

TABLE 1 - A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF GRIEF

1. DEATH AND GRIEF WERE NOT PRESENT AT THE BEGINNING OF CREATION.

- God created life, not death.
- Death entered the world when mankind chose to sin - to rebel against God who is the source of life.

2. GOD GRIEVES WITH US.

- **“Jesus Wept.” John 11:35** Is a profound verse of Scripture. God feels our pain more deeply than we do (just as a loving parent may feel a child’s pain more deeply than they do.)
- Jesus came to take our guilt, our sin, and our grief upon Himself. He is not removed from our suffering – He is in the midst of it for us. He truly understands and truly loves.
- “I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross... In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside His immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our suffering becomes more manageable in light of His.” – John R. W. Stott

3. GRIEF IS PART OF LOVE.

- If God took away our grief, He would be taking away our love. Instead He provides the help and strength we need each step of the way.
- “Every time we make the decision to love someone, we open ourselves to great suffering, because those we most love cause us not only great joy but also great pain. The greatest pain comes from leaving... the pain of the leaving can tear us apart. Still, if we want to avoid the suffering of leaving, we will never experience the joy of loving. And love is stronger than fear, life stronger than death, hope stronger than despair. We have to trust that the risk of loving is always worth taking.” — Henri Nouwen

4. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF TRUE COMFORT.

- Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

- Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Matthew 5:4
- Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4

- The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He saves those whose spirits have been crushed. Psalm 34:18
- He heals the brokenhearted. He bandages their wounds. Psalm 147:3
- He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart. Isaiah 40:11
- Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Matthew 10:29-31
- God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5
- The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10
- My God turns my darkness into light. Psalm 18:28
- But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9
- You have recorded my troubles. You have kept a list of my tears. Aren't they in your records? Psalm 56:8
- He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. All the old ways are gone. Revelation 21:4
- "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:55-56
- The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 1 Corinthians 15:26
- God has given us Himself.
- God has given us His word.
- God has given us a family of faith.
- God is greater than our pain and will one day bring perfect healing.
- God has transformed death into a doorway to victory through Jesus' death and resurrection.

5. GOD CAN REDEEM OUR PAIN AND SUFFERING (GOD CAN USE IT FOR GOOD.)

- Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:16-17
- And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28
- You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good. Genesis 50:20
- Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1:4

Which of these truths brings you help and comfort?

TABLE 2 - BRINGING COMFORT

- **Say little at an early visit.** "I'm sorry," or "I care," is all you may need to say. A squeeze of the hand, a hug, your arm around their shoulders can express your concern for them far better than mere words can.
- **Avoid empty phrases and easy answers.** Don't say "He's better off now," or "I know exactly how you feel," or "It was God's will." These statements usually do more harm than good.
- **Be available.** Text, call, write. Continue to check back with the family in the months following the funeral to let them know you are concerned and want to help.
- **Perform acts of thoughtfulness.** Find out if you are needed to answer the phone, prepare meals, clean the house, care for children, etc. This kind of help lifts burdens and strengthens relationships.
- **Be a good listener.** Talking about the sorrow slowly lessens its sting. Most grieving persons need to talk repeatedly about their loved one's death. Therefore, it is important that you avoid the temptation to steer the conversation away from the deceased to not never mention the deceased name.
- **Don't attempt to tell the bereaved how to feel.** A loss often brings feelings of anger, sadness, fear and guilt. Is she emotional? Accept that. Does he cry? Give him space. Are they angry at God? God can handle their anger. You don't to defend God. He is great enough to understand and accept their anger. Give the bereaved person permission to express whatever feelings they might have. Don't criticize. Don't change the subject. Acknowledge their feelings and try as best you can to understand them.
- **Be patient.** Keep in mind that it takes many months, even years, for someone who has been badly hurt to accept his or her loss and to deal with the changes it has caused. Don't whisk away clothing or hide pictures of the deceased. Don't criticize seemingly morbid behavior. Young people may repeatedly visit the site of the fatal accident. A widow may sleep with her husband's pajamas as a pillow. A young child may wear his dead brother's clothing.
- **Encourage the postponement of any major decisions.** Grief can cloud a person's thinking. Whatever decisions that can wait should wait until after the period of intense mourning.
- **Comfort children in the family.** Do not assume that a seemingly calm child is not sorrowing. If you can, be a friend to whom feelings can be shared and with whom tears can be shed. Assure the child that someone will be there to take care of them and that they were not responsible for their loved one's death. Answer the child's questions in a simple and straight-forward manner. Encourage the family to allow the child to participate in the funeral if the child so desires.
- **Lift the grieving person up in your prayers.** Pray that they will know God's strengthening presence and power. Pray that they would be able to rely on God's love for them.

