



# The Pain and the Process of grief

g<sup>ood</sup>  
g<sup>rief</sup>



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## MONDAY – The pain of grief



**2 Samuel 18: 33** “O my son, Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom! If only I had died instead of you – O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Reading the cry of King David when he received the news of Absalom’s death, one wonders how the words “Good” and “Grief” can ever be combined. During this series we are going to look at grief in a manner that we perhaps have not considered before and find out whether in fact we can combine these two disparate words.

*We are all just a car crash, a  
diagnosis,  
An unexpected phone call, a  
newfound love,  
Or a broken heart away from  
becoming  
a completely different person.  
How beautifully fragile are we  
That so many things take but a  
Moment to alter who we are for  
ever?*

**Samuel Decker Thompson**

The pain of grief is real, whether it is the loss of a loved one, or a job, or maybe a dream for the future. All loss is as real as physical pain and we often find ourselves at a loss to put this into words. The pain of grief is due in part to the overwhelming sense of loss. A loved one has died, a relationship ended, a job with its security has been lost, maybe your plans for the future have been

suddenly and irrevocably been put on hold. Whatever the cause of the pain, the sense of loss is immediate and intense. We find ourselves going over past events, both helpful and unhelpful, regrets and sorrows intermingle with questions as to why and what we could have done to change the outcome.

Grief is a process, and this week we will be journeying through that process and while not denying our pain we will try to see whether we can make sense of our grief and move gradually to a place of healing and wholeness.

Can you name whatever it is that you are grieving at this time? Loneliness, confusion, lost freedom?



**Prayer:** Thank You God that You are alright with our pain and mess. Thank You that You invite us to speak it to You. Today I bring to You all the brokenness in my life. Please walk with me during this most difficult of times and remind me of Your love when I feel myself drowning in my pain. AMEN

## TUESDAY – Denial



**John 14: 26** *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”*

*There is a time for everything,  
A time for giving birth,  
A time for dying, a time for tears,  
A time for laughter;  
A time for mourning,  
A time for dancing...*

**Ecclesiastes 3: 1-2,4**

These are words we are familiar with, words we have probably heard on many occasions, yet when news of loss is brought to us our response is shock, unbelief and often a kind of numbness.

Denial is a kind of emotional protective device. We simply refuse to believe that what we have heard is true.

During this period it is often this numbness that gets us through the early stages of loss. We get on with things that have to be done, we almost expect our situation to change back to normal as though this had all been a bad dream. We may find that we have difficulty concentrating and making decisions, become confused or forgetful and find it hard to sleep. At times like this when we need shelter from the storms of life, Joyce Rupp in her book *“Praying our Goodbyes”* suggests that having a visual focus

is helpful. She suggests that we light a candle, and use the following prayer written by Caryl Houseman: *Say the word **God** and let it pervade you....God’s hands are around you; they shelter your life as a flame is sheltered in the storm.*

Allow yourself to just be in God’s presence – there is no rush, no need to feel guilty about your feelings. God knows, He understands and even though you may not feel His presence, He is close to you, ready to comfort you.

**John 16: 22** So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy.



**Prayer:** Dear God, in times of loss I don’t know how to express myself but You know the depths of the pain of loss and so I trust my feelings of pain, of confusion and sometimes despair to you. Please walk with me through this time. AMEN.

## WEDNESDAY – Anger



**Psalm 23: 4** *Even though I walk through the darkest valley I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.*

The stages of grief do not necessarily follow a set pattern, but at some stage as the reality and enormity of the loss sets in anger may be felt and expressed.

At this stage we often have questions as to why this has happened, why healing wasn't given and many more that we wish could be answered. We need to acknowledge these feelings so that they can be expressed in a healthy way, as it is through acknowledging them and recognising them as a part of our pain that we can move forward in our journey with grief.

Grief is inhibited when the bereaved or someone close shuts off the natural flow of feelings about the loss. Fear of the feelings or their intensity, discomfort with tears and false pride about silence and self-control are all things that inhibit grief. We are bound to be inhibited in our grief and unable to complete it if we cannot express our feelings.

