

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at [www.aldenson.com](http://www.aldenson.com). Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

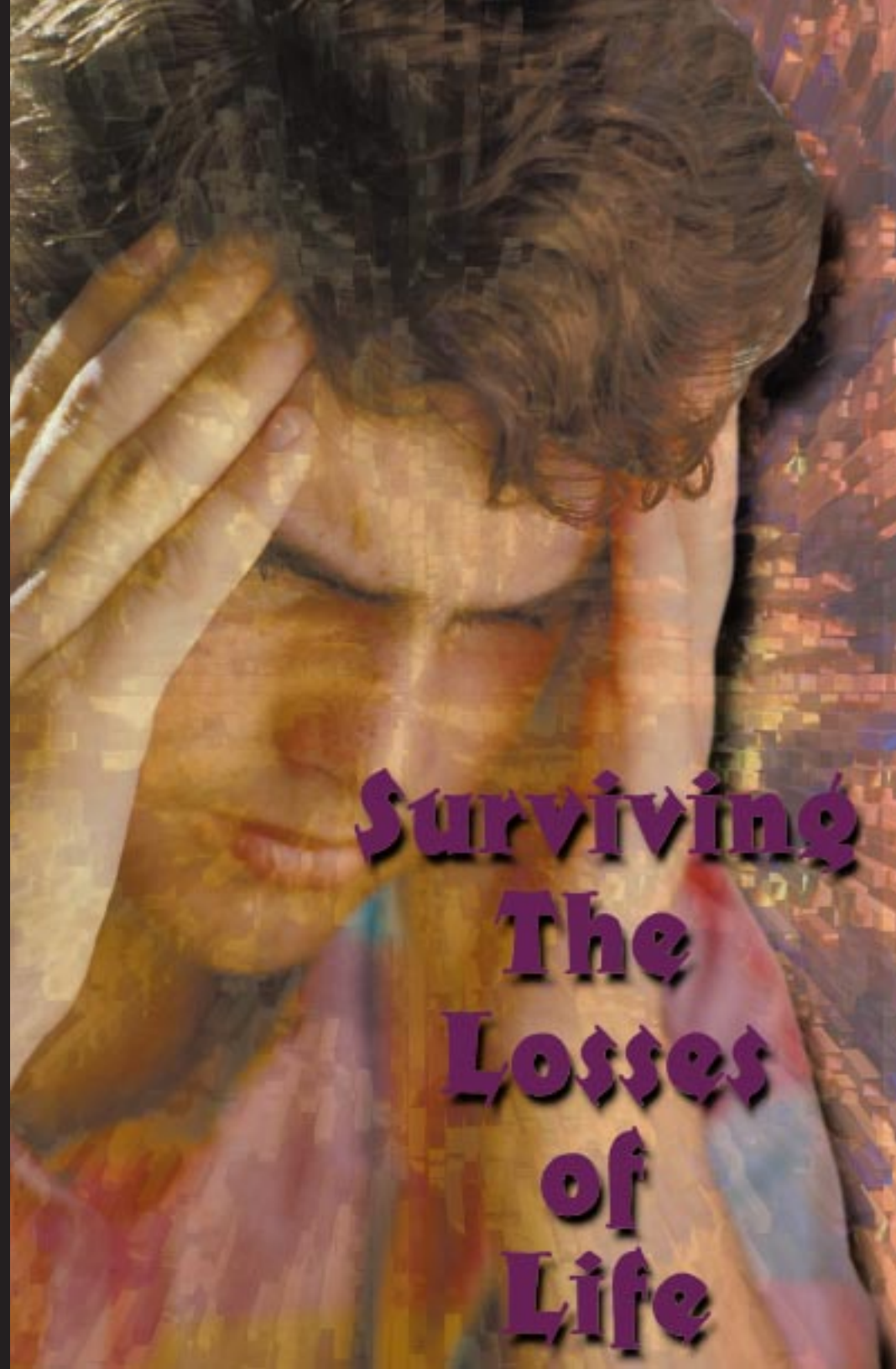
Sincerely,



**An Outreach of Celebration Ministries**

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# Surviving The Losses of Life



Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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## Surviving The Losses of Life

Losses come in all shapes and sizes. There are the big, traumatic, sometimes unexpected losses in life like the death of someone we love, or a divorce, the loss of a job or a business, the loss of our health, or the loss of a relationship or a dream. Other less traumatic but still very painful losses are the rejection of a friend, financial setbacks, not getting the job we wanted, not getting into the college of our choice, or not making the team. All these losses are different but what they have in common is that all losses hurt. Is it possible to survive a loss? How can we go on? Can life be good again?

The story of Job in the Old Testament is one that almost everyone knows. If there was ever an expert on “loss,” it was Job. He lost all his children, his wealth, his health, his reputation, the support of his wife and friends. For 42 chapters in the book that bears his name, Job wrestles with all the questions, pain, and emotions that come with great loss. Job starts his journey of suffering believing that an explanation from God would help him bear the losses he had experienced. He says to God in Job 7:20, “...Why have You made me Your target? Have I become a burden to You?”

We all tend to believe if God would just explain to us why our loss happened then we would be able to understand what has hap-

pened. It seems if we can somehow make sense out of it all, perhaps we will be able to guarantee we can prevent loss and hurt from happening again. Not understanding why something happened makes us feel out of control, so we

believe that the way to regain control is to get an explanation. Ultimately, God is the One we all look to for that explanation.

What Job discovered was that when we hurt we think what is needed is an explanation from God, but what we really need is a revelation of God. The most painful thing about suffering is the feeling we are alone. In Job 23:3, 8-9

he cried, “If I only knew where to find Him; if only I could go to His dwelling! I would state my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say...But I go to the east, He is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find Him. When He is at work in the north, I do not see Him; when He turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of Him.”

Dr. James Dobson says, “The greatest frustration is knowing that God...could rescue...could heal...could save. But why won’t He do it? This sense of abandonment is a terrible experience for someone whose entire being is rooted in the Christian ethic. Satan then whispers, ‘He is not there! You are alone.’”

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of why.

## Reminding ourselves that God is in control will help us rest in the present.

If we jump to the end of the book, we find Job's problem with God was never solved intellectually—the “why” question was never answered for him. The central issue for all Christians struggling with a loss in life comes down to a fellowship problem with God, not an intellectual problem with God. Suffering usually causes us to reevaluate who God is and who we are to Him. Job did resolve these issues when he said in Job 42:3, “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” Job was totally liberated when he came to the place of understanding that a God who can be totally explained or understood is no God at all. A God who is small enough for a human to understand is too small to be our God. This revelation freed Job from having to understand it all.

This may be one of the most important lessons a Christian can ever learn. It is important because

in the midst of dealing with the pain of a loss, if we aren't able to totally depend on God, what limited physical, emotional, and psychological resources we have will be divided even more. Our strength must come from God and God alone. It is crucial at times like these to focus on what we do know about God and not what we don't know or understand. When we have suffered a loss in life, we must reaffirm who we know God to be, and our relationship with Him. Unless we do, we won't be able to turn to Him for the strength, comfort, and hope we need. Three of the most important truths we must reaffirm about God are:

### 1. God loves us and He understands.

The Bible affirms the love of God again and again. We know this love is unconditional and unending because Jesus demonstrated God's love to us. I John 4:9 and 16 says, “This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.” Psalm 145 speaks of God's abundant goodness and of His being loving toward all He has made. Jeremiah 32:41 tells us that because God loves us, He rejoices in doing good for us. The Bible says that God is love, and that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so we can depend on God's love and goodness being unconditional and unchanging. The Bible tells us in Psalm 34:18 that, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Jesus is not

removed from our pain. He understands what it is like to suffer loss because the Bible reminds us in the book of Hebrews that Jesus has faced every heartache and pain that we face. He is a Savior who understands.

