

Ep #63: When Prayers Feel Empty: Wrestling with Faith After Loss



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sandy Linda

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Did you check your notifications this morning? 14 emails, seven texts, three missed calls, and one profound absence. Where your faith used to be. Let's talk about finding a spiritual signal in the noise of loss. Stay tuned!

Welcome to *Overcoming Grief*, a show for women experiencing profound grief and looking for support in healing and transforming their lives. If you are ready to heal after loss, create a new self-identity, take responsibility to do the hard things, and get massive results in your life, this show is for you. Now, here's your host, Master Grief and Life Coach, Sandy Linda.

Hello, creative humans. Do you know that morning ritual every successful leader swears by? Mine used to be perfect. 6 a.m. My favorite coffee mug, my worn leather prayer journal, and 15 minutes of devotional time that set the tone for my entire day until it didn't.

Every executive knows this moment when the spiritual practices that once empowered your leadership feel lifeless. When your carefully crafted morning routine becomes a painful reminder of what's missing. If you ever sat there, coffee going cold, staring at prayers that used to bring comfort, but now feel like empty words, this conversation is for you.

Welcome to those joining us for the first time. You found a community of high performance women who refuse to choose between professional success and authentic grieving. And thank you to my regular listeners for continuing this journey with me.

You know that moment when your entire spiritual foundation crumbles? Mine came in waves of loss, one family member, then another, until my world completely shattered. And here's the thing about faith that nobody really prepares you for, how it feels when the connection goes silent.

My mom was one of those beautiful souls who never missed a Sunday service. Every morning, without fail, she prayed before heading to work. We did everything by the book, as they say. But when multiple losses hit, that book couldn't hold all my questions anymore. I found myself asking God, why, over and over. Why take my family members when we follow all the rules?

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The church walls that once felt like home started feeling like they were closing in. Every hymn, every prayer, they all felt like echoes in an empty room. So I stopped going. I mean, What was the point? It felt like some kind of cosmic punishment. And I was done trying to make sense of it.

But here's where my story takes an unexpected turn. Three years into my spiritual desert, I stumbled into meditation. 20 minutes of sitting still felt like an eternity at first, but something started shifting. In that stillness, I began finding pieces of myself again. Then 2020 hit, you know when the whole world stopped.

Somehow I found myself face to face with my old Bible, dust and all. The book of Job caught my attention. Forty chapters about a man who lost everything. Finally, here was someone who understood multiple losses, someone whose story spoke to my experience.

Although I've moved away from religious services, I still embrace spirituality. My faith looks different now. It's raw, it's real, and honestly, it's deeper than before. And today, I am diving into how we wrestle with faith after losing someone. It's not always about being perfect. It's about being honest about your struggles and finding your path back to faith on your terms.

If you are in that space right now, questioning, struggling, feeling abandoned by the divine, this episode is for you. Let's talk about what happens when prayers feel empty and how we find our way back to something real. Let's talk about something that often goes unspoken. What happens to our emotional wellbeing when faith slips through our fingers?

Do you know that 3 a.m. Anxiety that creeps in? It hits you in the strangest moments, like when you are about to announce a company-wide restructuring, and you realize you can't call your dad afterward to hear him say, "You did the right thing, kiddo." Those are the times when traditional prayers seem empty, when your executive armor cracks just a little.

Think about it. Faith gives us this built-in comfort system, right? A way to make sense of life, death, and everything in between. But when that system shorts out, it's like losing your emotional safety net. Suddenly, those prayers that used

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to calm your racing thoughts, those beliefs that used to give you peace, they're just not there anymore.

And here's the really tough part. Right when you're feeling most vulnerable, those traditional sources of comfort might feel more like empty gestures. That well-meaning friend saying, "They are in a better place," doesn't land the same way it used to. The hymns that once brought peace now bring tears and not the healing kind. Being alone can be super loud. It's this strange mystery.

You might be surrounded by people who care about you, but when you are questioning your faith, it can feel like you're speaking a different language, like you're standing on the outside of the window, watching everyone else find comfort in something you used to understand, but can't quite pick it up anymore. But here's what I want you to know. This struggle doesn't mean you are broken. It means you are human. And sometimes, the most honest form of faith is allowing yourself to question it.

Your doubt, your anger, your confusion, they are all valid parts of this journey. Maybe what we need isn't to force ourselves back into old patterns of faith, but to be gentle with ourselves as we figure out what it looks like now in this new reality we didn't choose.

Before we dive into the actionable advice, I have a quick ask. Would you take just two minutes to leave a rating and review of this episode? Your feedback is invaluable to us. It helps us to reach more people and motivate us to create resonating content. Simply share one key takeaway from our conversation today or any other episode, and let us know how we can continue to support and inspire you in the future. Your input makes a huge difference and we are grateful for your time and consideration.

Today I want to address my fellow women leaders, executives, entrepreneurs, and CEOs who are carrying both the weight of loss and the responsibility of leadership. When you have lost a parent or a sibling, showing up as a strong leader while wrestling with your faith can feel like walking a tight rope. Let's talk about how to honor both your grief and your leadership journey.

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Let's start with something I call sacred space office design. Some of you may be working at home, but there's others that still work in the office. And this isn't about a typical workspace feng shui. Instead, create a slight spiritual anchor in your leadership space. Maybe it's a small memorial object in your drawer that belonged to your loved one, or a meaningful quote that is hidden inside your planner. When tough decisions arise, this private touchstone becomes your spiritual grounding point. One executive I know keeps her mother's favorite pen on her desk. To others, it's just a pen, but for her, it's a spiritual connection point during challenging meetings.

