

The Path of Grief

By
Andy Davis

At A Glance:

- I. Introduction**
- II. Two Ways to Grieve**
- III. The Path Ahead**
- IV. Conclusion**
- V. Questions for Further Thought**

The Path of Grief

I. Introduction

- A. Like a physical wound to the body whose healing requires time and a restoration process, so too does our soul require time and a process of recovery to the injuries of grief. Like the natural reaction of the body—bleeding from a wound—the soul naturally reacts to trauma, tragedy, and grief. What are the reactions of the soul to grief? Specifically, the loss of a child?¹ 60 % of parents experience anger. Half of fathers and 90 % of mothers feel guilt at some point. 75% were irritable. A loss of appetite was experienced by 65 to 70 % of grieving parents. 80 to 90 % have difficulty sleeping while 95-100 % feel a profound and deep sadness.
- B. Another list of specific responses include:² distorted thinking patterns, “crazy” and/or irrational thoughts, fearful thoughts; feelings of despair and hopelessness; out-of-control or numbed emotions; changes in sensory perceptions (sight, taste, smell, and so on); increased irritability; may want to talk a lot or not at all; memory lags and mental “short-circuiting”; inability to concentrate; obsessive focus on the loved one; lose track of time; increase or decrease of appetite and/or sexual desire; difficulty falling or staying asleep; dreams in which the deceased seems to visit the griever; nightmares in which death themes are repeated; and physical illness like the flu, headaches or other maladies.
- C. As we can see, grief has many different effects on us and there is a great variety of reactions. This is normal. Nothing is wrong with you if you experience these things. Gaining knowledge about the grief process can be a source of comfort by itself. Knowing what to expect and that you are not alone in your experiences is therapeutic. Knowing that others have been where you are and have survived is reassuring. However, the most valuable and meaningful comfort will come from the Word of God.
- D. The Bible has much to say about people who are suffering under the circumstances of life.³ God, through His Word affirms the appropriateness of mourning. This condition is described as, “²⁸ My soul weeps because of grief; strengthen me according to Your Word.” (Ps. 119:28). Each one of us is forced into situations in which our “soul weeps because of grief” and the most beneficial solution is to find inner strength from God’s Word. Dr. John Terveen confirms the value and importance of this wonderful truth, “When our daughter Rachel died, we were devastated. Yet, in the following months, while we waded through clouds of grief, God gradually and graciously reached into our broken hearts, especially through his Word in Scripture. Hearing the Lord speak through the Bible, we rediscovered hope.”⁴

¹ These statistics come from a CDC study reported in John McArthur’s book *safe in the arms of God: truth from heaven about the death of a child* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 11-12.

² H. Norman Wright, [*Missing the Child You Love: Finding Hope in the Midst of Death, Disability or Absence*](#) (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2014), 26.

³ F. P. Cotterell, [*“Suffering,”*](#) in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 802–806.

⁴ John Luke Terveen, [*Hope for the Brokenhearted: God’s Voice of Comfort in the Midst of Grief and Loss*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2013). This is a very important resource as it is a rare book that looks directly to the Bible for what it says about grief and it comes from someone who personally walked down the path of grief looking for hope from the Scriptures.