### 2. God is too wise to make a mistake.

Psalm 147:5 says, “His wisdom has no limit.” Unlike a human parent, God is too wise to make a mistake where His children are concerned. He always knows what's best for us and what is the best way to bring about that result in our lives. Our Heavenly Father has the “big picture” for our lives and therefore is the only One who can know what is best for us. God is so wise that He automatically knows what we need, when we need it. He can separate our needs from our wants and knows whether what we want would be good for us to have or whether it would harm us. God's wisdom and ways are so far beyond our limited understanding that the only way we will find peace in times of loss is to let go and trust Him.

### 3. God is in control of everything in our world.

Being in control means God is sovereign and is in charge of the final outcome. The wise, good God who loves and understands us is a sovereign God. God is in complete control of everything at all times. There is not one single event in all the universe which can occur outside of God's sovereign control. Not even willful, malicious acts, or the mis-

takes of other people can change God's purpose for us. No detail of our lives is too insignificant for our Heavenly Father's attention. No circumstance is so big that He cannot control it. Nothing happens in our life without a reason and if we will allow Him, God will use everything that happens, including loss, for good in our lives.

Being out of control makes us insecure and fearful. When we are in a situation over which we have little control, fear will often rob us of our ability to “Be still (rest, cease from striving) and know that He is God.” Fear says, “Do something!” Guilt will always take us back to the past by asking, “what could I have done differently?” Anxiety will always propel us into the future by asking, “what's going to happen now?” Reminding ourselves that God is in control will help us rest in the present.

God, in His love, always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and in His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about. We can trust this kind of Father to meet our needs and do what is best for us. Psalm 112:7-8 tells us that trusting God will give us a steadfast (secure) heart, and the result of having a steadfast heart is that we will not live in fear of bad news. The peace that comes in our lives when we choose to trust Him will give us contentment, regardless of our circumstances, and regardless of what we have or don't have.



Jerry Bridges says, “God does not delight in bringing us pain and heartache. He always has a purpose for the grief He allows into our lives. Most often, we do not know what that purpose is, but it is enough to know that His infinite wisdom and perfect love have determined that the particular sorrow is best for us. God never wastes pain. He always uses it to accomplish His purpose.” Mr. Bridges is right; we can’t always know why God has allowed loss in our lives, but we can take comfort in knowing that there is a reason. God wants to take every experience, every heartache, and use it for good in our lives, regardless of the reason it happened.

One good thing that can come from a loss in life when we are willing to cooperate with God is the pattern of self-reliance can be broken in our lives. In order for us to be saved, we must come to the place where we are willing to repent of our self-sufficiency and of playing god in our own lives. We must be willing to acknowledge His right to be God in our lives and turn the controls of our lives over to Him. From the moment of salvation the whole essence of the Christian life is to live totally dependent on God for everything. The biggest temptation every Christian faces on a daily basis is to take back the control of our lives from God.

Do you remember the story of Jacob in Genesis 32? If ever there was a self-reliant person, it was Jacob. Verse 24 finds Jacob at

a very difficult place in his life. He is all alone and everything he has ever depended on is gone. At that very point in his life, God pays him a visit in the form of a man and the Bible says Jacob wrestled with the man all night long. Verse 25 says Jacob would not quit fighting against the man, so the man (God) touched Jacob’s hip and put it out of socket. God took away the one thing left in Jacob’s life that was keeping him from facing the truth about the self-sufficient way he had lived his life.

Jacob recognized this was a man from God and the Scripture says he would not let the man go. In verse 26 the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, I will not let you go until you bless me!” Jacob was saying, “I’m tired of being this way, I want things to be different in my life, I want things to change in my life. I will not let you go until you do a work in my life!” God did just that for Jacob and Jacob named the place where they had struggled, Peniel (face of God) because that is where he met God face to face. The Bible tells us from that day until the day he died, Jacob walked with a limp as a constant reminder of his dependence on God.

