

## Love's Abiding Joy - #4 of the Love Comes Softly Series

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; The Lord redeems His servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in Him. Psalm 34:18, 19, 22*

*This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18Dear children let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:11, 16-18 NIV*

After Kathy died in her crib, Missie and Willie drifted apart. Once eager to share everything with each other, after the baby's death, the two of them became distant. Sometimes grief brings families closer together but often it separates them, each choosing to grieve in his or her own way.

Have you experienced deep grief in your life? Have you healed from it or does it still cause you deep pain?

Missie's faith had been strong all of her life. She'd seen tough times but those difficulties had always strengthened her trust in God. When she lost her child, however, her faith was shaken. Although she wanted to believe, she was so overwhelmed by the loss of her child that she hardly knew where to turn. Missie's father, Clark, is finally able to reach through her grief.

Do you know someone who is dealing with grief? How can you help?

When Hank and Melissa are struggling to keep their farm, Missie is willing to sacrifice treasures that are dear to her in order to help her friends. The losses Missie had faced made her more compassionate to others in need.

Has someone sacrificed to help you during a difficult time? Have you sacrificed to help someone else?

When Missie and Willy started communicating again they began the road to healing. It is important to realize that each of us will grieve in a different way. Just because someone else isn't reacting to loss the same way we are doesn't mean that they aren't feeling the pain of the loss. It isn't fair to judge the feelings and reactions of others.

Is there someone you need to communicate with better? How can you reach out to that person?

When Judge Dorose began foreclosures on local farmers he believed that he had the right to the land, not caring that the deals that he made were at the expense of other people. The judge said, "the gap between me and poverty will never be enough." He was excusing his actions because what had happened years before when he was a child. Even if he was hurt in the past, it didn't give him the right to hurt others now.

Do you have any hurts from the past that still haunt you? Do they affect your actions today?

Throughout life we will all experience loss, pain, and difficulties. We can either let these things hurt us or help us. No one is immune to problems. It is our reaction to problems that will set the course of our lives. While many people sink into anger, resentment, or bitterness, God calls us to give our struggles to Him so that He can help us bear the burden. When we reach out to others in distress it helps lighten our load. We are to love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves.

*Dear Lord, we thank You that You have promised to always be with us. When adversity comes into our lives show us how to rise above it with Your grace and mercy. Teach us how to become stronger instead of giving in to the discouragement of grief and loss. When we are overwhelmed send us friends to walk through the valley with us. Show us how we can help others through their times of discouragement and grief. Help us to live victorious lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.*