

Growing Through Grief

The Supremacy and Sufficiency of God in all things

Growing Through Grief

When **Pain** Won't End...



And **Hope** Seems Lost!

*Experiencing The very worst from life,
But the very best from God*

Christ E Free Church Pulpit Series

July 2014

What can you say when your life has been turned upside down? When brokenness and heartache and shattered dreams engulf you? Is this the way of the cross? Is this what it means to walk in His steps? Unanswered questions, yet unshaken faith. Unfulfilled dreams, yet unexplained hope. Unspeakable grief, yet undying love.

How is this possible? -- *Only through Jesus!*

This booklet is dedicated, with deepest appreciation to all the suffering saints and faithful caregivers who face death, and experience grief, yet manifest the hope of God in Christ, and give to the rest of us, Godly righteous examples of how to live, and stand firm when our time of grief comes.

We thank God for all those who have found the following to be experientially true:

JESUS CHRIST,

Our Highest Calling,

Our Greatest Purpose,

Our Soul's Supreme Source and Joy

And our All-Sufficient and All-Consuming

PASSION

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INTRODUCTION

July Series -- Growing Through Grief Series is based on *Journeying Through Grief*, by Kenneth Haugk from Stephen Ministries. References are made throughout the study to JTG.

For more info or to order *Journeying Through Grief* booklets, go to: www.stephenministries.org

Also, references are made to June Hunt, *Hope For the Heart* ministries. For more info go to: www.hopefortheheart.org

“Use Me Lord!” How many of us have prayed that prayer at some time in our lives. We pray in earnest, deeply desiring for God to break through, get ahold of our lives, empower us for His service and use us for His kingdom purposes. And yet in ignorance, never realizing that it is through hardships and suffering that God fashions us into His instruments to use in the lives of others.

Metal is not forged, apart from being heated to near its melting point. Only then, can it be properly forged by the hand of the Master workman, to forge the metal into a useful and purposeful implement.

Our faith is not separated from the experiences of our lives. Loss and pain are part of the heating and forging process for the human spirit, to be molded in order to be used by the Master, into that which is most fitting for His plan and intentions.

When God does begin answering this prayer, the Christian response is often not, “*Lord, I perceive you are preparing me, to use me*”, but rather, “*Lord, why are you doing this to me?*”

Grief would not knowingly be chosen by any of us. But it is a certain part of every life. *How will you react when grief comes knocking on your door?*

“A Time for Everything: *the Lord of Life and Loss*”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

July 6, 2014

(Inspired by Journeying Through Grief, Kenneth Haugk, Bk.1)

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: (2) a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; (3) a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; (4) a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; --Ecc. 3:1-4

Tears are the silent language of grief.

--Voltaire

INTRODUCTION

Last year and a half, we experienced 7 deaths that touched our church family. It was handled in different ways and felt at different levels. The fact is, no one is excused or exempt from death and grief. Death is inescapable and promised to every one of us. And grief is indiscriminant, yet it is a tool of God, for building Hope.

Ecc 3:1-4 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: (2) a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; (3) a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; (4) a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

As I was reading this passage this week, I was encouraged by this; God's word promises that grief, and weeping and mourning is but for a *time*. It will not endure forever, though at the moment we are feeling it, we think it will surely be eternal. And, *"He makes all things beautiful in His time"*. ^[Ecc.3:11]

There is
a time for
everything
under heaven.

Thank God
grief is only
for a "*time*".

We believe there is a time for Everything under heaven; we have no problem with that. We believe that God is the Lord of Life and are thankful for that. But God being the God of loss, is something that causes us concern – we hesitate as we read those words, and wonder whether or not God really is the Lord of loss? Is He Lord of death and pain and loss and grief? If so, we may reason, why does He not remove it all together?

Some people attempt to bargain with God. One person has stated; "God, I will not fight against death, if you will only promise to spare me from its grief."

This series, ***Growing Through Grief***, is not intended to be advice from an expert. As one counselor put it: "When it comes to grief, there are no experts!". Your situation and your grief will be as individual and different as you, yourself are, and no one can be an expert on that!

Listen how the book of Job speaks about our troubles and grief.

Job 11:13-18a *"If you prepare your heart, you will stretch out your hands toward him.* (14) If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and let not injustice dwell in your tents. (15) Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; you will be secure and will not fear. (16) *You will forget your misery; you will remember it as waters that have passed away.* (17) And your life will be brighter than the noonday; its darkness will be like the morning. (18) And you will feel secure, because there is hope...

Don't misunderstand this promise. God is not saying if you are spiritual enough and mature enough and strong enough, then you'll eventually "*get over it*".

But God does promise, that if we prepare our heart and stretch out our hands to Him – indicating that, in our loss, we look to Him – and in our pain, we cry out to Him -- and in our brokenness we reach out to Him as our sole source of help and hope, then in time, He – not time itself, not simply a volitional quelling of our emotions – but that HE, God Himself will cause our misery to fade like waters passing by. The promise is not that the loss will disappear, or the grief be forgotten – but that the hopelessness and the misery will ease, little by little, and fade or lessen.

One person told me: "*It has been so horrific, yet I would not trade it for anything, because of how it has deepened my relationship with God beyond what I have ever before experienced*".

While grief is unpleasant, it is not all bad. There is even a time and a purpose for grief.

WHAT IS GRIEF?

* *Grief is “merely” emotional, mental, physical and spiritual. In other words, it is all encompassing.* It touches every part and seeps into every available space.

Kenneth Haugk reminds us that “**Grief is Normal**”. It is simply how we respond to personal loss. It is normal to expect people who have experienced significant personal loss to be grieved. Sometimes the grieving person feels foolish or guilty or weak, or even childish for grieving. *Yet Grief is NORMAL.*

How Do We Understand Grief?

So what is Grief and How can we understand grief? You can never *understand* grief, until you **experience** grief. But just because you **can** understand grief, doesn't mean you **will** understand it.

Grief is an emotion. It is a state of the human spirit or shock as a result of the emotional trauma of loss. Grief is emotional pain, suffered when something or someone of value, is lost

Grief is often accompanied with indescribable inner pain, depression, possibly despondency, and at times mental dysfunction. I've had people say, “I must be going crazy! I can't effectively think anything through.” Because of the mental toll grief takes, people sometimes doubt their own sanity, wondering why they can't think straight, or why the daily routine, suddenly seems so paralyzing and why relatively simple decisions, now have become incapacitating.

But these kinds of reactions to grief do not indicate a person is losing their mind – but are in fact, experiencing normal and natural

mental effects of deep emotional grief. Grief can be deep emotional pain, but also significant mental shock. That is why planning a funeral for a loved one is often times, so unexpectedly overwhelming. It is often helpful to allow another close friend to help the grieving party through the details of a funeral

Loss may also cause deep, personal reflection. It can cause us to evaluate everything - values, life, relationships, possessions, time, purpose, pursuits, priorities even our faith. That is just part of the effect grief and loss has on us.

How do we feel Grief?