While creating a sacred space provides physical anchoring, we also need spiritual wisdom to guide us through this journey.

This brings us to our next approach, biblical wisdom for the modern leader. When I lost my parents and sister, I discovered something unexpected in those ancient texts, leadership lessons hidden in the stories of loss. Think about Esther's courage in the face of uncertainty, Ruth's resilience after her loss, and Deborah's strength as a leader and symbol of justice. They weren't just spiritual readings anymore. They became executive case studies in leading through grief.

Focus on the stories that speak to struggle, Job's journey through loss, and the raw honesty of lamentations. These passages don't sugarcoat grief. They give us permission to question, to doubt, to be human while leading.

Now that we have established both physical and spiritual foundations, let's talk about how to weave these elements into your daily leadership practice in a way that honors both your professional role and your personal journey.

Grief-informed leadership rituals.

Create leadership rituals that honor both your professional role and your grief journey. Instead of diving straight into metrics and deadlines, create a ritual of intention setting. Maybe you begin with, this week we focus on innovation and growth. Privately dedicating this to how your father always encouraged creative thinking. It's your secret bridge between your loss and your leadership. Your team sees professional focus while you're honoring your loved one's legacy.

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Schedule what I call real talk moments with your team. Once a month, create a space for authentic conversations about challenges and growth. Share appropriately about your own journey, not to burden, but to demonstrate that great leadership includes processing life's hardest moments.

These rituals create a culture where bringing your whole self to work isn't just allowed, it's valued. What makes these rituals powerful is their ability to integrate what many think should be separate, grief and leadership, professional strength and personal pain. They acknowledge that our losses don't diminish our leadership, they deepen it.

While structured rituals provide framework, Sometimes the most profound spiritual connections happen when we are simply in motion. This brings us to a practice that transformed myself and other executives' leadership journey. Let's talk about walking meditations.

I know what you're thinking, where do I find the time? As leaders, our calendars are often back to back, but here's the thing. This practice can actually fit into your executive routine. Those early morning hours before your first meeting, or that lunch break you usually work through. That's your secret time.

Start with just 15 minutes walking around a nearby park. This may become your private board meeting with the divine, if you will. No agenda, no performance matrix, just honest conversation with each step. The beauty of walking meditation is its flexibility. You can do it between meetings, during your commute, or even while walking to get coffee. Some of my most clear-headed leadership decisions came during these walks, when I gave myself permission to be both vulnerable and strong.

In the end, this isn't just about walking. It's about creating mobile moments of clarity that serve both your spiritual journey and your leadership path. As women leaders, we often chart new territory. So remember that. There's no manual for balancing quarterly reports with spiritual questioning or team leadership with personal grief. But perhaps that's exactly why we're in these positions, to show that strength can be soft, leadership can be heart-centered, and faith can be found even in the boardroom.

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Your journey of spiritual renewal while leading isn't just about you, it's creating a new paradigm for every woman leader who will walk this path after you. And that, dear listener, is both a responsibility and a gift.

You know, when I started this journey of leading through loss, I thought I had to choose to be either the strong executive or the grieving daughter and sister. But what I hope you are taking away today is that your greatest leadership strength comes from integrating both.

So the tools that I left you with was creating a sacred space in your office isn't just about remembrance, it's about grounding yourself in moments of executive decision-making. Finding wisdom in ancient texts isn't about religious doctrine, it's about connecting with timeless stories of resilience that mirror your own. Building grief-informed leadership rituals that helps transform our loss into legacy. And those walking meditations, they are your mobile sanctuary in a packed calendar.

But beyond these practices, here's what I really want you to remember. Your spiritual struggle isn't a leadership weakness. It's a source of authentic power. When we allow ourselves to be both strong and vulnerable, both leader and human, we create a new model of executive presence that is so desperately needed in today's business world. Think about it. Every time you honor your grief journey while leading your team.

Every time you create space for authentic connections in the boardroom, you're not just healing yourself, you're showing other women leaders that they don't have to cut off their pain to be powerful. Don't think of losing someone while you're leading as a setback. It's a part of your spiritual growth. And maybe, just maybe, that's exactly what makes you not just a good leader, but a transformative one.

Remember, you're not just rebuilding your faith after loss. You are pioneering a more human way to lead. And that, my fellow executives, is both your challenge and your gift to the next generation of leaders.

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As I wrapped up, if you know another woman leader walking this path of grief and leadership, please share this episode with her. Not through a casual forward, but with a personal saying, this made me think of you. Sometimes knowing we are not alone in the executive leader's struggle is a first step towards healing.

Also, I want to leave you with two journaling prompts that I would love for you to share with me or with any grieving advocates that get it and understand it. The first one is the leadership quality I inherited from a loved one that I'm most grateful for today is, and the second one, the ways my leadership style has deepened through loss.

Spend 10 to 15 minutes writing about this item and what it represents in your journey of grief and healing. I would love to hear how this journaling exercise resonates with you.

Remember, you're not just a leader who happens to be grieving. You are pioneering a new way of leading, one that honors both your professional strength and your human heart.

Until next time, grieve with grace, nurture your inner strength, and lead with courageous hearts. My grief warriors, keep walking your path with elegance. Have a beautiful week. Bye, everyone.

Thanks for listening to today's episode of *Overcoming Grief*. If you're ready to move into a new, rewarding life experience, and want more information about how to work with Sandy, visit www.sandy linda.com.