

“King Size Grief!”

I. INTRO:

- A. Scottish pastor *Andrew Bonar*, “Let us be as watchful after the **victory** as before the **battle**.”
1. It’s possible to win the **battle** but lose the **victory**, which is what happened to David after Joab defeated Absalom & his army.
 2. We are going to deal this morning with **King Size Grief!**

II. MAKING WOUNDS! (1-8)

- A. **Grief To Deep To Bear!** (1-4)
- B. Israel’s troops learned that David was grieving deeply over the death of his son, *their pride in victory turned into shame*. :(
1. After all, the troops had saved the lives of David & his family.
- C. (3) *The people stole back* (lit. *went by stealth*) back to their homes, *as if* they had been humiliated by defeat.
1. They had risked their lives for the **king** & **country**, & were now treated like criminals!
 2. The king turned a **military victory** into an **emotional defeat**.
 - a) Remember Absalom was *a liar, a murderer, a traitor, & a rebel* against his dad.
- D. **Faithful Are The Wounds Of A Friend!** (5-8)
- E. Joab sternly rebukes David, claiming that he seems to *love those who hate him* and *hate those who love him!*
1. He warns David that his troops will desert him unless he congratulates them for winning the battle.
- F. Joab delivered a very *cutting speech* that jolted the king back to reality. **He had to hurt David to help him.**
1. **Faithful are the wounds of a friend.** Prov.27:6
- G. (8) David’s sorrow over his dead son *almost* cost him the kingdom.
1. It is right to **mourn**, but not to the point that we **lose touch with reality**.
- H. **David the father** forgot that he was also **David the king** & that he still had his crown **because** his brave soldiers put the good of the nation ahead of their own personal interests.
1. **Which is exactly what David should have done.**

2. **Note:** the 1 thing that's *missing* in the entire Absalom episode is David's **seeking the mind of the Lord** as he made decisions.
- I. David's problem **wasn't** that he grieved over his son, for **grief** is a very human response & **tears** are a part of the healing.
 1. His problem **was** that he grieved **excessively** & wouldn't permit himself to be comforted.
 2. His response **was abnormal**.
 3. He neglected **himself & his responsibilities** & had to be soundly rebuked by Joab before he would take steps to return to Jerusalem & save the kingdom.
- J. The Lord **can** heal a broken heart, **if** we **give** all the pieces to Him & **obey** Him by faith.
- K. It was time for the whole nation to affirm loyalty to God's chosen king.
 1. David declared amnesty...except in some cases.

III. **HEALING WOUNDS! (9-15)**

- A. **The people argue over whether David should return!** (9-10)
- B. The king did right to await the nation's recall.
 1. This was given by **Israel**, but his own tribe of **Judah** did not speak.
 2. So, David made a direct appeal to the men of Judah.
- C. **David Speaks!** (11-15)
- D. (13) **Amasa** - **who** was David's original commander; **who** had went with Absalom; **who** is now back; **who** is now Joab's designated replacement as chief commander.
 1. This also meant that David was **pardoning all** the officials who had followed Absalom.
- E. **Why replace Joab?** - David learned that it was Joab who had slain Absalom in **disobedience** to the orders the king had given. (1 Kings 2:5)
- F. (14) When David was assured of **being accepted by both** the **Israelites** & the **Judahites**, he led his group to cross the Jordan River & return to Jerusalem.
- G. **Why then are you last to being back the King?**

IV. **THE GRIEF PROCESS!**¹ Taken from Wiersbe & Wiersbe "Comforting The Bereaved" pg.21-27

- A. Just as it takes time for a **broken bone** to heal, **so** it takes time for a **broken heart** to heal.
 1. And the pain can be just as great, or greater!

