




LESSONS OF GRIEF - PART ONE

10

SESSION

YOU NEED HELP TO FACE THE DAYS AHEAD, to take steps forward, to do your grief work, and to remain steady as you go. This session introduces several practical lessons that will help.

Viewing the video and completing your **FROM MOURNING TO JOY** and **MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK** exercises will help you become more aware of:

-  An often-overlooked reason that grief is so painful
-  Why going to church can be so difficult
-  The benefits of helping others

VIDEO OUTLINE

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words, or questions you have while viewing the video.

BASIC LESSONS OF GRIEF

You lost more than a person

Firsts and holidays

Plan for difficult days

"The harder I know a day is going to be, the sooner I need to turn to God." –Brad Hambrick

Church may be tough

Pray

Read the Bible (Psalm 119:50, Philippians 4:13, Psalm 147:3)

Read the Bible

Visualize Scripture (Psalm 18:29, Deuteronomy 33:12)

Use a checklist

Help others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

"It's a great benefit to be in fellowship ... to be in church." –Phil Sasser

Help Others

Point people to God

You have something to offer

It's a blessing

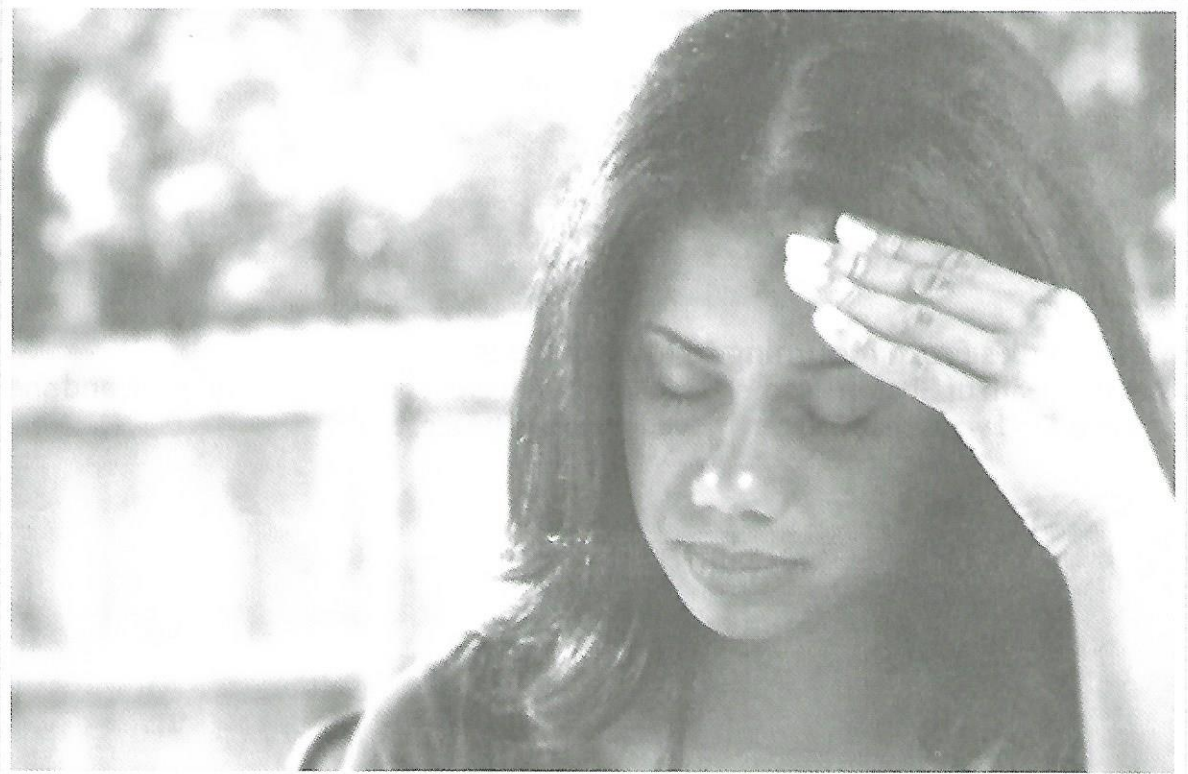
In this week's From Mourning to Joy exercises ...

After the death of Sharon's son, she struggled with great guilt, anger, and grief, and she discovered the path to peace. Find ways that you can move forward in peace, too.

"It went from, 'Oh God, why me?' to 'Okay God, use me.'" –Cindy Bultema

COPING WITH GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

In this week's video, you heard about how to handle difficult days, such as anniversaries, birthdays, and other holidays. Holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas can introduce an entire season of difficult days. The suggestions in this article can help you face the many traditions, gatherings, and expectations associated with the holiday season.



Prioritizing and planning: Start by making a list of what you would like to accomplish, do, or not do during the holidays; this could include traditions, get-togethers, events, decorations, meals—anything you've done in past years. Then, sit down with your family and allow each person to discuss what his or her preferences and desires would be, too. Encourage each person to be specific about what would be helpful to him or her, and share what would be helpful to you. Allow everyone plenty of leeway as each one will be dealing with different emotions. Be creative; give yourself and your family members permission to do something out of the ordinary when it comes to family celebrations or traditions. Regarding holiday tasks and responsibilities that you usually take care of, ask yourself, "Is this something someone else can do?" (This planning activity can also include extended family and friends.)

