

JOY IN THE MORNING

Overcoming Grief and Trials

Barbara Hanna

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By Barbara Hanna
(Information about the author
may be found on page 265.)

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Foreword by Terry M. Hightower

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my granddaughter,
Sophie, in memory of her mother, Angie.

Angela Michelle (Hanna) Lee
June 10, 1970 - August 30, 2003

While at college, Angie wrote this
letter to me, and it is now framed:

Mom.... I just wanted to drop you a short note and remind you how much I love you and appreciate you. You do so much for me and brought me up so well. I am so thankful I had you as a mother. God blessed me. I know I 've told you before – but the things you said to me contributed the most to my decision to put God before all else. In my hardest times I try to hear what you would say to me. I love you so much and I will strive to follow your footsteps and someday we will meet in heaven and be happy forever. I love you.

And also in Memory of:

Mark Christopher Wills
February 14, 1964 - January 4, 1984

Robert Kyle Wood
January 3, 1980 - November 3, 1999

FOREWORD

By Terry M. Hightower

If you have read books on grief before, you will find this volume to be very different from most of the others. *Joy In The Morning* is a handbook written for those who are suffering from any kind of deep emotional bereavement caused by the death of someone through circumstances that are somewhat out of the ordinary events of life, such as losing one who was seemingly "taken before their time." It was also written for those who desire to understand (to whatever degree they can) what their friends are undergoing spiritually, physically and emotionally who have suffered just such a loss. Upon its completion, you will better be able to fulfill Paul's admonition to "weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15).

This book has been written by a Christian sister who has "been there" in the depths of tremendous and strongly felt personal loss. Predictably, this work will sometimes be "tough going." So keep a box of tissues close at hand, for likely you will cry for Barbara (or her family) or perhaps because the intimate details which she shares bring back old feelings of a similar sorrowful event in your own life. Yet, with these tears, you will probably experience a "good" kind of catharsis or downloading which will assist you in growing spiritually closer to the Lord.

Quite significantly, Barbara knows that our eternal existence is at stake here! As she points out, "the dreaded call" becomes a turning point (i.e., either as an instrumental good or an instrumental evil) driving us further into God's loving arms or away from Him—depending upon our reaction to it. In reading this treatise, those presently experiencing great sorrow and

seemingly ensnared in it will hopefully be enabled to place what happened (which sometimes almost uncontrollably plays over and over in one's mind) in a less accessible or less painful "drawer" of memories. Yet, no shallow attempt is made to merely numb the mind or to totally "block out" unpleasant recollections. Instead, the reader is helped to place the loss in proper (and ultimate) perspective by seeing it Biblically and through the eyes of one who has lived the roller-coaster ride of extreme sadness.

Barbara Hanna has extensive experience in teaching God's Word and has written many great materials for God's people, all from her perspective of endeavoring to restore New Testament Christianity in our present age (2 Tim. 1:13). Though the idea that we must measure every detail of life in the light of Scripture, even personal crisis and grief, is incomprehensible to humanistic thought, Barbara still doggedly clings to the notion of John 17:17: "Thy Word is truth." The Bible is the basis and contains the criteria by which she seeks to make every judgment. I have no higher compliment to offer than to say that I believe *Joy In The Morning* to be extremely practical and written from the perspective of one who loves God, truly knows the Bible, and has personally experienced "weeping that endureth for a night." Therefore, I can wholeheartedly commend this work for personal study at home or in the classroom, and for use in personal work.

Editor's Note: Terry M. Hightower is an evangelist and author, presently preaching for the church of Christ at Vega, Texas, where he and his wife, Vicki, reside. He graduated from Harding University with a B.A. in Social Science Education and a M.A. in Christian Evidences. He has preached for several congregations and has directed lectureships, editing the lectureship books. He also served as an instructor for the Florida School of preaching.

PREFACE

To those who have recently experienced the tragic death of a close loved one, I want to caution you as you begin reading this book. The first two chapters are very graphic regarding my own experience. If that will only cause you anguish, please skip over those first few pages of both chapters until you have more time to recover.

However, for some, reading about another Christian who has remained faithful to God in spite of pain and suffering may be a comfort. Following Angie's death, I clung to the realization that John and Pat Wills were strong Christians, still actively serving God, although they had lost a son many years earlier. I believe that if I had read a book similar to this one a few weeks after Angie's death, I would have cried and cried – but at the same time I would have grown stronger and more able to bear my own trials.

In fact, that is why I have written this book. It is the type of book I sought, but could not find – written by a faithful Christian. I did not want to read only the factual words about how to recover by leaning on God – although they are extremely vital! Yet it was needful for me to comprehend how those Bible teachings are actualized in the heart of a suffering Christian.

Another reason for writing this book is to open the eyes of those who have never lost a close loved one. Joe told me, "I always felt sorry for.... (name of a person who lost a child), but I never realized how much it hurts until it happened to me."

