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# “Finding Love Again”

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*On Beauty, Loss, and the Courage to Love Anew*

**by Oludare Akinbo**

*“A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” — Ecclesiastes 3:4 NKJV*

*“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” — Psalm 30:5 NKJV*

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## A Personal Note

*This reflection did not begin as a reflection. It began as a journey through the deepest loss of my life — the passing of my dear wife, Oluwatohungbogbo Tolulope Akinbo, my imzadi, on the 24th of April, 2024, after a year-long battle with leukaemia. She was the steady centre of my work, my service to God's people, my fatherhood, and every charity I served. When God called her home, I believed for a season that the story had ended.*

*It had not. The God who heals the brokenhearted led me, slowly and tenderly, to a love I had not been looking for — though, looking back, I see now that the Lord had placed her near us all along. Ruth Chidinma Egbujor stood faithfully beside my late wife and me through every stage of that long battle — from India to Lagos, from the ICU to the recovery at home — asking nothing but offering everything: her time, her resources, her heart, her presence. What had been a friendship spanning decades between our families became, in God's own quiet timing, a deep love. The journey to that recognition was not an easy one; yet in looking back it has proven to be the most natural, the most logical, and the only clear path God placed before me — and each day I see anew what a blessing, what a comfort, and what a joy she is to me and to my immediate family. We were married in December of 2025; she became Ruth Chidinma Akinbo, and I gave her the Yoruba name "Morenike" — "I have found one to cherish" — in grateful acknowledgment of God's gift in her.*

*It is offered here as both a meditation and a testimony. It is given to anyone walking the road from love, through loss, and back again — and to the God whose mercy made the road, in the end, bearable and beautiful.*

**— Oludare Akinbo**

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*This is a reflection on the gentlest and most fragile of journeys — the path from love, through loss, and back again to love. It does not pretend that grief is brief or that healing is simple; it does not minimise what is taken when a beloved is removed in what feels, to our finite human view, far too soon. But it dares, with Scripture, friendship, and grace as its companions, to say that love does not diminish in being multiplied. To love again, after love has been deeply lost, is not a betrayal of memory but its honouring — an act of courage that testifies to the enduring beauty of life and to the faithful kindness of the God who heals the brokenhearted.*

## The Beauty of Love

Life is a delicate weave of beauty and pain, love and loss. In its most radiant moments, life gifts us the sweetness of love — a bond so profound that it transcends words. To love and be deeply connected with another is to glimpse eternity, to feel the world soften and grow richer because someone else walks beside you. Their laughter lights up your soul, their presence becomes your safe harbour, and their love is a melody that lingers in your heart.

Scripture, from its very first chapters, places this gift at the centre of human experience. It is the first thing God called 'not good' to be without — the first absence He moved to fill. The companion was not added as a luxury; she was given as a necessity, drawn from his own side so that the two might become one flesh.

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*And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'*

— Genesis 2:18 NKJV

Love, when it comes in this form, carries an echo of Eden — a faint memory of the world as it was meant to be, where nothing is broken and no one is taken away too soon. And we who have known such love — the lingering glance across a crowded room, the hand reached for in the dark, the quiet thousand small kindnesses no other person on earth understood the weight of — we know what cannot be said in lesser words: we have been gifted with a glimpse of how God Himself loves His people, faithfully, particularly, by name.

## The Tragedy of Loss

Yet, life can turn bitterly tragic when a loved one departs too soon, their journey cut short, leaving behind a hollow ache. The world seems dimmer, the rhythm of life disrupted by the silence they leave behind.

Grief, sharp and unyielding, becomes a constant companion. Yet, even in this dark valley, faith offers a light of comfort and strength.

What grief does, those who have not yet walked through it cannot fully describe. It changes the very colour of ordinary days. The household that once held two now holds one. The chair across the breakfast table sits empty in a way no other empty chair has ever been empty. The phone call that does not come, the joke that no one else would have laughed at, the half of a thought finished only by a face that is no longer there — these are the small daily wounds that grief inflicts long after the funeral guests have gone home.

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*My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, 'Where is your God?'*

— Psalm 42:3 NKJV

Scripture does not deny any of this. The Psalms are unflinching about the weight of loss. The Lord Himself wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus, though He already knew the resurrection He was about to perform. The God of all comfort does not require us to pretend that the loss is small. He meets us in its full size.

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*Jesus wept.*

— John 11:35 NKJV

Two of the shortest words in Scripture, and among the most pastorally important. They confirm what every grieving heart suspects but is sometimes afraid to believe: that tears are not unbelief, that mourning is not weakness, and that the God we worship is no stranger to human sorrow.

## The God Who Heals the Brokenhearted

Before we speak further of hope, we must speak of the God in whose hands all hope is held. Scripture is unusually tender on this point. The God who is exalted above the heavens, who measures the seas in the hollow of His hand, who calls the stars by name — this same God stoops particularly close to the brokenhearted.

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*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.*

— Psalm 147:3 NKJV

The verb is gentle. He does not merely note our wounds; He binds them up. He does not merely observe our brokenness; He heals it. The picture is of a physician kneeling beside the wounded, hands moving with the unhurried care of one who knows exactly what to do for the kind of injury before Him. This is what the Lord Himself is to the bereaved — not a distant deity to whom we report our pain, but the very Healer who has come down to where we lie.

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*He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief... Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.*

— Isaiah 53:3-4 NKJV

And He is no stranger to what we feel. The prophet calls Him a Man of sorrows, one acquainted with grief. He has not loved us at a distance. He has walked the road of human loss Himself — weeping at tombs, weeping over cities, weeping in gardens. The God who heals the brokenhearted has known a broken heart of His own. There is no place in our grief He has not visited first. The cross is the proof and the seal of this: that when we walk through the valley, we walk where He has already walked, and we walk with His hand in ours.

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*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

— 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NKJV

And there is a multiplying purpose even to the comfort God gives. The comfort received in our trouble does not stop with us. It equips us to comfort others. The widow becomes a balm for other widows; the bereaved father becomes a steady presence for other bereaved fathers; the one who has walked through deep grief into renewed life becomes a witness — almost a sacrament — of what God can do. Our suffering, in His hands, is never wasted. It is the very material from which He fashions a ministry to others walking the same road.

## A Hope That Steadies Us

Paul's words remind us not to grieve 'as others who have no hope' (1 Thessalonians 4:13), for death is not the end. Faith reassures us of a future reunion, 'in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet...

the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality' (1 Corinthians 15:52–53). These promises anchor us in hope, a reminder that our loved ones are not lost but transformed, awaiting a glorious resurrection.

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*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

— 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 NKJV

The Christian hope is not denial of the grave but defiance of its finality. It does not say the grave is nothing; it says the grave is not the last word. The very Saviour who wept at the tomb stepped out of one Himself on the third day — and in doing so, He guaranteed that every grave belonging to His people will be opened, every loss reversed, every separation healed.

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*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*

— Revelation 21:4 NKJV

We carry our beloved into that day — not as memory only, but as anticipation. The reunion ahead is not a sentimental hope; it is a covenanted certainty, guaranteed by the empty tomb. For the believer, even in the deepest grief, there remains a foundation that cannot be moved: those who have died in Christ have not perished. They sleep — and they will rise.

## The Quiet Permission of Scripture

Before we speak of loving again, we must clear away a common burden: the unspoken belief that to do so would be to betray the one who has gone. This belief is not from Scripture. The Bible nowhere binds the bereaved to a permanent solitude as a token of fidelity. It says, with care and with kindness, the opposite.

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*A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.*

— 1 Corinthians 7:39 NKJV

Paul's instruction is not grudging permission; it is gentle release. The covenant of marriage, sacred and binding, is bounded by life itself. Death does not erase what was, but neither does it forbid what may yet be. The same apostle who teaches the indissolubility of marriage in life teaches its quiet release in death.

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*For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives.  
But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.*

— Romans 7:2 NKJV

Nor is this counsel of release a grim concession to weakness. Throughout Scripture the God who calls Himself the husband of widows (Isaiah 54:5) does not consign His grieving children to permanent winter. He invites them, in His own time and at His own pace, into the renewal of joy. The new love does not erase the old; it neither competes with it nor diminishes it. It rises in a different season of the same life — sometimes carrying the lessons of the first love forward, sometimes simply offering company for the rest of the road.

## The Tender Spark

And yet, there is another salve, one that requires courage and faith in life itself — the spark to love again. In time, the memory of loss grows less raw, not because the love is forgotten, but because life gently invites us to love anew. It is a tender spark, fragile yet persistent, that dares to glow even when fear looms large. To nurture it, to let it grow, is to risk the pain of loss again. But it is also to honour the memory of love lost, for love does not diminish; it multiplies.

