



Meeting Trials with Tears of Joy

Ever attend a birthday party and a death simultaneously?

A year ago, my father died at my six-year-old granddaughter, Kalli’s, birthday party. After a morning at the zoo, my father bought all the party kids a toy or book from the zoo gift shop and climbed in the car. My sister drove them around to the picnic area for birthday cake. But Tom Neunaber never climbed out of the car under his own power again and died peacefully of an apparent stroke under a shade tree at the park while the kids were only yards away enjoying birthday festivities.

There are many parallels between our births and our deaths in Scripture. What are some of the contrasts in Ecclesiastes 3:2, 4?

Tears of Joy at Birth

There are times for every emotion under heaven. We are emotional human beings. Sometimes our tears and joys intersect. Most pregnancy books tell the expectant mother that a baby cannot survive outside the womb before 24 weeks gestation. My granddaughter Kalli was born four months premature at that 24 week mark. She was one pound, five ounces, hooked up to eight machines, suffered infections, surgeries, and even a stroke before going home four months later still on a respirator and a feeding tube. You can imagine the joy and tears of this new life. Mothers especially have a heart for their children and suffer for them and with them. Read Jeremiah 31:15. Why is Rachel crying?

My first calls when awaiting Kalli’s birth at the hospital were to my LWML Bible study friends. Her parents protected her precious life at home until she was strong enough to be introduced to the public. Afraid to send out birth announcements for such a tenuous life, many people did not know about Kalli until months later when she was brought to church for Baptism.

What is this spiritual second birth?

1Peter 1: 23 _____

1 John 5:1-5 _____

1 John 5:18-20 _____

Once we are in God’s kingdom through Baptism, does that take all the tears away?

Tears of Joy in Life

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9. Explain some of the extremes listed here.

Does that bring to mind some high and lows of your life experiences? Share some with your group.

Kalli's mom (my oldest daughter) owns a dance studio and Kalli's world has been about music and dance since the day she was born. What joy! However, because of Kalli's stroke she is an unstable girl, not learning to walk on her own until age three. She has a tough time keeping up with her peers and has a crooked smile because she can only feel half her face. One day she told her mom, "When I get older, I will be able to smile like you." We tear up because that is probably not going to happen.

Read 1 Peter 1:24-25. Sometimes the life we are granted is short. Where does our joy come from even in those times? _____

Read Psalm 23:4. How do we cope when we are in the shadow of death?

Read Romans 8:36-39. Life may not always seem joyful to us when we are in the midst of life's trials. What pep talk does Paul give the Romans at these times?

Tears of Joy in Death

My father knew he was near death. He had been very ill for many years before that day in the park. He was prepared and in fact wrote his entire funeral service by selecting the songs and Bible verses for the pastor to use. He especially wanted John 3:16 emphasized so everyone would know his faith was in the Lord. What does Scripture say about our physical death?

Psalm 89:48 _____

How does God feel about our death? Psalm 116:15 _____

Joy in Christ's Victory Over Death

What assurances do we have that our physical death is not the end for us?

Isaiah 25:8 _____

John 5:24 _____

Romans 4:25 _____

1 Corinthians 15:21-26 _____

1 Corinthians 15:50-57 _____

What is Jesus' final word about His eternal status for us?

John 11:25-26 _____

Revelation 1:18 _____

How do you plan to keep that joy alive in your life?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for this life of trials and tears so that we can see the wonders You have done for us more clearly. Remind me on those days when the tears flow that You are there to grant me the joy of knowing the resurrected Savior has conquered sin, death, and the devil for me. In Jesus' holy name, Amen.

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