

## Grief

Today we are in **Week 4** of our series called “**Sound Mind**” where we have been diving into the topic of mental health and attempting to address some of the major struggles we have regarding our mental health. Our theme verse for this series is **2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.** It is because of this incredible promise that we can have the HOPE of VICTORY regarding whatever we may be facing physically, emotionally or spiritually.

As we have reiterated each week, we have 3 main GOALS we hope to accomplish through this series

- **Goal #1 is to help you understand you are not alone!** The mental health issue is a human issue! We all struggle in some way with our mental health!
- **Goal #2 is to help you see that therapy (seeking the help of a mental health professional) is not a sign of spiritual weakness but is actually a step of courage.** Sharing your burden with others who are equipped to help you is a blessing God has given us. Sometimes we need help sorting through and working on things that have us bound up emotionally.
- **Goal #3 is to help you see Jesus is the answer for whatever your struggle may be!** Jesus wants to heal you, comfort you, and give you victory over whatever is coming against your life.

Today, we are going to deal with the issue of **GRIEF.** (Let's **PRAY** as we prepare for God's word)

[\(First Half of David's testimony video\)](#)

**Grief is the experience of having to deal with or cope with loss in our lives.** Most of us tend to think of grief as the painful emotional experience we endure following the death of a loved one. But we need to understand that grief can also accompany any event or situation that disrupts or challenges our sense of normalcy or our sense of self. This includes the loss of connections or relationships with people or events that tend to define our lives. Grief can be caused by the loss of a job, a debilitating injury that hinders us from doing something we love to do, the end of a relationship that you hold dear, or a close friend or family member who is moving away. Anything that brings a disruption to what you consider to be normal in your life.

Our ability to process and deal with loss in our lives is crucial to our mental health. If the effects of the loss are not dealt with it can lead to other issues such as (addiction, depression and anxiety). Dealing with our grief is not just physical and emotional. It is also deeply spiritual! You see, what affects us physically and emotionally also affects us spiritually and vice versa. They are all connected, not separate This really is an important theme throughout this series and is why we cannot afford to ignore or gloss over grief. Grief is not a sign of weakness or of a lack of faith as some tend to believe. It is simply the brokenheartedness we feel whenever we

experience loss in life. Dealing with grief is also a process that takes time and we cannot rush through it. **Marion Balster** says this about grief, *"Grief is like peeling an onion... It comes off one layer at a time, and you cry a lot."* We cannot rush the process and we never really get over our loss as much as we learn to live with it over time.

As we talk about the topic of GRIEF this morning I think it would be very helpful for us to look at God's word and a story defining how King David processed a moment in his life where he experienced some intense grief. If you have your Bible, turn with me to **2 Samuel 12** as we uncover some foundational principles that I believe can be very helpful in assisting us with our own grief process.

In order to set the context for David's situation here in Ch. 12 we need to understand the events leading up to this passage. After David had an affair with Bathsheba she conceived a child. To try and cover up his indiscretion David tries to get Uriah (Bathsheba's husband) to come home from the battlefield and sleep with his wife. When Uriah refuses to do so because he didn't think it was right for him to be comforted by his wife while his fellow soldiers were away from home and engaged in battle. David conspires to have Uriah sent to the front lines of the battle in hopes that he would be killed and David's reputation could be spared. Upon Uriah's death David takes Bathsheba to be his wife and feels like he has covered his tracks regarding the affair. However, God knows what he has done and He reveals this to Nathan the prophet who confronts David regarding his sin.

**2 Samuel 12:13-14 (NIV) 13** Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. **14** But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die."

This may seem harsh but we need to be reminded here that David is God's anointed king whom God had selected to lead His chosen people Israel. He is leading God's people and as a result he should be representing the God he serves. What does it say about God and His holiness to the other nations if God's king is behaving this way and God does nothing about it? Thankfully, God doesn't always give us what we deserve! He is gracious and He is merciful and even in this situation God is showing mercy to David but God is holy and there has to be a consequence for David's sin.

But it kind of makes an important point that we all need to be reminded of when it comes to the issue of grief and loss. We all will encounter grief and loss in life because our world is broken by sin.