Joy in the Morning: Overcoming Grief and Trials is a good book to give to a Christian friend who is suffering due to the death of a loved one, a recent or impending

divorce, the loss of a job, the discovery of a terminal illness, or any other trial. Congregations can uplift members by giving books to those who are grieving.

This book is recommended for Ladies' Bible Class as well as for personal study. Here are some suggestions:

If you are studying this on your own, I recommend reading through from cover to cover the first time without taking time to answer the questions. Then go back and study it carefully, with an open Bible, answering the questions at the end of each chapter.

If you have recently faced the death of a child (young or old), go directly to Appendix E. Consider the thoughts as you plan your own recovery. Then begin with Chapter 1.

If you lost a child who was a parent to one of your grandchildren, read Appendix E and F first. Then go back to the beginning of the book.

If you are not a member of the churches of Christ, please know that I care about you, and so does the person who gave you this book, if you did not purchase it yourself. I am not your judge. If this book was given to you, the person who gave you the book is not your judge. Jesus said:

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (john 5:22,28,29).

It is my prayer that you are like the Bereans of whom Paul wrote, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). All I ask of you is that you study God’s Word and determine the Truth based upon what you read.

Bible Class Teachers are encouraged to read through the entire book before teaching. Then try to keep at least one chapter ahead of your students.

Plan to devote at least two classes to each chapter. However, be careful not to let things drag along, causing class participants to lose interest. Stress to your students the necessity of reading the text of the chapter being studied prior to the first class. Then ask that they answer all of the questions before you teach the second class on the same chapter.

As you prepare for a class, jot down the main points you plan to cover. It is recommended that if you have a large class, or if you don’t know all of the students well, you could write each scripture reference you would like to have read on a small piece of paper. Each reference should be numbered (in the order you plan to cover them in class). As the students arrive, ask those who don’t mind reading to take one of the papers and find the passage, marking it with the paper so it can be quickly found. When you call out each number, the specified student will read her verse(s). This avoids the uncomfortable pauses created by teachers who do not assign reading, but instead ask, “Who would like to read this passage?”

In the chapter regarding the lost, there may be some students who experience deep sorrow over a loved one who was not saved. Spend time covering the fact that if we live long enough, we will all at some point face

the death of a lost loved one. Although we believe the person has entered eternal punishment, we must focus on the knowledge that he or she would never want us to be there, too. Like the rich man who wanted his loved ones to be warned, our lost friends and relatives would tell us to accept God's Truth and **obey it!**

As a teacher, please stress to your students that one goal in studying the book is to assist each class member as she strives to overcome trials in life. A second goal is to experience empathy for those who have recently lost close loved ones – or maybe not even recently – because when the death is a child or another very close relative or friend, the suffering may be difficult to bear for several years. This book emphasizes the strong bond between brothers and sisters in Christ, and shows how God wants us to comfort one another. If the suffering is related to another type of trial, the strength provided by other Christians is equally important.

Special Thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped me proofread this book. Special thanks to Christy Weakland and Vicki and Terry Hightower for their help and advice throughout the writing of the book. However, I want to specify that any errors are my responsibility alone.

Terry Hightower has my deep appreciation for writing the "Foreword" to this book. We met many years ago when he was preaching for the Shenandoah church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas. He asked me to speak to the women at the Third Annual Shenandoah Lectures in February of 1989. He edited the lectureship book. I spoke on "Humanistic and New Age Influences In the Church and the Christian

Woman's Responsibility," and my article with this title also appears in the book.

We kept in touch now and then over the years. When Angie died, Vicki contacted me to offer their sympathy. She told me of her personal losses and the struggles she experienced, letting me know that I would heal with time. They both have my respect for their stand for the Truth.

Many thanks to the individuals who allowed me to include their stories in the appendices. John K. Wills and Lisa Smith both wrote about grieving after the death of a child, and told about how they and their spouses remained faithful to God throughout their struggles. Cindy Wood told me about the death of Kyle, her son, and how she and her husband handled grieving. I wrote it to the best of my ability, and let them look it over for approval. Bob Spurlin graciously allowed me to use one of his monthly e-mail messages, which I believe readers will find to be very uplifting. His wife and entire family have been a tremendous help and comfort to Bob both through the grieving process and also during the time he has been suffering from MS.

Dorene Carter is a dear friend who is mentioned in the pages of this book. She had faith in my writing abilities from the start. Over the years she has been my most ardent supporter. Her encouragement has kept me going when I might have given up otherwise. I can't count the times when I called her on the phone to read a paragraph or sentence to get her opinion or advice. She taught me with great patience and love. When Angie died, she grieved with me just as a mother would grieve with a daughter over the death of a granddaughter.

To my own mother, I want to offer deep gratitude for the happy childhood she provided, which is a foundation for a stable and productive life. One of my fondest character-building memories is the joy of reading God's Word and keeping track of the chapters I read on the hand written chart she made for me. She taught me at an early age that there is more joy in giving than in receiving.

