

Navigating the Grief Journey  
THERE IS A FUTURE  
By Carla J. Miller, Guest Writer

Today's Treasure

***Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.  
Proverbs 19:21 NIV***

Grief is the price we pay for love. When we love deeply, we grieve deeply. Continue to love. Don't be afraid to love again. Continue to live. Life continues on for those who remain, albeit in a "new normal." I will always be sad for Henry's too-soon death, but time passing does dissipate the frequency and intensity of the pain. Now, four years later, I still well up on occasion but concentrating on the joy Henry brought into our lives, the impact he made in his full but short life, and being grateful for having had him to love is what mostly fills my thoughts.

It helps to acknowledge special days and anniversaries, noting that life goes on. In that first year, I sent my daughter a text of remembrance on the 12th of every month, the date of Henry's death. Now, on Henry's birthdays, we celebrate him by eating his favorite foods, doing simple things he enjoyed, and quoting some of his favorite phrases. We've planted flowers and bushes in his memory, and lit candles for him at Christmas. I donate to the Dravet Syndrome Foundation on his birthday, on his death day, and at Christmas, giving me the chance to fund research to find effective treatments for others.

My 64th birthday was the day after Henry's funeral in 2019. It was hard to have a "happy" birthday that year but as I reflected, especially in the face of death, I was able to see that life is still worth celebrating. God gave me a quiet but abiding joy, and the ability to be grateful for the years of life with which God blessed me. His presence, strength, and peace never fail, and He provides me with the breath and vitality to embark upon each additional year that I am graced to be alive. Tallie, Henry's sister and 2 years his junior, is my birthday twin, which is a special blessing! Although Henry's death was hard on her, her life is an immeasurable blessing to Sarah and Paul and she remembers her brother with fondness and continues to grow and develop normally and vivaciously!

I find it helpful to rehearse all-things Henry. I simply revel in his personality, look at photos and videos fondly, quote his cute sayings, and recall his antics. It brings me a

little closer to who he was and brings joy to my heart. Our family talks freely about Henry, especially to his younger cousins so they get to know him. We say his name, imitate his arm flapping while watching the microwave numbers descend, and recall silly memories like how he commandeered adult beverages when we weren't looking. We remember his fierce hugs and give out hugs more often in his honor. We try to learn from his enthusiasm for the simple things of life like bubbles, bouncing, and bananas. I remember Henry daily by using secret computer passwords about him. I use his laminated memorial service card as a bookmark and keep another on the dashboard of my car. We focus on good memories and shared joys and keep Henry alive in our hearts while we live life in the "new normal." "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer." (1 Timothy 4:4-5 NIV)

I have been blessed with four new grandchildren since Henry's death. I welcomed each one with deep joy, immense gratitude and great excitement! They are here. They are present. They are with us. They are growing. I appreciate all my grandchildren even more, now being sorely cognizant of life's fragility and transience. I think of precious Henry who cannot participate in playing with his sister and cousins. I know Henry is living now in glory and perfection, and, one day I will join Jesus, Henry and many other loved ones for all time. What hope we all have because of God's great love and salvation for us all through Jesus! Our future is bright when we know Jesus as Savior personally! Every minute of time, love, and devotion invested in Henry and my other grands was and is worthwhile because they are eternal beings of immeasurable value to God.

The imbalance in our family circle caused by sweet Henry's physical absence can never be restored but every day I am reminded, as I look expectantly, that God is always gracious and good and continues to rain down blessings upon me. Henry's death pressed me into God's word and I continue to thirst after God and His word to learn more of His character and ways. I depend on prayer and the wise counsel of others to keep me positive and other-oriented. My restored energies can be spent helping my family and friends and honoring God. I am concentrating on being healthy so I can care for my dear husband of 48 years who is battling dementia and needs me every day. God allows all things and some we do not understand. "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV)

There is a future. There is a new day tomorrow. Embrace it with joy.

PRAYER

Heavenly Peace Maker and Peace Giver, I know that You will keep me in perfect peace when my mind is stayed on You, because I trust in You. I don't know what the next moment, day or year will bring but resting in your goodness, I know I am able to navigate any and all circumstances, even when they are new or different than what I expect. Amen. (Isaiah 26:3 NIV)