

## Healing for the Holidays: Part Two – Give Sorrow Words

This is the second in a series of articles on healing for the holidays. You can find the previous articles in the series [here](#).

C. S. Lewis famously wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” Loss always hurts, and holidays are like a megaphone magnifying that pain. Or, for our generation, like the volume control on your iPod—holidays can intensify and heighten the pain.

In Part One, we saw Jesus and Paul giving us permission to grieve. Now we ask, “But what do I do with my hurt during the holidays?” Shakespeare said, “Give sorrow words.” God’s Word models that principle—we need to move from denial to candid honesty about the hurt that holiday memories can bring.

### “Don’t Talk about Him!”

I faced my first experience of the death of a loved one when I was ten. My grandfather died unexpectedly one cold, snowy day in early December. Two weeks later the extended family gathered at my Grandmother’s home for the holidays. Even as a ten-year-old, it struck me as odd that no one dared to mention “Moshe” (Romanian for Grandfather). The unspoken admonition was, “Don’t talk about him!”

For many reasons—spiritual, personal, and emotional—my family was uncomfortable and unprepared to talk about Moshe. Somehow the thought seemed to be, “If we don’t mention his name, then we won’t feel the pain.”

### The Problem with Denial

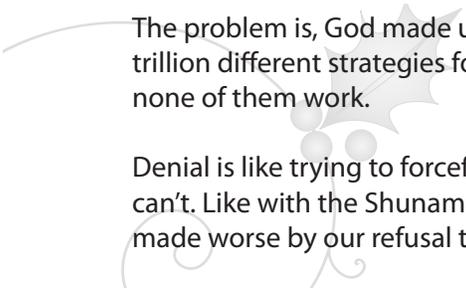
The barren Shunammite woman of 2 Kings 4 pictures for us the problem with denial. After years of barrenness, she bears a son who fulfills a lifetime of hopes and dreams. Tragically, he dies. Life has sent her two caskets: the first one—her inability to conceive, the second one—the death of the child she finally bore.

Rather than facing her loss, she keeps repeating, “It’s all right.” Her heart is sick, her soul is vexed, yet she keeps insisting, “It’s all right. I’m all right.”

Have you “been there, done that”? I have. Faking it. Pretending. But we can’t play make-believe forever.

Eventually it all spills out like it did for the Shunammite woman. She finally screams at Elisha, “Did I not say to you, ‘Don’t deceive me! Don’t get my hopes up.’” Denial refuses to hope ever again, to dream ever again.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:12). Hope hoped for, received, then lost again, makes the heart deathly ill. Fragile. Needy. We hate being there, so we block it out. We deaden ourselves by refusing to hope, long, wail, or groan because groaning exposes us as the needy people that we are.



The problem is, God made us longing, thirsting, hungering, desiring beings. So we follow a trillion different strategies for deadening our desires and shutting out the wail of our soul. But none of them work.

Denial is like trying to forcefully keep an inflated beach ball submerged on the ocean floor. We can't. Like with the Shunammite mother, inevitably the pain forces its way to the surface—only made worse by our refusal to face it.

Playing the denial game at the holidays is particularly difficult. A million different reminders flood our memories. The traditions we shared. The family pictures. The empty chair. If we're not careful we expend all our energy trying to keep that beach ball forced down, and we have little left for the loved ones who are with us now.

### **The Benefit of Candor**

Candid honesty courageously faces the pain of loss. As David does in Psalm 42:3-5, triggered by his memories of days gone by.

"My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?"

The Apostle Paul does not tell us not to grieve; he tells us not to grieve without hope (1Thessalonians 4:13). He chooses a Greek word meaning to feel sorrow, distress, and grief, and to experience pain, heaviness, and inner affliction.

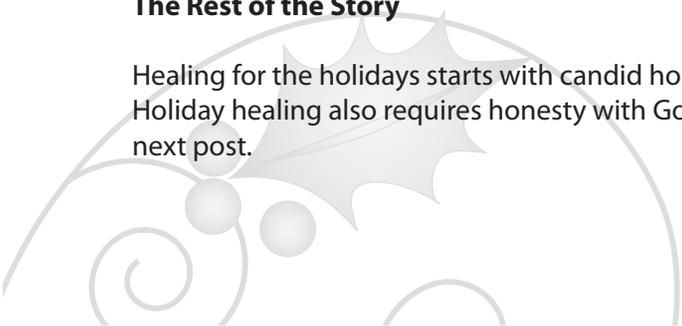
Paul is teaching that grief is the grace of recovery because mourning slows us down to face life. No grieving; no healing. Know grieving; know healing.

The only person who can truly dare to grieve, bear to grieve, is the person with a future hope that things will eventually be better. When we trust God's good heart, then we trust Him no matter what. We need not pretend. We can face and embrace the mysteries of life.

A good friend of mine provides a beautiful and powerful portrait of candid grieving with tenacious hope.

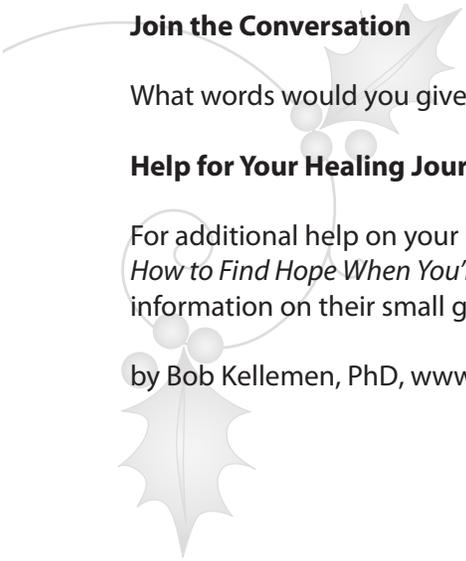
"Bittersweet is the word I use so often. My husband's empty place and missing smile are truly hard to bear. Tears come so frequently and people don't always understand how much it still hurts. My dad died in 1998 and all my and my husband's grandfathers have passed on also. I don't think I have really cried over them in years, just wistful memories and sadness. But the last few days I have totally broken down missing them! Grief is such a strange companion! But the sweetness is knowing they are all Home together with our Savior and I DO have the BLESSED HOPE of seeing them again and sharing all good times that have happened since they have left us!"

### **The Rest of the Story**



Healing for the holidays starts with candid honesty with our self, but it doesn't stop there. Holiday healing also requires honesty with God—what the Bible calls lament—the focus of our next post.





## Join the Conversation

What words would you give your sorrow over your hurt during the holidays?

## Help for Your Healing Journey

For additional help on your healing journey, learn more about *God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting* (<http://bit.ly/bKWaP4>). Also, visit GriefShare for information on their small group video series *Surviving the Holidays* ([www.griefshare.org/holidays](http://www.griefshare.org/holidays)).

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