

The Mind of Christ pt. 3
The Sting of Death
Grief and Trauma

I. Introduction

II. The Definition

- A. Today as we continue our study of mental health biblically, we will consider grief and trauma. Grief and trauma are not mental illnesses but I've included them in our study because they are closely and intricately connected to mental health issues. Grief is a normal and healthy response to loss but it can become unhealthy. As I said in our discussions about anxiety and depression, grief is not a sin - in it of itself - but it can become something very unhealthy if we are not careful.
- B. "Grief is a normal response to the loss of any significant person, object, or opportunity. It is an experience of deprivation and anxiety that can show itself in one's behavior, emotions, thinking, physiology, interpersonal relationships, and spirituality." (*Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, pg. 466)
1. "Any loss can bring grief, including divorce, retirement from a job, amputation of a limb, the departure of a child to college or a pastor to some other church, moving from a friendly neighborhood, losing a home or other valued possession, the death of [...] a pet, loss of a contest [...], health failures, or even the loss of one's youthful appearance, confidence, or enthusiasm." (Ibid)
 2. For our purposes today we will focus on the most common and most significant cause of grief: the death of a loved one.
 3. "It is a curious thing, the death of a loved one. We all know that our time in this world is limited, and that eventually all of us will end up underneath some sheet, never to wake up. And yet it is always a surprise when it happens to someone we know. It is like walking up the stairs to your bedroom in the dark, and thinking there is one more stair than there is. Your foot falls down, through the air, and there is a sickly moment of dark surprise as you try and readjust the way you thought of things." (Lemony Snicket, *Horseshoe: Bitter Truths You Can't Avoid.*)
- C. Quickly, I'd like to mention trauma as it is related to grief. As we just saw, grief can occur with the loss of anything. In the same way, trauma can result from any loss, difficulty, hardship, or negative experience. We may be tempted to reduce those who are battling post-traumatic stress disorder to combat veterans but that would be incorrect. Any trauma can produce PTSD at some level. Again, the severity and length of grief and trauma experiences should match the type of trauma and loss appropriately. However, it is worth noting that every loss and every trauma will impact us in some way for some duration of time. This is a normal response to loss, suffering, and death.
- D. One of the most influential books written on the subject of grief is psychologist, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' work *On Death and Dying*. Kubler-Ross' research is where the "Five Stages of Grief" were introduced.
1. As Christians, we sometimes fear being overly involved with the sciences such as psychology. In my opinion, Christians should embrace good science as it simply is studying God's universe and trying to understand the order and organization that God built into it. However, our foundation is a biblical worldview not a naturalistic one.
 2. Good science and good theology should go hand in hand.

E. The Five Stages of Grief

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

III. The Demonstration

- A. So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him. (Genesis 37:34 - 35)
- B. Last week we saw the enormous toll that grief had on Job who lost his children, his wealth, and his health.
- C. Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so also did all the men who were with him. They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the Lord and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. (2 Samuel 1:11 - 12)
- D. Then Jeremiah chanted a lament for Josiah. And all the male and female singers speak about Josiah in their lamentations to this day. And they made them an ordinance in Israel, behold they are also written in the Lamentations. (2 Chronicles 35:25)
1. King Josiah is one of my favorite Bible heroes. He became king at the age of 8 and when he was 16 he led the entire nation of Judah and Israel to revival. He is the last good king of Judah. When he dies Jeremiah leads the people in a lament - a mourning song. This mourning went on for generations. Now when a king dies that is especially upsetting. Even more so for a good king. But there is another layer to this national grief: God had promised that Judah's destruction would not happen until after Josiah's death. Now that Josiah is dead, the people know that God's judgment is coming as well.
- E. After John the Baptist's death the Bible says, "His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus. Now when Jesus heard about John, HE withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself;" (Matthew 15:12 - 13a)
- F. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I the believed that Your the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world." (John 11:18 - 27)
- G. When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling

her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?" So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. (John 11:28 - 38)

IV. The Defense

A. Rest in God's Refuge

1. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)
2. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, through the mountains Luke at its swelling pride. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations made an uproar, the kingdom tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of Hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. (Psalm 46:1 - 7)

B. Remember the Resurrection

1. But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. The we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 18)

C. How to Help Someone who is Grieving

V. Conclusion and Application