

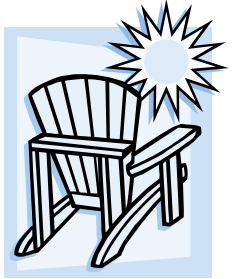
## Summer



# Reflections

## Summer Memories

Summer has finally arrived in Michigan! Along with the warmer weather and sun-filled days come the sweet memories of summers long ago. Take a few moments this summer to enjoy those memories. Bask in the warmth of special times spent together on family vacations, days at the beach or walking along the boardwalk. Spend time reminiscing about past family picnics or lazy summer afternoons out on the porch. Allow those memories to warm you and restore you.



## Sea Shells

By Rob Anderson

Walking along the beach  
I saw a sea shell  
Peeking out of the sand.  
It reminded me of you.  
And all the fun times we had.  
I picked it up  
And angrily threw it into the ocean  
Because I was mad that you died.

I kept walking.  
Every sea shell I saw I picked up  
And threw back in the ocean  
I threw them hard  
And with passion.  
The passion of grief and sorrow.  
The passion of longing.  
Your death leaves no room for the  
Beauty of a sea shell.

Eventually there was no more beach  
And no more sea shells  
But I didn't feel any better.  
I walked back down the beach  
Kicking at the sand  
And wanting those sea shells back  
If I could hold them once more,  
Maybe it would be like holding  
You once more.

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## The Missing Pieces

By Rabbi Earl A. Grollman, DHL, DD

I would like to recount one of my favorite stories written by Shel Silverstein entitled, *The Missing Piece*.

*Once upon a time, there was a circle that was missing a piece of itself. The incomplete circle was very unhappy. So it went all over the world looking for its missing piece . . . but in vain. It just couldn't find it. Some parts were too big and some were too small. Some were too square and some were too pointy. None of them fit. Then, suddenly one day it found a piece that seemed to fit perfectly. The circle was complete again. And now, because it was an unbroken circle, it could roll much faster. And it did. It rolled so rapidly, it rolled past the lakes and through forests. It traveled so fast that the landscape became a blur as did the birds and the flowers. It couldn't even talk to the insects. Suddenly, the complete circle realized that it was moving too fast, propelling itself fanatically without seeing and living life. It put down its missing piece. It began limping slowly away—beautifully, slowly away.*

It's a fable, short and simple with many insights. It's saying that a little bit of incompleteness opens people up—as it did to the circle in the story—to feeling more, seeing more, experiencing more. In a paradoxical way, those who seemingly have everything may never have some of the most poignant experiences in life. Those who have everything will never know what it feels like to yearn, to hope. They will never understand the songs that are born out of longing, out of grieving, out of

incompleteness. No one can ever make them happy by giving them something they would enjoy. By definition, they already have it. In a strange way, the “rich” person who has everything, who is missing absolutely nothing, is a “very poor” person indeed.

Sometimes we are more complete when we are incomplete. That's the strange truth of the story. We may be made more complete by the things we don't have. Not because we do not mourn for the loved one who died, because when just one person is missing the world seems so empty—a piece of us is missing. We realize that no matter how crowded our lives, there will always be empty places. Each of us in truth is incomplete in one way or another, some by death, some by divorce, others by disappointment. Maybe there was a job we wanted and didn't get, or perhaps there was a child who didn't turn out as we hoped he would, or certain people we trusted failed us. Every one of us is missing something from our lives. Like the circle in the story, because we are broken, we are compelled to see everything in our lives a little bit differently. We then come to see the world as it really is. The world isn't a birthday party. It's a very mixed up, unpredictable place. Hours of sunshine alternate with hours of darkness. We learn gratitude precisely because we can't have everything. We learn to roll through life more slowly with our missing pieces.

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# Telling Your Story

By Jeanne Shaffer

There is a purpose for telling the story of your grief. There is healing when you face the pain and reality of your loss. When someone dies, even if it is expected, there is always a feeling that it hasn't really happened. Sometimes this feeling may revisit you from time to time as you move through your grief. Telling your story helps make it real. Verbalizing the facts or details of the death, talking about the funeral and sharing memories of your loved one helps you accept the reality of their death.

Telling your story helps you live with unanswered questions. When you have been hurt by life, it is normal and natural to want to know why. Telling your story helps you accept the fact that you cannot change it. Telling your story helps you learn to live without all the answers.

Telling your story helps ease the pain. Each time a little more of the pain and emotion is released. Trying not to think about your loss is a common way to try to avoid the pain. But too often it's like having one foot on the brake and one on the accelerator. Expressing your grief helps release what is churning inside.

Telling your story helps you survive life's challenges. When you tell your story to others, you bear witness to the fact that there is life after loss. Your life has been changed, but you continue on. Your story helps others to see that hope, joy and meaning will once again come into our lives.

Telling your story helps you realize that your story continues. Your loved one is always with you—a vital part of who you are today. The story of

your loved one's life and death has taught you many things. It is a story filled with cherished memories that will never die. It is a story of love. It is a story of survival.

Find someone to share your story with. Don't be discouraged if you discover that many don't want to hear your story. Sometimes our closest friends and family members have the greatest difficulty listening to our pain. Find new friends to share your story with. Sometimes it is easier to write your story. Try keeping a personal journal of your thoughts and feelings or write letters to your loved one. Journaling is a powerful way to ease anxiety, identify hopes and fears, and move toward peace and acceptance.





## A Book Review

By Doris TenElshof

### Getting to the Other Side of Grief

by Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge, R.N. Ed.D., and  
Robert C. De Vries D.Min., Ph.D.

While the focus of *Getting to the Other Side of Grief* is in overcoming the loss of a spouse, it certainly applies to all types of grief. Because grieving leads to resolution, it should be intentional. Although the emotional pain of grieving hurts, it is not harmful, but rather heals.

The pain one experiences following a death is from a sense of loss – the loss of a person and the loss of hopes and dreams. But a part of us does not die. Rather, the part that defined the relationship with the deceased died. Grieving validates the significance of that relationship and acknowledges the value of the person who died. In order to get to the other side of grief, we must go into the pain.

Because this book is co-authored by a therapist and a pastor, each gives advice from his or her own perspective and expertise. The authors recognize that grieving is an individual process, and the way we handle it will be determined by the type of relationship we had with the deceased, our own personality and the type of death experienced.

The actual tasks of grieving are carefully

outlined. Helpful suggestions are given in dealing with the many myths surrounding death and grieving. Guidelines are given in how to proceed in our own grieving in terms of the loneliness we will experience, our relationship with family and friends, meeting our sexual needs and going on to new friendships, dating and remarriage.

The writers have also wisely included advice on facing one's own death. They recommend living life to the fullest and rejoicing in it, identifying our own meaning of life and death and being prepared – considering practical actions such as pre-arrangements.

We cannot move on while holding onto the past. We do not belong to a spouse, a child or a career. We belong to a faithful Savior! I was especially touched by references made to Psalm 23. Those who pass through “the valley of the shadow of death” are not those who die, but those who survive. They suggest that as we enter this valley we permit ourselves to go with the feelings of shock, anger, sadness and disbelief. We should cry for ourselves as well as the deceased. The important thing to remember is that the valley has an exit. We pass through it. Jesus walked the valley alone, but we do not . . . Christ walks with us.

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