We must be careful with this spark. It does not come like the first love — loud and certain and intoxicating. It comes quietly, often when we are not looking for it, often through an encounter we would have dismissed as inconsequential. It hesitates. It almost apologises for arriving. And yet — if we are honest — it brings with it the same God-given warmth that the first love brought, recognisable in its shape if not in its volume.

To welcome it is not to forget. To welcome it is not to replace. Love, in the divine economy, is not a finite resource that must be guarded jealously among the few it has touched. It is a fire that lights other fires without diminishing its own flame. The candle held by the bereaved beside the candle of a new love does not steal light from the first — it adds light to a room that was, until then, far too dark.

## Honouring the One Who Has Gone

There is a question that haunts every grieving heart that begins, however quietly, to consider loving again: have I been faithful enough? Have I grieved long enough? Am I dishonouring them by even allowing the thought? The answer Scripture gives, and that pastoral wisdom confirms across the generations, is that honouring the one who has gone is not measured by how long we refuse the future. It is measured by what we carry forward from the past.

The love we shared with the departed is not lost when we move forward. The lessons they taught us, the strength they gave us, the patience and tenderness and laughter and faith they shaped in us — these go with us into every relationship that follows. The widow who learned hospitality from her husband carries that hospitality into a second marriage. The widower whose first wife taught him how to listen does not unlearn listening when he loves again. He multiplies it. The legacy of the first love is most truly honoured when it shapes how we love everyone we love thereafter.

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*So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate.*

— 2 Samuel 12:20 NKJV

David's servants were astonished. He had grieved with such intensity while the child was alive, refusing food, lying on the ground. Then the child died, and he rose, washed, worshipped, and ate. When they asked him why, he answered with the kind of clarity grief sometimes produces: 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' The grief was real. The future was also real. Both were honoured — the one by the depth of his sorrow, the other by his willingness to rise from the ground and live the next chapter of his life.

Those we have loved and lost, were they speaking from the place where they now rest, would not ask us to spend the rest of our days in darkness on their behalf. They would, with a love larger than the grave, urge us toward the light. The most faithful way to honour them is to live the kind of life they would have blessed — a life that includes joy, includes presence, and, when God so leads, includes the gift of love once more.

## Biblical Witnesses to Love Renewed

Scripture is not silent on the question of love renewed after loss. It does not give us only doctrine; it gives us examples — men and women whose stories tell us, gently, that the road we walk is not without footprints.

## Eve and the Gift of Seth

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*And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, 'For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.'*

— Genesis 4:25 NKJV

Before the patriarchs, before the kings, before any other story in Scripture, Eve gives us the first words about loss and the gift that follows it. She had buried Abel — not in any ordinary loss, but by the hand of his own brother. The grief that opened with that murder must have been the first true grief in human history. And then God gave her Seth.

Notice the precision of her words. She does not say 'God has given me a son to replace Abel,' as though the new gift erased the old loss. She names Abel explicitly — 'instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.' The new child is appointed, given, gracious — but he stands alongside the memory of the one she lost, not in his place. From the very first chapter after the Fall, Scripture establishes the pattern that the rest of the Bible will confirm: loss can coexist with new gift; the memory of one love can stand alongside the receiving of another; comfort does not require forgetting.

## Abraham After Sarah

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*Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah.*

— Genesis 25:1 NKJV

The patriarch of faith stands as one of the clearest biblical examples of a widower entering into love a second time. He buried Sarah at Hebron, mourning her with the weight she deserved (Genesis 23). She had been his companion for nearly a century, the mother of the promised son, the woman whose laugh at the angels' word God had not forgotten and had turned into the very name of Isaac. Her death was no small loss in the patriarchal story.

And yet, after the mourning, Abraham took a wife — Keturah — and had six further sons by her (Genesis 25:1–2). The text does not apologise. It does not explain. It records, with the matter-of-fact simplicity Scripture often reserves for its most theologically important moments, that the man who buried the wife of his youth lived on, loved again, and was blessed again. The father of all who believe did exactly the thing this reflection explores, and the Spirit who inspired Genesis preserved the account for us.

