

Living with Loss: The Mystery of Loss in Biblical Perspective **By Ken Wilson May 6-7, 2006**

The Bible doesn't offer pat answers in the face of loss, but bears witness to a more profound engagement with those who mourn.

The mystery of loss makes an early appearance.

- + Genesis 1: light & life unfolding from God;
- + Genesis 2: human entry onto stage of life;
- + Genesis 3: "the fall" or "the loss"
- + Loss is as we feel it to be: tragic.

Yet loss is also tied to blessing, even gain in the Garden

- + *"Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and the two become one flesh."*
- + The death of the innocent means gain for the humans

Abraham and Sarah live with the diverse mystery of loss.

Gen. 11: 27-32: loss of his brother, Haran; loss of a dream (their infertility); loss of home in Ur; loss of father, Terah.

Gen. 12: 1-5: leaving-cleaving loss-gain.

Further losses: separation from Lot; loss of domestic tranquility; loss of contact with kids (Ishmael)

Gen. 22: 1-19: The mysterious and horrible near loss of Isaac

- + Some losses seem altogether wrong
- + Prefigures God's horrible loss, our wonderful gain

We cannot separate loss from the other plot lines in Abraham and Sarah's story.

Their story didn't end with their death: it leans forward toward a time of blessing for all nations through their seed.

There's a way into the story of Abraham and Sarah, even for those of us who aren't their natural offspring: through the Suffering Servant Acquainted with Grief (*Isaiah 53: 1-4,5c*)

When you're in the throes of grief who do you turn to, if anyone?

Story of Rick & Jenny, friends for 30 years.

God is not, as the ancient Greeks thought, impassive, untouched by the pain of loss.

Horrible story of Abraham almost losing Isaac in that horrible way is a repeat of a most horrible theme: God's loss for our gain. (Death of the innocent introduced in the Garden)

The awfulness of Abraham's anguish, provides a hint of the depth of divine loss when the Son of Promise was slain.

We can turn toward a God who suffers horrible loss so we can enjoy wonderful gain.

How might we, in practice, turn to God in our grief?

1. Turn toward, not away from, the pain of loss itself.
2. Express the pain of loss directly to God.
3. Meditate on parts of the Story that resonate with you in loss.
4. Invite Jesus into your sorrow to bear it with you.
5. Light a candle to remember your loved one.

Further Study

[Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart](#) by [Alan D. Wolfelt](#)

[In Memoriam](#) by Henri J. M. Nouwen: written after the death of his mother.

[A Grief Observed](#) by C. S. Lewis; written after the death of his wife, an unflinching look at raw grief.