- **Help the bereaved person attend a support group if they feel it would help them.** Sharing experiences with other grieving persons can be very healing for the mourner. They may need someone to go with them.
- **Whenever the mourner returns to social activity, treat him or her as a normal person.** Avoid pity. Acknowledge their pain but do not dwell on it.
- **Be alert to the mourner's progress through his or her grief.** If they seem unable to resolve their anger or guilt, for example, they may need to see a clergyman or other trained counselor.
- **Above all, be yourself.** Show your natural concern and sorrow in your own way and in your own words. Think of how you would want to be treated if you were in the bereaved person's situation.

What are some things that have been helpful to you during a time of grief?

What are some things that were not helpful?

TABLE 3 - WHAT DO WE NEED DURING A TIME OF GRIEF?

- Time.** Time alone, and time with others you can trust and who will listen when you need to talk. Months and years of time are needed to feel and understand the feelings that go along with loss.
- **Give yourself permission to mourn.** You don't have to put up a brave front. It is all right to feel anxious, angry, or even sad following the death of a love one. If you feel like crying, go ahead and cry. Even strong men cry.
- **Express your feelings out loud.** Do not try to protect your family and others by hiding your feelings inside. Find a trusted friend to talk to, someone who will listen to you without passing judgement. Admit your fears and anxieties. Holding them in will only make matters worse. When our feelings are not expressed they often become circular in nature. Expressing them helps us make sense of them.
- **Learn to rely on God.** He loves you and can provide help that can heal the deepest hurts of your soul. Realize that He is with you and feels your pain with you, yet He is greater even than grief and death. Spend time praying, reading scripture, and being engaged with other believers.
- **Ask for and accept help from others.** Friends and loved ones want to help, but often they are not sure what to do until you tell them what you need. If someone offers to help, give them specific tasks that you don't have the energy to do (cleaning the house, cooking meals, washing clothes.) If you have children, ask a friend to help you support them. You need good friends who will continue to listen.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Everyone grieves at their own pace and in their own way. Some days may be harder than others. Seek out things you enjoy.
- **Postpone major decisions.** Grief can cloud a person's thinking. If possible avoid major decisions during the season that grief is intense.
- **Rest, relaxation, exercise, diversion.** Grieving is exhausting. You will have more energy to handle problems and deal with your stress if you exercise regularly and get adequate rest. You may need extra amounts of things you needed before. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a "cause" to work for to help others. Any of these may give you a lift. Grief is an exhausting process emotionally and physically. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what brings healing and connects you to the people and things you love.
- **Eat right.** Keep yourself healthy by eating a well-balanced diet. Be extremely careful in the use of alcohol or tranquilizers. These do not end the pain; they only mask it temporarily. Abuse of these can lead to withdrawal, loneliness, and even addiction.
- **Get rid of guilt** (or imagined guilt.) God is able to bring forgiveness and wholeness. Do not carry burdens you were not meant to carry. Seek out your pastor or a mature Christian to help your work through accepting and relying on God's love.
- **Security.** Take steps to help yourself feel more secure.

- **Hope.** Take refuge in the promises of God and in His daily sustaining grace. Develop resiliency skills and support networks.
- **Caring.** Try to allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative who is also suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person.
- **Goals.** For a while it will seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps you get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a rule of thumb. At first, don't be surprised if your enjoyment of these things isn't the same. This is normal. As time passes, you may need to work on some longer range goals to give some structure and direction to your life. You may need guidance or counseling to help with this.
- **Small pleasures.** Don't underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures as you are ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food – all are small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself.
- **Permission to Backslide.** Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger. This is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because as humans, we cannot take in all the pain and the meaning of death at once.
- **Join a group of others who are grieving.** Support groups can provide an opportunity to meet with people who are going through a similar experience. Such groups can offer advice, support, understanding, friendship and hope.
- **Be alert to physical problems.** Often headaches, heartburn, and fatigue can be due to the stress of grieving. These problems are usually temporary. But if they persist, make an appointment to see your physician.
- **Get professional help if needed.** Don't allow grief to cripple you for life. There comes a time to stop crying and start living again. Sometimes just a few sessions with a counselor or clergyman will help you to resolve the anger, guilt, and despair that keeps you from enjoying life.
- **Drugs are not helpful.** Even medication used to help people get through periods of shock under a physician's guidance may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. We cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way out is through.

What are somethings that have been helpful to you during a time of grief?

What are somethings that were not helpful?

TABLE 4 - UNDERSTANDING THE TANGLED BALL

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' ground-breaking work on dying, death and grieving changed the way that we talk about the end-of-life issues and about grieving. She was a Swiss-American psychiatrist whose work with terminally ill patients led her to become a pioneer in near-death studies.

You might have heard of the five stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance—a concept that was developed by Kübler-Ross and that has been adopted by many health-care professionals world-wide.

On her death-bed, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross partnered with David Kessler to write her final book: On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss.

She states...

