

## Choosing to Mourn

Abraham had been married to Sarah for a long time, and Scripture tells us he mourned deeply when she died. He didn't hide his tears or cry privately, and he sought ways to honor her with a proper burial. No one was left wondering how he felt about her death. Life would never be the same again for him, and he allowed his grief to "go public." He would need to learn to live without her because the option of living in a pre-loss world was over. His grief would either transform him or destroy him, but it wouldn't leave him the same.

Abraham didn't always have the freedom to choose the roles he would play in life, but he could choose how to play the roles he was given. Circumstances wouldn't make or break him. The same hot water that hardens an egg softens a carrot. He always had choices about how he would respond.

The loved one we grieve now was given to us as a gift, not a right. We can choose to thank God for the joy he or she brought. We can choose to vacate the premises of the past by asking, "What kind of person do I want to become as I progress through this grief?" Practice doesn't make perfect; it makes permanent, and will continue to do what we have done in the past until we choose to learn another way. When we let go of something - or someone - we make room for something new. The pledge to never forget can become the pledge to never recover, but it's possible to give up the pain without giving up the precious memories.

Some of us are independent people who have always been givers, but now we need to receive. Giving is much easier than receiving. Choose to break ties one at a time. Clean out belongings when you are ready. Don't let others' discomfort be your guide. Only you can decide what you can handle. Choose what's important. Grief is not a bucket with a hole shot out of the bottom for all future joy to drain out. Your capacity for joy is far broader than you may realize now, and you can trust that God has sustained your life for a good purpose. Choose to cooperate with God in becoming all He has in mind for you.