**Theological Reflection on Ministry Context**

Some people believe that theology is a means of seeking faith and understanding. Similarly, as a young adult, the concept of theology was challenging for me because I never understood the real meaning of ministries or their purpose. However, with age comes wisdom. Studying MA in Christian Ministry has impacted my knowledge of theology and what it represents. It entails more than just depicting the Bible as an authoritative book. Instead, theology emphasizes the importance of reflecting and applying biblical truths to human experiences. This interactive and reflective process involves several elements, including beliefs of the church, culture, the one who seeks understanding, Bible verses and scriptures, and the specific context to which the theological reflection is applied. From my past experiences, I believe that just like democracy in politics, theology in Christianity is unavoidable (Banks, 1999). In other words, you cannot claim not to be a theologian if you are a Christian. That said, I identify the 'Doing Theology' spiral, according to Laure Green, to be the most effective theological reflection model. According to Green, the thinking behind the Doing Theory Spiral is inspired by the works of Latin thinkers Paulo Freire and Juan Luis Segundo (Green, 2010). The spiral starts with experience where theology functions to familiarize an individual with real-life situations within their surroundings. From experience, the next stage is the exploration phase, where Green urges Christians to use all resources at their disposal to understand the situation and relate it to their endeavors in theology. Having explored the experience, the theology spiral moves to the reflection stage, where an individual makes a conscious and concerted effort to relate their experiences to their faith (Green, 2010). Finally, at the final response stage, the individual asks themselves, "What does God require of me"? Considering its approach, I feel Laure Green's theological reflection method appropriately expresses my feelings after losing my sibling due to its emphasis on experience, exploration, reflection, and response to the situation.

**Experience**

The grief of death is the most sorrowful experience that I have ever encountered in my life. On 10/04/2021, I received the news that my younger brother had passed away. I could not believe it as it was just a few days back that we were catching up and enjoying splendid times. Upon confirming the sad news, it was at this time that I realized the meaning of grief and how sorrow could transform an individual (Collins, 2020). Thankfully, the Son of God named by Him and prophesied by Isaiah as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3) offers comfort to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

I had never known how discomforting losing a loved one could be until now throughout my time in the ministry. However, as a true believer, I was inspired by the words of Jesus in the gospel of John chapter 11: verse 25-26, where he says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying." Considering the context in which these words were said, all three siblings experiencing grief were friends of Jesus. In truism, through these actions, I discovered that there is no better place to look for comfort than in Jesus when you have encountered the loss of death.

Although Lazarus, Mary, and Martha were from a wealthy backgrounds, Jesus showed that his love was not restricted by social, cultural, political, or economic status. This fact made me believe that being human is determined by getting up after a fall and acquainting oneself with whatever grief you encounter in your lifetime. Despite our Lord having stayed on earth for more than three decades, he only committed three of the thirty years to ministry service. Yet, he could share in most people's experiences and did not hesitate to take time in mourning. For example, he wept over the death of Lazarus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and even during his death on the cross through a psalm of lament (Davies, 2008).

Additionally, he was even ready to continue grieving for the hardness of humankind despite the latter's willingness to kill him. Whatever Jesus did while on earth, no action was worthless. Just like the Son of God, I learned that the grief I was experiencing was by no mean irrelevant. It means, therefore, that the grief over my brother's death was not wasted. Here, I appreciated the importance of this theological reflective model for its core lesson that our lives are not always "up, up, up, with Christ" (Graham, 2013). Although Christians are always expected to end up in an upward trajectory in life, mourning and grieving are part of the human process and is justified because Jesus also did it for some time while here on earth (Philippians chapter 3: verse 13-14).

**Exploration**

The grief of a loved one takes a toll on every person who has previously not encountered such a tremendous loss. In the grieving process, the exploration model, as stipulated in Collin's model, is integral in alleviating the sorrowful moments. My healing process kicked off after accepting the reality that my brother was no more and that we were only separated in body but together in spirit. My greatest strength comes from the biblical scriptures in John chapter 11: verse 25. After learning about my brother's death, I was petrified and did not know where to turn to, but after my family sent me the video of his burial, I could resonate and come to terms with the reality.

The message by Jesus to Martha upholds my spirit and strengthens my body; "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?" These words by Jesus' cling and ring in my mind whenever I remember the loss. The connection between these words by the Messiah and my current predicament implies a new life after death for those who believe in Jesus Christ. Being a devotional reader of the Bible, my first impression of the scripture helped me pull through the trying times, but only by the grace of the Almighty God.

My spiritual leader also played a tremendous role in alleviating the problem and comforting me by making references to the book of Job chapter 1: verse 21, "It is God who gives, and it is He who takes. "Bearing in mind that we are all his creation, we are bound by His word, which serves as the guide to our lives. With reference to John chapter 11: verse 25, the context of the scriptures is comforting, as we can connect with the fact that we all suffer similar trials and tribulations just like our savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus is informed of the death of Lazarus, a brother to Mary and Martha, with whom He is deeply pleased.

Of all biblical scriptures regarding mourning, the passage is most relevant and impactful to all mourners. Amid the commotion, the passing of Lazarus touches Jesus and makes Him cry. John chapter 11: verse 35, the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus Wept," reminds us that Jesus too is prone to grief and loss, just like we do. Just like Martha, we all are mourning the passing of our loved ones, having lost all hope and faith, but he reminds us that he too understands what we are going through.

