

PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd



Dear Compassionate Friends:

A Friend whose family has suffered many medical traumas in the last several months and I were visiting the other day, and she wondered how much more strength she had to get through the ups and downs their family still faces. You are always told "God doesn't give you any more than you can handle", and we both agreed that sometimes we wished God didn't have quite so much confidence in us.

It is hard to understand why some people constantly seem to be "put to the test" through no fault of their own, whether it is serious illness, financial setbacks, or cruelest of all (as all of us know) to lose a child or sibling.

Most of us struggle with our spirituality while grieving. We wonder if our faith is strong enough to bear this terrible burden, we wonder how and why God could have let our child die, and a lot of us are pretty angry that our child died in spite of all our prayers. Most of all we wonder if the loss of our child is some kind of "punishment" from God. We don't understand. We feel singled out and resentful and confused that this happened to us. We seek explanations and answers to our confusion and bewilderment. Sometimes well meaning people who are trying to comfort us assure us "you are so brave! I just could not go on if anything happened to my child!" I always wanted to respond by throwing myself on the floor and yelling "I don't want to be brave! Someone else do this!" I always wondered if they thought they loved their child more than I loved mine because I was being "so brave". I may not have been so "brave", but I had another little child who needed me in this world and I had to go on for his sake.

As time begins to heal our intense grief we realize that we are stronger than we think, and we carry on the best that we can. At first, we struggle on autopilot to get through the numbness and shock, try to rein in our anger when we hit the "anger" stage of grief, and day by day get a little stronger and more courageous. We also learn what really matters and who we can count on to be there for us and help us through the dark times.

Gradually we realize that God didn't "take" our child. We are not being punished or singled out for something we did or didn't do. Bad things just happen, and they can and do happen to good people.

Another quote that we hear is "what doesn't kill us makes us stronger". We might feel many times that we could die from grief and may want to, but here we are-stronger, braver, more compassionate, and more caring.

A thought that has brought me a lot of comfort is that God doesn't "take" our children-he welcomes them to Heaven. I sign off with another beautiful quote from Henry Ward Beecher, a reverend and social activist. He said "**Children are the hands by which we take hold of heaven**". Our children brought us a piece of heaven when they came to us, and we take comfort in the certainty we will someday join them in that heaven to which they have returned.

I pray for your continued strength and healing, and wish you comfort and healing in the sweet memories of your child or sibling-your "piece of heaven".

In friendship,

Nadine