

# Handling Grief

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*I WAS SITTING, torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God's dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly, he said things I know were true. I was unmoved, except to wish he'd go away. He finally did.*

*Another came and sat beside me. He didn't talk. He didn't ask leading questions. He just sat beside me for an hour and more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, left. I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go.*

- Joseph Bayly, *The Last Thing We Talk About*



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This "PASTOR'S GUIDE SHEET" was developed by Dr. Joe K. Taylor, Senior Pastor, South Reno Baptist Church, Reno, NV • jtaylor@southreno.com  
Scriptures are printed verbatim with references noted but highlights and underlines are added. Quotes and all primary sources are footnoted.

## *A. Introductory Statements on Grief Management.*

1. ***"Remember, the Bible does not say, 'God will never put on you more than you can bear.' The Bible does say, 'God will never put on you more than He can bear.'"***
2. ***"Remember, Christianity is not a vaccine that immunizes us to problems and difficulties in life."***
3. ***"God never promised us there would never be 'storms,' He did promise us that He would be with us in the midst of them."***
4. ***"Grief is the price we pay for loving—it is a sign we loved someone; it is a sign of health!"***
5. ***"There are no set formulas or stages of grief. We all grieve in different ways. What makes the process of grief complex is that we can experience many feelings, in varying levels of intensity, all at the same time."***
6. ***"As a rule, we don't control our feelings. Remember that 'grief'—that mixture of many feelings all at once—is as intense a 'feeling' as one can experience."***

***T***he righteous perish, and no one understands it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. <sup>2</sup> Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

- Isaiah 57:1-2 (NIV)

## *B. "Society's Approach to Handling Grief"*

Source: Grief Management, by Drs. John James and Frank Cherry: Cf., "The Story of Johnny"

1. Bury your feelings.
2. Replace your losses.
3. Grieve alone.
4. Time alone heals.
5. Live with regret.
6. Never trust again.

## C. "A Biblical Approach to Grief Management"

Source: Dr. Joe K. Taylor, Senior Pastor, South Reno Baptist Church

Don't bury your feelings ...

### 1. Express your feelings.

**John 11:35 (NASB)** - "Jesus wept" [at the grave of a best friend.]

**Matthew 5:4 (NASB)** - "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Don't just try to replace the loss, but ...

### 2. Review the loss in light of God's Word.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13a (NIV)** - Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

*"It may be helpless, but it is never hopeless with Christ around."* - Anonymous

Don't grieve alone ...

### 3. Grieve together in Christian Community.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (LB)** - What a wonderful God we have—He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the One who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does He do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us.

#### Helping Others through Grief

By Dolorous Keening

- ❶ Do acknowledge the loss.
- ❷ Do give the person permission to express emotion.
- ❸ Do free the person to talk and then listen. (Be careful not to "top stories" or just talk too much)
- ❹ Do offer practical help. (Food, childcare, house cleaning, etc.)
- ❺ Do recontact the person monthly. (We grieve in 3 month cycles and at holidays/anniversaries)
- ❻ Don't be alarmed by "off the wall" statements.
- ❼ Don't try to answer the "why" question.
- ❽ Don't make careless statements (e.g., "This was just God's will." "They had a full life," "I understand what you are going through," "You will get over this," "It could be worse.").

Realize that time alone does not heal ...

### 4. Only the Holy Spirit offers true healing.

**Isaiah 53:5b (NKJ)** - "...by His wounds we are healed."

Don't live with regret ...

### 5. You can still resolve your regrets.

**Romans 12:18 (NASB)** - If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Don't wall up and never trust again ...

### 6. Make God your treasure and you will never lose it.

**Matthew 28:20 (KJV)** - "... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

**F** *ait*h is never threatened by the unexplainable. It respects His sovereignty and delights in His mysteries. It gladly acknowledges that God cannot always be understood, but He can always be trusted. That's why Paul could so confidently write: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unreachable are his judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33). Paul could make that insightful statement because he clearly understood the differences between God's promises and His processes. He was absolutely content to rest in His will even though he knew he could never fathom His ways. He knew that purposes and plans were vastly different truths and that they operated in entirely different spheres. - Junior Hill

## **D. Suggested Scriptures**

Scriptures are printed verbatim with sources noted. The words of Jesus are printed in Red.