Grief is experienced in every area and corner of life. Grief has been described like this: “As waves of the mighty ocean, can sink and crush even a large ocean liner, likewise the waves of grief can crash over our lives like a pounding surf, crushing those, even of the strongest of spirit.”.

Grief can bring our life to an abrupt standstill, while the rest of the world goes speeding past - careening around us and sometime crashing into us from behind. We may look at the world around us and everything seems to be continuing along as normal for everyone else. And we might think, “What are they doing? Don't they know what has happened? Don't they even care?”

Grief colors everything. It is an emotion that seeps its way into every area of life. Yet we must remember that grief is normal, because we are human.

For the
child of God,
Grief
means
experiencing
the *worst* from
life, but
the *best* from
God

WHY DO WE GRIEVE?

We Grieve because we are human. Kenneth Haugk: states that, not only is grief normal, but “ **Grief is Natural**”. It was how humans process regret, change, personal loss. It is how God created us. Grief is an emotion and grieving is a process of working through the emotions of grief, due to unexpected, or undesirable events of loss.

Jesus Himself, knows our every sorrow and can relate to our own grief and sorrow, as no one else can.

<p>Isa 53:3a He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;</p>

Grief Results from Loss

Grief is a result of the Loss of something of significant value.

“Imagine what it would be like to have your heart ripped from your chest. Then, perhaps you can imagine what it is like to lose your spouse to death.”

Wow, what a description! Grief can result from loss, death, regret, divorce, guilt, sin, bitterness, misunderstanding, change-even the change of a job, lost dreams, and/or traumatized relationships. The greater the value of the item, person or experience that is lost, the greater the sense of loss and the greater the level of grief.

There is a relationship between attachment and dis-attachment. The deeper the attachment, the more traumatic and grievous is the dis-attachment. You grab a band aid and quickly pull it off, there is a sting and a reddening of the skin. But get your arm caught in a piece of machinery and having it ripped out of its socket, becoming completely detached from the body, and the physical trauma can be devastating and will require long term recovery.

The greater the value of the item, person or experience that is lost, the greater the sense of loss. The deeper the attachment, the more traumatic and grievous is the dis-attachment.

Growth Comes Through Pain

Growing through deep inner emotional pain, can help us become instruments for God to use to help others. The greater the value of the item, person or experience that is lost, the greater the sense of loss. The greater the sense of loss, the deeper the emotional pain and grief.

Grief is **Natural**, because it is our God given, human way of dealing with and processing our loss. And it is often God's way of preparing us for a job He has for us in our future.

2Cor. 1:4 [He] comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

We will come back to that.

- I. What is Grief?
- II. Why do we Grieve?

HOW DO WE GRIEVE?

Grief is not an option for the weak, but a necessity for all who expect to go forward and remain healthy and useful to God.

Kenneth Haugk: “**Grief is Normal, It is natural, and it is Necessary**”. Grief is God's way of allowing us as humans to cope and process certain traumatic experiences. And trying to ignore or avoid the grieving process only prolongs that which is natural, normal and necessary. It can even accentuate the depth of grief and delay its resolution.

Much of this process of grieving is learning to talk to God and to share with Him all our feelings, all our pain and all our grief.

1Peter 5:7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

God has broad shoulders and can take your burdens and carry them, as well as carry YOU. Bear in mind, grief is not the end, but it is a process of mentally, emotionally, spiritually and even physically reflecting on, processing through and ultimately coming to grips with our pain and our loss. Grief is often a long and painful process.

And grief is not merely a challenge to get over, but a means of becoming stronger. Grief is a Trial!

Jas 1:2-4 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Grief is a trial, for which God has a purpose. God wants to use our grief as a strengthening and equipping process. If we only think that grief is bad luck or fate, then our painful process will be wasted. God *sustains* the grieving soul and in His time, as the Psalmist writes, He will *restore* the grieving soul.

The trial of grief
highlights the
Supremacy
and
Sufficiency
of God in all
areas of my life.

“He restoreth my soul” Psalms 23:3 (NKJV)

God has made us creatures that need to grieve AND creatures that need to express. God knows our needs before we even ask, so why pray? God doesn't need to hear our prayers, but we need to express those prayers. We are creatures that need

to be able to express ourselves and our feelings.

When someone goes to a psychiatrist the psychiatrist doesn't say, "OK, I just want you to sit there and think about your problem." Then when time is up, they send you on your way.

No, of course not! A psychiatrist asks questions and encourages the client to talk it out, vent, release and express their thoughts, feelings, frustrations and pains. They know the power of expressing what is on our mind.

Therefore, how much more important is it to express and cast our cares upon the LORD, through prayer, knowing that He cares for us. God alone, can do what man cannot. He alone can actually touch the human heart, and heal the broken spirit. He alone can listen to our venting and expressing and take all those things, sift through them and guide us through the process of Growing through Grief. That is why the Son of God is referred to as the *Wonderful Counselor*.

Isa 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called *Wonderful Counselor*, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Good Grief is Slow Grief

So How do we Grieve? We Need to Grieve Slowly and Patiently. **Pretending** to be over your grief, is like **pretending** to be healed of a gaping wound. If you pull the bandage off too soon, it will only make matters worse. Like our body, the emotions – the spirit needs time to heal.

Grieving is a process of emotional healing. A person doesn't quickly recover from a heart attack or stroke. A person doesn't quickly heal up from a terrible automobile accident.

Barbara Bartocci, a Christian counselor offers this advice: “*Don’t put on a happy face, because you think it is expected. Grief denied, is grief unhealed.*”

((Barbara Bartocci, *Nobody’s Child*. (A Time to Grieve, Bk 1, p13.))

Listen to how the Psalmist puts it.

<p>Psalm 6:6 I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping.</p>

Did God need to hear this out loud? No, but the Psalmist needed to be able to express his grief to his *Wonderful Counselor*.

Grieving is a time consuming process. We must be patient. As blunt trauma is to the human body, loss and grief is to the human spirit. Grief can be just as crippling as a broken leg – even worse. Grief can steal away all energy and initiative to go forward. It can traumatize our emotions, even to the point of affecting our cognitive abilities of logic, organizing and decision making. We need to allow time to grieve slowly and adequately

WE NEED TO GRIEVE INTELLIGENTLY

One key to working through grief, is to know **about** grief.

<p>Psalm 147:3-5 He heals the <i>brokenhearted</i> and binds up their wounds. (4) He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. (5) Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.</p>

Psychological science helps us understand the stages and process of grief. This is not *inspired* from God, but certainly is of value in our understanding of how God has put us together.

