

Sunday

Week 10. Freedom From Grief

Grief is a universal emotion. Everyone grieves, because, everything passes. So, you might have a fresh loss or a loss long buried or there's a loss smoldering on the back burner. There's lots of mystery about loss and death because our way of thinking – so analytical and rational – can't take it in.

Thus, you must make some meaning out of your losses or the thoughts attached to them will keep reverberating around in your head, driving you half crazy. So, to keep out devastating thoughts that are as urgent as is the need of a cold drink in a blazing sun, we're on the path right now to discover not only the meaning of grief, but how to turn around the devastation it can cause.

"God . . . is not a transcendent being living in a distant heaven whence from time to time he intervenes in the affairs of the earth. He is an ever-present spirit guiding all that happens to a wise and holy end."

David Hume

Your way of grieving is unique to you. Everyone has a different style, but, there's a common emotional force that erupts with the loss of a father, a mother, a child, a spouse, a lover, or even a close friend. This force, when unconstrained, has the power to wipe out your life as you have it structured.

In the Overweight State we often sense the effects of sadness when persons are faced with the loss or threatened loss of a primary relationship, through separation, divorce, or emotional distancing within an intact household. And, sometimes this burden is added on to the impending loss of a parent through sickness.

Time after time we have seen this combination of circumstances wreck the best efforts of well-intentional persons to get their eating patterns under control, because its just too much to cope with.

As well, there's another often seen factor that is related to the grieving process, one that keeps chipping away at your peace of mind – unredeemed grief from your earlier years. In our work we often see persons who live with unfinished grief reverberating in every cell for years, over having never mourned the death of a parent or a child who died years ago.

This is a good place to consider the nuances of terms that are related to grief and grieving. Consider the difference between grief and sorrow. We usually think of sorrow as pertaining to the emotional state we get when somebody

neglects us or betrays us or abandons us or abuses us. Of course grief, the stronger word, can apply equally well to those circumstances – it depends on how deeply you feel the emotion.

There are other words for grief – sadness, heartache, misery, woe, melancholy, despondency, or, as described by Stephen Vincent Benet – “An iron chain.”

There are, as well, words other than “grieve” that depict the process – mourn, lament, ache, bewail, bemoan, eat one’s heart out, weep, cry, tears.

One of the reasons grief causes so much long-lasting emotional turmoil is the way our friends try to advise us when we’re grieving. They think that to grieve too long will cause us to become depressed. So, they say such things as: “You need to get over this and get on with your life.” “Don’t let your feelings get the best of you.” “Don’t fall apart.” “Be strong.” “It’s not healthy to cry.”

Such comments are counter productive. What you need is a friend who will be willing and able to recognize and tolerate the pain you’re in, to be present with you, to say nothing, to just be there.

Thus, your only reasonable recourse is to surrender your grief to God. There is a danger to your emotional well-being when you choose to do otherwise, when you choose to suppress grief or to unconsciously avoid it or deny it. It has the potential for disrupting the emotional balance needed for good health.

So, there’s unredemptive grief – grief that’s not surrendered.
Then, there’s redeemed grief – grief surrendered to God.

Consider Job who lost everything. “The Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends.” (Job 12:10)

The peace, the quiet, the acceptance – these come only when you leave yourself completely alone in Jesus’ hands and then begin to pour your life out in the priestly work of Intentional Compassion, for the needs of others.

Jesus is not just beginning to save you from your state of sadness. He has already saved you and me completely. That’s Redemption. It’s a done deal. When you surrender your grief as did Job, through praying for his friends – you enter the ministry of the interior.

So, start praying right now that the Atonement of Jesus will be fully understood in the lives of others as it has been in yours. Pray for your friends right now and pray for those you’re going to come in contact with in the future – right now.

Monday

Week 10 – Day 1

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our families

Evening Prayer

**Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit
The Holy Spirit As The Source of Grace**

Salvation is a gift from God that is given once and lasts for eternity. Grace comes day by day. So, yesterdays grace won't do for a day when your heart is filled with grief. Grace is the overflowing favor of God and you can draw on it in the moment of your need. When you do this, when you surrender your grief through drawing on the grace of God, you are showing yourself and others that you are a miracle of God.

Thus, you fill your mind with the thought that God is there. This concept of divine control will be formed so powerfully in your mind that you will know – God is my Father. He loves me. I will never think of anything He might forget – so why should I give in to grief?

Consider this. You can choose to continue to suffer, of course. But, to choose to suffer is not a normal or reasonable thing. But, choosing God's will – even if it means that you might suffer – is different, entirely.

True surrender is not simply surrender of your external life. It is surrender of your will.

Grief causes pain, emotional pain. Jesus says, "Come to me . . . And I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) Grief will cause you to feel uncertainty. Jesus says, "Come to me."

Remember, the Christian life is a life of spiritual courage and determination lived out in our flesh. So, don't give in to grief. Surrender! Then let your grief take the course God dictates.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Tuesday

Week 10 – Day 2

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our work communities

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Gratitude

“Thank you” seems like such an impossible prayer when your heart is shattered and broken. Yet, now is a good time to remember what you are thankful for. Think of how grateful you are for those who are still alive, the friends and family who help hold you up at this time.