- E. The condition of grief is also described as a time when we refuse to be comforted (Gen. 37:35, Jer. 31:15), a condition that affects the soul and the body (Ps. 31:9), losing strength (Ps. 88:4), being tired (Ps. 77:2), it feels like a weight (Job 6:2), feeling abandoned by God (Ps. 88:13-14), God appearing to hide when you need Him the most (Ps. 10:1), having no appetite (2 Sam. 12:17), growing tired from crying (Ps. 6:6), feeling God’s absence during frequent times of crying (Ps. 42:3), feeling as if darkness surrounds us (Ps. 88:18), etc.⁵ The Bible accurately, specifically, graphically, in a manner true to life, describes the human condition of grief along with suffering and the natural responses to such a condition.
- F. Jesus knows suffering (Isa. 53:3). He knows what it’s like to feel abandoned by God (Mt. 27:46, Mk. 15:34, Ps. 22). He knows what it is to pray deeply and passionately about something really important and to get an obvious and painful “no” answer in response (Mk. 14:36, Lk. 22:42). Even with all this, Jesus has the ability to tell His followers, “you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.” (Jn. 16:20). He also told them, “no one will take your joy away from you.” (Jn. 16:22).⁶ Jesus even used the example of childbirth to explain how grief will be overshadowed by the joy that follows. A mother forgets the pain of childbirth as she moves from the pain to the joy of having a new child.
- G. While Jesus made these promises regarding His own death, this principle applies broadly to all the pains of life as the apostle Paul says, “¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Rm. 8:18). God promised, one day in the future, that He will “wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain;” (Rev. 21:4). As difficult as it is to believe in this moment, restoration is possible and our souls can experience rest again.

II. Two Ways to Grieve

- A. A person can go through the grieving process with or without God. All of us will go through the process of grieving when tragedy strikes, but there are two very different and distinct ways to proceed. The normal and natural way can be found in many counseling, grief, and recovery books. While everyone’s grief journey is unique, there are common patterns in the natural grief process. These common patterns include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.
- B. Although this may be familiar territory a brief explanation is in order. Denial is typically our first response to trauma and tragedy. This is natural. Often, people’s first thoughts are, “This can’t be happening.” Although this is where we start, it can’t be where we stay; we must move past denial in order to grieve in healthy and productive ways. Denial is simply refusing to acknowledge, accept, or deal with a tragedy. A person who is in denial may never want to talk or think about what happened. Some people refuse to deal with what happened far beyond the first normal natural reaction. In other words, they stay in denial thinking that it is safer and less hurtful to do so. They go on with life as if nothing changed, thinking this is the easiest or best

⁵ Grief is emotional suffering brought on by bereavement, mishap, or disaster—it is to feel sorrow or distress. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “[Grief](#),” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 904.

⁶ The reason Christian joy cannot be taken away is because that joy is based on the work of God and the work of God is unchangeable. God’s work of restoration is secure and eternal.

way to deal with a tragedy. It's not. This actually makes things worse. Instead of moving through the process of grief, those who stay in denial get stuck in a state of grief. Denial inevitably prolongs the pain rather than reducing it. Denial attempts to put off having to deal with something painful.

- C. Once people come to grips with the difficult circumstances they are faced with, it frequently leads to anger—most times anger directed at God. Individuals begin asking themselves questions and have thoughts like, “Why did this happen?”, “God, You were supposed to take care of me”, “How can God be good when He allows this much pain and suffering?”, and, “God took something really important away from me.” In many cases, fear and anxiety also come in because their sense of safety and security in life has been taken away. Some will have a crisis of faith at this point wondering how they can continue believing in God after such an event. In their view, it is God's fault. He is the one who caused their pain or at the very least didn't do anything to prevent or stop it. They feel that they are being treated unfairly by God and are upset about it.
- D. After anger has run its course, people begin attempting to make deals with God hoping God will give them what they want.⁷ If God will answer their prayer or meet their requests as they've asked, then they will do something that God wants from them in return. They will stop something they know is wrong or do something they think God wants—perhaps promising to go to church for the first time in years. If God will do X, Y, or Z, then the person approaching God will do X, Y, or Z in return. The goal is to make an agreed upon contract with God. They think if they are good God will do good for them. They expect divine karma. This is the mistake Job's friends made. The problem: God doesn't distribute justice in this life—He does that after this life. This response tries to manipulate and control God; it won't work.
- E. Finally, when all else fails, people come to terms with what is inevitable or what has happened. The situation and its consequences have forced their way into their life despite all their attempts to avoid or change an unpleasant situation. Individuals reluctantly accept the reality of the situation and realize there is nothing they can do to change it. Some people become bitter toward life in general and/or God in particular. They may not want anything to do with God and live with hostility toward Him. The tragedy must be dealt with. It is at this point that people start to honestly deal with the way their life is going to change in light of what happened.
- F. While this is the common and natural human response, we must ask, is there a better way to respond with the help of God? Going through the grief process with God brings us to the important passage of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 which teaches us that grieving with God is different than the grief process of those who don't have access to the resources of Jesus, “¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even