7 Stages of Grief (modified Kubler-Ross Model)

** See graph*

- 1) Shock:** Initial paralysis at hearing bad news or traumatic experience. Emotional numbness may be experienced. “like Reality hasn’t really sunk in yet”.
- 2) Denial:** Trying to avoid the truth of the matter or ignore the inevitable. “Oh, I’m fine”, may be well meaning, but it is often a statement of denial.
- 3) Anger:** Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotions towards others and/or toward God. Shortness of temper and uncharacteristic outbursts of emotion may be experienced.
- 4) Bargaining:** Seeking in vain for a way out or escape the emotional horror that follows. May involve fear concerning the uncertainty of the future. Can be a time of inner searching or evaluating of life, meaning, purpose and directions for next steps.
- 5) Depression:** Final realization of the inevitable. Can experience disorganization of routine areas of life, times of unexplained feelings of panic; onset of loneliness and isolation, whether purposeful or non-purposeful; even feelings of guilt resulting in entertaining questions of “What if...?” or “If only....?” Guilt or personal blame may arise.
- 6) Testing:** Seeking realistic solutions. During this time, new experiences of frustration and awkwardness of attempting to get “back into the swing of things”; getting back into a daily routine, or going to places you visited in the past, gatherings you attend prior to your loss;
- 7) Acceptance:** finally finding the way forward. This involves a realization that you are slowly moving forward, and dealing with the loss. New relationships are made, new steps taken of your own

initiative; the time seems right to begin socializing again and you begin to realize that you are going to make it after all. Here you experience renewed strength; you realize you can do more than you thought you could.

You may develop new patterns of life, work, or community. Hope and encouragement is building slowly, but steadily. You realize that life does go on after the loss of a loved one; At this stage you begin to share more openly and candidly about your experience, feelings, and lessons you are learning as you discover that you are Growing Through Grief.

Eventually, you realize you have something to offer others who are, where you were. You sense a willingness to encourage, visit, and perhaps even console others as you have been consoled.

2Cor 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 14:16-17 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (17) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

HOW CAN WE GROW THROUGH GRIEF?

Growing Through Grief...

1) ...Means growing in my Realization that In Jesus Christ there is an abundance of HOPE.

Heb 4:16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Growing Through Grief...

2)) ...Means growing in my Experience of the Presence and Sustaining Grace of God through His people, the church, in our darkest and most unspeakable sorrow.

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.

God uses friends, other family members, even His church family to help us through times of trials and grief.

Growing Through Grief...

3)) ...Means growing in my Discovery of God as our sole source of life, joy, peace and comfort.

2Cor. 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and **God of all comfort,**

Someone wrote to me stating that after nearly a year....

“...the loss seems to be greater now than before. But I have been given more strength than before too. Each day hurts so much but knowing that my God is in perfect control gives me an inexpressible peace.”

Growing Through Grief...

4) ...Means growing in my assurance of the supremacy and sufficiency of God in Christ, in all circumstances.. even our loss and pain and grief.

We can never grasp the supremacy and sufficiency of God in all things, until we experience the loss of lesser things that leave us with only God!

Through It All,

by Andrae Crouch

Verse 1

I've had many tears and sorrows, I've had questions for tomorrow,
there's been times I didn't know right from wrong.

But in every situation, God gave me blessed consolation,
that my trials come to only make me strong.

Chorus

Through it all, through it all,

I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God.

Through it all, through it all,

I've learned to depend upon His Word.

Verse 3

I thank God for the mountains, and I thank Him for the valleys,
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.

For if I'd never had a problem, I wouldn't know God could solve
them, I'd never know what faith in God could do.

Chorus.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: What exactly is grief? How would you **define** it? _____

Now how would you **describe** grief? How does it **feel** to you?

Q: How does grief help us grasp a better understanding on the supremacy and sufficiency of God?? _____

Q: What is the worst part of Grief? _____

Q: “Good Grief!” How might grief become good for us? _____

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Dear Father, Hallowed by Thy name! Thank you for your abiding presence in my life. Thank you for the promise that you will never leave me or forsake me. And thank you for what you are able to do with my grief. I praise you, that in your time, you make all things beautiful – even the pain of my grief.

In Jesus' name,

Amen!



“Aftershocks and Ripples: The Very worst of Life and the Very Best From God”

Text: Eccl3:1-11

July 13, 2014

(Inspired by Journeying Through Grief, Kenneth Haugk, Bk.2)

{ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be
comforted" -- Matthew 5:4 }

Tears are the silent language of grief.

--Voltaire

*“No one who has ever experienced grief has failed to weep,
if not on the outside, then on the inside.”*

REVIEW

“As waves of the mighty ocean, can sink and crush even a large ocean liner, likewise the waves of grief can crash over our lives like a pounding surf, crushing those, even of the strongest of spirit.”.

Ecc 3:1-11 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: (2) A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; (3) A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; (4) A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; (5) A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; (6) A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; (7) A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; (8) A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. (9) What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? (10) I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. (11) He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

A BRIEF REVIEW FROM OUR LAST LESSON

- We learned there is a time for everything under heaven and that is in God's Time. We thank God this kind of grief is but, for *a time*.
- We learned that God is the Lord of Life and the Lord of Loss & sorrow.
- We learned that Grief is an emotion of pain, and Grieving is a process of working through the pain of loss.
- We understand that Grief is Normal, it is Natural and it is Necessary; it is how we must deal with pain and loss.
- We learned of the 7 Stages of grief – because we need to be informed on what we are experiencing.

- We affirmed that grief seeps its way into every area of life; it is all encompassing and colors everything.
- We also learned of the supremacy of God in our problems and the sufficiency of God as the Source of all our needs.

June Hunt, *Hope For the Heart Ministries*, makes this observation: “Why are people so drawn to Jesus... especially when their hearts have lost all hope? Why do they assume He will sympathize with their sorrows? Why would He grieve over their griefs? Their answer is simple: Jesus was no stranger to grief. He was slandered and scourged, belittled and beaten, criticized and crucified.” Scripture says:

Mat 26:36-38 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." (37) And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. (38) Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

If you feel like no one cares about your pain –Jesus cares
If you feel like no one knows about your sorrow,” - -Jesus knows.
When you feel like no one has experienced what you are experiencing – Jesus has He knows exactly what you are going through and more.

A single Dad had to move his family out of their home town area and told me this week that, after a year, his *family is still grieving their move*. Loss of a familiar setting is still loss and grounds for grief.

INTRODUCTION

TODAY : The Terror of Aftershocks: When Waves Turn to Ripples.

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might have supremacy.

We tend to recognize the Supremacy and Sufficiency of God in our times of Grief and pain, more than at other times. CS Lewis said, *“Pain is the megaphone through which God gets our attention.”*

There are times when, during the process of grieving, one may think they

are stabilizing – only to be blindsided by a new wave of grief – not as horrific as the beginning, but still unexpected and life affecting.

Someone has said: “There are no victories without battles and Grief is one battle after the other, fighting for stability.” Grief is not a sprint to be measured with a stopwatch, but a journey that is to be marked with growing victories along the way.

Grief is Facing the very Worst of life, while Experiencing the very best from God. And in that, we may wish for the ways things used to be.

After the Exodus out of Egypt, the Israelites found themselves longing for the good old days – the leeks, and the cucumbers the old familiar places and comfortable ways of living.

Sometimes when feeling grief, a person finds themselves wishing they could rewind and go back to the way life was before the loss. “If only we could go back.” But we can’t.

When Waves Turn To Ripples and the Terror of Aftershocks.

