

STUCK




9

SESSION

IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL, THREE TO FIVE YEARS FROM NOW

your grief can be just as intense and raw as it is right now. Some people call that being stuck in grief. This session offers preventative measures you can take to ensure that you don't get stuck and that you're grieving in a way that leads to healing.

As you view the video and complete your **FROM MOURNING TO JOY** and **MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK** exercises, you'll find out:

-  How to prevent getting stuck in grief
-  Common misconceptions that hinder healing
-  Why your path to healing isn't always smooth

VIDEO OUTLINE

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

NORMAL OR STUCK?

The differences (Ecclesiastes 3:4)

BELIEF TUNE-UP

"Time heals"

"Stay busy"

"Everything we say is ours really is on loan to us." --Dr. Crawford Loritts

"I'm *the* caregiver"

"God took *my* loved one" (Job 1:21)

"Healing = forgetting"

"Progress is steady"

God & your situation

GETTING UNSTUCK

Do your grief work

Don't obey your feelings (Luke 22:42)

Worship God (Psalm 63:3-4, Job 1:20-21)

"We can't let our emotions drive the train during our time of grief." –Dr. Joseph Stowell

Be grateful (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Put God on display (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

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

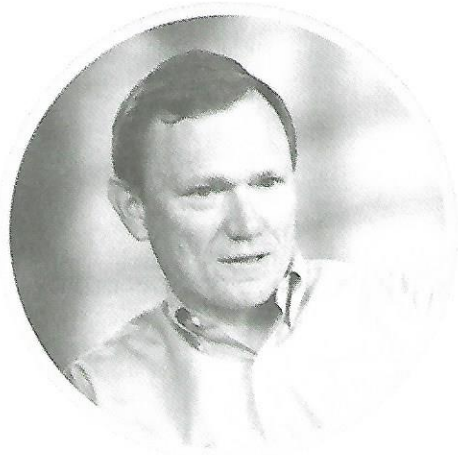
You'll learn more about Bryan, whose daughter was murdered, and find out how he avoided becoming stuck in grief and how you can, too.

"Gratitude is a healer." --Dr. Joseph Stowell

FROM MOURNING TO JOY

ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

Session Nine - Stuck



BRYAN: "AUSTIN WAS A GIFT FROM GOD"

"When we got to the classroom where Austin died, I sat down on the floor. I wanted to be in the spot she had last been alive. The thought that came to my mind was not how she died, but when she was first born. I had been standing in our backyard and [my pastor] had said, 'I want you to always remember that Austin is a gift from God.' That's what came into my mind as I sat there, that Austin was a gift from God, and now she had returned to God."

You saw on the video several beliefs that can get you stuck in grief, such as the belief that your loved ones belong to you instead of God. In this week's session you'll find encouragement to do your grief work and avoid becoming stuck in grief.

DAY
1

Walk by truth, not feelings

Don't let your feelings dictate how you think, act, and behave. Just because you feel something intensely doesn't make it right, true, or helpful.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

"The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19:7 NLT)

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5)

1. Sometimes, people get stuck in grief because they conclude God has abandoned them. Based on that conclusion, they feel reading God's Word won't help them. Yet that is contrary to Psalm 46:1, Psalm 19:7, and other Scriptures. According to Proverbs 3:5, what should you do when your understanding of your circumstances is in conflict with what God says?

2. Consider how you are thinking about (understanding) your circumstances—the conclusions you are drawing. Also consider how you are responding to those conclusions. In what ways do your conclusions and responses differ from what God's Word says?

This is what I think: _____

In response to that understanding, I've been: _____

This is what God's Word says about my conclusions and responses: _____

"Truth is not dependent on feelings." –Connie

3. How can you demonstrate your belief that it's better to trust in the Lord than to lean on your own understanding (see Proverbs 3:5)?

CONSIDER THIS

"We can be honest about what we're feeling, but that doesn't mean we have to be driven by what we're feeling. If I wait around to do things based on how I feel, I'm going to be an absolute mess."

—Dr. Stephen Viars

TALKING TO GOD

God, it's hard to see through my tangled emotions, in order to believe and act on the truth of Your promises. Help me to take each step by faith, choosing to cling to what You've said is true.

**DAY
2**

You have a purpose

There's a reason you're still alive.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10)

1. According to Ephesians 2:10, what did God create you to do?

2. Did your purpose for living cease with your loved one's death? Why or why not?

3. In order to do the good works God prepared specifically for you, you need to first do the grief work to help you heal. Write down a step you will commit to taking to do your grief work (perhaps a way to store memories, express your emotions, or develop a new normal).