Accept your limitations: Grief consumes your energy no matter what the season. Holidays place additional demands on time and emotions. Expect fluctuations in your mood and perspective. Lower your expectations to accommodate your current needs. Flexibility is the key word during this time. Your needs will change, so keep family and friends aware of what you're thinking and feeling. For instance, if you are invited to a get-together, you might choose to say yes, but also give the hostess a forewarning that you might end up not coming at the last minute or having to leave early.

Accommodate changes that came with your circumstances, and find ways to decrease your stress: Consider changing your surroundings or your traditions to decrease your stress. Be honest with family and friends and let them know things

might be different this year. Limit social, family, and church commitments to your existing energy level. Another suggestion is to shop early, use catalogs, or shop online. Look at the priorities you've listed and reevaluate them. Leave out unnecessary activities or obligations that you've either placed on yourself or that others may want to place on you.

Ask for and accept help: Accept offers of assistance with holidays—shopping, decorating, cleaning, cooking, etc. Your loved ones and friends might be looking for ways to come alongside you and lessen your pain. Allow them to support you in concrete ways. Let them do or help with the thing you would like to see done, yet have no energy to do. Bottom line, there is no “formula” for dealing with grief or loss over the holidays that will make everything better. You are walking in an unknown territory, but God promises His children that He will never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5b). Learn all you can from what you are called upon to endure so that in time you can come alongside someone else and comfort that person with the comfort you were given (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

To learn more about the topics shared in this article, take time to read the following Scriptures: **Faith:** Hebrews 11:1, Colossians 1:23; **Comfort:** 2 Corinthians 1:3–4; **Courage:** Isaiah 41:10; **Remembering:** Philippians 1:3, Psalm 111:4; **Love:** Romans 8:37–39; **Hope:** Psalm 71:14, Romans 5:1–5.

For helpful articles and videos on how to survive the holiday season, and to find a *GriefShare Surviving the Holidays* seminar near you, go to www.griefshare.org/holidays.



FROM MOURNING TO JOY

ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

Session Ten - Lessons of Grief - Part One



SHARON: "I HAD BEEN FIGHTING WITH THE LORD"

Sharon experienced the death of her young son, who had drowned. "I felt like I had been fighting with the Lord. There was warfare in my soul between Satan telling me to hold on to my grief and bitterness, and God telling me to let it go. I went to my son's bedroom, and I cried and pleaded with the Lord. But I needed peace, and I knew I had to submit to the Lord for peace to happen ..."

You can receive peace and comfort for your journey, too. This week's exercises discuss important lessons to learn and apply on how to move through grief.

DAY
1

Internalizing Scripture

Reading God's Word, taking it in and consuming it, brings great comfort and healing.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul ... The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight for living." (Psalm 19:7-8 NLT)

1. What are some benefits of internalizing God's Word, according to Psalm 19:7-8?
2. What three words are used to describe God's instructions/commands in Psalm 19:7-8?

3. Write down ideas of ways you can start getting into God's Word more. (See today's "Consider this" section for more ideas.)

CONSIDER THIS

"We had some CDs with songs that were all Scripture, and I would sit sometimes for hours and close my eyes and [listen] because I was too weary to read the Bible. I would feel like my cup was being refilled." –Ann

"Reading through the Psalms was a tremendous help." –Sharon

Meet with a mature Christian believer who can help you understand scriptural truths. Attend a Bible study.

Take a "guided tour" of Bible topics by using an online reading plan. You can find easy-to-follow Bible reading plans at www.bible.com/reading-plans.

"Church is where God is the focus, eternal life is spoken of, and comfort is given." –Phil Sasser



Write Bible truths on paper or electronic devices so you can read them throughout your day. Place a verse on your screensaver. Change your ringtones to uplifting Christian music.

TALKING TO GOD

God, Your Word is living and active. It is able to reach the deepest aches in our heart and provide comfort and healing.

**DAY
2**

Visualizing Scripture

Today's exercise will be done in your head, so you do not need a pen!

On the videos, Joyce Rogers explains how visualizing Scripture can help make your Bible reading more real and personal. It involves reading a Bible passage, slowly picturing the details in your mind, and picturing how you personally fit into the picture.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights." (Habakkuk 3:17-19 NLT)

1. Read these six steps first, and then apply them to today's Bible passage. You will be picturing each portion of Habakkuk 3:17-19 step by step. Spend time visualizing slowly and in great detail all the words.
2. Place yourself right in the middle of this picture.
3. Picture your responses to the scene as you read.
4. Visualize how, by faith, you turn to God in this scene.
5. Picture how God strengthens and helps you.
6. Picture how this can be applied to your personal situation.

CONSIDER THIS

"It helps me to sketch God's Word, to take paper, colored pencils, paint, and draw out the concept in the Scripture on paper." –Carol Cornish

"Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions." –Psalm 119:18 NLT

TALKING TO GOD

Thank you, God for the promise that You will be my strength as I walk on this difficult, desolate path. Thank you that You can give me joy alongside my sorrow.