## Isaac After Sarah

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*Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*

— **Genesis 24:67 NKJV**

This third witness sits a little differently. Isaac's loss was filial rather than spousal — his beloved mother rather than a beloved wife — and the comfort came through marriage rather than remarriage. But the principle Scripture is showing is the same. The man who had buried his mother was led by the providence of God to a new love. The text does not pretend that Sarah was forgotten. It pretends nothing. It simply records that Isaac was comforted — and the comfort came in the form of Rebekah's love. Scripture sees no contradiction in this. The same heart that had grieved a mother became the heart that loved a wife. Love, in whatever form God gives it, can be His instrument for the binding of grief.

## Boaz and Ruth

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*So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.*

— **Ruth 4:13 NKJV**

Both came to that marriage marked by loss. Boaz was an established man whose history Scripture only hints at, but who had clearly known his own seasons. Ruth had buried a husband in Moab and walked, with her widowed mother-in-law, into a foreign country with no promise of what lay ahead. By every transactional measure, neither was 'starting over' with the lightness of youth. They were, instead, two people whom God brought together in His providence — and from that union came Obed, and Jesse, and David, and ultimately the Christ Himself. Love renewed after loss became, in God's hands, the very line of redemption.

## Job's Latter End

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*Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning... So Job died, old and full of days.*

— **Job 42:12, 17 NKJV**

Job lost everything — his children, his wealth, his health. And God, in His sovereign mercy, restored him. He did not forget his first ten children; the text never asks him to. But he was given new children, new joy, new days. The pattern God works in His own people is not erasure. It is multiplication. The latter days were not better because the earlier ones were forgotten, but because grief, in the hands of God, is never the final chapter.

## Naomi from Bitter to Full

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*Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty.*

— Ruth 1:20-21 NKJV

Naomi did not lose a spouse in our usual sense — she lost a husband and then both her sons in succession, within a foreign country, with nothing to bring home but the daughter-in-law who refused to leave her. The desolation she returned to Bethlehem with was complete. ‘Call me Mara,’ she told her people — Mara meaning bitter — ‘for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.’ At that moment, no future of any kind seemed possible.

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*Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a near kinsman... He shall be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age.*

— Ruth 4:14-15 NKJV

Yet by the closing chapter of the book that bears Ruth’s name, the women of Bethlehem are speaking these words over Naomi. The bitter has become full. The empty has become blessed. Naomi did not love again in the romantic sense — but God, in His mercy, restored to her the company, the family, the future that grief had taken. Whether the restoration God works comes by remarriage or by the new community He forms around a widow’s later years, the pattern of His grace is the same: He does not leave us in Mara. He brings us, at His own pace and in His own way, into fullness once more.

## When Love Comes Quietly: How to Recognise It

How do we know when love is coming again? Few questions are more delicate, because the heart in grief is not always a reliable witness about itself. There are seasons when it longs prematurely for a substitute,

mistaking loneliness for love. There are also seasons when it refuses what God is plainly offering, mistaking godly invitation for temptation. The bereaved need help — from Scripture, from godly counsel, from the steady ministry of the Holy Spirit — to discern between the two.

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*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

— James 1:17 NKJV

The good gift comes from above. It is recognisable not by the absence of doubt — for the bereaved heart questions everything — but by the presence of peace that grows the more we bring the question to the Lord. Scripture does not give us a formula, but it does give us patterns. The love that comes from God tends to carry certain marks. It comes with peace, not with restless urgency. It comes with the agreement of trusted, godly counsellors, not over their warnings. It comes in a way that honours the memory of the first love rather than treating it as a competitor. It is patient, not pressured. It does not ask us to bury our grief; it walks beside us as we carry it.

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*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

— Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV

The acknowledgement of God in our ways is the protection against deceiving ourselves. The bereaved heart, even when it is genuinely encountering the new gift God is giving, must keep bringing the matter to prayer, to Scripture, to the discernment of trusted friends and mentors in the faith. The love that is from God will not be rushed; nor will it shrink from honest examination. It will, if it is His, prove itself slowly, gently, and with the deepening of peace rather than the noise of certainty.

## God's Hands and Feet

True friends become God's hands and feet, holding us up when we falter, surrounding us with love, and reminding us that we are not alone in our pain — or in our hope. They encourage us to embrace life's fragile beauty, to open our hearts to new connections even when fear whispers of life's uncertainty.

