

May 16, 2021

Be Not Afraid

Dear Friends,

“No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear.” (C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*)

The death of someone we love can be so shattering, so devastating and shocking, so life-altering, that it can often make us quite afraid of many things, even life itself. We can so fear the future that we don't want to move into it. We can so fear the present that we want to run away from it. “Fear prevents us from making decisions because we are now unsure of our ability to think clearly and make wise choices that won't hurt us further.” (Pat Schwiebert, R.N., *Fear and Grief*)

How can someone be here and then not? Once this becomes a reality it makes everything questionable. What is going to happen now? How will I survive this? How will I go on? How can I bear this pain? Will I ever laugh again? Will this happen again? Am I going crazy? We can be so afraid to face life without our loved one that we, in a sense, stop living as well. Often the trauma of our loss can make us feel like the world is no longer a safe place. “Grief feels like fear because it leaves you reeling in uncertainty.” (Schwiebert)

One thing that loss teaches us is that we are powerless over life and death. This feeling of powerlessness can permeate all aspects of life, even those over which we do have some control. The fear of facing life, or the future, can stop us in our tracks and paralyze us for a time or for the remainder of our time here. This is one of the reasons I so appreciate the *Serenity Prayer* as it is a short meditation on this struggle and an answer to a way out: *Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.* Before we can reach serenity, which will be the removal of our fear, we really need to get in touch with the things we are wrestling with that cannot be changed. Once we realize the battle is fruitless and unwinnable, which can take some time, we can begin to gather the courage to *change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.* “Courage doesn't happen in the absence of fear. It happens because of fear. Courage is refusing to let fear win. Courage is reclaiming one's life in the midst of the rubble that loss leaves behind.

Courage is saying ‘yes’ to life even if one’s heart is pounding.” (Pat Schwiebert, R.N. *Fear and Grief*)

And so today I predictably leave you with the healing and helpful words of the Serenity Prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

I wish you all peace and serenity, Kevin