**Psalm 73:25-26, NIV** - <sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. <sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. ... <sup>28</sup> But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

**Job 8:20-21, NIV** - <sup>20</sup> "Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers. <sup>21</sup> He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.

**Job 8:20-21, NLT** - <sup>20</sup> "But look, God will not reject a person of integrity, nor will he lend a hand to the wicked. <sup>21</sup> He will once again fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.

**Psalm 119:49-50, NLT** - <sup>49</sup> Remember your promise to me; it is my only hope. <sup>50</sup> Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles.

**Psalm 9:9, NLT** - <sup>9</sup> The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

**Psalm 23:1-4, NLT** - <sup>1</sup> The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. <sup>2</sup> He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. <sup>3</sup> He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. <sup>4</sup> Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

**Psalm 18:2, NLT** - <sup>2</sup> The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety.

**Psalm 30:5, NLT** - <sup>5</sup> For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.

**Psalm 31:7, NLT** - <sup>7</sup> I will be glad and rejoice in your unfailing love, for you have seen my troubles, and you care about the anguish of my soul.

**Psalm 46:1-2, NLT** - <sup>1</sup> For the choir director: A song of the descendants of Korah, to be sung by soprano voices. God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. <sup>2</sup> So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.

**Psalm 55:22, NLT** - <sup>22</sup> Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.

**Psalm 71:20, NLT** - <sup>20</sup> You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will restore me to life again and lift me up from the depths of the earth.

**Psalm 103:13, TLB** - <sup>13</sup> He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him.

**Psalm 126:5-6, NLT** - <sup>5</sup> Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. <sup>6</sup> They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.

**Psalm 147:3, NLT** - <sup>3</sup> He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.

**Isaiah 41:10, NLT** - <sup>10</sup> Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

**Isaiah 43:2-3, NLT** - <sup>2</sup> When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. <sup>3</sup> For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

**Matthew 5:4, 10-12, NLT** - <sup>4</sup> God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ... <sup>10</sup> God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. <sup>11</sup> "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. <sup>12</sup> Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

**Jeremiah 29:11-13, NLT** - <sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> In those days when you pray, I will listen. <sup>13</sup> If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.

**Lamentations 3:31-33, NLT** - <sup>31</sup> For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever. <sup>32</sup> Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion because of the greatness of his unfailing love. <sup>33</sup> For he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow.

**Matthew 10:29-31, NLT** - <sup>29</sup> What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. <sup>30</sup> And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

**John 14:1-6, NLT** - <sup>1</sup> "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going." <sup>5</sup> "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" <sup>6</sup> Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

**John 14:27, NLT** - <sup>27</sup> "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

**Matthew 11:28-30, NLT** - <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

**Matthew 11:28-30, MSG** - <sup>28</sup> "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. <sup>29</sup> Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. <sup>30</sup> Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

**John 16:33, NLT** - <sup>33</sup> I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

**Romans 8:28, NLT** - <sup>28</sup> And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

**Romans 8:35, NLT** - <sup>35</sup> Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

**1 Corinthians 1:3-7, NLT** - <sup>3</sup> May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. <sup>4</sup> I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Through him, God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge. <sup>6</sup> This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true. <sup>7</sup> Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 4:8, NLT** - <sup>8</sup> We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-17, NLT** - <sup>16</sup> That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. <sup>17</sup> For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10, NLT** - <sup>7</sup> even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. <sup>8</sup> Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. <sup>9</sup> Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. <sup>10</sup> That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Hebrews 2:14, NLT** - <sup>14</sup> Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.

**Hebrews 4:15, NLT** - <sup>15</sup> This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

**1 Peter 4:12-14, NLT** - <sup>12</sup> Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world. <sup>14</sup> So be happy when you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you.

**Revelation 21:1-5, NLT** - <sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." <sup>5</sup> And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."

**Matthew 25:34-40, MSG** - <sup>34</sup> "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. <sup>35</sup> And here's why: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, <sup>36</sup> I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.' <sup>37</sup> "Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' <sup>40</sup> Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.'