CONSIDER THIS

"Doing grief work means rolling up your sleeves and doing the tough stuff. I would contend that if we don't do those tough things, we really won't ever completely heal." —Dr. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge

"My wife and I decided that we were going to spend our time more focused on service and outreach, because we thought that was a more likely path to healing." —Bryan

TALKING TO GOD

God, You have good works prepared for me to do. But first, I need to do my grief work, and I can't do it on my own. It's so hard. Please help me to step out and do the work, one day at a time.

**DAY
3**

Worship looks different now

"In the midst of grief, worship looks different. The rawness of worship in the midst of grief will feel awkward." —Brad Hambrick

Yet, worship helps keep you from becoming stuck.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.'" (Job 1:20-21)

1. What does Job realize in Job 1:20-21 (after the death of his children and his many other losses)?

"Worship is relating to God with an accurate picture of who He is." —Brad Hambrick

2. Based on today's Bible passage, do we have to be happy to worship or praise God?

3. Even though you're probably sad, you can praise God right now. How? Simply write down a few things that God deserves to be praised for. Or, tell a friend or family member about a good thing God has done, or share something about God that you're thankful for.

CONSIDER THIS

"We brought nothing into this world. All that we have are gifts of God; the loved ones in our life are His gifts. Our response to His giving and to His taking away is that we will worship the Lord. He is worthy of praise."
–Phil Sasser

"I'm going to cry out to Him even when it's hard."
–Dr. Stephen Viars

TALKING TO GOD

God, thank you for the gift of my loved one, such a precious gift. Help me to understand that my time for having that gift is over, but my loved one and I are still part of a larger plan. I will worship You amid my tears because You are God.

DAY
4

Be thankful?

Being grateful helps you avoid becoming stuck. There's always something to be thankful for:

- The time I had with my loved one.
- I'll see my loved one again.
- My loved one is no longer suffering.
- What I've learned from my loved one.
- How God is helping me, comforting me, and providing for me in my grief.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

1. What are you thankful for?

2. Some people have mistakenly thought 1 Thessalonians 5:18 indicates we are to be thankful for the death of a loved one. What does this verse actually say? Explain your answer.

CONSIDER THIS

"I'm grateful I had my father for as long as I did, that he was the person he was, and that God had uniquely given him to me." –Phil Sasser

"I'm so grateful Jesus made it possible for me to see my son again one day." –Hollis

"I am so grateful for our church and how well they've cared for us." –Carla

"I'm thankful I have God on my team because I don't know how I would have survived without Him."
–Phoebe

"I'm thankful God has given me an opportunity to [lead a GriefShare group]." –Jeffery

"I'm grateful to have my family." –Shay

TALKING TO GOD

God, to experience Your peace, You have asked me to bring my fears, anxieties, and requests to You with thanksgiving. This is what I am thankful to You for ...

"I'm thankful we have good people in our life." –Ami

DAY 5

Where will I find the strength?

You're not out there alone. You can endure whatever today might bring. Read the promises in today's Bible passage out loud. They are for you.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"God arms me with strength, and he makes my way perfect. He makes me as surefooted as a deer, enabling me to stand on mountain heights. He trains my hands for battle; he strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow. You have given me your shield of victory. Your right hand supports me; your help has made me great. You have made a wide path for my feet to keep them from slipping." (Psalm 18:32-36 NLT)

1. You are walking on your own path of grief. How would you describe the path under your feet?
2. What did the author of this Psalm believe that God was doing/had done for him?
3. Which part of today's Bible passage do you find most encouraging?

CONSIDER THIS

"When I was grieving Rick's death, I did something really difficult that I didn't want to do ... I reread all the letters he wrote to me when he was in the Army, and just bawled. But after, it was like, 'With God's help, I did it!'" –Dr. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge

TALKING TO GOD

God, strengthen me, support me, and keep my feet from slipping as I step out and start doing my grief work.

BRYAN: LOOKING BACK

"God has been able to use the situation to inspire me to do things I otherwise would have never done. Through that, God's been able to show me a purpose, a hope, and a joy that I never asked for, but that I couldn't live without at this point in my life. That gets back to letting go of the things that I thought were important [before Austin died] and letting God direct me to those things that are important."

NEXT SESSION

Learn practical strategies that will help keep you on the path of healing.

"God is alive, and God is going with us into the future." –Carla

MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK

Session - Nine




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.

-  Describe ways you've been avoiding your grief and pain.
-  Worship God in your journal. Thank Him for the relationship you had with your loved one.
-  Describe how your feelings have been driving your actions and keeping you from doing your grief work.

MOVING FORWARD - PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD HEALING HOW TO WORK THROUGH YOUR MISCONCEPTIONS

The wrong beliefs below have caused people to become stuck in grief.
Explain why each of these beliefs are untrue:

Time heals all wounds -

The lessening of pain indicates a lessening of love -

Holding tightly to my grief honors my loved one -

God took something from me that I can't live without -

Progress means taking steps forward, but never steps back -