

## *The Bed*

Are certain types of death more impactful to loved ones than others? Some would say death is death and the impact is the same no matter how or when it happened. That approach applies a one-size-fits-all measuring cup of compassion and understanding. For the parent of a miscarried child, a stillborn baby, SIDS or any form of infant death that is simply not true. It is not that these parents and families are somehow needier, they have had a sudden loss which needs to be understood in a different way as they recover from the loss. Not only has their child died, but the loss of the dreams of what their child was to become has died too. There is no memory bank to reflect upon. The impact on the mind and body cause the soul to scream: "This is so unfair! This is so wrong!" My child has died without the chance to live.

Perhaps to think in terms of a loss is like having to sleep in a new bed. This story will help illustrate the journey of loss for a parent of a child who has died.

You, the parent of a child who has died, have just had the worst day of your life. Your child died today. You are bone tired. You are exhausted from the physical and emotional stress of the death. What you long for most is a good night's sleep in your own bed. You are suddenly aware you are walking with a small group of people who have experienced a death of someone they loved today too. Each of you reach at the same time a doorway marked, "Entrance into the rest of your life". What you are seeking is your safe comfortable bed, the one that you know so well. It has just the right amount of comfortable covers and pillows to insure that you can rest through the dark night and be restored tomorrow. As you peer into the room expecting to see your bed, you are shocked to find nothing is the same. A clip board with the following note hangs by the door. "Your bed has been removed. It was taken to a shedder and totally destroyed and dumped into a land fill. You will never see or experience sleeping in that bed again. Here is your new bed assignment:"

You are listed as number three among the group at the door. Each person must enter the room, climb into their new bed and fall asleep before the next one can enter.

The first person has experienced the death of a parent. They have a new bed, because their old comfortable place to sleep is gone too. They have a bed very similar in size to their old bed. It has about the same amount of pillows and blankets as the one they had before. Different, to be sure, but in many ways the same they explain to you. Person number one gets into the bed, pulls the covers up and after a few minutes slips into sleep.

Person number two has been assigned a new twin bed. Their spouse has died only hours ago. This bed is far narrower than the one they had before, they tell you. The blanket on their bed is heavy and thick and almost impossible to lift and slide under. The pillow is missing, but they position themselves in a way to accommodate the missing pillow and soon they are asleep too.

You are next. You are assigned a bed which is best described as an Army cot. Two X shaped wooden frames attached with a long wood rod running the length of the cot. A piece of rough canvas is stretched over the four corners. There is no blanket, no sheet nor pillow on your cot. There you are, expected to rest and recover from this horrific event in your life on this "camp bed". How can you rest and recover when you are given such an uncomfortable place to sleep?

You wonder about the blankets, pillows and sheets that the other people have as you sit down on the side of the cot. Slowly you realize what they mean in life. The blanket represents memories of the loved one, the pillow is support from the other family members or the one who has died, the sheet is the buffer that shields the bad things from all around us. You have none of these right now. Your child died. No memories, little or no support from others as they may not have even known you were pregnant if your loss was a miscarriage or they may not have known your child in the case of SIDS or other form of infant death. Your child died too soon to have created emotional bonds with the family or to have built a bank of meaningful memories for you.

Alone, un-buffered from the harshness of this loss, your tiny cot is without any comforting surfaces. For now it feels like this will always be your painful new bed. Others in the room who were already in bed, and who you thought were asleep when you arrived at the door, whisper in the night to you as you stretch out on the canvas surface. "You can regain peace. You can find life bearable again. You can seek God's divine plan in the midst of this loss. You will find help from THE one true source for comfort and contentment. You can survive this loss

with God's help." But for a time, you think as you look around from your cot, that such whispers are empty. You believe you will have to survive in this harsh bed of loss for the rest of your life – Unless....

What was that about THE one true source of comfort and contentment? Can I ask for comfort to flow from God through the Holy Spirit to ease my heartache? Does He understand the loss I am feeling? Will He cover me with peace? Will He heal my wounded soul?

The answer is **yes**.

But what about those people at the end of the room who are still sleeping on cots? Most of them appear to have been here a while and yet they still do not have a blanket or pillow. Did they fail to seek and ask God to lift their burden of loss? Perhaps they have missed the opportunity to seek God's provision of soul healing and life regenerating love. How and what do I do to live abundantly again? I don't want to be like them, desolate, damaged, and cold in this dark night of loss.

Matthew 7:7-8 NIV

*Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

You can decide to ask for the smooth sweet warmth of the Lord's comfort, not made of earthly threads but made of grace layered upon mercy, layered upon peace and contentment. Bound around the edges with gentleness and hope, you can wrap yourself in the garment of love which is provided by the Holy Comforter, the Holy Spirit. You can claim God's promise to hold you close, knowing He cares about your heartache of loss. Your cot can be transformed into a gentle resting place which enfolds you in His abiding love through the long night of grief recovery.

Look, it is folded and waiting just there, for you.

Isaiah 43:1-3a NIV

*But now, this is what the Lord says -*

*He who created you, O Jacob;*

*He who formed you, O Israel;*

*Fear not, for I have redeemed you;*

*I have summoned you by name;*

***You are mine.***

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.*

*And when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.*

*When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

*For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy Spirit of Israel, your Savior.*

**Rest in the comfort of the Savior.**

By Sharon Fox

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