

# Licence to Grieve

Clement Yeung



*Dear Mrs. Cheung,*

We were very glad to hear about your condition from our mutual friend Irene. As you know, we have been very concerned about you ever since the first day when we were told that your husband Richard had left you for a younger woman. We can only imagine the pain that you have gone through and we admire your courage in helping the two children through these dark moments of their young lives. Then after being dumped by the other woman, Richard began to realize what he had done. It was indeed gracious of you to take him back home. We are sure it was your magnanimity, rather than his promise to change, that was key for his return.

Irene told us that shortly after Richard's return, you entered into a period of depression. You were strong when he was away. Now that he is back, you have become weak. I am sure the fact that the two teenaged children had gone to England to study complicates the situation. The reality of the empty nest makes the heart-break even more painful to bear.

Irene also mentioned that you had seen a Christian psychologist who was most caring and sympathetic. You were reluctant to use antidepressant medications for fear of side effects. However, your depression has deepened and Richard finds it very difficult to handle the

situation. You have always been the emotional pillar of the family, providing support for all the other members.

Your strong personality makes this emotional battle exceptionally difficult for you to fight. We are very excited that you have decided to "give God a chance". Being a graduate of a Christian high school, you have a good understanding of the Christian faith. As you open your heart to God, you have found Him indeed "only a prayer away."

But this is the puzzling part: having the vibrant zeal in the newly found faith did not improve your depression. It must be frustrating for you and your psychologist. She has advised you to "let go and let God." To let go is not to live in the past but to be forward-looking. To forgive and forget, as the saying goes. To let God includes allowing Him the time to work in the life of your husband. I suppose these are important steps.

I wonder if there may be one more step that has been neglected. Consider it as the observation of a concerned bystander. If it does not make sense to you, that simply means that I have misread the situation.

The missing step is what I call "let grieve." As I see it, losing your husband to another

woman may be likened to the death of your marriage. Though Richard has gained back his senses and come home, the marriage will never be the same. It cannot be "business as usual." Sure, you need to let go and not to dwell in the past. Certainly you should rely on God to change your husband. But you must also allow yourself time to grieve over the death of your marriage, the loss of a loved one and, perhaps, the departure of your lovely children.

After a plane accident, the authorities always spend a lot of effort searching for the remains of the victims. Of course, there are legal and forensic reasons for doing so. The other reason is that it would help the victim's family accept the situation so that they will be able to grieve properly. Without the grieving periods, some people may feel as if they have been frozen in time, unable to move on.

I wonder if the same is happening here. You have a supportive psychologist and your newly found faith is certainly providing you with inner strength and peace. Yet you still find yourself sobbing and weeping from time to time, especially when you are alone by yourself. Maybe what you need is a licence to grieve. You need to hear that it is okay to cry and to mourn.

You may ask how your faith in God may affect the grieving process. For the most part, we all grieve and mourn the same way, whether we are Christians or not. As normal human beings, we all need emotional outlets. On another level, Christian grieving is different and this is my main reason for writing to you. As God's children, we no longer grieve alone! This is the amazing promise: not only are we allowed to grieve our losses in life, but Christ actually

grieves with us.

Some years ago, I learned a Christian folk song and the words have stayed with me ever since. It goes like this:

You said you'd come and share all my sorrows

You said you'd be there for all my tomorrows.

I came so close to sending You away,

But just like You promised, You came to stay,

I just had to pray.

And Jesus said, "Come to the water, stand by My side.

I know you are thirsty, you won't be denied.

I felt every teardrop when in darkness you cried,

And I strove to remind you that for those tears I died."

When Jesus died for me on the cross, He carried all my sins, my burdens and my tears. This fact distinguishes Christian grieving. When we mourn with tears in our eyes, we can look at the cross and see rainbows of hope.

We will continue to remember you in our prayers during this necessary time of holy grieving.

Emmanuel!

*Clement*

