

Sharing and Overcoming Grief

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 tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

(2 Cor. 1:3-4)

During these very uncertain days there is more than ever a need to address and discuss the impact of grief in our daily lives. The overwhelming trauma of Covid-19, loss of loved ones, the fall out of our economy, unemployment rates skyrocketed, the racial unrest, and the fight for justice and equality, domestic violence, divorces, concern for our children academic stability. This is surely just a tip of the iceberg, and a challenge to make our aim to develop and understand the grief process.

Grief definition: The process of reacting to a loss. The loss may be physical (such as a death), social (such as divorce) or occupational (such as a job). Emotional reactions of grief can include anger, guilt, anxiety, sadness, and despair, Physical reactions of grief can include sleeping problems, changes in appetite, physical problems, or illness.

The Five Stages of Grief are now widely recognized as a way of understanding how we deal with any loss. Not everyone goes through each stage of grief and they may be experienced in any order. People may return to certain stages many times during the grieving process.

Denial, happens to people when they first experience a loss and can't believe it has happened. They deny it, it is essentially a stage of shock, numbness, and disbelief. They are not denying the has occurred, they are more so experiencing a "mentality" I can't believe this person, whom I love so much and came to depend on, will never be around to embrace again. This thought process serves to protect the grieving because to understand this reality all at once would be too intense and overwhelming for the remaining love ones. **(Psalm 46:1) God is our protection and our strength, He always helps in times of trouble.**

The second stage is **Anger**-at oneself, at God, at the loved one, at the world. It is often kept bottled up inside until it turns into guilt- guilt that more could have been done to prevent this great loss. But this is a completely natural response to loss. Recognizing this anger phase of the process of grieving and being able to control these strong emotions is a crucial step to moving on toward acceptance. **(Ephesians 4:26) Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger.**

Bargaining, is the third stage. This occurs when the grieving person wants life to be like it used to be when everyone and everything was well. The essentially fixate on going back in time in order to prevent the loss from happening in the first place, it is the "if only" mentality. This keeps the person focused on the past- and they avoid dealing with the emotions of the present, the reality of the loss. **(Ephesians 5:17) Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

Depression, is a normal stage of grief and expressing depression after a major loss is appropriate. The stage happens when the griever begins to understand that the loss is real. This return to reality brings deep sadness and often withdrawal from life. At this point, you may feel emotionally and physically removed from your family and friends. While depression may feel unbearable at times, comfort from those close to you can help ease your sadness. If you or someone you know is in the depression stage of the grieving process remember the beatitude from the book of Matthew. **(Matthew 5:4) Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.**

Acceptance-The stage of acceptance is often confused with "being okay" with what has happened. This is not necessarily the case, people who have experienced loss may never be okay with the absence of loved ones and life is not what it was. However they will come to a stage of acceptance of what has come about and continue with their lives in a new way. No matter the difficulty of the previous stages, know that God is always with you and will never put you through something he doesn't think you can handle. **(Psalm 23:4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.**

Just like the experience of grief itself, the causes of grief can vary widely, Grief can be caused by any significant loss in life. The loss of anyone or anything that is very important in someone's life can cause grief.

Causes of Grief

- Miscarriage or death of a child
- Death of a spouse, parent or sibling
- Loss of personal health
- Serious illness of a loved one
- Divorce or relationship breakup
- Losing a job or loss of financial stability
- Retirement
- Death of a Pet
- Loss of life goal or dream
- Loss of a friend or friendship
- Child leaving home

