

Are You Grieving?

If you are grieving the loss of a loved one, you don't have to be alone.

Help Is Available:

Many people find that bereavement support groups help the healing process. Clergy, hospitals, and hospices conduct support groups or can recommend organizations that may meet your needs. The associations related to a specific disease may also have support group suggestion.

About the Author

Linda continues her commitment to others. Recently, she left a management position to become a high school teacher.

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Acceptance

Linda Graham Swanson



Summer 2005, I joined a missionary group traveling to four African Methodist Episcopal churches and several underserved communities in Jamaica. The trip's purpose: help repair church buildings, conduct medical clinics, teach vacation Bible school, and give witness to God's grace and mercy.


I planned this trip with one purpose in mind -- help someone else. As it turned out, God had plans for me.

I will always keep a cherished memory of August 1, 2005, Jamaica's Emancipation Day. Coincidentally, it was also the birthday of my son, Majied, who had departed this earth on October 21, 2004. The following excerpt from my journal explains why this moment helped me adjust to and accept my loss.

Day two Monday, August 1, 2005

Jamaica's Emancipation Day!

On the way to some churches, the missionary group traveled through Jamaica's rich, green countryside. The views were sobering, however, because of the devastation and poverty intermingled in this majestic landscape. Hillsides were full of small tin shanties, crude dwellings without running water or electricity. So many houses were abandoned, either from the effects of hurricanes or a lack of access to building materials to complete repairs. With this humbling experience, the group of twelve was quiet while our mini-bus drove down extremely narrow roads, just barely missing the sharp edges of the hills.



The missionary group was fortunate to stay in a small hotel in the middle of St. Mary's parish. Each morning I held my own devotion on the balcony overlooking the Caribbean ocean. With the sun rising on my face, I watched fishermen row their tiny boats dragging their fishing nets behind them.

I would have taken this trip even if Majied were alive. He would have loved this beautiful country, the majestic ocean, and the rhythmic reggae music; he would have cherished the precious spirit of the Jamaican people. He would have roamed free to dwell among and help all the people, which was what he did best.

On the bus, I cried silently when I realized this was the first birthday without the honored guest, my son. As God would have it, I had another realization: although Majied was not physically with me, his spirit was all around me wherever I was on this earth.

Majied's spirit whispered how beautiful Jamaica was, how blessed I was to be in this place, how much he loved his daughter, his family, and me. I felt his presence and realized that my Savior divinely planned this day, a blessing to keep my son's precious birth the memory and not his tragic death.

What better way to celebrate a life? Finding myself in an overwhelmingly beautiful and humbling environment, I reconciled that not only was God's spirit and mercy real wherever we are, but the wholesome spirit of my son was also real. Happy birthday Majied! Your spirit was with me every second and we were happy.