WHEN REALITY SINKS IN

When the numbness of the initial trauma wears off, reality begins to sink in. For a while grief may seem *surreal* – sometimes like you are on the outside looking in. (Bk.2, p3)

Familiar Places and Experiences

* It takes a while but you work up courage to go back out and get back involved in routines. We eventually encounter familiar places and experiences. It is in this time, that many have stated: *“I get ready to go home and all I can think about is that I’m going home to an empty, lonely house.”*

The ripples of grief aren't what crush us, but are often responsible for catching us off guard, and keeping us de-stabilized.

And it is times like this, when a person attempts to get back into life, only for reality to sink in and you realize that thing or person or experience or place you lost is not coming back.

These are situations when you thought you were OK but unexpectedly, you were caught off guard again, by familiar places and experiences.

Last week we described Grief like this: “As waves of the mighty ocean, can sink and crush even a large ocean liner, likewise the waves of grief can crash over our lives like a pounding surf, crushing those, even of the strongest of spirit.”.

So today, attempt to carry that image on -- If in a boat, these kinds of crashing waves cause us to hold on for dear life, with every muscle in our body tensed. But after the crashing waves are over, a person might begin to relax and even loosen their grip on the side

of the boat, thinking that the crisis is over, since the waves have passed. Until the aftershock or the ripples come back. It's the ripples that catch us off guard and throw us off balance.

Waves cause us to take on a crisis posture – sitting secure – gripping the side of the boat for stability. It's the ripples, that catch us standing up in the boat, thinking things are secure and trouble is past. Ripples can totally catch us by surprise and cause us to lose our balance all over again, as we tumble to one side, grappling for something secure.

Overwhelming Feelings and Emotions

* These ripples can return as overwhelming feelings or emotions that we thought were under control. Our most important earthly relationship is no longer with us. This can be so profound that we are told that emotional hurting and mental distraction can cause a grieving person to become accident prone. Performing normal tasks, distracted by the concerns of life, can allow for mistakes, accidents or worse.

Just when we think it's safe to go back into the water, the ripples come back and catch us off guard all over again, affecting every area of life.

When the numbness wears off, reality sinks In.

When that happens we find ourselves in need of

GOD'S KIND OF THERAPY

(Bk.2,

p18, 22)

We have to allow ourselves time to grieve. Remember, grieving is Normal, It is natural and it is Necessary! It is also *individual*.

God's Blessing

* *We grieve in different ways, and we experience God in different ways.* The presence of God – the supremacy and sufficiency of

God in all things. In all our situations – in all our grief and pain God shows Himself to be Fully-Supreme and All-Sufficient. He is the source for all we need, for all that we are facing.

Mat 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

This is for people who look to God in times of Grief.

When we face
the very worst
of life, yet
the very best
from God,
tears are often
the result.

They are promised to be blessed, not because mourning is a blessing, but because it is God who will be the one who comforts them. He is the God of all comfort.^[2 Cor. 1:3]

And those who look to God in times of grief are promised to be blessed with His Supremacy over every problem and Sufficiency for every need, including the need for comfort.

In times we experience the very worst from life, we also experience the very best from God.

God Therapy

* How many of us have experienced tears to be a wonderful God given therapy for grief?

"Weeping is perhaps the most human and most universal of all relief measures." – Karl Menninger, *The Vital Balance* (JTG, 2, p23)

There is even grief that results from guilt.

Mat 26:75 And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Tears are God's therapy even for guilt. Even the shortest verse in the Bible reminds us that....

Joh 11:35 Jesus wept.

There was need for tear therapy *even for the Son of God!*

All I Need to Know

by Thousand Foot Crutch

[**Chorus:**] I don't know why, it's so hard to swallow our pride!

And I don't know how many wrongs make a right.

I don't know the reason. Sometimes it just feels so good to cry!

And I don't know which way the wind will blow.

But you're here with me , And that's all I need to know

Writer(s): Zac Maloy, Trevor Mcnevan Copyright: Zac Maloy Music, Sony/ATV

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Dottie Rambo was a woman well acquainted with grief and sorrow. She knew that tears were God's therapy for sorrow and pain and loss. Knowing this and what heaven would be like she wrote:

"Tear drops will never stain the streets of that city"

In an old song, that many of us may still know, Gordon Jensen wrote; *Tears are a Language God understands.*

When grief has left you low it causes tears to flow

When things have not turned out the way that you had planned.

But God won't forget you...O His promises are true

Tears are a language that God understands.

[chorus:]

GOD SEES THE TEARS OF A BROKENHEARTED SOUL

HE SEES YOUR TEARS
AND HE HEARS THEM WHEN THEY FALL
GOD WEEPS ALONG WITH MAN
AND TAKES HIM BY THE HAND
TEARS ARE A LANGUAGE GOD UNDERSTANDS.

In the deepest of emotional pain, we discover that in the very worst of life, we experience the very best of God. The Supremacy of God in our problems and the Sufficiency of God for our needs.

Tears are God's therapy for brokenness. It is not a sign of weakness, but that God is at work, and healing is taking place.

AFTERSHOCKS AND RETURNING RIPPLES (Bk.2, p25,27, p31)

Without the
pain of loss,
we would never
know the
Supremacy of
God in our
problems or
the Sufficiency
of God for
our needs.

Agonizing Reminders

* Aftershocks and destabilizing ripples come as a result of unexpected agonizing reminders. How do the aftershocks return? And what causes the ripples of grief to take us by surprise? Because the sorrow of loss never leaves, it is only temporarily dissipated or we have become distracted.

1) People can be agonizing reminders of your loss. People who care and are genuinely concerned asking you questions when you don't want the questions or even those being silent when you wish they'd just go ahead and say something.

2) The year of firsts. This referred to as "secondary losses". The first birthday or anniversary without your loved one. The first time you visit a

familiar place alone, that you most often visited with your loved one. Typical family holidays, like easter, Christmas and thanksgiving can be agonizing reminders of your loss and can be like scrapping the scab off a healing wound.

These are secondary losses or agonizing reminders of grief that we thought we were getting over..

After Shocks and Ripples

While these are typical agonizing reminders, they are also necessary opportunities to begin ***Growing Through Grief***. These times remind us. They are like aftershocks or ripples that threaten to catch us off balance, but like grief is normal, natural and necessary, these opportunities to begin dealing with grief and growing through it, are also normal, natural and painfully necessary in our journey of growing through grief.

Some have described this as the most difficult stage of grief, to navigate through and yet continuing to function. In this stage, we may be tempted to think; “the pain will never end, all hope is lost. I’ll never get over this.” But God promises we will and that in this very worst of life, we can experience the very best of God.

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

We can begin growing through grief by...

1) Remembering:

a. You are not alone. You are not *in this* alone. God is our supreme source and hope and joy and peace and He alone, is our All-Sufficient supplier of all we need for any and all areas of life’s challenges .

Deu 31:6 Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

b. Also remember, that while the grieving process may seem like an eternity, this is only for "*a time*"

Ecc 3:4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

Psa 30:5 For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. **Weeping** may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

2) Writing:

Write things down. Some find it helpful to write down or journal their thoughts and feelings, – how you are feeling, the things you are experiencing. It can help us formulate out thoughts and express our feelings. Some have found it meaningful to write to their loved one, and express their thoughts and feelings. Some have also found it helpful to write to God - He already knows all of what is going on in your life. But remember, He is the Wonderful Counselor, and writing and expressing yourself openly to God can helpful in working through your own feelings and formulating your prayer to God.