Death and loss are the by-products of a broken world which we have inherited from ADAM and EVE. It is part of life on this earth! When we consider death we are all headed that way. It has no respecter of person. Does not matter what your social status is, how strong and powerful you are, we all have an appointment with it. Kings of the earth, cartel leaders who think they are untouchable, great athletes, the rich and wealthy, Hollywood elites. Death will come for us all. What makes it so difficult to process is we were never meant to experience it. It was not what

God wanted for us. In fact, life and our desire to live forever is part of our DNA and was the original intent God had for life. The Bible tells us that eternity has been placed in our hearts (**Ecclesiastes 3:11** He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.) We were made for eternal purposes. As a result of that, death and loss seem so out of place and are really hard for us to process and accept. Death for a soul that was designed to live forever does not seem natural and is why we experience such grief and loss when we have to face it.

**2 Samuel 12:15 (NIV)** 15 After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. Death in general is the consequence of SIN (humankind's rebellion against God)!! Sometimes it is directly related to our actions or it is the result of the actions of others, but not in every case is death a consequence as it is in this instance. The fact that we even have to deal with death at all is the consequence of mankind's decision to attempt to live our way and not God's way. Paul reiterates this reality in Romans. **Romans 3:23 (NIV)** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **Romans 6:23 (NIV)** For the wages of sin is death,..... But thankfully that isn't the end of the story!! **Romans 6:23 (NIV)** also goes on to say..... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. And because of this we have HOPE!

**2 Samuel 12:16-17 (NIV)** 16 David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. 17 The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them. This is what grieving looks like! David loved the child and the thought of life without his son broke his heart. He was mourning the loss of many things! Mourning the loss of the opportunity to see his child grow up and become a man! He grieved over the experiences he would never get to have with his son. David experienced all the feelings and raw emotions associated with a life being taken away from one who should be living and experiencing the joys of life. Add to David's grief that this is his child and if anything is normal about life on earth, he should die before his son does. It didn't seem fair that this little child should be robbed of life at such a young age. (btw, this has to be a parent's worst fear!) David grieved over the reality that death does not respect one's age. If that were not enough, in this particular case David is also dealing with grief associated with the fact that he is reaping the consequence of his own actions. Because he was responsible for ending the life of Uriah (Bathsheba's husband) he is now going to reap what he has sown. (This is not always the case for those of us who have lost loved ones. We need to understand that this is a special situation unique to David as the anointed king of Israel and is the result of special circumstances God is using to deal with David in this particular moment. It does not mean that if you have experienced loss that God is somehow bringing you grief as a consequence of your own sin. Nor is it to be prescriptive of every instance when someone loses a loved one or child in death. So please don't read that into your life situation. Here is what I want you to see, David's grief is intense and overwhelming! But the important thing we need to take from this is that **he GRIEVED**. This, while it may appear difficult to watch or witness or even read about, is absolutely necessary for David to do!

**2 Samuel 12:18-21 (NIV)18** On the seventh day the child died. David's attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate."

**19** David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked.

"Yes," they replied, "he is dead."

**20** Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

**21** His attendants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? Somewhat odd behavior for someone so distraught when the child was alive. **21** His attendants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!" Here is the thing about grief. Grief is like a fingerprint. No two people are alike. Just like everyone has a different fingerprint, **everyone grieves loss differently!** For David, in this particular case, he started grieving when he found out that his son was sick. He also knew, based on what Nathan the prophet had told him, that his son was going to die. In this scenario David grieved intensely for seven days. Which leads us to another important point regarding grief, **there is no standard time frame for our grief.** It varies from person to person and from situation to situation. Just like we all grieve differently, there are no two situations that may be causing our grief that are the same. There is no standard for how long it will take or for what your grieving should look like. You grieve for however long it takes and you grieve in the way that feels appropriate to you, but whatever you do, **it is important that you grieve!** Another important element that is vital to processing your grief that David shows us is that when you do grieve **take your grief to the LORD!** Verse 16 says, **David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground.** Listen to David's response in verse 22 when the elders ask him, "Why are you acting this way? You see, the elders were perplexed at David's grief process. He mourned while the child was alive and then seems ready to get back to life as normal after the child is dead. On the surface this seems backwards. Listen to David's response.

