

*A Reflection on C.S. Lewis "A Grief Observed" **

If heaven is a state where “former things have passed away” and where families are not to be pictured in “earthly terms” (p.23), why would God create loving relationships on earth? C.S. Lewis ached for the relationship that had developed upon the touching of the “two circles” (of him and H.) across the “plane of Nature” (p. 22). This is what he cried out “with mad, midnight endearments and entreaties”, but had “spoken into the empty air” because “reality never repeats” (p.23). These words whip up old yearnings inside me for our child who died in a miscarriage years ago. This is of no comparison with Lewis’ sufferings and pain but I, like many others who have lost their loved ones, long for the reunion “on the further shore” (p. 23). Yet, heaven is of an entirely different state. Relationships are not the same in heaven. Why do we have to go through the bliss and at the same time the inescapable agony of earthly relationships?

Two thoughts came into my mind. First, relationships are a character of God. The three persons in the Triune God are closely related. We are created in His image and hence the need for relationships is built into our nature. Feelings and emotions involved in human relationships help us to appreciate better our relationship with God and the suffering of Christ on the cross. Relationships are a gift as well as a training from God. Second, relationships force us to go through the process of grieving when there is a loss and the process can be self-revealing. We are to mourn not like those who have no hope. Is this more applied to “those who love God better than the dead, and the dead better than themselves” (pp. 23-24)? But usually the reverse order is true. We mourn of self-pity, or in another word self-love. We see ourselves as the one who got left behind to suffer. Yet, through mourning we can see clearer of our own self. C.S. Lewis saw his faith as “a house of cards” and came to a fuller sense of God as he grieved for H. He gained a deeper perceptive realization of himself through observing the grief. Grieving and mourning are self-reflection exercises. We grief and mourn because relationships are a part of us, a part of life. May we graciously give ourselves and others ample space to grief and mourn when the time comes.

* Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961.