

Traumatic Loss and Uncommon Grace

By Mary Lambrecht, M.S. LMFT

“Uncommon grace” were the words used by Pastor John Ortberg to describe Lisa Beamer’s response to living daily life since September 11, 2001. Lisa Beamer is the widow of Todd Beamer, the man who died as he interrupted the terrorists’ attempt to crash a plane into the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. Uncommon grace could be described as the supernatural, divine strength of God which is especially given to us in times of great need or suffering. One example of great need or suffering in Biblical times is the story of the wounded traveler in Luke chapter 10, who was ministered to by the Good Samaritan. Through this parable take notice how Jesus, like the Good Samaritan, ministers to a hurting family. When particular individual family members have suffered personal loss or forms of abuse, Jesus desires “to bind up the broken-hearted” (Ps. 147:3).

F.E. Marsh, in his book, Emblems of the Holy Spirit, points out that the Good Samaritan had “legs of mercy” for he came to where the wounded man was. He came alongside the wounded traveler, when others had passed the traveler by. When we are emotionally wounded, we too can feel left in the dust, forgotten and abandoned. God desires to give grace and mercy to our hurting hearts. We can ask Him for His legs of mercy to come alongside us in the painful feelings, experiences, and memories.

Marsh also states that the Good Samaritan had “eyes of kindness” for he saw the traveler, and responded to his need. A common feeling for a victim of abuse or an individual in deep grief, is a feeling of “does anybody really see what I’m going through?” Jesus sees our pain with eyes of profound compassion. Moreover, He not only sees the present pain, but also sees past unhealed memories and future ramifications from this pain.

Lisa Beamer stated in a talk given at Willow Creek Church in Barrington, Illinois, that “we can be completely honest with Jesus regarding how very much we do not like what is happening to us.” Lisa continued with the following thoughts: “I don’t think or focus much on the terrorists, but what I do focus on is that on September 10th, 2001, God knew what would unfold on September 11th. The fact that He is sovereign and that He loves me has made it easier for me to accept the circumstances.” Lisa is experiencing the eyes of God’s compassion upon her pain. Rather than succumbing to hating the terrorists, she is asking Jesus to come alongside her in all her myriad of feelings. This is dwelling in Jesus’ legs of mercy, trusting wholeheartedly in his eyes of compassion, and leaning on divine strength. Uncommon grace. Sister or brother in Christ; may God grant you the same! Though fellow human beings can deeply fail us, Jesus never will.

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