

Can God Fix This?
First Colony Church of Christ
Small Group Series Leader's Guide
Fall 2011

Grief: My Heart Hurts

Grief is a feeling of deep mental anguish caused by loss. It can be the loss of a loved one, loss of possessions, loss of a career, or some other life-changing loss. Grief can also be sorrow for something that someone has done or failed to do. Because we live in a fallen world, life inevitably includes sorrow. When sin entered the human race, it brought death—physical death and spiritual death with all the accompanying ramifications. Death or loss of anything we value causes grief.

It is not ungodly for a person to experience grief. Even Jesus wept when he heard of his close friend's death. God has wired us to experience this emotion. While we do not enjoy feeling grief it is a part of life. A familiar passage from Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that there is:

*a time to be born and a time to die...
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance...*

So, how does the believer respond to the deep ache of loss we call grief? The answer in the end is: we trust in a loving and good God to do what is right. But grief is process and it may even begin with anger or frustration towards God. This can be especially true if the loss or failure causing grief is sudden or unexpected. Believers can sometimes get nervous when they or others feel anger towards God. Is it wrong to feel this way? The answer is: probably not. Job, David and Jeremiah all express frustration and even anger towards God in the Bible. God understands that we have feelings and He's OK with it.

The important thing to remember in feeling grief is that however we feel, we must run to God with our feelings and not away from Him. Even if we feel angry. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 tells us that we do not need to grieve hopelessly like the rest of mankind. This doesn't mean we can't grieve, it only means that as believers we have hope even in death because God is in control.

The Kübler-Ross model, commonly known as The Five Stages of Grief, says that a person will likely go through these stages during the grieving process: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. This is a widely accepted model although it is important to remember that each person is unique and will handle loss differently. Another model credited to Dr. Roberta Temes lists these stages: numbness, disorganization, reorganization. Again this is not definitive but it can be helpful for us as we or a person close to us suffers through the grieving process.

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Icebreaker:

When you were a child did you ever lose a precious toy or “treasure?” What did you lose? Did you ever get it back? What was your reaction when you realized you lost it? How long was it before you were able to let go?

Discussion:

1. Grief is a difficult part of every persons life. How do you define grief? What causes grief? How does grief affect us?

This is an opinion question so there are no wrong answers, but just for reference- Grief is a feeling of deep mental anguish caused by loss. It can be the loss of a loved one, loss of possessions, loss of a career, or some other life-changing loss. Grief can also be sorrow for something that someone has done or failed to do.

2. Grief is a process that those who have suffered loss of sometime go through. What does the grieving process look like? How might the grieving process look different from person to person?

While the process is different for everyone, here are some widely accepted lists for the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance -or- numbness, disorganization, reorganization

3. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 tells us that we can grieve differently than the rest of mankind. Why is this? Have you found this to be true in your life?

There is hope in the believer that even during pain God has a plan to take the believer to live with Him eternally.

4. It's possible for us to have unrealistic expectations of ourselves during the grieving process. What kind of unrealistic expectations might we have? How can we turn these into realistic expectations or goals?

Mostly we may expect to move through the process too quickly or be surprised by feelings of anger and frustration. We need to give ourselves freedom to go slowly and feel. Finding someone who has been through it to can be of great help.

5. 1 Thessalonians 4:18 tells us to encourage one another with these words. How do we help others as they go through grief? What should we do and what should we avoid doing as we help others?

It's not usually best to tell someone God loves them and heaven is coming so straighten up. But we can walk alongside and gently remind the griever of the truth of God's love.

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