




LESSONS OF GRIEF - PART TWO

11 SESSION

IF YOU PERSEVERE, YOUR GRIEF can teach you invaluable lessons. You might not want to learn them. But others who've completed the journey of grief say these lessons, while painful, are worth learning.

This week, the three aspects of GriefShare—video, discussion, and workbook exercises—combine together to bring you a more complete picture of:

-  Who you are now that your loved one is gone
-  Why no one grieves perfectly
-  What grief can teach you about relationships

VIDEO OUTLINE

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

DIFFICULT LESSONS

Grief is not an identity

Grief Is Not an Identity

Who are you?

Resisting a new identity

More like Christ (Romans 8:28-29, Luke 22:42)

"This experience doesn't define me. Christ defines me." –Dr. Paul David Tripp

The value of relationships

Depend more on God

James: "Learn to embrace it" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

No one grieves perfectly

No One Grieves Perfectly

Susan: "I was wrong"

God loves & forgives (Psalm 32)

Preparation for future trials (Philippians 1:6)

"Life is really about loving God and loving others." --Carla

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

JoAnne shares how she moved from not knowing who she was anymore to becoming more comfortable in her new identity. Read this week's exercises to continue moving forward on your own grief journey.

"One person cannot be your all in all, except God." -Susan

FROM MOURNING TO JOY

ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

Session Eleven - Lessons of Grief - Part Two



JOANNE: "I DIDN'T KNOW WHO I WAS"

"I had defined myself like someone who was needed for so long: as a wife, a mother. And then as Jody [my husband] was dying, I was there to strengthen, encourage, and comfort him—and now that was all gone. It was like I didn't even know who I was anymore."

Grief can leave you floundering, so much so that you don't even know who you are anymore. If you begin to focus on grief as your identity, you'll fail to look up, look around, and see what you can learn from your situation. This week's exercises discuss some important lessons of grief. Please read each one and prayerfully allow God to work in your heart as you consider His truths.

**DAY
1**

Grief is not an identity

These are the thoughts of someone who has taken on grief as an identity:

Don't expect me to enjoy myself ... I'm still grieving.

I'm not going to help someone else ... I've got my own wounds to care for.

This is my lot in life ... to grieve.

Making plans won't make a difference ... grieving people don't have schedules.

Stop annoying me with your invitations ... you know grieving people don't want to go anywhere.

I'm not going to pursue my own interests ... I'm only going to do what my loved one and I enjoyed.

Please understand, in the early days of grief, your focus is going to be on your grief and its all-consuming nature, and that's okay. But your grief shouldn't become your identity.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith ... There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave

nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26, 28)

1. According to today's Bible passage, Christians are those who, through faith, are what?*

* Read the article on page xii to find out what it means to be a Christian.

2. This passage tells us that significant aspects of a person's identity (race, status, gender) are not as important as his position in Christ. What does this imply about how God primarily wants you to see yourself?

3. How will you define yourself? Write your answer in the form of a prayer to God.

"If I'm defined by the way God sees me, that gives me hope." –Dr. Larry Crabb

CONSIDER THIS

"My primary identity is, I'm loved by my Savior. That is where I have to find everything I am."

—Elyse Fitzpatrick

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" —1 John 3:1a

TALKING TO GOD

God, I am loved by You. I am Your child. I can rely on Your strength and Your promises.
I have a purpose in You.

**DAY
2**

God uses suffering to help us grow
Grief teaches us valuable lessons about our relationships with others and our relationship with God.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

(James 1:2–4)

1. James 1:2–4 does not mean to be happy about what happened. Instead, what reasons does this passage give for being joyful in the midst of trials?

2. What lessons has grief taught you?

About persevering in your faith:

About your relationships:

CONSIDER THIS

JoAnne shares some of the lessons she has learned in her grief:

- *Relationships are so important to me. I work harder to keep them healthy.*
- *I learned that God means what He says.*
- *I discovered I could really encourage people who are hurting.*

TALKING TO GOD

God, give me the grace to persevere. This grief can make me bitter for the rest of my life, or it can make me better. Help me to accept this suffering and to be open to learn from it.

**DAY
3**

God always turns bad to good

Certain things in your life look pretty bad right now. The most amazing hope you can receive into your life comes with the promise that God always overcomes suffering and evil with good.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

Joseph's brothers betrayed and abandoned him. He was forced to live far from home, facing slavery, prison, and false accusations. Eventually, through a series of events only God could have orchestrated, Joseph became the highest official in the Egyptian palace under Pharaoh and was able to help many people survive a famine. Years later, Joseph faced his brothers again.

"But Joseph said to them, '...You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.' And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them." (Genesis 50:19–21)

"The cross is the ultimate argument for God using bad for good." —Dr. Paul David Tripp

1. Joseph was in a powerful position to do or say anything he wanted to his brothers, whom he was seeing for the first time after their hateful deed. Describe Joseph's response to the situation.