Anger may recur again and again during the time we are grieving. Anger is a natural outgrowth of our sense of impotence and helplessness, our sense of disappointment and loss, and our sense of abandonment by the deceased (Judy Tatelbaum). Take a good look at the Psalms and you

will know that God is not afraid of your anger. In Psalm 109 David tells God all about his troubles, and he says things very plainly, but he ends with the following words:

*With my mouth I will give great praise to the Lord. I will praise Him in the midst of the throng. He stands at the right hand of the needy one to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.*

Where do you go with your anger? Can you find some creative way to express it? What is holding you back from coming honestly to God with your pain, your anger and confusion?



**Prayer:** Thank You God that there is nothing I cannot bring to You – all my anger, my pain and my questioning. Thank You that You hear even my unspoken prayers. AMEN

<https://youtu.be/aKkHi5IJ4yc>

## THURSDAY – Depression



**Jeremiah 31: 15** *Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted because they are no more.”*

As loss, whatever that may be for you, becomes a reality and loneliness sets in, periods of darkness and depression are not uncommon. When these times occur, we may find that using symbols bring us not only comfort, but help us to move forward in our prayers.

A dried seedpod may remind us that although the pod may be empty, the seeds have blown away, where they land new life will grow. There are many ordinary images which speak to us of the necessary transitions in life such as autumn leaves and empty nests. When we pay attention to small details, we can see the hand of God in whom all things can be made new in the planting of a winter garden, the birds which nest in our trees, the butterflies which migrate every year.

Judith Tatelbaum in her book “*The courage to Grieve*” learnt a lesson from a ten-year old friend who had a list on her bedroom door entitled “Things I can do when I am alone”. She had written a number of activities of things to occupy herself with when she imagined she had nothing to do. Often after a loss we have difficulty in resuming life, especially if we are alone. Judy suggests that this is a helpful tool to

use. Here is a sample of her suggestions

### **Things I can do when I am alone**

- Listen to music
- Write a short story
- Draw or paint
- Sew, knit or crochet
- Take photographs
- Work crossword puzzles
- Learn a new subject
- Plant something in a garden
- Walk, hike or run.

**2 Cor 1: 3-5** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*



**Prayer:** God of comfort, thank You that You are closer to us than our own breath. We draw our comfort and courage from You. AMEN

## FRIDAY – Acceptance



**John 16: 22** *So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice and no one can rob you of that joy.*

In this stage you come to accept the loss. You begin to realise that life is good and that you have a purpose in life. You begin to laugh again, sometimes much to your own surprise. And even though you still have many unanswered questions, you may begin to see the value in what you have been through and that you have gained something worth passing on to others.

Although it may be hard to believe, we can recover from our sorrow. Recovery from grief is the restoration of our capacity for living a full life without feelings of guilt, sorrow, shame or regret. We have recovered when we once again feel able to cope with our feelings and our environment and when we can face reality and accept our loss on a gut level, not just intellectually. Willingness to recover is essential. What it takes to recover is a willingness to hope, a willingness to go on with life, a willingness to let go of the pain and a willingness to heal fully.

A look at some of the attributes which help us to be restored are

**Courage** – the courage to grieve, to face our feelings and to go on with life. **Patience** – with ourselves during this period. **Resilience** – which is learned and tends to increase rather than decrease as we age. **Perseverance or endurance** – having the faith to stay with what we are experiencing. **A capacity to distance** – to gain perspective in order to cope and a **Sense of humour** – it is a relief to be able to laugh at life sometimes, even if just for a moment. (*The Courage to Grieve* Judy Tatelbaum)

A few practical steps towards recovery from grief and sorrow.

Write down some affirmations about yourself:

I am brave

I am strong

I am able to accept change

I am .....



**Prayer:** Thank You Jesus that You have not left us alone in our trials and sorrows. I embrace Your comfort, Your strength and Your love as I move into a new phase of life. AMEN

<https://youtu.be/Hhf5Ghk-O7E>

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