all gone, gone, gone away,

And we just can’t get them back.

Matthew, Mark, and Anne Boleyn,

Cain and Abel, and Errol Flynn,

Luke and Janice, and Jimmy Dean,

Cleopatra and Augustine,

They’ve all gone, gone, gone away,

And we just can’t get them back.

Mussolini and Baby Snooks, Thomas and Gable,

And Captain Cook, Uncle Abe, and Superman,

All gone to some other land.

They’re all gone, gone, gone away,

And we just can’t get them back.

Forest Lawn, and Flanders Fields,

Calvary and the cross revealed,

Someone died and was crucified,

He died but He came alive.

They’re all gone, gone, gone away,

But Jesus Christ is here to stay!

 ***Acceptance***

 For the person diseased and facing death, he or she may come to terms with the reality of the situation. And for the person who has bore the pain of watching a loved one pass, it is the mere acceptance of the passing.

 I may not want to accept this terrible and painful period of my life, and I do my best to hold onto my faith. Was it fair that Judy died? Is it ever fair when a piece of our heart is taken from us? Acceptance is not questioning the fairness nor pondering on the events of the past. Acceptance is that bridge that moves us forward to the fulfilment of our lives. It must mean that God has more work for us to do!

 Moving in a forward direction is the key. Whether it be David’s reasoning that he will one day see his infant son again, or the mere fact that death will come to all; it is so necessary to cherish the memory of those we lost and to look forward to what lies ahead.

 To this day, I still have a hard time accepting Judy’s death. I have had many sleepless nights dreaming of her crashing into that embankment. I want Judy to be alive and happy sitting next to me. I do not want to accept this event in my life. I do want the nightmares to stop! I want peace! I recall the words of Jesus as He informed His apostles of His leaving. He exclaimed, “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (Jn. 14:27).

 Truly this is the peace I desire, pray for, and hope for! I know it will come because Jesus spoke these words to twelve men who were hurting just like me. And in my selfish desire, I want it now!

**THE EPITAPH AND EULOGY**

The Body of
B. Franklin
Printer;
Like the Cover of an old Book,
Its Contents torn out,
And stript of its Lettering and Gilding,
Lies here, Food for Worms.
But the Work shall not be wholly lost:
For it will, as he believ'd, appear once more,
In a new & more perfect Edition,
Corrected and Amended

By the Author.

 Above is the epitaph written by Benjamin Franklin at the age of twenty-two. In life, he often requested that this epitaph be placed on his tombstone, but it never was. On his stone it simply reads, “Benjamin and Deborah Franklin, 1790.”

 I’ve always loved walking through cemeteries reading the stones that have epitaphs. My favourite is not written on any stone, or carved on some memorial plaque, but simply that of brother Paul to young Timothy. He wrote, “*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*” (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

 When someone asks you if you are ready to die, what is your reply? The response of every faithful Christian should match that of Paul’s. His was a declaration of sureness and readiness. He saw his coming death not as an ending to one man’s story, but merely the first half. The other half would take place in heaven with God.

 One may ask the difference between an epitaph and a eulogy. You need simply note that an epitaph is an inscription on a gravestone in memory of the deceased. Whereas a eulogy is an oration to honour a deceased person at a funeral. Paul’s writing to Timothy is unique in that there is no stone that marks his grave, nor do we know if a funeral was held in honour of the cherished apostle. Secular history has offered no definitive proof of the apostle’s demise. However, many historians suggests that Paul’s death occurred after his recorded journey to Rome in 67 AD. It was believed that the aged apostle was beheaded by the Romans, under the emperor Nero. Later that year, around June of 68, the wicked emperor would commit suicide.

 When I think of Judy, I have rehearsed in my head her eulogy. Bobby Goldsboro sang a song in the 60’s entitled, *Honey*. It spoke of a man’s wife who died young. In one of the verses it reads, “*She was kind of dumb, and kind of smart*!” Judy being raised as an elder’s daughter was very naive concerning many things. Whereas there were things she was extremely knowledgeable about.

 None of us ever searched for a spouse who is a mirror of ourselves. The best choices will always be those who are strong in areas wherein we are weak. A Christian woman seeks a man who will love her without conditions. A man who protects, guides, and provides. Whereas a Christian man is best compatible with a woman who is lady enough to behave accordingly. Yet most importantly, one who will be faithful to the Lord and him.