¹ Taken from Wiersbe & Wiersbe, "Comforting The Bereaved". Pg.21-27

- B. Each year in the U.S. some **2 million people die**. Thus, a lot of people grieving every year.
1. And the loss of that loved one is very much like the **loss of a limb**.
 2. It is an **emotional amputation**, & it affects you deeply.
- C. **Time** by itself *does not heal* a broken heart. It all depends on what people do with **Time**.
- D. **Our goal**: Is not to shelter people from the pains of bereavement, nor to help them escape. **Rather**, our task is to help them draw upon the **divine resources** that God provides, so that they accept their situation **maturely**, use it **creatively**, & finally emerge at the end of the valley **better people** than when they went into the valley. Warren Wiersbe
1. Psychologists & counselors who have studied ***grief reaction*** tell us that there are certain stages to be expected in the experience of the bereaved person.
 2. **Note**: *We must not assume that every person will go through all of these 8 stages, or that the stages will necessarily be in this order!*

E. GRIEF STAGES!

1. **SHOCK** - is an **emotional numbness** when we hear that a loved one has died.
 - a) This is a normal response triggered by the **nervous system** of the body.
 - b) It's God's way of **anesthetizing** the person so that he/she might be able to face the reality of death & handle the difficulties to come.
 - c) Of course if this stage lasts **too long**, it is abnormal & will create problems (like wDavids case)
2. **STRONG EMOTION** - God made us to weep, & tears are always in order when there is a broken heart.
 - a) Jesus gave dignity to our grief & freedom to our emotions!
 - (1) What a beautiful tribute that **tears** are to the deceased, telling them they were **loved & will be missed!**
 - (2) Jesus, knows what it's like to lose someone you love. **He knows how we feel!**
 - b) The foolish counsel, "*Now don't cry!*" is based on both **bad psychology & bad theology**.
 - (1) **Jesus wept**, & so did **the saints of God** named in the Scriptures:
 - (a) Gen.23:2 **So Sarah** died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and **Abraham** came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.
 - (b) Gen.50:1 **Then Joseph** fell on his father's face(**Jacob/Israel**) and wept over him, and kissed him.
 - (c) 2 Sam.18:33 **Read** (David)
 - (d) Acts 8:2 **And** devout men carried **Stephen** to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

- c) *We are not told that it is **wrong** to sorrow. We are told that our sorrow should **not be hopeless**, like the sorrow of the world.*
3. **DEPRESSION** - is sometimes accompanied by a **smothering feeling of loneliness**.
- a) The loss of a loved one forces a person to **reorganize** their whole life (esp if a mate or parent)
- (1) **Relationships** are broken, & feelings of **security** are often gone.
- b) The *dedicated Christian* **must not think** that he is above these normal expressions of grief. **Sometimes** there are even symptoms of *physical* problems.
4. **FEAR** - The bereaved person finds it **difficult to think**, to **concentrate**, & then becomes **afraid & panicky**.
- a) Life seems to be falling apart from both the **outside & the inside**.
- b) Sometimes well-meaning people *misunderstand* what the grief-stricken person is **saying or doing**, & this only leads to **more fear & disorientation**.
5. **GUILT** - A sorrowing person often has the tendency to **blame himself or herself** for the death of the loved one.
- a) This is especially true when its death by suicide.
- b) There is also the tendency to **idealize** the deceased person & see only the **good points**. *This is in turn*, **exaggerates** the **bad points** of the one grieving.
- (1) **"If only we had gone to another doctor."** **"If only I would have..."** **"If only"**.
- c) Often heavy guilt leads the bereaved to spend a **great deal of money** on an *elaborate funeral or grave marker*, to "atone" for past sins against the deceased.
- (1) **I praise God for funeral homes like *England Family Mortuary* in Temecula, who don't take advantage of folks in this situation.**
6. **ANGER** - Along with *blaming themselves* the sorrowing person will also **blame others, including the deceased**.
- a) **"Why did he have to leave me & the children now?"**
- b) They start to remember **old resentments & negative experiences**, & these become confusing part of their hurt feelings.
- c) **Sometimes this leads to **blaming God** & even saying all kinds of *blasphemous things*.**
7. **APATHY** - It seems strange that **hostility** can be replaced by **apathy**, **but** this is often the case.
- a) **"Nobody understands how I feel, thus there's no sense in **saying or doing** anything."**
"Life is not worth living."

b) The bereaved person finds it painful to relate to real life & wants to withdraw into his or her shell & be left alone.