3) Looking:

Look Beyond the Present to the Promises.

“By embracing the pain, by looking into it and beyond it, I have come to see God’s presence in even the worst situations. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, *The Gift of Peace* (Journeying Through Grief, Bk.2, p20)

This does not mean overlooking the grief, but looking over it – beyond the present to the Promises of God's relief.

Ecc 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.^[Mat.5:4]

4) Praying:

Ask, Seek, Knock, Praise and Thank God for Who He is and for all he has done.

Jonah 2:7-10 When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. (8) Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. (9) But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!" (10) And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

Jonah felt his own life was fading away. He prayed to God, He thanked God, and the ordeal came to an end. We don't know how long it took for these things to transpire. But He did pray. He did thank God and acknowledged His salvation. God did cause his circumstances to change.

5) Reading:

Read Scripture, especially some of the Psalms and the Promises

Psa.42:4	Psa. 42:6	Psa. 63:6	Psa. 77:3
Psa.119:55	Psa.143:5	Deut.31:6	Psa.30:5
Mat.5:4	Ecc3:1-11	Psa.6:7	Psa.31:9
Jere. 8:8	Psa.23:4	Psa.119:50	Psa.119:76
2 Cor.1:3-7	2 Thes.2:16		

For the true child of God, Grief is facing the very worst of life, but the very best of God.

-----Thinking Things Through -----

Q: In our topic of grief, what is the difference between the crushing waves and recurring ripples? _____

Q: How can the Supremacy and Sufficiency of God be experienced during times of great loss and pain? _____

Q: How have the agonizing reminders of your loss kept you destabilized and how has God's Supremacy and Sufficiency carried you through your trial? _____

Q: What does Ecclesiastes chapter 3 promise in regard to the duration of our misery over grief? _____

-----Praying It Through -----

Dear Faithful and Sustaining Father,

Thank you for your Sovereign Lordship over each and every area of my life. I praise you for being the Lord of Life and of loss. I trust You to take this time of grief and make something beautiful from it.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



“Step-By-Step: The Great Awakening”

Ecclesiastes chapter 3:1-11

July 20, 2014

(Inspired by *Journeying Through Grief*, Kenneth Haugk, Bk.3)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you,
and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. --Mat. 11:28-29

Grief is in two parts. The first is loss.
The second is the remaking of life.

--Anne Roiphe

Ecc 3:1-4 (CEV) Everything on earth has its own time and its own season. (2) There is a time for birth and death, planting and reaping, (3) for killing and healing, destroying and building, (4) for crying and laughing, weeping and dancing

Ecc. 3:11 God makes everything happen at the right time

INTRODUCTION

This morning we focus on the stage of grief where the grieving person begins to realize that:

- 1) ...there is life after loss, God is the Lord of Life and Loss and you are going to make it after all.
- 2) ...you are sort of waking up to the fact that there is a light in the darkness and there is a flicker of hope ahead.
- 3) ...you are beginning to establish a new definition of what is “normal” for your life.

Today we focus on the stage of grief in which *Growing Through Grief* is becoming gradually evident to the one who is grieving. Here, there is a growing realization that, while we cannot fully understand it, *God is the LORD of Life and Loss*.

We are now understanding that while we have experienced the worst of life, we are also experiencing the very best of God as our source and hope. In our times of trials, we are now keenly aware of the Supremacy of God over all our problems and the sufficiency of God for all our needs.

As we are Growing Through Grief, we begin to think that in God's Supremacy, I presently realize that Every experience had a purpose and every step of the journey had a destination.

In God's Sufficiency, I can acknowledge that I have experienced the richness of His sustaining grace, His keeping power, His gentle leading and His loving compassion in never leaving me.

Consider this expression of grief from one family survivor:

What can you say when your life has been turned upside down?
When brokenness and heartache and shattered dreams engulf you?
Is this the way of the cross? Is this what it means to walk in His
steps? Unanswered questions, yet unshaken faith. Unfulfilled
dreams, yet unexplained hope. Unspeakable grief, yet undying
love. How is this possible? -- *Only through Jesus!*

These are, if we can put it this way, anointed words of grief – grief
that experiences the very worst from life, while experiencing the
very best of God. Grief that has found God fully Supreme over all
of loss and pain, and all-Sufficient for all their needs.

There is a poem which many of us are familiar with.

Footprints in the Sand, by Mary Stevenson

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.

Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.

In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.

Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,

other times there were one set of footprints .

This bothered me because I noticed

that during the low periods of my life,

when I was suffering from

anguish, sorrow or defeat,

I could see only one set of footprints

So I said to the Lord,

“You promised me Lord,

that if I followed you,

you would walk with me always.

But I have noticed that during

the most trying periods of my life

there have only been one

set of footprints in the sand.

Why, when I needed you most,
You have not been there for me?"

The Lord replied,
"The times when you have
seen only one set of footprints,
is when I carried you."

--Mary Stevenson

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This is the stage of growing emotional, mental and social stability. The grief is still with you, but the aftershocks and ripples are not catching you off guard as before.

The grief is still felt, and loss is still heavy, but there is a stabilizing assurance of the plan and purpose and presence of God, along every step of your journey. And Step-by-Step, it is as though you are awakening to a new understanding of God in your life.

The questions now turn from, Why did God allow this? To *Where is God taking me?* From, Will this never end? To *I wonder what is His purpose for me today?*

Now there is a seeking of answers – not as much to understand the grief of the *present*, but to discover new direction and meaning for your *future*. This is a time of establishing new “*normals*” in your life and redefining what is now *normal*, for you. It is here that one begins to believe that pain is lessening, hope is growing and genuine healing and coping is taking place.

Long after the blunt trauma of loss and pain have taken its toll, we begin to realize that we seem to be awakening to the realization that the pain is subsiding and hope has begun to creep up on us.

“In grief, nothing ‘stays put’. One keeps emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I’m on a spiral? But if a spiral, am I going up or down it?” --CS Lewis, a Grief Observed.

Growing through Grief involves a step, by step journey along...

THE WAY OF CHRIST

The way of Christ is always, walking with Christ, in obedience *to* Christ and full dependence *upon* Christ.

Draw Near to God

The way of Christ is a continual drawing near to God. Jesus invites us to come to Him and find Him to be our Source.

Mat. 11:28-29 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

This is a promise which is conditional The condition or command is to “come to me”. The promise is that we will find rest for our souls. In this we will discover that He alone is fully supreme over all our trials and all-sufficient for all our needs.

Conditional promises from God invite us to step out in faith and can enable us to *Grow Through Our Grief*.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ

The way of Christ is experiencing the supremacy and sufficiency of God in Christ. This involves the learning of life lessons, beyond

head knowledge to personal, experiential confirmation of those lessons.

