

# HELP FOR THOSE TEARS

On Friday morning I received an urgent message from Nadine while she was at the church cutting up onions in preparation for making chili sauce for our bazaar later this fall. Her urgent request was for me to search Google to find suggestions on how to cut onions without crying. As a pastor I have been asked advice for how to stop tears resulting from loss and grief but never due to cutting onions. After a couple minutes on the computer, I messaged back to her these recommendations:

1. Put the onions in the fridge or freezer before cutting.
2. Cut them on a wet or damp paper towel
3. Cut them while they are submersed in a bowl of water
4. Wear goggles while cutting them

A short while later I heard back from Nadine that putting the onions in the freezer seemed to do the trick.

Cutting onions can be a source of tears for us. Usually, we associate tears with moments when we are hurt, disappointed, or experience loss in our lives. On Sunday night I was reminded of a moment in time when I found myself crying. I was looking through a memory book my mother did up for me on Sunday night and came across my father's obituary notice. As I read it, I was reminded this week will be the 25th anniversary of this loss. September 12, 1999, happened to be a Sunday. When I came home from church that day there was a message on my phone from my mother to come up to the hospital because my dad had passed away earlier that morning.

I can still remember the tears I shed saying goodbye to my dad there. I don't cry often, and I remember both Nadine and my mother crying when they saw my tears. Part of my tears was realizing my dad passed away alone without any of his family there. I was confused as I left the hospital and was asking God why He did not arrange for me to be with my father before his passing.

That afternoon God arranged for a person to call and provide me with the answer I was seeking. This person had just heard about my father's passing and called to express her sympathy. While we talked, I shared with her how I was struggling with the question of why my dad died alone. Her words to me

were heaven sent. She said, "Because that is what your father wanted. He wanted to die alone!" These words made perfect sense to me because my father was a very private person. These words came at the perfect timing for me, and I knew God had arranged this call when He did to comfort me in the midst of my tears and grief.

I share this story as a reminder how God is very aware of our tears. One example where we see this in the Bible is when Jesus stands behind Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb and asks, "**Why are you crying?**" This story shows us how our Lord is not only aware of our tears, but also reaches out to comfort us in these moments. Mary Magdalene was comforted shortly after discovering the person calling her name behind her was not the gardener but rather Jesus who had risen back to life. Her tears of sadness quickly turned to tears of joy thanks to the comforting presence of Jesus. While we cannot avoid loss in our lives, it is so reassuring for us knowing that God is not only aware of our tears but reaches out to comfort us in these moments. It is no wonder the psalmist David expressed:

**Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)**

September 12th will mark twenty-five years from my father's passing. Thanks to God's comfort and help along the way, there will not be as many tears as there were on the day of his passing. If I do happen to shed a tear, I know God will find a way to wipe it away for me.

The Bible does tell us in Revelation 21 that when we experience "The New Heaven and Earth" one day there will be no more tears because there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because these things will be gone forever. What I cannot tell from this passage though is whether we may still have tears from cutting onions in heaven.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean