

HEARTPRINTS

As I wrestle once again with an acute sense of isolation and loneliness of living with a neurological disorder that makes simple communication so difficult, it would be so easy to just give up. As I struggle to enunciate my words while many people equally struggle to understand me, it would be so tempting to give in to despair. Being the "people person" that I am, it's very hard to no longer be able to communicate normally. It is very disheartening to feel so alone and sometimes deeply misunderstood. How often I long for my normal mouth, voice, and eyelids back!

As in times past, the Holy Spirit again led me to the book I needed to uplift my aching heart during this winter season of my life. In "C.S. Lewis...Through the Shadowlands" Brian Sibley shares the true story behind the movie, "Shadowlands," the story of C.S. Lewis's life with Joy Davidman. Most of their four-year marriage was lived under the cloud of Joy's cancer. But Joy's son, Doug, said after Joy's death, "**There were never two people alive in the history of the world, who were more in love than Jack and Joy.**" (Bold print mine). Jack's love for Joy---and the pain which was part of it---deepened with every passing day. "Through the Shadowlands" is literally a touching tribute to a couple whose faith, hope, and love blossomed through hardship.

But upon losing Joy, C.S. Lewis finds himself shipwrecked by grief, marooned on an island of doubts. He finds his faith questioned, his convictions challenged, and his beliefs assailed. For sixty years he had avoided his emotions. Joy, however had pried open the protective covering and exposed the real person inside. It had proved to be a glorious and far from traumatic experience. Then with unbelievable cruelty, pain and suffering had followed. For the first time in his life, her death found him unprepared, defenseless, and totally devastated. In addition to grieving the loss of his wife, Joy, he was also grieving for the first time the loss of his mother when he was nine.

He sat in his study with bookcases all around him, stacked double deep with books, including some he had written, to which millions had turned for comfort. "There they stand: volume upon volume, page after page, paragraph after paragraph of insight and wisdom on matters of faith and belief, all of which are utterly useless to the man who wrote them," writes Sibley.

"Where is God?" Lewis asks. "Go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You might as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence." This is the same man who had written earlier, "Look for yourself, and you will find, in the long run, only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. **But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.**" (Bold print mine). Why and how could such certainty turn to doubt and utter despair?

What C.S. Lewis discovered was that **IN ORDER TO HEAL IT...YOU HAVE TO FEEL IT.** He began to journal his feelings of loss and seemingly unbearable grief and experienced a measure of healing...and the restoration of his faith. One of his best-selling books, "A Grief Observed" was birthed out of the travail of his soul in experiencing the greatest loss of his life, his beloved Joy. So during this acute wintry season of my life, once again I pray, "**O Holy Spirit, don't let me waste my pain in this winter season. Empower me to let go and let God use it creatively and redemptively for His glory.**"

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