 Judy was my wife, my love, and my best friend. I never worried about her desiring other men though she had the looks in her early years that would turn any man’s head. She loved the Lord, her husband, and children. She adored her grandchildren. How often had we shared tears, fears, and trials. She found out that there was a great difference between being and elder’s daughter and a preacher’s wife.

 I looked up one night, shortly after Judy’s death, and gazed at the moon as it lit up the sky. Her entourage of stars flickered as if each were communicating with each other. I questioned where in the universe would my love be found. We are not told where Hades is located. Ancient man believed that hell was under the earth and heaven was somewhere above.

 And though it is not ours to know where such a place is located, I just pray for Judy’s happiness. Every preacher’s wife deserves that. Their tears are sacred, and their strength is amazing. The wife of the preacher is a major asset to his ministry. How often have I laid in bed beside Judy conversing on matters in the church? Never sharing things confidential, for a preacher’s wife knows not to ask, but simply the other burdens one faces in that position.

 Just a few nights before Judy’s death, she laid beside me wondering if she was going to die soon. It was a typical conversation which one would have after just being released from the hospital. In my ignorance, I sought to soothe her by stating that we both had plenty more years to go. If I would have known the fallacy of such a remark maybe the conversation would have gone differently.

**AN ANIMAL’S PAIN**

**OLD SHEP**

When I was a lad and Old Shep was a pup
O'er hills and meadows we'd stray
Just a boy and his dog, we both full of fun
We grew up together that way

I remember the time at the old swimmin' hole
When I would have drowned beyond doubt
Shep was right there, to the rescue he came
He jumped in and helped pull me out

So the years sped along and at last he grew old
His eyesight was fast growin' dim
Then one day, the doctor looked at me and said
"I can't do no more for him, Jim"

With a hand that was tremblin', I picked up my gun
I aimed it at Shep's faithful head
I just couldn't do it, I wanted to run
And I wished they'd shoot me instead

I went to his side and I sat on the ground
He laid his head on my knee
I stroked the best pal that a man ever found
I cried, so I scarcely could see

Old Sheppie, he knew he was goin' to go
For he reached out and licked at my hand
He looked up at me, just as much as to say
“We're partin' but you understand”

Now Old Shep is gone where the good doggies go
And no more with Old Shep will I roam
But if dogs have a Heaven, there's one thing I know
Old Shep has a wonderful home

 ***Old Shep***

 The song, “Old Shep,” was composed by Red Foley in 1935, with the lyrics being written by Arthur Willis. It spoke of a dog Foley owned as a child. The dog, poisoned by a neighbour, was actually a German shepherd named “Hoover.” The song really grew notoriety when Elvis Presley sang for the first time in a school talent show the “*Ballet of Old Shep*.”

 The story I loved the best is about another dog named “Shep.” He was a Collie owned by a sheepherder in Ft. Benton, Montana. While tending his flock, the sheepherder fell ill. As the man layed in the hospital, Old Shep waited patiently outside for his master’s return. That never happened because the man died. Upon request of the sheepherder’s family back east, the casketed body was taken to the trainyard for transport followed by Shep. As the train left the station, the saddened collie mourned. Four times a day the trains would pull into the station being met by that faithful companion. The townspeople would feed him and stare at amusement at the dedication of Old Shep. After years went by, and the dog grew older, one cold winter’s day, the faithful friend slipped on the ice onto the tracks and was killed.

 To this day, in that Montana town, there is a memorial dedicated to Old Shep. A bronze statue that costs the city $75,000.00 to erect stands as a reminder of the many furry friends who brighten our world.

 ***Judy’s Bella***

Judy loved animals. She wanted so much to have a close relationship with our two dogs. Howbeit, those two attached themselves to me. Shortly before her death, Judy asked if she could have another dog that would be hers. I couldn’t say, “No!” She searched diligently online until she saw a notice advertising the type of dog she desired. She was located on an Amish farm. Judy drove the distance, bought the dog, and brought her home.

 Judy named the dog, “Bella.” At that time, we had a Yorkie, a Pug, and now a Schnoodle. She was a crossbreed between a Poodle and a Schnauzer. They are fuzzy little balls of fur that are playful, intelligent, and people friendly.

 Bella was the pet that Judy always wanted. She treated her like a little doll that needed special attention. Even now I think about Judy sitting in her recliner holding that small puppy. She hugged her, kissed her, and spoke to her like one of her best friends.

