

Grieving with Hope

Walking with Jesus
in Heartbreak



Randy Alcorn

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My wife, Nanci, and I met at age fourteen. We enjoyed fifty-four years as best friends and soul-mates, including forty-seven years of marriage.

After four-plus years battling colon cancer, and praying for healing daily, Nanci and I decided it was time to end the treatments. We planned a final vacation together. Nanci was excited to make that last journey, but God had another journey in mind.

Nanci took a turn for the worse, so we asked our daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren to gather around her bed. Weak as she was, she spoke to them, telling them of God's grace and sovereignty, and saying, "Don't ever resent Him." Between tears and laughter, she reminded them of her love and our future reunion in Heaven, and encouraged them to stay close to Jesus. Seven days later, as I held her hand, she died.

What struck me on her death day, once everyone was gone, was the quiet. No humming of the oxygen machine. No more of her laughter, which over the years had been frequent, loud, and contagious.

Our dog Gracie stayed by Nanci's recliner, waiting for her to come back. I woke up every morning, turning to look at my wife. My mind would begin to clear, and I'd realize yet again that she really was gone. As the weeks passed, I lost track of time. I would look at my phone, not to see what hour it was, but what day, and sometimes what month.

Though I worked in an office eight feet behind our house, Nanci and I would text each other dozens of times a day, often sharing funny animal photos. Months after she died, I'd start to send her a

picture before remembering her address had changed to another world.

Her homegoing left a huge hole in my life. But isn't that what I would want? Healthy sorrow recognizes the immensity of loss. Greater love brings greater grief.

Likely you too are facing great loss. Perhaps a loved one or close friend has died. Perhaps your grief stems from a loss of another kind; maybe your family, career, or health have crumbled. Or you've received a terminal diagnosis. You might be burdened, depressed, or traumatized. Perhaps you've lost hope. Maybe you're disappointed with God. Don't be afraid to admit your feelings. Attempts to bypass grief usually prolong it.

I vividly remember what it was like as a teenager to have no hope—to live, at times, in despair. I'd never heard the gospel and had no clue that Jesus was real. Meeting Nanci, a Christian, and attending church for the first time motivated me to read the Bible. At first it was utterly foreign to me. But once I saw Jesus on its pages, everything changed. His words had the ring of truth. All I had longed for I found in Him. Over fifty years later, my relationship with Jesus and trust in His promises have allowed me to grieve Nanci without despair. I miss her every day, but our separation is temporary; eternal reunion awaits.

Am I suggesting that knowing God's love and truths about Heaven eliminates grief? No! But make no mistake, living in light of these truths *greatly* reduces the pain and brings perspective to the loss.

The good news of Jesus Christ is not a fragile shred of hope. It is a radical, historical, life-changing reality.

Jesus, God's Son, really *did* become a man, die on the cross, and rise from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Though our sin separates us from God, He promises that all who trust in Him will receive full forgiveness and eternal life (John 1:12).

I know that not every reader will believe this. But I encourage you to ask yourself, not for my sake but for yours: If the good news of salvation in Jesus is not true, how can you face death and find a true basis for hope and joy? If Jesus is not the answer, what other answer is there?

Regardless of what you believe, my prayer is that as you read this booklet, you will open your heart to God's truth—and find help to grieve well and eventually heal.

God's Promises for the Journey of Grief

Psalm 23 was the first passage I memorized. I loved these words then, but because of both the suffering and joy I have experienced, I love them even more fifty years later.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever. (ESV)

Our Good Shepherd leads us to places of refreshment. But He also takes us where no one wants to walk: the valley of the shadow of death. “Grief is a walk alone” is a recurring quotation in grief books. But as David walks that dark valley he says to God, “You are with me.” *Our Good Shepherd doesn't leave us to walk alone.*

Nor does He give us the option to bypass the darkness. We can't choose whether to grieve, but we can choose *how*. The valley of Psalm 23 doesn't last forever. Eventually, a beautiful vista of hope opens up: “I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Psalm 23:6).

We will always feel pain from our loss—it's the price of love. Yet when we grieve well, in time, grief will walk alongside joy and gratitude and all the other feelings. Hence, Paul described himself and his coworkers as “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Each step we take on God's path leads us closer to the restoration He wants for us.



eternal perspective ministries

with author Randy Alcorn

Learn more about *Grieving with Hope*

Author Randy Alcorn encourages you to go to God with all your sorrows and to remember that Jesus, your Good Shepherd, walks with you—a suffering Savior who is well acquainted with sorrow. No one can bypass grief, but you don't walk this dark valley alone. Jesus will lead you, and he guarantees that death is not the end and Heaven awaits. In *Grieving with Hope*, Randy gives perspective and practical advice to help readers on the grieving journey, so that in time, your grief will be accompanied by joy and hope.



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About Randy Alcorn

Randy is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries and the best-selling author of over 60 books (over 12 million sold) including *Heaven*, *The Treasure Principle*, and the Gold Medallion winner *Safely Home*.

About Eternal Perspective Ministries

Eternal Perspective Ministries (EPM) is a nonprofit ministry dedicated to teaching principles of God's Word and assisting the church in ministering to the unreached, unfed, unborn, uneducated, and unsupported people around the world. You can order all of Randy's books and products through EPM's online store at www.epm.org.