Col 1:17-19 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (18) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might have supremacy. (19) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

This is not head knowledge, but firsthand experience of the supremacy of God over your trials and the sufficiency of God for your needs. He is our Source of life and healing and strength and peace and comfort and hope and strength and joy and satisfaction. He is fully supreme and all sufficient in every situation. The way of Christ is clinging to God and drawing from God.

A CASE STUDY IN GRIEF

Naomi from the book of Ruth

Naomi was an example of someone who faced the very worst of life, but experienced the very best of God. She is a case study in grief, with loss and hope and loss and hope.

Ruth 1:1-9 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. (2) The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. (3) But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. (4) These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, (5) and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without

her two sons and her husband. (6) Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. (7) So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. (8) But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. (9) The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Rth 1:16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

Loss and Hope

Loss and Hope are often viewed as opponents. Yet they often seem to balance one another, as though part of the cycle of our emotional life.

"Grief is a choppy 'two steps forward, one step backward' kind of experience". Therese Rando, How to go on Living When Someone You Love Dies (JTG, Bk3, p3)

Sometimes it seems that we take two steps forward only to be taken back a step. But the important thing to see is that our progress forward is exceeding our setbacks.

Naomi experienced....

1) famine which brought **Loss** of family stability and life sustaining provisions (v1

- 2) She moved and experienced the **Loss** of homeland and familiarity, perhaps even extended family (v1)
- 3) **Hope** of finding a new home in Moab (v2)
- 4) **Loss** of her spouse when her husband died (v3). This was an additional unexpected trauma and grief.
- 5) **Hope** of sons finding wives (v4) which was a blessing of a growing family.
- 6) **Loss** of sons (v5) in their death, posing additional unexpected pain and grief.
- 7) another move and the **Loss** of homeland (v6) as a result of moving back to Judah.
- 8) **Loss** of 1 daughter-in-law (v8) – family separation
- 9) **Hope** of keeping 1 daughter-in-law and devoted friend, Ruth. (v16)

Until we get to the point of full recovery, God provides people and experiences along the way that work together to sustain us, until the misery itself is past or we grow through it. Grief is a process of experiencing loss as well as hope. Each has its appointed time and each has its ordained purpose - *both from God*.

Growing Forward with God and His Grace

Naomi experienced much of life's grief, but also much of God's all-sufficient grace.

One fellow griever puts it this way: "While I cannot do your grieving for you or your for me, we can be with each other in honest and tender companionship. –John Claypool, *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler*. (JTG, Bk3, p7)

People are always part of God's plan for us to be *Growing Through Grief*. Think a minute; Who has God placed in your life

to help you through some time of grief? It is how He works!

PURSING HEALTH

People are a very important part of the grieving and healing process. An important part of Naomi's grieving process was Ruth, who herself, was grieving.

Special People

* God uses people as instruments to dispense His grace and encouragement. Some may think, "*I don't need anyone.*" That may be what you think and how you feel, but it is not how God typically works.

The fact is...

1) We need people who are available: We need people who are available to be there when you need them. They make time and even in silence, their presence brings encouragement, hope and stability.

2) We need people who are empathetic: We need those who may not know how you feel, but are willing to "do their best to understand and to let some of your pain touch them." (*Read that again!*)

Psychologists can give us input into human thoughts, ideas, and the thinking process. But psychologists cannot make us fully understand human grief. Only by experiencing grief personally, and first hand can we then fully empathize with the grief or another person.

3) We need people who are accepting: We all need people who don't judge, allow you to speak your mind and express your feelings.

4) We need people who are listening: In times of grief, we especially need people who listen first and speak last, if they speak at all. These know the importance of personal expression in times of pain. They will listen to you tell your story over and over again if necessary. (Kenneth Haugk, JTG, Bk3, p11)
God uses special people!

A Special Friend

* We have a special friend in Jesus.

Pro 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Sometimes part of grief is anger. And sometimes that anger is directed at God and must be shared with God. God can hear our prayers, even our angry, pain filled prayers and He alone can sift through them perfectly and lovingly, receiving each accusation, addressing each question and sifting through it all in a way that only God can **AND STILL LOVE US!**

“Sharing my anger with God gives me a listener who accepts me where I am and who tells me He can handle it.” (Nancy Groves, Faith and Illness, Bk.3:p.17)

God is our ever present friend^[Ps.46:1] and our own personal Wonderful Counselor^[Is.9:6].

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF?

At this stage, how can we grow through our grief? *Growing Through Grief* involves:

1) Accepting: Accepting that the past will always be the past. That the present offers stability and that the future holds promising hope

Psa 34:17-18 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. (18) The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

2) Talking: Talk about the history you have shared with that which is lost. Acknowledge that history as a permanent part of your past, but no longer a part of your present. James R White advises; “*Grief is not handled well alone. God mad us social beings, and when we lose a loved one, we desire and need the help and assistance of others*”. –James R.White, *Grieving: Our Path Back to Peace* (JTG, Bk.3, p9).

3) Expressing: We are beings of expression. Express any unfinished business regarding the past and resolve any remaining issues or feelings you may have, such as regrets, resentment, grievances or guilt – even with the one you have lost. With God’s help and often with the help of another Christian friend or pastor, you can begin to process of Growing Through Grief by emptying out the negative and debilitating feelings and beginning brining those to a close.

4) Experience the Supremacy and Sufficiency of God in your life. These are things to put into practice daily.

* **Choose to live** one day at a time

Mat 6:33-34 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (34) "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Grief is a daily struggle. We need to make the daily choice to live one day at a time. *Seek God first!*

** Every day afresh, **Put the Lord at the center** of your life

Mat 16:24-25 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (25) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

With Christ at the center of life, we evidence the Supremacy of God in our lives.

*** **Go to God** with your questions.

"What a tremendous relief... to discover that we don't need to do anything to prove ourselves to God"

-- Desmond Tutu, *Hope and Suffering*

"Pray as you can, and do not try to pray as you can't."

-- JI Packard

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Again, God gives us conditional promises. The condition or commandment is that we ask God. The promise is that He will answer and provide.

**** **Thank God for** providing all you need for your life

2Pe 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

The focus here is God's Sufficiency.

***** **Praise God that though your situation** has changed, He has not! He will never leave you or forsake you.

Heb 13:5-6 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you

nor forsake you." (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; ...

** These are points from June Hunt, *Hope For The Heart*.

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-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: What does this stage of grief focus on? What is beginning to take place? _____

Q: Explain what is meant by "the supremacy and sufficiency of God" in our situations? _____

Q: Why was Naomi a good case study for grief? What two things were coming and going? How was she taking two steps forward, but one step backwards? _____

Q: How would you rate the importance of other people in your process of Growing Through Grief? _____

Q: Any specific names or faces come to mind, who God has used to help you through your time of grief? Have you thanked them?

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Dear Father,

Thank you that grief and mourning are but, for a time. Thank you for the promise of the coming of hope into my life. Thank you that I can trust you to make all things beautiful in your time.

In Jesus' name,

Amen!