 When Judy died, Bella mourned. She was confused concerning the absence of her master. It is tough to see our friends and family shed tears, but it is just as painful to watch a family pet sorrow.

 Just imagine if an animal can love his or her owner with true dedication, what about our love for our spouses and our church family? Should it not be unmatched by any in the animal kingdom? There are over twenty species in nature that mate for life. This includes the wolf, bald eagle, beavers, cayotes, and penguins. These various creatures bear harsh conditions, cruel treatment, and perilous terrains with the aid of their mates.

 In this human world we live in, one reads constantly of marriages breaking up, abuse, and horrible results in failed relationships. This has not changed since the dawn of man. For in the Holy Bible, we view marriages disintegrating. You have men like Nabal in 1 Samuel twenty-five who was a drunkard and an insensitive husband. Then of course Ahab, the king, who married a wicked woman named Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31-21:25). And let us not forget Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. Every failed marriage penned in God’s word are warnings against marrying the wrong person.

**HOLD MY HAND**

Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I'm tired, I'm weak, I'm lone
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear precious Lord linger near
When my light is almost gone
Hear my cry, hear my call
Hold my hand lest I fall
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.

When the darkness appears and the night draws near
And the day is past and gone
At the river I stand
Guide my feet, hold my hand
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.

Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I'm tired, I'm weak, I'm lone
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.

(Tommy Dorsey)

 More than a decade ago, I returned from a trip from India. From the moment I stepped off the plane, I experienced severe pains in my abdomen. Judy took me to the hospital where they told us that I had an inflamed gallbladder and that it had to be removed.

 The simple surgery turned sour when the gallbladder busted and dispersed gangrene into my body. They had no choice but to insert a tube going into that area trying to drain the poison from my system.

 One of the doctors told Judy that he did not think I had a chance to recover and that she needed to make funeral arrangements. I laid in that bed for over a month and a half without having one sip of water or food. Everything I received to nourish my body was through an IV.

 Why this story? The focus is not to be on me or my trial, but on that soft hand that held my hand. She cried, prayed, and often remained silent, but she never stopped holding my hand. My wife believed and knew that my life was not in the doctor’s hands, but in the providence of God who sits on His throne in Heaven.

 All of us need to appreciate the human touch. Not just by anyone, but from those who we care for and who care for us. Holding Judy’s hand was like caressing a baby’s blanket for a young child. It was both comforting and soothing.

 I had often held Judy’s hand and gazed at the ring upon her finger. This was not just anybody’s hand, but the girl I married. This was the hand that squeezed my hand when she was afraid. This was the soft and beautiful hand of one that made me feel special. In my deepest sorrow, she was present. Whether it was holding my hand for comfort, rubbing my back out of love, or the warmness of her cheeks as she brushed my hand against them; this was the hand that made my life complete.

**THERE IS A SHIP**

**The Water is Wide**

The water is wide, I can't cross over
And neither have I wings to fly
Build me a boat that can carry two
And both shall row, my love and I.

There is a ship, and she sails the sea
She's loaded deep, as deep can be
But not so deep as the love I'm in
I know not how I sink or swim.

O, love is handsome, and love is fine
The sweetest flower when first it's new
But love grows old and waxes cold
And fades away like summer dew.

Build me a boat that can carry two
And both shall row, my love and I
And both shall row, my love and I.

 The “*Water is Wide*” was an old Scottish tune called, “*O Waly, Waly*.” This is one of my favourite love songs. I believe the reason this song has so much meaning to me is presented in the fact that I have seen so many couples simply give up. A boat that carries two can easily sink in the river of despair.

 Marriage is not all about commitment and similarities between spouses. Marriage is about endurance, sacrifice, compromise, and an unyielding love for each other. The love that “*grows old and waxes cold*” defines the reasoning behind failed marriages. It can also be applied to walking away from the Lord and the church.

 If I was able to add to the beautiful folk tune, I will place a third oar in the boat. The hands that would grip this oar would be that of our Saviour. There were no storms that Judy and I could not pass through. Though the sea be raging, and the sails slightly torn, the caring comfort of an experienced Sailor like Jesus makes way for a safe passage.

 There were so many things in life that Judy and I would not have been able to endure. Things that most married couples must face. Howbeit, the Lord held our hands and guided our hearts. Like the hymn reads, “*What would I do without the Lord*?”