(1) *Certainly* it is normal for a hurting person to want to be left alone; but if this withdrawal continues *too long*, it becomes dangerous. (again like David)

8. **ADJUSTMENT** - Slowly the person learns to **accept** the loss, **rearrange** his or her life, & **come to grips** with reality.

a) This **does not mean** the total absence of grief, loneliness, or bewilderment; but it **does mean** that the bereaved person **recognizes** what is happening & is able to **cope** with it.

b) **People die, but relationships** never die. **And** each must struggle to **adjust** to the *new relationship* with the one who has passed away.

c) **Here are some signs this adjustment is taking place:** The bereaved person can **openly & easily** talk about the dead loved one, **and**, in time, even **laugh** about things that happened in the past. The person no longer **gives vent** to hostility but, instead, seeks for ways to **minister** to others when *they* suffer loss.

F. We must not assume that every person will go through **all** of these 8 stages, or that the stages will necessarily be in this **order!** But in order for us to comfort others...

1. We must...**learn to recognize** these symptoms & accept them.

2. We must...realize that **no amount of preaching** will **eliminate** hostility & guilt.

3. We must...remember the sorrowing person must **learn to face** these feelings **personally** & deal with them in his or her **own time**.

4. We must...learn to listen with our **heart** & pay attention to **feelings**, not to words.

5. We must...not assume the posture of **Job's comforters** & try to argue people into a right, relationship w/God & each other.

a) It's **unfortunate** that Job's 3 friends listened to Job's words & not his **feelings**.

b) As *Samuel Johnson* said, "Grief has its **time**. While grief is **fresh**, every attempt to *divert* only irritates. You must wait till grief be **digested**."

(1) That's why *post-funeral ministry* is so important. [They say, most people **bottom out 6-8 weeks after the funeral**]

G. **Again**, these stages are only *guidelines*; do not force them into every grief situation.

1. You are there to **comfort**, not to **analyze & explain**.

2. But hopefully these stages will help you **understand & assess** the situation better & **not be too shocked** at what you see or hear!

3. **Emotions expressed become medicines that heal;**
Emotions repressed become poisons that kill.

4. **Blessed is** that congregation that who knows how to keep their **mouth shut, ears open, heart soft, & mind sharp** to the *feelings expressed* by the words spoken.

H. Here are some **Evidences** that the person is *coming to grips with reality* & drawing upon the *resources available* through Jesus Christ:

1. They are able to accept the fact of the death of the loved one.
2. The memories of the deceased gradually become **positive & creative** rather than **negative & destructive**.
3. Another good sign is the person's ability to **understand the past & plan for the future**.
4. The ability to **laugh** is another good sign, **for** a sense of humor usually indicates a sense of perspective.
5. When the bereaved person **stops condemning** himself or herself.

I. One grieving father said, “**You never get over it, but you do get through it.**”

J. **Our task as Christians?** We are to be *comforters* to help people face grief *honestly & courageously* & help them to use their painful experience of sorrow as a means of *growth*.

1. Praise God, **we are not left to our own human resources**. We have **divine resources** to share with others, because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.
2. **Can God heal the brokenhearted?** If all the pieces are given to Him!
 - a) In 1858 Scottish missionary **John G. Paton** and his wife sailed for Vanuatu. 3 months after arriving on the island of **Tanna**, his wife died. One week later his infant son also died. Paton was plunged into sorrow. Feeling terribly alone, and surrounded by savage people who showed him no sympathy, he wrote, “Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me. As for all other, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows....*But for Jesus, and His fellowship, I would have gone mad and died.*”