



# The Pitfalls & the Profits of grief

g<sup>ood</sup>  
grief



[westview.org.za](http://westview.org.za)

## MONDAY – Better in death or life?



**Romans 3: 23 (NIV)** ...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

**Ecclesiastes 3: 11 (NIV)** He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

No one is perfect. When you lose a loved one, it's normal to want to remember the good. The memory of good times can be comforting on the journey of grief. It can also go too far.

Common pitfalls where you may go “too far” include:

- Idealising the dead: making them into something in death that they never were in life.
- Making negative comparisons between those who are still with you and the deceased.
- Feeling guilty for not continuing their “good works” or not living up to their “example”.

Remembering their humanity gives perspective as you reflect on how their life touched you. You can learn from the good and bad. It provides space for you to

understand the gift of those who are still with you. It gives you the freedom to live your life your way, with all its imperfections.

Think about someone close to you who passed away.

- What did you love most about them?
- What did you love least about them?
- What comfort do you experience by remembering their strengths?
- What comfort do you experience by remembering their flaws?

The best memory we can carry of our loved ones is the complete version, showing the beautiful tapestry of their imperfect life carefully woven together with God.



**Prayer:** Help me to retain perspective as I try to honour the memory of my loved ones who have passed away. Allow me to remember the beauty of their lives not as “perfection” but as “goodness”.

AMEN

## TUESDAY – Moving on (too fast)



**Job 2: 13 (NIV)** *Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him because they saw how great his suffering was.*

The ancient Jewish tradition of “*shiva*” is a week-long mourning period for first-degree relatives. The practice of “sitting *shiva*” was inspired by the above scripture and involved sitting on the floor or a low stool during the period of mourning. It was common for friends and family to sit *shiva* with the bereaved. It teaches us the importance of sitting with others who are grieving, but also the importance of the bereaved sitting with their grief.

The psychiatrist Dr Jorge Casariego ([How Sitting Shiva Can Help | Shiva, Jewish Mourning](#)) considers a *shiva*-like grieving process to be of psychological importance. He explains that when a bereaved person does not take the time to mourn their loss, it can lead to longer-term mourning. This can be chronic

and emotionally disturbing, even leading to depression.

It is not unusual to feel like the best way to honour the dead is to simply “get on with it”. But this is seldom helpful. Our grief should be given the time it needs.

Some common pitfalls you can try to avoid include:

- Keeping yourself busy so that you don't have to face your grief.
- Making big life decisions while still getting to grips with your loss.
- Focusing on your career or ministry to honour the life of the deceased, or to continue their “unfinished work”.

God invites us to not be hasty in moving on when we suffer loss. Dealing with loss takes time, and that is okay.



**Prayer:** Lord, in times when I experience grief, help me bravely face my pain and set aside the time I need. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Moving on (too slow)



**John 10: 10 (NIV)** ...I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

Yesterday we learnt the importance of not moving on too fast. Equally, we should take care to not get stuck in our grief. The wisdom writer of Ecclesiastes lamented that the world has too many problems and the dead may be better off than the living (Ecclesiastes 4:2). Losing someone whose life was deeply intertwined with your own can leave you feeling the same. Life may not feel like it is worth living.

But even in our grief, Christ invites us to life. It is good and necessary to take time to grieve and to find ways to remember our loved ones. But this can be taken too far.

Some of the common pitfalls in this area we can avoid include:

- Living in the past by trying to keep the deceased alive, e.g.

keeping their clothes and other possessions, or leaving rooms untouched as shrines.

- Shutting others out of our lives.
- Feeling a constant sense of self-pity.

Jesus once invited a man to follow Him. The man said he needed to first go bury his father. Jesus recognised that the man was using his grief as an excuse to avoid living a full and meaningful life. Jesus responded with the rather blunt words “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9: 60, NIV). Jesus is not saying we should not grieve or have funeral services. But our grief should not become so entrenched that we neglect the calling Christ has placed on our lives.



**Prayer:** God, give me the wisdom to know the difference between avoiding my grief and getting stuck in my grief. AMEN

## THURSDAY – He is with you



**Psalm 23: 4 (NIV)** *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 first three days this week we considered the pitfalls of grief. Now we will consider the good which can come from our grief. Losing a loved one is never “good”, but God has a tendency to work in the most tangible ways where there is brokenness.

For reflection: which heart is easier for God to touch?

- A hardened, tough and self-reliant heart?
- A broken heart?

The words of Psalm 23 are amongst the most famous in the Christian tradition. They are often quoted at funerals and remembered by Christ-followers in their darkest moments. These are words that are unlikely to form the basis of theological debates between conservatives and liberals. Death is a great equaliser, and the comfort God

gives to the bereaved shows no prejudice. As Jesus reminds us, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5: 4).

There is a special encounter which God reserves only for the broken, those who grieve. It cannot be found when we are living our “best lives”. It is only experienced when we walk the valley of the shadow of death.

As a church community, we should be careful to remember this. The time when a person is most likely to meet the living God is when they are on a journey of grief. We can help them to find Him amid their pain, not by sharing the “sinner’s prayer”, but by walking with them in their grief and sharing Christ’s love when they need it most.



**Prayer:** Thank You that You are the God of the broken. You are always there when we need you most. AMEN

## FRIDAY – The wounded healer



**Isaiah 53: 5 (NIV)** *But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.*

**2 Corinthians 1: 3-4 (NIV)** *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*

On 13 April 2021, President Joe Biden paid tribute to slain police officer Billy Evans (transcript available [here](#)). The president did not know Billy, only of his sacrifice in protecting the US Capitol. President Biden himself has lost two children and a spouse. He knows the journey of grief. Biden spoke directly to Billy's mom, wife and children in the way only someone who has walked a similar road could do.

Christians know that Christ walked a difficult road. He felt pain, He mourned loss, He

suffered humiliation. The healing we receive from His wounds is not only in the form of salvation for sin, but also the knowledge that Christ is the wounded healer.

Similarly, if you have been down a path of grief and pain, you are able to be a healer to others. There is a level of deep empathy for the bereaved known only to those who have walked the road of grief themselves. Our own journeys of grief can be used by Christ to bring comfort and healing to others in our community in their time of need.



**Prayer:** Lord, it brings me great comfort to know that You understand the pain I feel. May my wounds be the very thing which bring Your comfort to others. AMEN