- Grief is a Highly Individual, Nonlinear Process (Your grief is as unique as you are.)
- Grief is a Healing Process (The process of grief transforms the broken, wounded soul, that has suffered an unbelievable loss and helps move it toward healing.)
- Grief can be an Isolating Process (“Healing grief is often an overwhelming and lonely experience. We do not have any real framework to help us recover from the loss of a loved one. We do not think we have the tools to overcome the feelings that devastate us. Our friends do not know what to say or how to help. As a result, during the days following a loss we wonder if we can survive. As time passes, that fear gives way to anger, sadness, isolation, feelings that assault us one after another. We need help. Simply being together, sharing stories about the person that we loved, participating in funeral rituals, helps us feel connected to others while we grieve.”)
- Grief can be a Transformative Process (“You can choose to make the process more meaningful. As two people who have spent our lives dealing with loss and grief, we both visited concentration camps, where there are carvings of butterflies. They are an enduring symbol of transformation, that even in the face of great loss we will continue, someday, somehow. We spent time with Mother Teresa and witnessed the embodiment of human kindness. In our worst we have the power to find some thread of hope. In grief, just like in death, there is a transformation for the living.”)

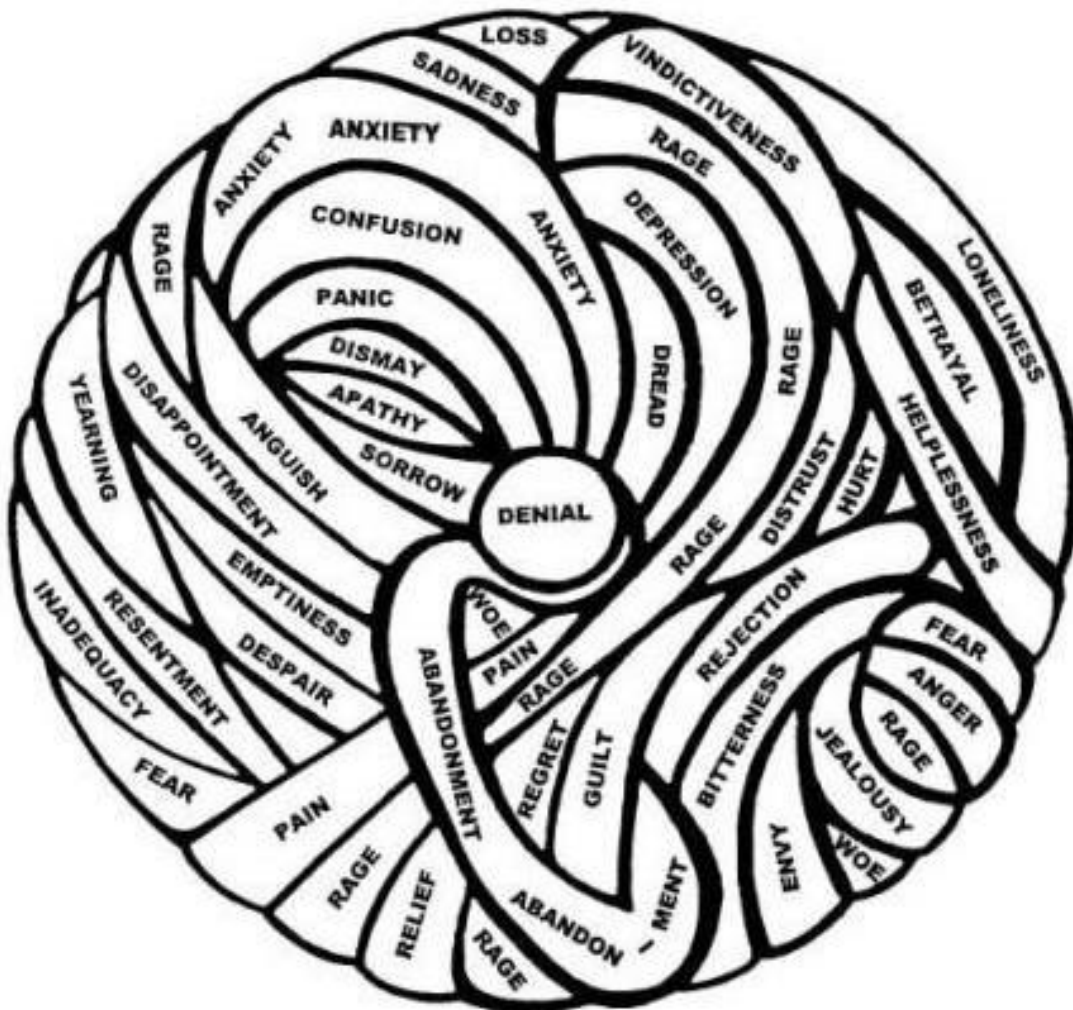
Having a knowledge of the stages of grief is beneficial because...

- It helps us know that normal grief takes many forms - denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. But these are usually chaotic rather than orderly and resemble more of a tangled ball than a logical progression.
- It helps us to realize that different people in the same family may not be experiencing grief in the same way at the same time. We need to be very patient with each other.

How is this understanding of grief helpful to you?

grief

Origin



The Seven Stages of Grief