Closest to my heart is my husband, Joe, who became a Christian in 1994. He is truly the love of my life. Not once did he complain about all the money I was spending on publishing Bible lessons for children, knowing that I was supplementing my Hanna Publications earnings with some of the income from my home day care. Most of all, I want to thank Joe for his patience and love when our daughter died. We leaned on each other, and our love grew deeper. Then he willingly gave up an excellent job in Eudora, Kansas so we could move to Texas to help care for our granddaughter, Sophie. I thank God for this wonderful husband!

To My Readers

Many thanks to each person who bought this book to read or to give to a friend. Thanks to all who take the time to study these chapters. It is my prayer that your life will benefit from this study of God's Word.

I know that some of you are experiencing the depths of sorrow. Even though I can't talk to you individually, I hope you will hear me speaking to you through the pages of this book.

Unfortunately, I do not have time to write each of you a personal letter. If you write to me, please understand why I cannot reply. I have many writing and publishing goals I hope to attain in my remaining

years on this earth. One goal is to offer an entire curriculum for age two through eighth grade. Another is to write additional books for adults.

If you want to order books for friends, please call your favorite Christian bookstore, or order from one of my web sites:

www.joyinthemorn.com
www.hannapublications.com

The Hanna Publications web site also provides information about the children's Bible lesson books I have written and published, as well as many I have published that were written by other Christians. It is my goal to expand the "Joy Web Site" in the years ahead to offer more teaching for those who are going through trials in life. Lisa Smith is preparing packets to assist parents of autistic children. Hopefully the site will be a method of reaching others (besides those who are overcoming grieving for a close loved one) who are seeking joy in their lives.

Many thanks to Pam Hinds for creating both the Hanna Publications web site and the "Joy Web Site." If you are looking for a web hostess, I am happy to recommend her to you! Her web site is:

www.aperfecthost.biz

May God be with each person who is truly seeking to do His will. Whether or not we ever meet on this earth, I pray that we will meet in heaven.

INTRODUCTION

THE CALL...THE DREADED CALL.... It comes to all of us if we live long enough. It may not be a phone call, but somehow the message is delivered. Those words are forever embedded into our brain as if they had been seared into it with a red-hot branding iron: "He's gone." "She didn't make it." "I'm sorry, but...."

In a few short minutes – minutes that seem like an eternity – our lives are unalterably changed. The question then is: Will I let Satan use my grief to weaken my faith so he can snatch me away from God, or will I draw closer to God as a result of this heart-shattering experience?

There is a Bible passage, which has always been meaningful to me. It proclaims the truth that God comforts His faithful Christians when a loved one passes from this earth. As a result, God gives us the strength to pass it on, comforting other Christians in their time of grief. This Bible passage has truly been woven into the fabric of my life:

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God
(2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

Joy in the Morning is not intended to be a listing of all of the stages of grieving, although if you have studied those stages, you will find that I have probably gone through most of them. Nor am I a counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist. If you need more help

than this book can offer, please seek it at the earliest possible moment.

By seeking psychological assistance when you are struggling emotionally, you are no less a Christian than you are by seeking physical assistance when you are physically ill. Realizing that you must get help when you have a 105-degree fever does not indicate that if your fever is below 105 degrees you are in perfect health. So please don't say to yourself, "Well, I can get out of bed in the morning, and I don't cry all day, so I don't need medication or any type of therapy."

Certainly we can never heal completely without the help of the Great Physician. As we study God's Word we learn that Jesus "...was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Jesus is our High Priest who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb. 4:14, 7:22-28, especially v. 25). God the Father is the one to whom we pray. We do not "tell it to Jesus alone," as the words of one song might indicate. Our Father hears and answers our prayers.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Paul further illuminates us:

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:20).

As an older brother might plead our cause to an earthly father, because he has gone through a similar situation, Jesus likewise intercedes for us to our

Heavenly Father. Jesus understands what we are going through. He pleads our case because we are His adopted brothers and sisters. When Lazarus died, and our Lord saw the sorrow Lazarus' sisters were experiencing, "Jesus wept" (John 11:11-46). He genuinely possessed human emotions.

We are deeply saddened when a loved one is no longer with us. Some deaths bring a short-lived pain. We soon recover with only a tear in our eyes at times when we think of the person who had been a part of our lives.

Other losses cut us so deeply that recovery feels like a person is taking a needle and thread - using no pain killer - and slowly, excruciatingly, sewing stitch after stitch in our broken flesh. This is the pain I have been suffering. While the wound is healing, the tissue often throbs. Although occasionally I realize the aching has stopped for a period of time, I know the scar will always be there. There will never be a day in my life when I don't miss my beloved daughter, Angie. But as the time goes by, there will continue to be fewer tears and more joy.... Joy for the blessing of having had Angie in my life for 33 years.... Joy for the blessing of Sophie, her daughter, being a part of my life.... Joy for the blessing of being able to share this experience with you in the hopes that you, too, will find peace in the truth that....

.... weeping may endure for a night, but
joy cometh in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

Your night may be short or long. Hold fast to God's unchanging hand, and He will bring you to **joy in the morning**.