

## Entering the Tears of Others

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### Scripture: John 11:1-44 (NIV)

Time does not allow me to read all 44 verses, but I can read verses 17, 23, 33, 34, 35, 39, 43 and 44 to you.

“17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

23 Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

34 ‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied.

35 Jesus wept.

39 ‘Take away the stone,’ he said. ‘But, Lord,’ said Martha, the sister of the dead man, ‘by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.’

43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’

44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go.’”

### Introduction

Where there are tears, there is also life. Indeed, it is the living who cry, not the dead.

And as we grow older, the sound of tears change and its cause deepens.

Babies’ tears are both a sign of health and life as well as illness and pain.

Adult tears are usually shed in the dark, and alone.

Tears are the companions of sadness, happiness, anger, sympathy, anxiety and fear.

While tears make us feel better, compassion leads us to enter into the tears of others.

## **Standing at the Grave**

Jesus was standing outside a closed tomb. And he wept; He shed tears. And they were not for Lazarus.

Lazarus was about to be raised from the dead. Jesus was going to speak life into death and life into hopelessness.

Why hopelessness? Lazarus in the grave for four days and there was already an unpleasant odour. According to Jewish tradition, a person's soul/spirit remained with his/her dead body for three days. After three days, the soul/spirit departed. Even the unbelieving could not deny that Lazarus was dead both in body and in soul/spirit.

All of us have stood next to the grave of someone else and cried. I am thinking of my tears when my dad died. I desperately wanted my dad back. I need him. I also buried all of our dreams, hopes, a mentor, source of security, advice, wisdom and much love. Life is never the same after putting someone in the grave. I have to continuously deal with the unbelief that dad is dead and my memories together with my emotions still flood my mind. The person a buried was not "just" a person, it was a real person who had a life, family and friends and all who knew and loved him were and are in some way going through the same things as me. All of our tears tell a story of pain, sadness, loss and love.

People were gathered where Mary met up with Jesus and they were weeping. Mary took Jesus to Lazarus' tomb. Jesus understood the pain and the sorrow that stretches both forward and backward throughout all human history, a history that is filled with relentless illness, sadness and death. And He wept.

It is the living, not the dead who cry.

Verse 33 describes a different weeping of the people to Jesus' weeping. The weeping of the people was that of a loud mourning for the dead. Jesus' weeping was for the living. Jesus, feeling the agony of the people, compassionately entered their tears.

## **Take Away the Stone**

The people were in a situation familiar to us all. The grave, specifically a sealed one. Between the living and the dead was a stone that sealed the fate of Lazarus and it

also sealed human abilities.

Then Jesus said, "Take away the stone," (v39). He was breaking not only a physical seal but also a spiritual seal, revealing who He is and who sent Him. Taking away the stone became the meeting point between mourning, death and Jesus. Real hope had arrived, even though some still doubted, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" (v37).

Lazarus could not move his tombstone. Jesus did not remove the tombstone, but He was on the other side, and that made all the difference. The tomb was opened up for a Godly intervention.

Removing a stone is your willingness to open yourself to a miracle or Godly intervention -in waiting. It is allowing someone to compassionately enter your tears.

A removed a stone is where you compassionately start to enter the tears of people.

### **Believe and See**

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" (v.40).

Believing and seeing is a matter of relationship. Even today, many believe but stop short of seeing. Others see, but do not believe. Both believing and seeing are very necessary because belief speaks life into hope and seeing creates evidence.

When someone enters your tears, they bring with them hope, life and love. You become a witness to the power of God—in action in your life.

In seeing, doubt is replaced by evidence, and on this basis, you can compassionately enter the tears of others. This is the privilege of those who see. Those who only believe also wear only one side of a T-shirt.

Jesus, in thanking God for always hearing, is also telling the people that God always listens to our tears.

### **Lazarus, Come Out**

Three simple words with profound meaning.

Firstly, there is a bold call into the world of the dead. Bold calls are made by those who can guarantee the outcome.

Secondly, life replaces death. God is the only source of life. In Genesis 2:7, God breathed life into man and he became a living being. When we became born again it was God spoke life into death. Even in our death, our spirit returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7) in whom we continue to live.

Finally, the call to Lazarus, not any other corpse that may have been there, to come out. And he came out, still in his grave clothes, which the people were told to remove.

Entering the tears of others, in the power of Jesus, involves all your senses:

1. You LISTEN to their pain as they speak and weep.
2. You FEEL their distress, TOUCH their hearts and help remove bandages.
3. You SEE their pain.
4. You SMELL what you can't see and in "smelling," empathy leads us to the root of their pain, be it death or hopelessness.
5. You TASTE and SEE that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8). Touch hearts and help remove bandages.

Let him go. He has been freed from what held him captive. Life has returned and strongholds are broken.

### **Call to Faith (Conclusion)**

What is going on in other's lives? What is behind their "tombstone?" What tears are they crying in loneliness and darkness? For that matter, what is going on in your life? What is behind your "tombstone?" What tears are you crying in loneliness and darkness?

It is the living, not the dead who cry. Help roll away the tombstone of the heart and allow Jesus to call out in a loud voice. Compassionately enter their tears of others and allow them to enter yours. Amen.