⁷ For some, this can be an attempt to prevent an extremely difficult situation such as the death of someone who is sick. Bargaining will try to convince God to heal the person and not allow them to die. This type of bargaining is not possible in every situation. Some circumstances of grief happen suddenly and are finalized immediately. In these cases, bargaining occurs over relief not preventing a hurtful situation.

so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.¹⁵ 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.” (1 Thess. 4:13-15).

- G. The first way to grieve does so apart from God and, as a consequence, lacks real hope. There is a marked contrast between the first and the second way. The goal of God is for those who love Him to grieve in an entirely different way, “so that you will not grieve as do the rest”. There are two groups of people, both experiencing grief, yet each group handles grief differently. The primary distinguishing mark is, “who have no hope”. One group has hope while the other does not. Those in each group may both claim hope, however, one is only left with wishful thinking. The hope in the first group is blind optimism or wishful thinking and sets its focus on the thought that things will eventually get better. Their “hope” is that one day down the road their pain and sense of loss will diminish and be manageable; which is potentially true. But this is not true deep seated hope; this is simply looking forward to the end of the grieving process. This perspective simply looks forward to the pain going away. This is not the hope God offers.
- H. Those who invite God into the grieving process experience hope that is real; a hope that is based in reality instead of positive thinking. The hope God offers is not trying to convince ourselves everything will be okay; rather, the hope of God trusts that the wounds of this life will actually be healed by God and He will give them strength throughout the grieving process. This is a hope that makes a difference within the grieving process. This hope is based on truth and knowledge, “we do not want you to be uninformed”. This knowledge includes accurate information about what happens to people when they die, “about those who are asleep”. The Bible, using the common language of the day, often refers to death as falling asleep. This was the imagery that was in use at the time and would be familiar to everyone.
- I. Keeping our grief, thinking, and emotions tethered to truth is extremely important as it protects us from depression and total despair. Those without God and without accurate information about death and the afterlife will be at the mercy of their out of control thoughts and feelings during the grieving process and this can lead to very dark places. But the individual who remains attached to truth has a life preserver. They have the ability to take their thoughts captive (2 Cor. 10:5) and not let their emotions run wild (Ps. 42:5, 7, 12, 43:5). They may think to themselves, “I can’t go on” but they will at the same time remember the truth of the matter, “I can make it with God’s help” even when they don’t want to continue with life (2 Cor. 1:8-9). Even when I feel like I don’t want to continue with life, I don’t depend on myself but on the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead. Knowledge and truth make all the difference.
- J. Those who work their way through the grief process with God experience hope in the midst of the pain. This hope is not based on the current situation but on the resources and plan of God, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again”. If we consider the resurrection of Jesus to be a true event of the past, this will change our perspective while we grieve. The resurrection of Jesus changes the afterlife of those who believe in Him, “God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” Those who live for Jesus, in death God will bring them to Jesus. This provides hope in two different ways. First, it is really good to be with Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8). Second, there is hope for a reunion with those who have died. The separation caused by death is not

permanent, “those who are alive and remain...will not precede those who have fallen asleep”. Our relationships with our loved ones will be restored for all eternity.