“Leading with a Limp: *Its My Turn Now!*”

Genesis 32:24ff

July 27, 2014

(Inspired by *Journeying Through Grief*, Kenneth Haugk, Bk.4)

Theme: Comforting with our own comfort

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (5) who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, (7) so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. --1Peter 1:3-7

If God treats you well by teaching you a disastrous lesson,
you never forget it.

--Ray Bradbury

Ecc 3:1-11 ESV For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: He has made everything beautiful in its time...

INTRODUCTION

As we have been going through this series on *Growing Through Grief*, I have thought several times, that I wish I had a video camera focused on the congregation – because as we have covered the stages of grief, the pain and loss of grief, and the goodness of God in our grief – I have noticed that the vast majority of the congregation are nodding throughout the message.

I take that to say, that everyone who is nodding, is acknowledging some aspect of their own personal experience with grief. – That makes up nearly everyone in the congregation. It seems that no one is exempt from grief.

I met and spoke with a man this week who was **still grieving** a long past experience of how he had been treated by a church. He had given himself to the work of the Lord in that church until he felt that it came to the point when he wasn't needed anymore and from his perspective, he had been discarded by the church. And unfortunately, He has never been back to church. His un-healed pain, has kept him from going forward with this part of his life.

God often allows His true children to be tried as though by fire. Fire consumes all that can be consumed. When it is finished, ashes remain. What can come from those ashes is intended by God, to be something of exquisite and eternal beauty.

There comes a time, when it becomes time, to begin to give again. “**Now Its My Turn**” is a challenge to consider where you are in the grieving process, what God has taught you – what he has brought you through and ***IF*** you are ready to begin giving back, so God may use you to help others begin to *Grow through their Grief*.

At some point in your grief, you realize you are back...

ON THE ROAD TO “NORMAL”

What is normal, anyway? What normal is to be for you, may be quite different for what normal may be to someone else.

“What wound did ever heal but by degrees?”

--William Shakespeare, *Orthello*

You may feel you aren't ready to begin giving or helping others yet, and you may be right. But also, we remember we will never be free of the loss and the grief will always be with us, to some degree. To wait until all grief is gone, is to await a time which will never come.

One lady has never perceived herself as a strong person or a people person. But as she grows through her own grief, she has begun connecting with others who have gone through a similar experience to see how they are doing. Whether she realizes it or not, she has begun to give of herself to help others who are in her situation.

The right *time*, the right *place*

On the road to “normal”, there is the right time and the right place to begin giving back. For some, beginning to Lead with a limp and help others, means finding a place or person or time or perhaps a group which will allow, not only healing in your life, but also provide opportunities for you to give and to help others to heal.

When speaking about grief, Pierre Auguste Renoir said, “*the pain passes, but the beauty remains.*”

Part of the beauty of what God does through our grief is how we are to affect others. Our lives can have a beautiful effect on others if we consider talking to someone about your loved one who is no

longer with you. It helps others see that grief is survivable and may even help them to begin sharing the present grief and express the pain in their own heart.

Isa 40:31 ESV but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

One person wrote: “*Out of my pain, God became a living reality to me as never before.*” (Gerald Sittser, *A Grace Disguised*, JTG, p16)

*In life there is always pain. But With God,
there is always HOPE.*

When you begin to step out in faith, you will begin to experience how God wants to use you to offer the strength and hope that you have received, into the lives of others.

But there is a right time and a right place for helping others and it may be different for everyone.

Grief changes everything

On the road to “normal”, we realize that grief not only changes us, it can change everything around us, at least from our perception. Grief even changes what is “normal” for your life. And with God we can be changed for the good. We have to remember that.

In her book *Giving Sorrow Words*, Candy Lightner, founder of MADD, makes this observation: “*Death changes us, the living. In the presence of death, we become more aware of life. It can inspire us to decide what really matters in life and then to seek it.*” (JTG, p.25).

In other words, change comes in incremental steps, so we can survive it. When the time is right and the opportunity arises, we

must allow change in our lives to work toward the greater good for our own future, as well as for God's eternal purposes.

The future has brought change.

"The best thing about the future is that it only comes one day at a time."
-- Abraham Lincoln

This is part of the road back to "normal"

A CASE STUDY OF JACOB (Gen.32:24ff)

In Genesis chapter 32, Jacob has gathered his family and left their home during the night.

Gen 32:24-32 (24) And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day (25) When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. (26) Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." (27) And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." (28) Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." (29) Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. (30) So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." (31) The sun rose upon him as he **passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.** (32) Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

Jacob wrestled with God

During the night Jacob is alone with God, he wrestled till morning.

Gen 32:24 ESV And Jacob was left alone...And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.

Alone with his thoughts. Alone with God. Isolated and separated from onlookers and what other people might see, or hear or think or perceive. Jacob most emphatically requests a blessing from God.

Gen.32:26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

How many of us have begged and pleaded and prayed and bartered and made deals with God for the sake of a blessing – at least what we might consider a blessing. Perhaps we've prayed for a blessing - Trusted God for a blessing. Only to experience some trial or difficulty of life. And we think, "well that's not what I wanted." "Lord I prayed that you'd bless, but you gave me a mess."

I prayed to God for a blessing, but he allowed hardship to befall me – trouble to overtake me – sorrow to fill me. Perhaps we have come to think that blessings from God come free of charge. But blessings come at a price.

Like praying for God to give you patience. Have we not learned that lesson yet? Like the Marines motto, *Patience is learned, never given.* It comes with a price!

Perhaps we
have come to
expect that
blessings
from God
come free
of charge.

In order to learn patience, we have to go through the painful ordeal of patience being brutally forged into our character, through

circumstances that are frustrating, and experiences that are challenging. Character and blessings - the really good things from God - are not free of charge. They come with a price.

If Grief is anything, it is nothing short of a character forging wrestling with God. Wrestling with God's presence, His faithfulness, His plan and purpose, His sovereignty, sometimes we may wrestle with God's sanity. "Is God crazy?" though we may never verbalize it that way.

You can be sure that people who have grieved, have wrestled with God – even athiests. And here we find Jacob alone. He wrestles with God. Prays insistently for a blessing. We also see, that God answers Jacob's prayer, and Jacob gets exactly what he asked for, but nothing that he had expected.

Jacob was changed by God.

As a result of his wrestling with God and prayer for a blessing, Jacob was changed by God.
How was Jacob changed?

His name was changed.

<p>Gen.32:27-28 (27) And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." (28) Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."</p>
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You recall the word Jacob literally means "heel-catcher", and also meant "supplanter" or one *who trips up or overthrows* another.

As a direct answer to his prayer for a blessings, Jacob's name was changed from Jacob to Israel. v.28b) "...for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Prevailed, meaning not that He beat God, but that he endured the experience without having been killed or consumed in the process.

His name was changed as an everlasting reminder of His wrestling with God. Jacob is pronounced – yakov while **Prevailed** (v28) is pronounced – yakol. The Hebrew scholars tell us that *Israel* means “*God Prevails.*” His name was changed from *one who trips up another*, to *God prevails*. One referring to his fallen, broken human inclination, the other a testimony to His experience and life change from God. *I'd say he benefitted from that name change.*

His Walk was changed

Not only was Jacob's name changed, but His walk was changed.