God’s heart is stirred by our neediness and by those who aren’t afraid to admit they need help. When we are self-reliant, we block the power and blessing of God in our lives. God loved Jacob and He loves us so much that He is willing to allow us to be broken in the flesh

to heal us in our spirit. God will cripple a man to get to his heart because He is much more interested in our spiritual wholeness than in our health, wealth, or prosperity. God dislocated Jacob’s hip, but He will dislocate our plans, if need be, to help move us out of our self-reliance. God knows that self-reliance for a Christian is deadly and as long as we feel strong in ourselves, we will never depend on God.

God wants to use suffering in our lives to put us in situations over which we have no control. Jacob had to get to the place of being in such pain and being so overwhelmed by his circumstances that he was finally willing to let go of his self-sufficiency and let God change him. Up until that point in his life, Jacob had known God from a distance—now through loss, he knew God face to face. This is the only way we will ever develop real intimacy

with God. The fact God allows loss in our life is not a sign of His disfavor, but a sign of His love. He wants us to know His best in our lives and that won’t happen until we are totally dependent on Him.

In moments of great suffering we must ask ourselves this question: Do we really want to know the truth and be healed, or do we just want the pain to go away? If we are going to survive a loss we must be willing to allow God to do His part, but we must be willing to do our part, as well. Here are some things to avoid, and some practical things to do, in order to survive a loss in life.

#### Avoid

##### 1. Prolonged Fatigue

When we don’t take care of ourselves physically as we should, we get physically exhausted and emotionally drained. When this occurs, going on will seem impossible.

The fact God allows loss in our life is not a sign of His disfavor, but a sign of His love.

# If we wait on Him, ...

## 2. Unfounded Fears

Grieving a loss feels like fear and that is normal at first. However, irrational fear can cause us to become emotionally “stuck” in our loss, which is not healthy. The way we recognize being emotionally stuck is that we have an intense, deep desire to escape reality and our problem. When we have a problem in life, we can either run away from it in fear, or walk through it in faith.

## 3. Unresolved Anger

There is nothing that causes us to lose our perspective like unresolved anger. Anger is a natural part of loss and it is an emotion we need to be honest about and deal with. However, if we find ourselves being angry all the time and unable to move past our anger, then this is a signal we need to get some professional help.

## 4. Lingering Depression

Almost everyone who suffers a loss in life will experience some depression. But if depression lingers, it can cause us not to care about the things that would normally be important to us. Lingering depression is also a sign that some professional help may be needed. There are some things we can do for ourselves to keep depression from being worse than it has to be. Here are four things we should avoid when we are depressed:

- A. **Focusing on our feelings and not on the facts.** This is called emotional reasoning—I “feel” like it, so it must be true. This is a very destructive line of reason-

ing because even though feelings are important, they are highly unreliable and not to be trusted.

- B. **Comparing ourselves to others.** This will always breed unhappiness in our lives and make us more depressed. We can't compare our lives or what we are going through to anyone else. If we start playing the comparison game we will always compare ourselves to those who have more, not less, than we do and this will give self-pity a foot-hold in our lives.
- C. **Blaming ourselves for negative things which are not our fault.** The gap between “what is” and “what ought to be” can cause us to look for someone to blame. When we blame ourselves by assuming responsibility for other people's actions and responses, we are assuming a responsibility which is not ours and this only makes depression worse.
- D. **Exaggerating the negative.** When we are depressed, we always tend to exaggerate the negative and make things out to be worse than they really are. Every time we “rehearse” what has happened, the loss becomes larger and more painful. If we continue to do this, eventually, the loss will appear too big to survive.
5. **Drifting aimlessly**  
Just like a storm can cause us to lose sight of where we are headed, loss can cause us to forget our goals, values, and convictions and just begin to drift through life. When we allow our-

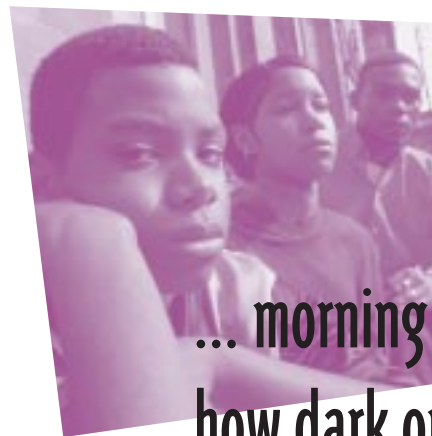
selves to drift aimlessly, waves of pain and anger will beat us around like waves on the ocean and we will get farther and farther off course in life.