- K. Even though we share in the sufferings of Jesus, we will also share in His comfort, “⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.” (2 Cor. 1:5). The goal of the grieving process is to mourn with hope by relying on God, “² In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; in the night my hand was stretched out without weariness; My soul refused to be comforted” (Ps. 77:2). When we seek God in our trouble, it still takes time for our soul to be comforted. Our efforts of reaching out to God may not immediately result in comfort. But, if we keep seeking God throughout the grieving process, He will eventually provide that comfort as our hearts begin to heal.
- L. We have a choice to make about how we are going to travel down the pathway of grief. Will we invite God into the process with us or will we try to do our best on our own? This choice will have a large impact on how we grieve and how well we grieve—healthy versus unhealthy, harmful versus helpful, destructive versus constructive.
- M. It will be tempting, even for Christians, to push God away because of the pain and inability to make sense of what happened. We have a tendency to go in the opposite direction than what is actually good for us. While understandable, this is very damaging; fight this urge with everything you have. It is during the most difficult times of our life when we need God the most.⁸ Don’t isolate yourself from Christian friends, prayer, Bible reading, or church attendance. Although church will likely make the pain worse in the moment, attendance is healthy in the long run. The desire to avoid pain and gain healing often find themselves contrary to one another in the grieving process. Isolation for the purpose of processing grief is fine; isolation as a reaction to pain is dangerous. Don’t shut God out, instead invite Him in. While it may feel like worshipping God seems false or at least contrary to the place where your heart seems stuck, God wants us to worship and pray “at all times” (Lk. 18:1); even in our grief (2 Sam. 12:20). Thinking we can only worship when we are happy or joyous is mistaken and expresses too narrow a view of what true worship is. While it may be challenging, where else can we go for the words of life (Jn. 6:68)?

III. The Path Ahead

- A. What does the path ahead look like for someone who invites God into the grieving process? The general pathway looks like this: Frequently, grief intensifies near the three-month mark, on special dates, and at the one-year anniversary of the loss.⁹ The pain and sense of loss may feel as fresh as it did when you lost your loved one at these times. There will be random difficult times interspersed throughout the grieving process. Your good days may consistently outnumber your bad days around a year and a half. Coming out of the grieving process could take a year and a half to two years. If the death is “unnatural”, sudden and unexpected, it may take even longer.¹⁰ Be patient with yourself and your grief. Your life will never be the same again but there will be a journey to a new normal and life will return. We need to be able to

⁸ While we always desperately need God, we sense this need most directly during the difficulties of life.

⁹ Joanne T. Jozefowski, *The Phoenix Phenomenon: Rising from the Ashes of Grief* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1999, 2001), 17.

¹⁰ Norman Wright *experiencing Grief* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2004), 83.

deal with life's losses in the context of God's healing.¹¹ Recovery is not a smooth, straightforward path; it's a forward-backward dance.¹²

- B. What does this general grieving process look like with God? How do our hearts respond to God throughout this journey toward healing?¹³ Instead of remaining in denial, our heart accepts the situations that God determines for our good (Rm. 8:28-30). We don't fight against God and what He brings into our lives. The key idea is to receive the circumstances of life as they really are. It means to be honest about our circumstances and how they are affecting us. There are two aspects of acknowledging our circumstances: the external circumstance and our inner response to that circumstance. This requires us to be honest about what is hurting us and the depth of pain we feel. Doing this is therapeutic and healthy.
- C. An example of this is found in the life of David, "3 My tears have been my food day and night, While *they* say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' 4 These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng *and* lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. 5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And *why* have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence." (Ps. 42:3-5). David is in a state of grief, "My tears have been my food day and night,". David responds to this situation by "I pour out my soul within me." As David is grieving he finds ways to accept and express how his circumstances have affected him.
- D. Notice how David acknowledges both his external situation that is causing his pain, "While *they* say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember". David is being mocked and harassed by his enemies (Ps. 42:9). This leads David to examine his internal state in response to the difficulties he is facing, "I pour out my soul within me". David finds ways to express his internal thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Instead of avoiding the unpleasantness of what is going on around him, David embraces them and works his way through them.
- E. David admits how his emotions have changed in light of his situation, "For I used to go along with the throng *and* lead them in the procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving". David is no longer in a place of joy and thankfulness, instead he is in "despair" and his soul is "disturbed within". Yet even in this condition he still tells himself to, "hope in God" and approaches God, "*For* the help of His presence".
- F. Make a list of all your thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Search within yourself to see if you can discover the source of each one. Brainstorm creative ways in which each appropriate one of these can be expressed in productive ways. This might be done through talking, journaling, writing poetry, writing a letter to the lost loved one, playing music, getting out into nature,

¹¹ Robert Kellemen *God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 2010), Kindle 207. This is a helpful book for those who want to understand the grief process and how our hearts can respond to God in healthy and productive ways throughout the process.