**DAY
3**

Going to church is hard

"I didn't go to church for months."
–Stephen

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."
(Hebrews 10:25)

1. Describe any struggles you have with going to church now.
2. What does Hebrews 10:25 say about going to church?
3. What are some practical ideas you can do to help make it a little easier to be in church?

CONSIDER THIS

Ideas to help you ease back into church:

- Arrive late and/or leave early.
- Sit in the back row.
- Sit with someone who will run interference for you and help you interact with people.
- Identify a place ahead of time where you can go if you're emotionally overwhelmed.
- Attend with someone who will understand when you're ready to leave.
- Let your pastor know you are there, so he can be aware of ways he might be able to help you.

"I realized I needed church, because it gives me strength; it is positive; it's encouraging. It's everything I need to get through life and to get through this grief."
—Shay

TALKING TO GOD

God, I know that part of my healing is to spend time with other people in a church setting, focusing on and worshipping You. Give me the strength to do this.

**DAY
4**

Helping others helps you

Don't wait until you feel better to begin helping others.

"Sometimes the best remedy for grief is finding some way to touch somebody else's life." —Dr. Larry Crabb

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Serve one another humbly in love." (Galatians 5:13b)

1. People all around us are facing stresses, hardships, and losses. Why do you think you're better qualified now to help someone who is struggling?
2. When we reach out and help another person, what should our heart attitude be, according to Galatians 5:13b?
3. Prayerfully ask God whom you could help. Write down ideas of different ways you could reach out and help people. (It could be a simple, one-time act of kindness, or it could be a regular service.)

CONSIDER THIS

"My sister-in-law has three preschoolers, and I would go over and weed her flower beds. I was reaching out to somebody. I was physically active. Those two things brought a lot of healing for me." —Sharon

TALKING TO GOD

God, with Your enabling, I have something to offer people, even in the midst of my pain. Show me who needs my help, my care, and my energy.

**DAY
5**

Praying

Prayer is talking with God. You can talk to God anytime, any place. You don't have to use formal words or special phrases. And God understands that sometimes we feel we don't have any words to pray at all.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray."
(James 5:13a)

"I found that as I served someone else, it lessened my pain." —Nancy Guthrie

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." (Romans 8:26)

1. What do you think might happen if you spent more time praying about your situation?
 2. According to Romans 8:26, if you are a Christian, how does God help you when you have no words to pray?*
- * To learn more about how to ensure you are a Christian, read "God, What Is Going On?" on page xii.
3. Write a prayer to God below, telling Him anything that's weighing on your mind and asking for His guidance.

CONSIDER THIS

"When I feel anxious, when I feel tempted, when I feel nervous, when I feel out of control, when I feel worried, I take that to [God, who is seated on] the throne of Grace, with great intentionality, and I tie it to the altar. I thank Him ahead of time for the outcome."

—Dr. Crawford Loritts

TALKING TO GOD

God, help me to make prayer a part of my daily life, a moment-by-moment experience with You.

SHARON: LOOKING BACK

"Instead of saying, 'Why did You take my child? Why did You let this happen to me?' I'm saying, 'Okay Lord, You brought me to this point in my life. What do You have for me to do next?' I was willing at that point to let God work through me to help others, and that's when the total healing process started—when I was able to let go of my anger, my guilt, and my self-will and to say, 'God take control. I'm willing to let You work good through this tragedy.'"

NEXT SESSION

Discover what your grief is teaching you.

"The Spirit of God empowers us to do the impossible." —Dr. Crawford Loritts

MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK

Session - Ten



PERSONAL CHECKUP - TRACK YOUR HEALING PROGRESS

Place a check in the box identifying how you're feeling. Insert words to explain why.

	REALLY BAD	OKAY	PRETTY GOOD	GREAT
EMOTIONALLY				
PHYSICALLY				
SPIRITUALLY				
RELATIONALLY				

JOURNAL TOPICS - MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

Choose one or more ideas below, or choose your own topic. We encourage you to use a separate notebook for your weekly journaling.

-  Write down your fears and anxieties about going to church. Then write steps you will take to ease back into church. (See Day 3, page 100, for ideas.)
-  Before the death of your loved one, you claimed to believe (and not believe) certain things. How have your beliefs changed or been tested?

MOVING FORWARD - PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD HEALING HOW TO IDENTIFY AND GRIEVE SECONDARY LOSSES

You have lost more than a person: you've also lost everything that person was to you. Today you'll begin the necessary step of identifying and grieving your multiple losses. We suggest you write these in your journal or on a separate page.

1. Write down what you've lost in that person (categories and examples to the right are given as a guide; you'll want to develop your own list).
 - Chores/Responsibilities*
- my cook, my mechanic, the bill-payer
 - Child care/Nurturing*
- the one who reads to the kids, makes them laugh
 - Hopes and dreams*
- retiring together, future milestones
 - On a personal note*
- my companion, my snuggler
2. Say your losses out loud to God and grieve each loss separately, asking for God's comfort and guidance.
3. Come back to this exercise as the weeks go on and add to the list.