 If it is your response with this book to place it on the bottom shelf or bury it in a cardboard box, keep this in mind, what helps me make it from day to day is the fact that Judy was a Christian. I really don’t know if I could handle the pain of losing one that had no chance of making it to heaven.

 There is no doubt in my heart that heaven is real and so is hell. Peter scribed, “*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet. 3:9).

 The terrible place prepared for the devil and his angels is also a pit where good, caring, and adorable people will be cast. They will not be thrown into this pit because of their failure as parents or even spouses. They will burn in the fire of hell because of refusing to heed to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

**The Anchor Holds**

**Ray Boltz**

I have [journeyed](https://www.definitions.net/definition/journeyed) through the long dark night

Out on the open sea, by [faith](https://www.definitions.net/definition/faith) alone

Sight unknown; and yet His eyes were [watching](https://www.definitions.net/definition/watching) me

The [anchor](https://www.definitions.net/definition/anchor) holds

Though the ship is battered

The [anchor](https://www.definitions.net/definition/anchor) holds

Though the [sails](https://www.definitions.net/definition/sails) are torn

I have [fallen](https://www.definitions.net/definition/fallen) on my [knees](https://www.definitions.net/definition/knees) as I face the [raging](https://www.definitions.net/definition/raging) seas

The [anchor](https://www.definitions.net/definition/anchor) holds in [spite](https://www.definitions.net/definition/spite) of the storm

I've had visions, I've had dreams

I've even held them in my hand

But I [never](https://www.definitions.net/definition/never) knew they [would](https://www.definitions.net/definition/would) slip [right](https://www.definitions.net/definition/right) through

Like they were only [grains](https://www.definitions.net/definition/grains) of sand

The [anchor](https://www.definitions.net/definition/anchor) holds

Though the ship is battered

The [anchor](https://www.definitions.net/definition/anchor) holds

Though the [sails](https://www.definitions.net/definition/sails) are torn

I have [fallen](https://www.definitions.net/definition/fallen) on my [knees](https://www.definitions.net/definition/knees) as I face the [raging](https://www.definitions.net/definition/raging) seas

The [anchor](https://www.definitions.net/definition/anchor) holds in [spite](https://www.definitions.net/definition/spite) of the storm

 The song spoke of falling on one’s knees and trying to steer through the storms of life. Sadly, this is one gust of wind that lingers. I need Jesus to calm the storm as He did for those frightened men in Mark 4:35-41. I need Him to lift me up out of this sinkhole that has buried my soul in muck.

 I will never understand the “why?” Nor do I think about tomorrow. My loneliness overtakes me, and ever fibre of my being is grasping for air. I don’t know if I will ever breathe again, or watch another sunrise, or even hold another’s hand. I never dreamed of life without Judy. And now I live in a fog of uncertainty and despair.

 I do know that this, like all else, will pass. I must simply trust in the God who guided me through valleys, and rivers, and steep mountains. I must believe that He is not finished with this elderly preacher living in the small town in Northern Ohio.

**REFLECTIONS**

 As I sat in my easy chair viewing the pictures of our wedding day, I come to miss Judy even more. At the same time, I fasten my eyes on the urn in the glass cabinet that reminds me of her ending.

 I could not grieve the loss of one so precious. We watched our children grow to be adults. We heard their cries and felt their pains, but all of this we did together.

 Judy longed to have grandchildren and she was able to hold them, love them, and watch them grow. Others will not remember her for being too young at the time of her death. Yet I will remind them that no grandmother ever loved her children and grandchildren more.

 I was saddened to see the first snowfall without my wife. She loved the beauty of seeing the landscape painted white. The memory of seeing her sitting with a smile on her face when the first snowflake hit the ground was heart-warming. There is nothing more beautiful than seeing a woman smile at such simple things. Howbeit, those are the reflections of my life that I hope will not be discarded when I grow older.

**CONCLUSION**

**MY DARLING JUDY**

Where are you, Judy?

I looked beside me, and you weren’t there.

I called out your name, but you didn’t answer,

My brow did sweat for what I feared.

I went to my window and looked at the stars.

I saw the moon shed a single tear.

I fell to my knees with a broken heart,

My sad little world had been torn apart.

I laid back on my bed and took a breath,

Are you thinking of me wherever you’re at?