**2 Samuel 12:22 (NIV)22** He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' **23** But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." David sought the Lord in his grief and because he did he found comfort in the promises of God even though the child was not healed as David had hoped. What promises could David have received that would bring him such peace when David's grieving and prayers for the child were not answered.

**Promise #1 - If we take our grief before the Lord, He will comfort us!**

Jesus gives us this promise! **Matthew 5:4 (NIV)** Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Reality is this, if you and I never grieve how can we find comfort. And if you and I never bring our grief to the Lord how can we expect Him to bring us the comfort we need. Mourning a loss is a good thing. It isn't pleasant and we would rather not mourn if given the option. But when we live in a broken world we can expect that there will be seasons of grief.

There will be tough seasons in all of our lives. but one thing is for certain, we can hope in the Lord and He will not let us down! No one understood this promise better than David. And it was the only thing that gave him the strength he needed to get off the floor, wash his face, worship the Lord and replenish his physical strength with some food.

**Psalm 31:23-24 (NIV)** **23** Love the LORD, all his faithful people! The LORD preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full. **24** Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.

**Promise #2 - Our lives extend way beyond this life and only when we are in Christ do we find our eternal salvation and true victory over death and loss!**

David trusted in an eternal promise. He knew that what God was doing even in His loss was bringing about something eternal! Listen to the words David in this psalm he wrote.

**Psalm 18:50 (NIV)** He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing love to his anointed, to David and to his descendants forever. God is working out an eternal kingdom brought about by Jesus the Messiah who would provide salvation for all who would trust in Him. David's descendants would be responsible for that Messiah coming to earth through his family line,

God brings us into this world but this world is not all that there is for us to experience! God's plans are rendered in eternity because He Himself is eternal. This is what we get a glimpse of when Jesus brings Lazarus back to life in John 11.

**John 11:21-26 (NIV)** **21** "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." **23** Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." **24** Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." **25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; **26** and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

God's plan to redeem our lives from death and what appears as a hopeless outcome in a sin cursed world is to provide us salvation and victory over death through Jesus who is not only one who resurrects but who is in and of Himself THE resurrection and THE life!!!

David knew that life on this earth eventually comes to an end for all of us. Some sooner and others later. Once it does there is no coming back. This is part of what grieves us! But when our hope is in Christ, we can find comfort. You see, death seems like a curse and what seems so final is actually a grace gift and a doorway to something better. For those who do not know the Lord, death is a curse but through Christ that curse becomes a door to life and the greatest

blessing of an eternity with him. If death never comes for us that would mean we would live forever under the groanings of sin and its sufferings. We would live forever in this life with all of its pain and difficulties forever without finding relief. But if we know Jesus and His rich salvation we have access to an eternal life without sin's hindrances. You see, our loved one who dies in Christ is not gone forever! And while they cannot return to us, we WILL one day have an opportunity to go to where they are if we are in CHRIST. A place where there is no more sorrow, suffering or death This is the hope that Jesus is speaking of in John 11 and this the hope being described by John in **Revelation 21:1-4 (NIV)** Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. **2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **4** 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

I want you to notice what happens when we allow God to comfort us in our grief. **2 Samuel 12:24 (NIV) 24** Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba,.....

**When we allow God to comfort us, we can be used to help comfort others!!**

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV) 3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, **4** who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

David would have been no help to his grieving wife if he didn't grieve and find comfort himself. Who knows what would have happened if he doesn't grieve? He could have spiraled into a deep dark depression that would have debilitated his leadership as king. Making him a checked out husband leading to a broken relationship with Bathsheba thus forfeiting his opportunity to be used by God to bring forth another son who eventually through whom the Messiah Jesus would come.