There is a particular grace God reserves for the season of grief — the grace of human company. He does not ask us to walk this road alone. He sends friends, often more faithful than we deserve, to do for us what He could do directly but chooses to do through them. They sit with us in the silence. They make meals when

we cannot. They speak our beloved's name when no one else will. They wait beside us when we have nothing to give back.

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*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

— Galatians 6:2 NKJV

And among these friends, some will be appointed, in the providence of God, to do the most delicate ministry of all: to gently encourage our hearts toward life again. They will not push. They will not rush. But when the time has come, when the tender spark has begun to glow, they will be there — to see it, to bless it, to make a way for it. The body of Christ, at its best, is the very tent within which the Lord brings new life out of seasons that looked like the end of all things.

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*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.*

— Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NKJV

## Rooted and Grounded: The Soil in Which Grief Does Not Become Despair

When grief strikes, what makes the difference between the bereaved who walks through and the one who is broken under it? The question is unavoidable for anyone who has watched two believers receive comparable losses and respond entirely differently. The Lord Himself gave the answer before any of us asked it, in the parable of the four soils.

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*But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

— Matthew 13:20-23 NKJV

The Lord's diagnosis is precise: 'no root in himself.' The seed that withered in the sun was not betrayed by the sun; it was betrayed by the shallowness of the soil. So it is with grief. Loss comes to all. The waves and the wind do not select for the unfaithful; they break upon the rooted and the unrooted alike. The difference is what is there beneath the surface when they come.

Two clarifications belong here, both important. The first is that rootedness is not the absence of grief. Job, the most thoroughly rooted believer in the Old Testament outside the Lord Himself, cursed the day of his birth and sat seven days in the ashes. David wrote some of the darkest songs in Scripture. Heman the Ezrahite wrote Psalm 88, the bleakest cry in the whole Psalter, and the Holy Spirit inspired it. Even the Lord wept at His friend's tomb and asked, in the garden, that the cup pass. The deeply rooted are deeply affected. What rootedness gives is not the anaesthesia of the dark valley but the anchor that holds while the dark valley passes.

The second clarification is that rootedness is not the same as the accumulation of biblical knowledge. The Pharisees knew the Scriptures thoroughly and used them to crucify the Word made flesh. Knowledge informs the head; rootedness shapes the person. The seed must not only enter the soil; it must go down. That work is not done in a day or in a crisis. It is done over the slow years — of prayer that has become breath, of Scripture lived as well as read, of communion sustained when it is dry, of obedience kept when it is costly. The believer who arrives at the hour of catastrophe with this formation already worked into the soil discovers, sometimes to his own surprise, that something holds.

The thorns deserve their own attention, because they are subtler than either the wayside or the stone. The Lord names them precisely: 'the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word.' They do not deny the seed; they crowd it out. They do not pull the believer from the faith; they pull the faith into a smaller and smaller share of the believer's attention. By the time grief strikes, the soil that was meant to be rich has become hard and shallow and full of competing roots. The remedy is not crisis-management. It is the patient pulling-up of thorns long before the hour of testing arrives.

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*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*

— Colossians 2:6-7 NKJV

Paul names the work in three movements — rooted, built up, established — and adds a fourth: abounding in it with thanksgiving. The rooted are characterised by gratitude even before the storm. They have learned to give thanks for daily mercies they have not yet had to lose to discover. That, too, is part of how the soil becomes deep.

And roots are nourished by what is around them, not only by what is above. From the moment God declared in Eden that it was not good for the man to be alone, He has expected the believer's life to be lived in a community of others walking the same road. Two are better than one. Iron sharpens iron. Let us consider one another to stir up love and good works. A companion of like-minded faith does not replace the personal work; he or she enriches it. A friendship of two unrooted hearts becomes mutual decay; a friendship of two rooted hearts, in the season of grief, becomes one of the most powerful instruments God has on earth for the binding of wounds.

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*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

— Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV

The biblical witnesses already met in this reflection bear out the pattern. Job lost everything and yet, before any restoration came, said 'though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.' Naomi returned bitter as Mara and was given fullness in time. David buried more than one son and rose from the ground to worship in the house of the Lord. Paul's afflictions did not crush him because they worked 'a far more exceeding and

eternal weight of glory.' Each was deeply affected. None was destroyed. The difference was the depth of their roots in the One who is faithful even when the storm has taken everything visible.