¹² H. Norman Wright, [*Missing the Child You Love: Finding Hope in the Midst of Death, Disability or Absence*](#) (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2014), 27.

¹³ The approach that is being offered here comes from Robert Kellemen *God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 2010).

physical exercise, participating in a hobby etc. Think about how you can begin to move from denial to acknowledgement.

- G. A healthier response in the anger phase of the grieving process is to enter into a lament with God.¹⁴ This is where we pour our heart and our complaints out to God (1 Pet. 5:6-7). This is sometimes referred to as crying out to God. Once our pain is acknowledged, we now take that pain to the throne of God. Casting our concerns on God is done with all honesty. This is a time in which we bring our raw emotions to God and wrestle through them with Him or even against Him at times. It is helpful to vent our lack of understanding, questions, pain, frustration, disappointments, anger, and our other emotions to God. The main issue here is: who is in charge of my life? Am I in charge or is God in charge?
- H. An example of expressing a complaint/lament to God is described this way, “¹ I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD; I make supplication with my voice to the LORD. ² I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him. ³ When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path. In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me. ⁴ Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me; There is no escape for me; No one cares for my soul. ⁵ I cried out to You, O LORD; I said, “You are my refuge, My portion in the land of the living.” (Ps. 142:1-5).
- I. Once again David is dealing with a troubling situation. He cries out to God by expressing himself verbally, “I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD”. During this time David makes requests of God, “I make supplication with my voice to the LORD”. He isn’t always positive either, “I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him.” After wrestling with himself, David now wrestles with God about his complaint, pain, and concerns.
- J. There is a very big difference between sinful and destructive complaining and a godly lament. It is a difference in perspective and attitude. The one thinks God has no right to interfere with their life while the other thinks God is in charge but they don’t like what He’s done in their life. One complains ABOUT God the other complains TO God. One grievance IS God while the other grievance is about something FROM God. One views God as evil, spiteful, cruel, and unkind while the other views God as good, gracious, compassionate, and kind even if they don’t understand how those attributes fit the situation at hand. One draws a person away from God while the other brings them toward God. The key is whether or not we are accusing God of wrongdoing (Job 1:22). If we accuse God of wrongdoing, our complaint is immoral. If we don’t accuse God of wrongdoing, our complaint is okay. We come to God with a sense of abandonment and confusion.¹⁵
- K. In the grief process, it is beneficial to tell God the truth. The truth that has been acknowledged is now brought into the presence of God to be dealt with by Him. Honestly expressing our genuine thoughts and emotions toward God is an important step in the healing process. Here we have honest “conversations” with God about what is happening, “⁸ Trust in Him at all times,

¹⁴ Lament is a spiritual discipline in which a person works through the negative and difficult circumstances of life with God. This is an almost entire forgotten practice in the modern church with its over emphasis on triumphalism. For how to practice lament and an explanation of it’s four parts see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjoYjTcwiWs&t=1100s>.

¹⁵ Robert Kellemen *God’s Healing for Life’s Losses: How to Find Hope When You’re Hurting* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 2010), 53.

O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.” (Ps. 62:8). This happens frequently in the Scriptures. In all this David is seeking “refuge”.