Gen 32:24-25 ESV And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. (25) When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his **hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint** as he wrestled with him.

At this point, - and we aren't immediately alerted to the fact – but at this point Jacob has been changed forever. This touch, has now changed his walk, and Jacob or now Israel, will never be the same. His name has been changed, but now his walk has been changed. And when we refer to His walk, we are not merely referring to his lifestyle, but literally his walk was changed- the way he walked was changed.

Gen 32:30-31 ESV So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "*For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.*" (31) The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, **limping because of his hip**

It is interesting how the Scripture presents the picture. It is almost given in passing, as a lesser bit of information. Jacob is traveling with his company – and as the sun comes up, he is pictured as **limping along** because of his hip.

As a result of his wrestling with God – as a result of the holding on for a blessing – His hip was put out of joint and from then on, he goes about **Leading with a Limp**. We don't know how long this injury lasted or whether or not it was characteristic of his walk for the rest of his life – a constant reminder of his wrestling and blessing from God.

But at least for a while – and evidently long enough – it lasted long enough to be a constant reminder of His alone time, blessed wrestling match with God. Most of us are marked – either

God changed
Jacob's walk,
as a lifetime
reminder of
his encounter
with God.

mentally, emotionally or spiritually – perhaps even physically with the wrestling matches we have had with God. Some changed for the good, but some changed for the bad.

How do we know Jacob's life was changed? The very next verse, we find Jacob limping along and he comes face to face with the man, who from his earlier days, had sought to take his life – Esau. And not just Esau alone, but 400 of his men for backup.

What will Jacob do? Well, we discover that Jacob doesn't live here anymore – *Israel does*. He has

wrestled with God and with man and prevailed – what's a murderous brother and 400 fighting men going to do to him?

Gen 33:1-4 ESV And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. (2) And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. (3) **He himself** went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. (4) But Esau ran to

meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

At this point, we wonder? What really was the blessing Jacob received? Just a new name? a changed walk? Or perhaps the circumstances around him? For sure, Esau's desire to kill his brother was changed. Surely that must have been part of God's hidden blessing.

There were lots of ashes in Israel's past, but now God makes something beautiful, and out of the ashes of pain, loss, and grief - deceit, life threats and broken families. – out of all that ashes, God causes something beautiful to arise. Jacob got exactly what he'd prayed for, that is a blessing, but it was nothing he'd expected.

Grief is wrestling with God and a life changing experience, that changes, perhaps far more than we can realize. God is in the life changing business.

LEADING WITH A LIMP: *Its My turn Now*

* Our focus today is learning to lead with the limp or hardship or the loss or life lesson or the thorn in our flesh that God has given us. God expects us to allow Him to use the life lessons in our lives, to help others learn the hard and life changing lessons He has for them. He wants to use us, to help others *Grow Through Their Grief*.

Become An Encourager

Your change has come with a price. Don't waste it! We have the opportunity to become a comforter or an encourager. Here, we realize that we can be an encouragement, to help others become encouragers.

2Cor. 7:6-7 (6) But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, (7) and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.

The word for comfort means encourage. There is unimaginable power in *encouragement*. In “*Its Wonderful Life*”, head angel Silas is talking to the lesser angel Clarence. And preparing Clarence for his assignment on earth, he points out that George Bailey was in need of his help. Clarence asks, “Why, is he in trouble?” Silas, the wiser head angel answers; “oh its worse than that – He’s discouraged!” The world is in need of *encouragers*!

Heb. 10:25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but *encouraging* one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Encouragement = paraklete - “*to come along side of*”. So Encouragement has to do with personal involvement in another person’s life, being used of God to infuse a discouraged or courage-less person with the courage we have gained, through the darkness of our own painful experiences, yet with the hope of God in Christ.

2Cor. 1:2-7 ESV Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, (4) who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (5) For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. (6) If we are afflicted, it is for your

comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. (7) Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

Going Forward with Life

Sometimes this can be a difficult barrier to overcome. To go on with life, for some, implies putting the past behind, forgetting what has been experienced – including the loved one and moving on. Nothing could be further from the truth.

“What we have once enjoyed, and deeply loved we can never lose; for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us.” --- Helen Keller

In going forward with life, we do not forget, but we take our memories and lessons and loves, along with us. You can begin to effectively minister to others in grief, assurance and encouragement.

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

Growing Through Grieving means..

LOOK AT YOUR OWN SITUATION. Could it be Your Turn, to begin Leading with a Limp and beginning to give of yourself again, to help others through their own grief and sorrow?

LOOK AROUND YOU. Who around you, might benefit from what you have experienced? Who seems to need some comfort or courage in their own trial by fire?

HOW CAN I HELP OTHERS?

1) You have learned lessons about grief and pain – not just head

knowledge, but personal testimony with head knowledge mixed with life experience.

2) You have lessons about yourself – you are different on the inside and you are living and acting differently on the outside. Your walk has changed and your life is noticeably different. Others need to know the reason why.

3) There are Lessons you have learned about God – His faithfulness, his promises, your life and the strength and hope you have received. You have found God to be Supreme over all your trials and Sufficient for all your needs. Others need this same assurance.

LOOK AT THE PROMISES OF GOD

As we give of ourselves for the good of others, we will be surprised how God will give to us, renewed energy, passion, purpose and joy in living once again – perhaps for the very first time for some.

Luke 6:38 ESV give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

First: we have the condition or command: – ***GIVE***.

Then, we have the promise: ***YOU WILL RECEIVE BEYOND YOUR ABILITY TO CONTAIN.***

For the child of God, grief is experiencing the very worst of life, while experiencing the very best from God. It is discovering that the same Lord of Life is the Lord of loss and there is life, and hope and peace and joy after loss.

May God be praised – He alone is our help and hope and our comfort.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: What does this stage of the grief process focus on? What is beginning to happen? _____

Q: Going forward does not mean, '*forgetting what has happened and full steam ahead*'. Instead what does "going forward" mean at this stage? _____

Q: Are you aware of your process through pain and loss and would you say you are *Growing Through Grief*? _____

Q: Are you far along enough to begin giving of yourself to help others who are grieving? Could it be, *Your Turn Now*? If so, does that scare or intimidate you? If so, how? _____

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while,
if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,
so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than
gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found
to result in praise and glory and honor
at the revelation of Jesus Christ. --1Peter 1:6-7

[Also read 2Thessalonians 2:16-17]

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Dear Good and Gracious God,

Thank you for your directing hand and helping power through this time of unspeakable grief. At times I thought the pain would never end and Hope would never be part of my life again. But You have made all things beautiful in Your perfect time.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*

Don't close this booklet yet



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; --
Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from
God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but
have everlasting life. --*John 3:16*

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die
in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- *Romans 6:23*

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus
Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still
sinners, Christ died for us. ---*Romans 5:8*

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- *Rom 10:13*

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he
gave the right to become children of God, - *John 1:12*

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your
sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. *He already knows.*
- also Confess Jesus as you LORD.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

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and also

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A NEW CREATION: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

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*May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience
and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship
of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit,
in His Church and throughout our mission field.*