



*“Don’t it always seem to go,
that you don’t know what you’ve got
till it’s gone?”*

*They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot.”*

(Lyrics by Joni Mitchell, 1970)

Can one ever prepare for grief?

Can we know and feel loss before the actual separation?

We think that we know how it will be to lose someone or something that we love, but the reality of it, it seems, is a different experience.



In the recent aftermath of an earthquake, a photographer caught a stunning picture: A young woman is seated near a pile of rubble that was her mother’s house. On the stoop next to the woman is a pair of battered shoes. She said that she found her mother’s shoes and would like to find her mother now and give them to her. In a matter of 40 seconds of time, her life had been totally changed. What is gone? What was left? She had not had time to prepare for such a separation. How will she adjust?

Whether separation is expected or drawn out, knowing oneself in life, can help to adjust in times of disappointment. **Dr. Elizabeth**

Kübler-Ross identifies stages of grief: ♦Denial, ♦Anger, ♦Bargaining, ♦Depression, and ♦Acceptance.

I had a year to adjust to my brother’s death. From the time of his diagnosis to his admission to hospice, his approach to his own failing health was to keep control — of his dignity, his schedule, his choice of food, his keys...until the parameters began to close in around him. When told that an emergency surgery would be scheduled for the next week, he said, “No. My brother is coming in from Boston. We’ll do the surgery two weeks from now.”

Eventually, the parameters of his control became the space around his bedside. Being a consummate, inventive, mechanic, he rigged his surroundings to assist his immediate needs, his hygiene, communication, comfort, and mental activity. No television. No radio needed. The telephone became an annoyance and was quickly eliminated. “Friends can come and see me, if they are interested,” was his response to the approaching separation. We all adjusted, as best we could, to his control. It was good... we are who we are.

“Adjustments”

Currently, I, myself, am in a period of forced adjustment to loss, not of my brother, but to a thing that will prematurely disappear, as if by an earthquake. A friend has referred to the predicament as “the permitting will of God” in contrast to “the ordaining will of God.”

I am picturing myself as the trapeze performer standing poised on a platform. My hands are grasping the horizontal bar attached to the two ropes.

On the far platform is God ready to throw out another bar, perfectly timed for me to grasp, allowing me to be on my way to a new place. It takes a leap of faith. “Jump out, let go, grab on. I can do this,” I say to myself.

It is more or less accepted that each of us generally follows the journey through all five stages of grief. I am resolved to skip the fourth stage, take the leap of faith, grab on to the gifts that God will provide, adjust my expectation of others, and move on. If you are standing, poised on some platform that is not of your choice, may you also find adjustment, and find peace.