- L. Prayer becomes a central component of lamenting and crying out to God. Talk to God often. Express your emotions as they come up to God. Do this regularly and consistently. Talk to and wrestle with God until you either run out of strength or complaints. Make God your greatest confidant.
- M. Rather than trying to bargain with God, gain His favor through good works, or attempting to manipulate God into doing what we want Him to do; let go of the illusion of control and receive God’s authority over your life. If we try to find safety, security, and peace of mind, by feeling as though we are in charge of our own life we will fail to receive the peace, comfort, and deep trust that comes along with the settled assurance that comes from thinking God is in control and His character is good. The heart issue that must be answered at this point is: who is in charge of my life? Those who desperately try to maintain their false sense of control over their life will see God as an adversary who inappropriately intruded into their life and made a mess of things. On the other hand will be those who release their desire for control and humbly submit to God’s authority over them. A heart responding positively to God waits for God to bring them out of their pain on His timetable, “⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exult you at the proper time,” (1 Pet. 5:6).
- N. A description of this is as follows, “²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God’? ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power. ³⁰ Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, ³¹ Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.” (Isa. 40:27-31). Instead of thinking God is treating them unfairly, “My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God” those whose heart responds humbly before God reminds themselves of the fact that, “His understanding is inscrutable”. God’s wisdom and insight is unsearchable and incomprehensible. Followers of Jesus only get glimpses of the intelligence of God. It is ultimately beyond them. Instead of fighting against God, it is wise to pursue His good resources.
- O. Maintain a connection with God looking for the medicine that will heal and restore your soul is extremely important. This is the source of restoration along with the resources and blessings of God. Replace self-reliance with God-reliance.
- P. Instead of letting themselves travel down the path of depression, this temptation is replaced with strength, comfort, peace, and hope through the resources of God by the one who grieves with God. Those who invite God into the process of grief will remain attached to Him as they continue to pursue Him and seek refuge in Him in order to receive the wonderful benefits of His resources. God is treated as the doctor of their soul. As the grieving person remains faithfully connected to God, their soul heals over time.

- Q. We see the back part of the grieving process with God, “⁵ Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate. ⁶ The LORD preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. ⁷ Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. ⁸ For You have rescued my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling.” (Ps. 116:5-8). Those who walk with God through the grieving process will find that God is “Gracious”, “righteous”, and “compassionate”. He “preserves” those who invite Him into their pain so that their souls can “Return to your rest”. They will know from personal experience that God, “has dealt bountifully” with them. God rescues, “my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling.” This is the end result of allowing God to help throughout the grieving process.
- R. Don’t let go of God. Keep relying on Him. Keep pursuing Him. Make this an unwavering commitment in your grief. Refuse to let your thoughts and emotions move you away from this commitment.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Grief is a process that takes time. A person’s heart will experience ups and downs throughout their journey toward healing and recovery. Our great hope is that God will strengthen us to the point that we can say, “⁷ Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.” (Ps. 116:7). Although this doesn’t happen immediately after our “soul weeps because of grief” (Ps. 119:28); God kindly and graciously takes us along the path of healing and recovery.
- B. The book of Psalms is a very useful and comforting resource in helping us express our grief and hurt to God while at the same time expressing trust and respect toward Him. This is a difficult balancing act that God’s Word assists with. More specifically the Psalms in the category of lament are especially helpful.¹⁶ I encourage you to take advantage of them in order to help you cope with life’s losses. Read, study, and become familiar with the dark night of the soul Psalm: Psalm 88.

V. Questions for Further Thought

- A. Have you or anyone you know had to cope with the death of a loved one? How did you support them? How did you or they cope? What was most helpful?
- B. How did Jesus comfort His disciples when they were grieving the death of a loved one in Jn. 11:11-15, 21-27, 33-44?
- C. What resources does God offer to help those who are belong to Him in their grieving process?
- D. What effects does suffering and grief have on a person’s heart? What about their attitude toward God?
- E. What are healthy practices of grieving displayed by a person who remains firm in their trust in God?

¹⁶ There are 59 Psalms of lament in the book of Psalms. Other helpful books could be Job and Lamentations when it comes to the grieving process.