

Every Death is Different

When we think about death, our natural response is to think about the pain. Whether the death was an expected departure or an unexpected departure, each one leaves us with a hole in our heart. However, there is a different type of pain associated with the different types of death.

I will share a few of my personal experiences with you to help you better understand. Actually, just the other day while going on a country drive with Jason, we had this discussion: When I was around 18, my grandma, to whom I was very close, ended up passing away after having heart surgery. I remember going up and seeing her at the hospital with all the tubes going in her, but, in that moment, I saw a woman who once was strong now ready to let go. I knew Grandma loved God and had things right with Jesus. That grandma of mine wouldn't even let us talk once our heads hit our pillows at night because she would be busy talking to Jesus and didn't want to be interrupted. Her passing broke my heart, but I had a peace that only God could give me.

Now my dad, by the time I was in my early twenties, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He was a Vietnam Veteran and a very strong man -- a man who, from as early as I can remember, could do anything that needed to be done. But during this time of his life, he slowly withered away, and I watched with my own eyes a strong man become weak and engulfed in pain. It was a process for him to transition over into eternity, a process I will never forget. The day that he exhaled his last breath on earth with his kids and wife by his side, I remember the relief I felt knowing he was no longer suffering. People say all the time, "Don't be sad. They're in a better place." It's important to understand not everyone feels that way. For me, I knew and still know my dad is definitely in a better place. After watching what he went through, I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

Then I experienced the sudden passing of my mom that literally shook me to my core. For me, the sudden deaths are the ones that rip me apart the hardest. Not having a chance to say goodbye, I love you, and mend the relationship where it needs to be mended, that can leave you feeling like you let them down. With Grandma and Dad, I did okay and didn't need counseling. Now when mom passed, I needed help, and to be honest I needed it fast. The anxiety that attacked me after her death, the anger and the feelings of being in a dark hole, unable to get out was more than I could handle.

Thankfully, I understood what I needed and have a good relationship with God. But I was needing more than faith and God's Word to bring me out of what I found myself in, so I went through several different healing meetings and talked to people I knew I could trust. One thing I refuse to do is allow Satan to pull me into a dark hole of depression when I know I have no control over whom God calls home.

It's important to understand this topic because sometimes we wonder why a particular death didn't bother us but another one did. If you find that you're struggling with depression or beginning to pick up behaviors that you normally wouldn't, I recommend that you speak with someone. You have to know you are not alone. When you love someone and they are suddenly gone, it can take a toll on you. That is part of the grieving process but a process and a journey on which you need someone to walk with you. If you ever need anyone to talk to, know we are here for you.

Life Celebrant Anita J. Shipman