

The Road of Grief – The Journey Begins

Baptist Burden Bearers

Grief is a Merciless Adversary

Grief has no feelings but pain. It shows no emotion but heartache. It attacks the old, the young, the weak and the strong. It descends upon the rich, the poor, the good and the bad. It shows no favoritism. It gives no warning. Grief arrives in many forms. It may be the death of a loved one, the betrayal of a trust, the destruction of a relationship or the loss of a lifestyle. Grief is determined to destroy whatever is left of our once peaceful and productive lives. Its goal is to enslave and control us. It wants to dictate our actions, our thoughts and our feelings. The effects of grief are comparable to wounds inflicted by any physical, emotional or mental injury. It attacks our memory, our feelings and even the joints and muscles of our body. Then, just when we've hit bottom physically, spiritual confusion sets in. Why did this happen? Is God really good like I've always believed? The questions are overwhelming and the answers seemingly never come. You are now beginning your ... *journey of grief*.

You Didn't Choose This Path

Someone you love may have died. You may have suffered through a devastating betrayal. Your doctor may have told you that your condition is terminal. Whatever the cause your world has just come crashing down. You didn't ask for this, you didn't plan for this and you definitely weren't prepared for this. Nothing in your life is right ... everything has gone terribly wrong.

Verse from Job

You don't know what to do next

When your life is turned upside down it's almost impossible to see through the fog and have any idea where to go next. How do you go on without your loved one? How do you handle the health condition? How do you cope when everything in life has changed? Remember this ... you're not alone. Others have gone through what you're enduring and there is someone to help you walk this journey. Don't make any major decisions. Don't rush into more life changes. Wait ... and reach out to someone that can help.

Life will never be exactly the same again

The biggest blow that you endure may well be the thought that life will never be the same again. This is especially true if someone you love has died. It is even more devastating if that someone was a child regardless of their age. You may eventually recover from a crippling disease or a destroyed relationship or even a

financial disaster. You will never completely "get over" the death of a child. You can learn to adapt to life after they are gone but life will never be what you thought it would. At some point you will have to accept the fact that life will never be the same and you are forced to create a new life with their memory rather than their presence.

Grief is an injury

The culture we live in today doesn't allow for the interference of grief. We approach grief as a taboo subject that should be avoided. Even in our churches grief is treated as a "lack of faith". Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that grief is as much of an injury as a broken limb or a severe illness. A traumatic event can create a medical condition called "Stress Induced Cardio Myopathy". This is a condition that actually effects the heart. Because of this we need to face our grief much in the same manner as we would a broken limb or a severe illness. If you incurred an injury or illness your medical provider would place you on an appropriate treatment plan. However, when it comes to grief our society expects us to just "move on" as if nothing happened. You must remember that you have been injured ... severely ... and you must address that injury in order to heal properly.

Grief effects your entire person

Grief is a condition that will attack every area of your being. Obviously your emotions will be completely out of control and move from sadness to denial to anger to depression and more. Physically you can literally be sick at your stomach, have severe headaches, lose your appetite and have trouble sleeping. Mentally you may experience times of forgetfulness, have trouble concentrating and even experience personality changes. Then, spiritually you may even start to doubt what you've always believed about God, His love for you and even the truth of the Bible itself. All of these conditions are normal for someone traveling the road of grief. Just realize that you have been injured and you will need to heal in each of these areas. It will take time and attention ... and help from others.

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Expect there to be ups and downs

The grief journey is not a sprint that will get you to the finish line in a short amount of time. It would be great if all of our pain and suffering could end soon after it begins. But grief doesn't work that way. It is more like a marathon but it's not a steady pace. The hardest time may not even be during the first year or two after you lost a loved one or suffered a trauma. Sometimes you will experience *grief bursts* weeks, months and even years later. In reality the grief road is filled with pot holes and detours. Sometimes you even feel like you've come to a complete stop. Then there will be those days when you feel like you've regressed all the way back to the beginning. It will be like you're living through that fateful day all over again. You will have good days, bad days and even worse days. You may be half way up the hill one minute and at the bottom of the valley the next. This too is normal ... and to be expected.

Don't expect everyone else to understand

You can't expect ... nor should you ... that others will understand what you are going through. There are multitudes that have traveled through the grief journey but every road is different. No two people grieve alike nor travel the same path. There will be many friends and family that will try and offer words of hope and encouragement but will instead increase the intensity of your pain. They haven't traveled your road so they can't understand. There will be others that don't know how to reach out to you so they will simply try and avoid you or avoid bringing up your grief in your presence. Try not to be too critical of them. Their intentions may very well be sincere ... they just don't understand.

You are the one to decide how you are going to move forward

Everyone grieves differently. We all have different emotional, physical, mental and spiritual foundations. It's the combination of all of these factors that determines how we react to grief. The severity of your grief is related to, for example, the intensity and lengths of relationships that you had with someone that has died. Even with all these facts there are some basic reactions that you will be faced with when you begin your grief journey.

- Some people choose to *ignore* their grief. They try to give the impression that they can handle everything, they aren't having any issues and they are moving on with their life.

- Others try and cope by simply continuing in a state of *mourning*. Their life is constantly hampered by the outward signs of grief such as continuous depression, neglect of responsibilities, constant weeping and dwelling on their loss.
- Still others try and *replace* their grief by over indulging in actions that they hope will remove the pain. Such things as alcohol, drug abuse, immoral behavior and even becoming a "workaholic" only add to the problem. They can never replace the grief and the life altering changes that are the result of a traumatic event.
- The only way to overcome grief and its effect on our lives is by *attacking* our grief until we conquer it. Embrace your grief. Talk about your loss. Reach out to others. Call out for help. Find a grief caregiver. You must determine that you will not let grief destroy you.

Regardless of how you feel right now there is purpose and meaning behind your grief

Romans 8:28 begins with the words "*We know that all things work together for good ...*" That doesn't mean that you're ready to accept what happened. It doesn't mean that you even understand or agree with that meaning or purpose. However, it is true that is God is always good and He is always in control. The time will come when God will remove all the fog and you'll be able to see His hand in your life. Until then you are on a journey down the painful and sorrowful road of grief.

One day everything will be made right again

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ..." Rev 21:4 At this point in your journey you can't see how that your life could ever be "fixed". It appears impossible that you could feel happiness, safety and peace ever again. Your loved one is gone, your dreams has been destroyed and your life has been turned upside down. It is at this point in your journey that you must realize, "*...With God all things are possible*" Matthew 19:26

Let us walk with you

We've traveled this road before. We've been through the fog. We've struggled through the darkness. Please feel free to contact us and let us walk beside you as you travel down the long, long road ...

..... *the journey of grief.*