**2 Samuel 12:24 (NIV)24** Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him;

Part of God's comfort to both David and Bathsheeba was granting them another son. This is both a comfort and a sign of God's grace in their lives. Their relationship didn't exactly start on the best of terms. But God is a restorer and He works in all of our lives differently extending us grace and restoring what sin robs from us! God is a God of LIFE, not DEATH and LOSS and as far as God is concerned death and loss never have the final say. This was true with David regarding the loss of his son, this was true for Mary and Martha regarding the loss of their brother Lazarus;

**John 11:38-44 (NIV) 38** Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. **39** "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha,

the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” **40** Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” **41** So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. **42** I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” **43** When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” **44** The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

And this is true for us as well!!

(Second Half of David's testimony video)

As we close, maybe you are here today and you are grieving the loss of something or someone. Or maybe you know someone who is and you are not sure how to pray for them or even help them as their friend or loved one. Let me give you some final thoughts regarding grief for you to remember and pray through:

- 1) **Grief is not an ENEMY to be avoided but is a PROCESS to be followed.** It isn't a sign of weakness or a lack of faith. It is because you love and you have lost something dear. You can't find comfort if you do not first grieve.
- 2) **There is no RIGHT WAY to GRIEVE.** Everyone will grieve differently just make sure you allow yourself and others to do so in a way that best suits them..
- 3) **TAKE as long as it takes.** Again everyone is different and the circumstances surrounding the loss can also differ. Don't apply pressure to yourself by making a certain timeline or deadline for your grieving process.
- 4) **Think of Grief in terms of WAVES** (Sometimes the pain is intense, other times it is less intense) Over time the waves will come less often and when they come they will not be so overwhelming. **Don't think of grief as something to get over, but rather think of it as something you are learning how to cope with.**
- 5) When it comes to grief understand that there are **5 stages people go through:**

Stage 1: **Denial/Numbness/Shock** (should not be confused with not caring)

Stage 2: **Bargaining** (persistent thoughts regarding what you could have done to prevent the loss)

Stage 3: **Depression** (the pain of the loss really starts to set in)

Stage 4: **Anger** (This stage is common. It usually happens when we feel helpless and powerless. Anger can stem from a feeling of abandonment because of a death or loss. It can be directed in a lot of directions. Ourselves, the person who is gone, God and so on)

Stage 5: **Acceptance** (In time, we can come to terms with all the emotions and feelings we experienced when the death or loss happened. We are not over grief we are just learning how to better cope with the emotions associated with our loss)

- 6) **Process your emotions in healthy ways:** (Don't isolate yourself!! How many times have we said that over the last few weeks?)
- Talk to others (Friends/family/counselor/pastor)
  - Find a support group with those who share your particular experience (Grief share, special groups dealing with specific issues - loss of a child, loss through suicide, loss through violence, divorce etc.)
  - Memorialize - we need more than one funeral (Creative ways to remember and celebrate the life of the person you have lost, getting together at special times or seasons / celebrating birthdays, etc.)
  - Talking with God
  - Journaling your thoughts (Here are a few prompts to help you get started)

*"Things people say that upset me the most"*

*"Things I want to ask God"*

*"Things I miss most about my loved one"*

*"Things I wonder about the most"*

*"Things that I am most angry about and why?"*

Grief is not a mountain to be climbed, with the strong reaching the summit long before the weak. Grief is not an athletic competition with stopwatches timing our progress.

Grief is simply a walk through LOSS and PAIN. There is no competition and there are no time trials. Grief is peeling the onion in your own unique way until the day comes when you are ready to reconstruct your life and live again. So be FREE! Free to take the time you need! Free to go at your own pace. Be free to laugh again, love again and live again! Be free to change traditions if necessary, be free to question and to cry. Be free to allow God to heal and minister to your broken heart! Here is what God wants for you and for me:

**Psalm 30:8-12 (NIV)** **8** To you, LORD, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy: **9** "What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness? **10** Hear, LORD, and be merciful to me; LORD, be my help." **11** You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, **12** that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. LORD my God, I will praise you forever.

### **Invitation:**

Ultimately Davids hope for his dying son rested in God one day sending His son, who dies, so that none of our children have to. So that through him we may all have eternal life. Christ was grieved so that we could walk through it. Christ walked through it with us, and for us.