Jesus reminds me that Martha and I, that death is a bridge to meeting our Father, and its temporary nature is a revelation that there is life after death. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ indicate that we, too, shall defeat death and be united with our creator on His throne. We can rest assured that our departed ones are not lost but are one with the Father, and we will soon be reunited with them. Only then can impeccably understand how the Christian faith directly relates to the issue of losing a loved one.

**Reflection**

To further understand and come to terms with the passing on of my brother, different treasures of the Christian faith served as a source of hope and motivation. The reflection phase works concertedly indirect reference to how the Christian religion is expressed in our lives. Throughout the Bible, many analogies and situations open up our minds and allow us to view issues from God's perspective. To many non-believers, death results in a tragic loss and serves as the end of life. However, to believers, death is a gateway to eternal life (Collins, 2020). For this reason, many non-believers cling to and fear death than how they cling to life.

Prayer and Bible study group have played a tremendous role in helping me overcome sorrow and brighten up my days. Hope and faith are the food to life for every believer. Of particular interest is the message passed on through choir songs and hymns sang in our church service. Most of the church songs represent biblical figures' lives and experiences and serve as a restoration of hope for everyone battling life challenges. The songs provoked my grieving heart to break away from the pain and put my trust in Christ, just as His love for me endures forever.

The theological implicit in the hymns serve as a reminder that upon the death of a believer, they are instantly reunited with Christ and that we should not wallow in pain; instead, we should remain steadfast in the faith. It is human nature to question what we cannot see or touch, but Jesus Christ serves as an example to conquer death (Davies, 2008).

In His scriptures, John chapter 3: verse 16, God reminds us that eternal life is a gift for all believers, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son so that we can have eternal life. "My family and I are servants of the Lord and adhere to His teachings as well as follow His rules. For this reason, I believe that my brother being the avid follower of Christ he was, and he shall be reunited with God the Father. In the gospel of John chapter 14: verse 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life (Graham, 2013). No one goes to the Father except through me." Jesus reassures us that if we believe in Him, we shall receive the promise of eternal life.

Those who have died before us and are believers will rise one day and see the Lord Jesus. More importantly, Jesus is seated on the right-hand side of the Father, waiting for the faithful ones to be united within him. The Bible tells us that Jesus is unpleased whenever we mourn and cry for our loved ones as he was victorious over death. Jesus reminds us that just as he successfully fought and won over death, we too shall overcome. For this reason, we should let those who have passed on go and rest with the Father.

Basing my experience of my brother's death on the early Jewish beliefs, death is inconsequential and serves just as the gateway to another life free of pain and strives (Sheldrake, 1995). After watching the video of my brother being laid to rest, I was overcome with God's providence in the dire time of need. Being a convicted and robust believer in life after death, I overcame the pain of losing my brother and even served as a source of strength for my family.

**Response**

After overcoming the stages of experience, exploration, and reflection, this is the stage where an individual asks, how does God want them to respond? According to Green, the model simplifies the complex process (Green, 2020). If adopted effectively, it provides a valuable resource to individuals interested in "doing theory." However, research questions are surrounding the model's effectiveness compared to individuals and groups, with most literature pointing to the direction that reflection in a group is more beneficial than an individual.

In my context, I was alone, numb, and disoriented. Often, I felt anxious and had troubles sleeping as my thoughts shifted to the things that I had said or should have said to my brother before his untimely demise. For me, sudden outbursts became common whenever his memories crossed my mind. Even with my commitment and determination to serve the Lord as a minister, the sadness caused by the ordeal was too much to hide. From this situation, I learned an essential lesson of respecting other people's feelings and actions when dealing with death or grief (Sheldrake, 1995).

Most importantly, I healed and realized that, in Christ, no amount of pain, sorrow, strain, or grief could overcome His love for us. Keep in mind that not all people grieve in the same way. For instance, there are those that grief for just a little while, whereas there are those who can grieve for more extended periods. Regardless of how you perceive the loss of death, Christ's teachings teach us to remain strong and approach such situations bravely, so us to build an excellent foundation for your life in future. According to the Holy Bible in Lamentations, Chapter 3, honest grieving and asking God relevant questions that will help you to be mature in the faith is the only route to a good life in Christ despite the many losses that occur throughout our livelihoods.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, the purpose of the scripture is to help people of God deal with sorrow, even in hard times. In Apostle Paul letter to 2nd Timothy chapter 3: verse 17, the Bible asks God's people to face death with courage. Even as we struggle through the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, I believe that Christians all over the world realize that God is in control. The lessons I took from loss of death are evident that grief in a decent manner helps us make informed decisions in our ministries of worship, especially in the contemporary world where there is a lot of rebellion against church ministry. The Scriptures remind us that death is natural, and we should approach it with confidence after many years of preparation. From the precedent, Christians should be more prepared than anyone else for death. To achieve this goal, it is every Christian's responsibility to ensure that they lead their lives during eternity, which is only achievable upon a realistic preparation for loss by death. Essentially, death is an important occurrence because it happens to everyone. It is just a matter of time.

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