The same pattern has held in every century since. Horatio Spafford, sailing across the very Atlantic where his four daughters had drowned, wrote 'When peace, like a river, attendeth my way... it is well, it is well with my soul' — the hymn itself the testimony of a soil too deep for the waves to reach. Joni Eareckson Tada, paralysed at seventeen, has walked five decades of profound suffering with rooted faith, and has freely told the world about her own dark seasons in the process; her witness confirms what Scripture has always taught — that the rooted are not exempt from the dark valley, but they are held in it. Festo Kivengere, the Ugandan Anglican bishop who buried many of his closest companions in the terror years of Idi Amin, wrote a small book whose title bears the testimony of the soil beneath it: *I Love Idi Amin*. The title was not flippant. It was the precise testimony of a faith that grief and the threat of martyrdom had tested and could not uproot.

What these witnesses hold in common is not the size of the platform or the public visibility, but the slow, hidden, daily work of rootedness — done before the storm arrives, sustained while the storm rages, and drawn upon for the rest of a life that is still being lived for the glory of God. That work is open to every reader of these pages. It is, in the end, what most determines whether grief deepens into despair or whether it deepens, by grace, into a more reverent love for the God who heals the brokenhearted.

#### COMPANION RESOURCES FOR THE JOURNEY

*This reflection is offered alongside two longer companion works by the same author. *Finding God in Grief* explores in fuller detail the many aspects of the journey through loss — the early shock, the long valley, the slow healing, and the strange new shape of life on the other side. The *52 Weeks Devotional* that follows it is a year-long companion designed to be walked at one's own pace.*

*Both are intended for two readers at once: the one carrying recent grief, who needs Scripture, language, and gentle company for the road; and the one who has not yet known such loss but who, in time, will either walk that road himself or be asked to walk beside someone he loves who is walking it. To learn the tools of grief before one needs them is among the wisest preparations a believer can make — and one of the most loving things a friend can do for the friend who will one day need them.*

## What the Heart Must Lay Down

If love is to come again, the heart must lay down certain weights it has been carrying — some of them sacred, some of them poisonous, all of them needing to be surrendered to the Lord before the new can be received.

## The Burden of Guilt

The first weight is the guilt of feeling new joy. Many who have loved deeply and lost cannot, at first, allow themselves to laugh again. To smile feels like betrayal; to feel the heart stir for another feels like infidelity. But this is not biblical wisdom. The God who counted Isaac's joy with Rebekah as a comfort would not also call it a sin. The covenant of love, sealed unto death, is honoured by death's sundering of it — not violated by what comes after. The departed beloved, if they could speak from beyond the grave, would not ask us to spend the rest of our days in darkness on their behalf. They would, with a love larger than the grave, urge us toward the light.

## The Fear of Loving Again

The second weight is fear. To love is to risk loss; to love after loss is to risk loss with full and bitter knowledge of what loss costs. The heart, having been broken once, often guards itself with a vigilance the unbroken heart never needed. Yet love does not flourish under glass. The same God who gave the first love gives the second, and He is not less faithful in the giving. The fear is reasonable — but it is not final, and it must not be allowed to make our decisions for us.

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*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.*

— 1 John 4:18 NKJV

## The Idol of Permanence

The third weight is subtler. It is the unspoken belief that the love we lost was the only love possible — that nothing can ever equal it, that to receive a different love would be to dishonour the first. This is not love speaking; it is grief still wearing love's face. The faithfulness of the heart to one love is not measured by its refusal of every subsequent one. It is measured by the love it carries forward into whatever God still has for us. Two loves can be true. Both can be honoured. Neither is diminished by the existence of the other.

## The Mystery of Divine Orchestration

When love comes again, those who have walked through grief often look back and find, with a kind of holy astonishment, that the encounter was prepared long before they knew they were ready for it. The meeting that seemed like chance was, on quiet examination, providence. The friend who had stood quietly nearby for years was suddenly recognised. The unexpected source proved, in retrospect, to be the most logical and most divinely ordered.

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*Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.*

— **Ruth 2:3 NKJV**

Scripture notes the word with deliberate irony. Ruth ‘happened to come’ to Boaz’s field. Of all the fields in Bethlehem, she ‘happened’ to glean in the one belonging to the very kinsman-redeemer who would become her husband and the great-grandfather of David. There is no chance here. There is only the patient choreography of a sovereign God who knew every step of the road before either of them set out on it.