Or am I simply a memory of the world you left?

So, so, many things I do regret!

Rest now my darling queen,

And worry no more for worldly things.

Enjoy the splendor of the saints in glory,

Till we meet again at the end of the story!

What I love about teaching and writing is that it allows me to refresh my memory about Judy and others who impacted my life. I realize how difficult it might have been if Judy would have passed when the children were small. And I know that many of my feelings are based on my selfish desire to have Judy with me again. In the story of the raising of Nazareth, Jesus was overtaken with sorrow over the mourning and sadness of the mourners. That simple verse which reads, “*Jesus wept*!” (John 11:35), is paramount in viewing our Lord God experiencing human grief. Yet could it be so that the Master realized what the raising of Lazarus entailed? As Christians we spend our whole adult life hoping, praying, and working to rest in the arms of Abraham. Lazarus did not want to return. That meant he had to survive in a world once again where Satan ruled, and sin was rampant. He was happy and in awe at being in a place so wonderful. And in the twinkling of an eye, he found himself back in a mortal body that would one day decay.

 Our loved ones who lived for Jesus are at rest. The sun no longer sets, nor does the burdens of life entrench them. They are in the presence of all those Bible characters which seeded and led nations. Men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, and the prophets who penned the words in our Holy Bible by the Holy Spirit. Can you imagine the chance to sit down and converse with Paul and the other apostles? And most of all to be in the presence of the only true God of the universe. To hear the Lord’s voice, see His face, and gaze into those immortal eyes will bring one the greatest joy!

 At the same time, the Bible speaks of great love affairs and great marriages. Whether it be Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, or Mary and Joseph; each unveiled for us what marriages should look like. And the greatest love affair and marriage ever is personified in Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 21:1-27).

 I am an old man now. I have been blessed with beautiful grandchildren, and memories that are sweet reflections of my past. It will not be that long when I, like Judy, must stand before my Master and Saviour. The church, which I so love, stands as a beacon of hope to the lost. Every word in God’s holy book is sacred. However, to whom? To only those faithful members of the Lord’s body who have finished the race. I so want to finish the race, and finish it well!

 To my children, and others, I pray that you do not depart from the faith. And if you do, repent and turn back to God. It is not in your career successes, nor in the hands of your many friends, which will give you entrance into the holy city, but only through your absolute dedication and love for your Creator and Saviour.

 I need not spend the time to prove to another that God exists. The bible does not move in a direction to prove God, but simply states that only a fool would come to that conclusion (Psa. 14:1). It was never my intention to write this book for the purpose of convicting souls and making them realize the inevitable. If that happens, so be it!

 It will always be difficult to come to the acceptance that one day you will be forgotten. A stone placed on your grave will weather with the years. And then your name will no longer be readable. Howbeit, do not be concerned about your ending but on your new beginnings. For every “jot” and “tittle” will not be forgotten by God.

 This book was penned to aid me in my healing. It was my attempt to come to terms with the passing of my dear wife. And if the truth be told, it was my way of saying, “Goodbye!”

 There will never be another sunset that won’t put a tear in my eye. I will always thank God for that brief moment in time when He brought Judy into my life. From our first kiss to the last, I will never find another like her.

 For all of you who have your loved one’s close by give them a huge hug and kiss. Take time to tell them how much they mean to you. For soon you will be a distant memory. The life you led will consist of faded pictures and those memories left in those special people whom you loved in life.

 Isaiah wrote, “*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint”* (Isa. 40:31).  So descriptive are the righteous in God’s holy book. The love of my life soared with the eagles during her time on earth. Her strength lives on in the people who knew her. She was a gift to me and to her family and friends.

 So, to my love, I leave you with this one last poem written by John P. Read.

**MY SOUL MATE**

I still say I Love You,
But now there's no reply.
I always feel your presence
As if you never left my side.

I remember your comforting voice.
Now there's not a sound.
Only echoes from the past
Follow me around.

You're always by my side,
But I can't hold your hand.
The reason why God took you
I find hard to understand.

Summer days seem much shorter.
Dark nights just linger on.
Dreams turn into nightmares
When the one you love has gone.

But real love never fades.
It still burns like the sun.
Although they're far away,
Those memories go on and on.

Her spirit will never die
It shines like the stars.
I know you're sleeping in heaven,
But you're living in my heart.

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