## 6. Discarding things that matter

If we are out in a boat when a storm hits, the temptation is to start throwing things overboard. When we experience a loss, we may also be tempted to start discarding things from our lives. It is easy at times of great loss to feel as if we are about to go under emotionally, so we begin throwing important things like dreams or relationships overboard.

## 7. Despairing and giving up hope

When a loss in life has made things dark all around us, it is easy to give up hope that the sun will ever shine again, but God doesn't want us to despair. If we wait on Him, morning will come no matter how dark or long the night. Remember, where there is life, there is hope.



... morning will come no matter  
how dark or long the night.

## Do

### 1. Face the loss honestly

We must deal with our loss honestly and if we need help, ask for it. We must talk to our parents, pastor, youth pastor, or a Christian counselor. If we don't get the help we need, we must keep asking until we do because talking to the right person helps.

### 2. Focus on the facts, not our feelings

If we have allowed ourselves to believe the lies Satan tells us, then we must replace them with the truth of the Word of God. We must “renew our minds” to the truth daily and focus on verses like these that remind us of God's:

- **Nearness** – Hebrews 13:5 says, “...never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.”
- **Power** – Ephesians 1:19-20 says, “...His incomparable great power for us who believe. That power is just like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead...”

When we have suffered a loss, we must make a choice with an act of our will to get our focus off of our feelings and our circumstances, and put it on the Lord.

### 3. Fight temptation with all our might

We must resist the temptation to give in to negative and discouraging thoughts. The battleground for a Christian will always be the mind—this is where all the battles of life are either won or lost. God will do His part and supply the power we need to go on, but we must do our part. We must remember that our feelings will always follow our thoughts, so we must guard our thoughts well.

### 4. Decide what our priorities are and make them our focus

A loss can be a wake-up call in our lives. This is a good time to evaluate where we are and where we are headed. We must say no to things that are just good in life, in order to have the best. We must decide that we are not going to be distracted any longer by things that don't really matter in life.

### 5. Determine to only see things through God's eyes

God sees things differently than we do because we see only a small piece of the puzzle of our lives, while He sees the big picture. It's the difference between watching a parade

from the sidewalk or from a helicopter. The only thing we can see of a parade is what is visible from the curb—what is right in front of us at the moment.

But from the sky we can see the entire parade: The beginning, the middle and the end. After a loss it is easy to feel hopeless because we only see what is going on in our lives at the moment. God can see how everything that happens to us fits and works together. The only way to get God's perspective for our lives is to spend time alone with Him on a daily basis.

Life is like a well, and in order to experience life to its fullest, we must drink deeply from that well. Sometimes the water at the top of the well can be dirty and warm, so to get the best water, we have to get beneath what is on the surface to the water that is deep below. The same principle is true in life. To truly appreciate life, we must experience both the good and the bad, the pleasure and the pain. We can never fully know how good it is to be full unless we have been hungry. We can never really appreciate good health, if we have never been sick. We can never fully understand how good it feels to be clean, if we have never been dirty. We will never truly appreciate the good, sweet times in life unless we have known hard times.

Loss is a fact of life for everyone—we can't get around it and we can't avoid it. A loss can make us hurt so badly, that we think we won't be able to stand it. It may feel as if we have been broken into a million pieces, and there isn't enough glue in the world to put us back together. But if we will simply let the deep pain hurt and not try to shortcut through it, or detour around it, we will actually heal faster. We can survive losses in life, but the only way to "get through" is to "go through."

To truly appreciate life, we must experience both the good and the bad, the pleasure and the pain.