2. What good things did God accomplish through a very bad situation (see Genesis 50:19–21)?

3. Why do you think God wants you to know that He always brings good out of what is bad?

CONSIDER THIS

God always overcomes evil with good. He can take the bad things that happen, the bad decisions of people and the terrible consequences of those decisions, and turn them around to bring about good.

TALKING TO GOD

God, it doesn't feel right to even consider that good might come out of my loved one's death. But, this is where I think I know what's going on, when really I don't. Help me understand that there is a bigger picture. You know what You're doing.

**DAY
4**

God is good

God is good, and He proved it when Jesus died on the cross.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person ... But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"
(Romans 5:7–9)

1. How does Romans 5:7–9 say God has demonstrated His love for us?

2. In what kind of spiritual condition were we in when Christ died for us (see Romans 5:7–9)?

3. Other Bible passages (Ephesians 2:1–3 and Romans 3:10–11) make it clear that, as sinners, we wanted nothing to do with God, yet God still gave His Son for us. What does that tell you about God's character?

CONSIDER THIS

"When bad things happen, I start wondering, 'God, are you really good?' That's where the cross comes in: how can you argue that God isn't good if He did that? If He sent His Son to die for me, then I've got to say that He really is good." –Dr. Larry Crabb

"[Be] intentional about reminding yourself of God's goodness and looking at the bigger picture."

–Lois Rabey

TALKING TO GOD

Jesus, Your death on the cross was the worst evil, and You overcame it with a greater good. You came so that we could have life. When I confess my sins to You and believe in the goodness of Your sacrifice, my grief won't disappear, but I'll be able to move forward because I can see a bigger picture now of what goodness means.

**DAY
5**

Repentance is part of your grief process

That moment when you realize even your grief is tainted by sin ...

"In my grief I lashed out at a lot of people." –Jodi

"I cling to that truth that I know God loves me because He sent His Son for me." –John

"I had anger. I had jealousy. I had self-pity issues."
—JoAnne

"I chose to blame [my aunt and uncle] ... I pushed them away for eight years." —Iris

"I distrusted [God], didn't like Him, and was trying to use His own words against Him." —Susan Lutz

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8–9)

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23–24)

1. In what ways have you used your grief as an excuse for mistreating other people?
2. According to 1 John 1:8–9, what should we do once we realize we've done something wrong? What is the result?
3. Read Psalm 139:23–24 as your prayer right now. Write down anything that comes to mind that you need to repent of.

CONSIDER THIS

"Anytime God shows you something that's amiss in your life, it's not to push you away, it's to pull you closer." —Susan Lutz

Repentance involves turning from your sin and doing something else in its place. It's not a one-time thing. We do it over and over in life and will have to do it multiple times as we grieve.

TALKING TO GOD

God, I agree that what You've revealed to me about my behaviors is wrong. I want to make a sincere effort to turn from this sin and handle it differently next time. Thank you for Your love, mercy, and patience with me, and for Your forgiveness.

JOANNE: LOOKING BACK

"I started to see myself as a single woman who was sad, but was making it. I was lonely, but I was dealing with it, because God was helping me and He was making me into a different person. At first I thought God took what I needed away from me, but He didn't. He gave me more of Himself, and that's all any of us need. God was becoming a reality in my life more and more, and it was really a learning process. As I was seeing how God would help me, then I was trusting Him more. It was building my confidence. As that grew, I was starting to feel more comfortable with my new identity: my new identity as a single person who had to trust God and get His guidance in making good decisions."

NEXT SESSION

Get a glimpse of what you can look forward to in heaven.

"God stands ready to forgive us, and He treats us with grace and patience, even as we grow." —Dr. Stephen Viars

MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK

Session - Eleven




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.

-  What are the most significant lessons you are learning through your grief?
-  Dr. Joseph Stowell says, "Self-sufficiency is a terrible place to be because it is the worst deceit we can bring on ourselves. We need God." Explain how this is true for you.
-  When you look at the cross—the cross where Jesus was crucified to take on the punishment for our sins so that we might live forever with Him—you will see that out of horrific evil came the ultimate good. Have you had an experience of something good coming out of something bad? Write about this experience.

MOVING FORWARD - PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD HEALING

HOW TO FIGURE OUT YOUR NEW IDENTITY

On the video, H. Norman Wright shares this suggestion.

1. In your own handwriting, write a title on the blank line below: "Who I Am Now."
2. Using as many descriptive words as possible, write down who you are in the following categories. (Use a separate paper as needed.)

Title: _____

Relationally -

Emotionally -

Career/Work, including volunteer and service -

Skills/Interests/Hobbies/Passions -

Spiritually, in God's eyes -