### **A QUIET REMINDER FROM THE STORY OF RUTH**

*The smallest words in Scripture often carry the largest theology. The Hebrew text betrays the irony: there is no chance with God. The encounters that change our lives are choreographed long before we step into them. The hand that arranged Rebekah’s well, that placed Boaz in the right field at the right hour, that put Mary in the path of Joseph — that same hand is still arranging meetings, still placing people in fields, still timing arrivals to the very heartbeat of His providence.*

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*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

— **Romans 8:28 NKJV**

The God who promises to work all things together for good does not exclude grief from that work. He weaves it in. The losses we could not have chosen become, in His hands, the very means by which He brings us to a future we could not have imagined. This is no glib resolution; it is not a denial of how hard the road has been. It is the deeper truth that lies beneath the road: God is at work, always, and especially in the places where we feel He has stopped working.

## Reflections for the One Standing at This Crossroad

If you are reading this in a season where loss is fresh, or where loss has long sat heavy and the heart is beginning, quietly, to wonder if life might still hold more — sit with these questions. There is no rush. There is no formula. There is only the patient listening that allows the Lord to lead you, in His own time, into His own goodness.

### **1** Have I given grief its proper room?

There is no hurrying it, no shortcut, no spiritual bypass that honours God. Have I allowed myself to weep, to remember, to feel the weight, before I have asked whether the weight is beginning to lift?

### **2** Am I confusing remembering with refusing?

There is a way of holding the memory of love that honours it; there is also a way of holding it that prevents life from continuing. Which am I doing? Does my remembering open me to gratitude — or close me to grace?

### **3** Have I let trusted friends speak into this season?

The body of Christ exists, in part, to do this very work — to see us, to know us, to encourage us toward life when we cannot encourage ourselves. Who have I let near enough to do this ministry?

### **4** Is the fear of further loss controlling more than the hope of further love?

It is not weakness to be afraid. But it is wisdom to ask whether fear has become my keeper rather than my counsellor.

### **5** Am I weighing what I find by Scripture, or only by feeling?

Feelings are real but they are not always true. What does the Word actually say about loving again? What permission, what blessing, what warning does it give?

**6** **Have I quietly forbidden the Spirit's nudge?**

There are gentle invitations from God in seasons like this — a thought, an encouragement, a tender turn of the heart. Have I welcomed them, or have I, out of guilt or fear, refused them as if they were not from Him?

**7** **Am I receiving love when it is offered, or only watching it from a distance?**

To be loved again is to allow oneself to be known again — vulnerably, fully, without the armour grief tends to leave behind. Am I willing to take the armour off?

**8** **Have I taken my whole heart to the Lord?**

The whole heart — the grief, the guilt, the longing, the hesitation, the hope. Have I laid it all before Him, or am I still trying to manage some of it on my own?

**9** **Am I willing to trust His timing rather than mine?**

Some who have grieved want love again before the heart is ready; others delay long past the moment of readiness. Both are forms of refusing the Lord's pace. Am I willing to receive His timing, neither rushing it nor resisting it?

**10** **If the Lord is bringing love, am I ready to bless it rather than fear it?**

The Lord who gave the first love gives the second. To bless what He gives — to thank Him openly, to step into it with worship and not only with caution — is itself an act of faith and of gratitude.

## A Final Word

Though the loss may bend us, it cannot break us. With faith as our foundation and friends as our pillars, we rise again. We carry the memories of our loved ones forward, honouring their legacy by daring to love and live fully. For love, like faith, is an act of courage — a testament to life's enduring beauty even in the face of its deepest tragedies.

*Before the empty chair grew familiar, the empty chair was a wound.*

*Before the laughter returned, the silence was the only sound.*

*Before the heart dared the second love, the heart had to be told by God that the first was not betrayed.*

*Before the new joy could enter, the old grief had to be held — fully, honestly, and without shame.*

*Before Isaac was comforted, his mother's tent had to remain empty long enough for the Lord to send a way.*

And so we walk this road with both hands open: one still holding the memory of the love that was given and taken, the other slowly, carefully, daring to receive the love that God in His mercy is giving now. We do not choose between them. We honour both, because the same God gave both, and the same Christ holds both in His hands.

Beauty for ashes. The oil of joy for mourning. The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. This is the work the Lord has appointed for those who weep in Zion — not the forgetting of their sorrow, but its slow, faithful transformation into a new kind of beauty.

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*To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.*

— Isaiah 61:3 NKJV