



Update

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God in the Middle of Change

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

It is not new news that we need refuge (a safe place), strength, and help. We are all in trouble. Everyone is coping with COVID-19 in different ways. Some are angry, some have peace, and some show fear in their eyes above their masks. The full range of the good and the bad is openly displayed—people taking advantage of others and people helping each other with what little they have.

We are often asked how we are doing, and we answer we are well for a couple of “hermits.” Friends and family have made it possible for us to stay away from crowded areas. We appreciate the “safe place,” but isolation has its own challenges. We are already in a huge cycle of change since Vernon’s stroke, and this just added to it.

Change has indeed become a constant for us all.

It’s natural to hang on to how we’ve always done things. Habits are useful because we don’t have to re-think every activity in the day. But as “normal” has been upended all around the world, normal isn’t normal anymore. We can no longer live by the same routines and patterns we’ve had because everything is different.

In a time when so much is being lost—financially, personally, and even the death of those we love—

there are things we can do to help ourselves and others. Because this letter is going to Believers, let’s assume you already understand that God does hear and answer your prayers, that the Word is filled with wisdom, and that there’s strength and comfort being with other Believers.

Our God is the God of peace.

We would like to share some understanding of how to deal with the **emotions** that can be difficult to handle during sudden changes. Unfortunately, some things we must walk through; they won’t be instantly removed. Maybe these ideas will help us know how to better “cast our care on Him.” Although the ideas are not original with us, we have personally learned them, and continue to learn through daily experience.

Whenever there’s a loss of any kind, there’s a cycle of grief. It could be quick if the loss is not of major importance. But if it is major, it can take longer; grief can become a way of life if we don’t know how to deal with it. In our culture we tend to stuff our emotions without processing them. That becomes a burden God wants to take.

The grieving process goes through stages. The first is **denial**. We’ve all heard or said, “I can’t believe this!” It can be surreal and sometimes numbing.

Once reality sets in, **anger** usually follows. Anger about the situation generally or anger specifically toward a person. As one woman said after the death of her beloved husband of many years, “I don’t understand, but I’m angry with him for dying and leaving me.” It’s not always logical, but it is always emotional.

The **Bargaining** stage is the what-if time. If I hadn’t been gone—if we had known sooner—if they had not made that investment. It’s a place where guilt and false guilt can move in. It’s also the place where we can end asking the question “why” and can say to the Lord, I don’t understand, but I believe You are in control.

Sadness usually follows. It’s a true sorrow for what’s been lost and a time when we go to our Savior to have our broken hearts mended. He handles them with such care. If we slip into



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depression, His healing is even deeper.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... (Isa 53:4 NKJV).

The last stage is **acceptance**. The Psalmist said, *But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content* (Ps. 131:2 NIV). It's not meaning that what's bad is now good, it's accepting that it is what it is. Good or bad, we are at peace.

The memories remain because they are part of our history, but they are no longer filled with sorrow.

There's one more stage, but it takes time to fully unfold, and that's **Meaning**. It's where the good memories of a person bring a smile.

Perhaps it's seeing a strength or wisdom we've gained. This is where we discover that once we have walked through a valley, we can be a guide for someone else. Not necessarily a guide for the valley, but a guide to find the Shepherd in the valley.

This is only a high-level summary of a process that can be complex and involved. The "stages" are not clear cut steps one, two, and three. They overlap and sometimes cycle through again as God brings us from the "sorrow of the night" to the "joy in the morning" (Ps 30). We know, because it's a familiar journey.

We appreciate your notes of encouragement and your prayers. Vernon is doing well overall but is still working through some challenges in recovery. He has great

medical help and lots of doctor appointments with more tests this month.

Although he will continue to improve some in speaking because he works on it daily, he has reached a plateau. Having said that, when the anointing comes as he talks with someone one-on-one, the words are there. He continues to be patient in the process because, as he says, he knows in his Knower that God is good.

The world will get through COVID-19 and each of us will get through whatever storm is in our lives. May the strength and peace of our Lord Jesus empower you! ✨