Let’s endorse British writer G.K. Chesterton’s idea of “Taking things with gratitude and not taking things for granted.”

Think of life itself – your life. Are you grateful for it? Sometimes the pain of grief causes pain of such force that to feel gratitude seems impossible. Even so, let your mind return to a memory of a good time. Now, repeat out loud – “A good time is a taste of God.” Replay the moment over and over. Repeat the affirmation: “A good time is a taste of God.”

Be grateful for help. Grieving is not something to do alone. Consider one purpose of grief – to teach us that we are not alone – that we are interconnected and that in our interconnectedness lies our hope and our solace. Friends, family, and spouse can pitch in – within the constraints of your need for both help and solace.

So, practice the deliberate and conscious habit of finding somebody every day to whom you can honestly say, “Thank you” – somebody who least expects it from you.

Say a prayer of thanks to God for sending you the Holy Spirit.

Wrapping Up

It’s time.

Wednesday

Week 10 – Day 3

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our living communities

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Action

Grief, like despair, can stop you dead in your tracks. At that time, to “get moving” seems irrelevant or impossible. Ironically, it is the one thing you most need to do. Remember, movement is in your bones and in your blood and in your heart. It will sharpen your senses, protect your memory, and even inspire self-esteem.

Try some of the following :

- 1) Walking (a good inexpensive form of exercise as long as you have a safe place to walk and have a backup plan if it is too hot or cold. Try walking while moving a ball from one hand to the other to build coordination)
- 2) Treadmill (start slow and gradually work up speed at your own pace)
- 3) Exercise Bike (bikes that work the arms and legs are especially good)
- 4) Recumbent Bike (good for people with knee problems these bikes take the stress off the legs and knees while providing a good cardiovascular workout)
- 5) Elliptical Trainer (one of the best low impact workouts, however, they tend to be more expensive)

Pick one then “**Get Moving**”.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Thursday

Week 10 – Day 4

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for the healing of our nation

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Common Sense

It makes sense to love yourself. It opens the door to abundant living within the family. Without loving yourself you become a part of the living dead – limping through life – unable to help those who need you.

Self-love makes good sense. You can't grow or glow without it. Nor can you make solid and fulfilling decisions.

The problem? Self caring is often confused with hedonism, where self-involvement is both exclusive and consuming. This has no resemblance to the common sense approach of focusing on your own needs – to the point of balance – mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Self-care makes good sense.

It makes good sense to make that early morning exercise class. It makes good sense to never eat to fullness – to push your belly away from the table when you're satisfied, before you're stuffed full and it makes good sense to help your loved ones care for themselves.

Self-love affirms the divine design, to delight in the beauty and function of your body and personality. It affirms the vision you have been given to mold your family as an instrument to serve humanity.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Friday

Week 10 – Day 5

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of the world

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source For Turnaround of Sadness

This is a two-part completion exercise, known as Nous Work, for you to (1) identify your beliefs about your grief and (2) turn those beliefs around.

Part I

Here are six questions for you to answer. Don't try to pretty up the answers. Just write – on your writing pad.

1. Who makes you sad? Why? How?
2. What do you want them to do to change?
3. What should or shouldn't they do, be, think, or feel?
4. What do you need for them to do for you to feel happy?
5. What do you think of them? Make a list.
6. What experience with that person do you not want to relive?

Part II

The work of the Holy Spirit is to connect you to truth and reality through deep inquiry. Here are five inquiries for you to use to investigate the reality of what you have written for the previous questions.

Inquiry #1. Is what you are saying true?

Inquiry #2. Can you know that it's absolutely true, beyond a shadow of doubt?

Inquiry #3. What thoughts do the answers bring up? (example: sadness or anger over something said or done to you)

Inquiry #4. What if you forgive the person for making you feel this way?

Inquiry #5. After forgiving them, what if you turnaround the negative thought and think the opposite thought about them? (example: "in spite of how you have treated me, I am happy"). Thus, the power of forgiveness changes your mind and behavior (you cannot change other people).

As you work in the Nous Work exercise, think of someone you haven't totally forgiven yet. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you forgive them.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Saturday Eating Realities

Your Witness

As you lose weight and start to feel more energetic you should expect people around you to notice. Do not be surprised if family, friends, and co-workers comment on your health change. The question you must ask yourself is "How will I respond when people take notice?". Will you simply tell them how you are eating differently or attribute the change to your new exercise routine? As Christians we should always look for ways to witness to those around us. You should consider using your health transformation as a way to share your reliance on God and the Holy Spirit. When people ask what you did to cause the change, tell them about the power of the Holy Spirit in your life and how your faith has empowered you. Share with them the Spiritual Fundamental Principles and Tools and use this as a guide to talk about the transforming power of Jesus Christ. In today's secular world the opportunity to share your faith with others is limited. Think of what you are doing now in your life as a witness opportunity. I guarantee that people will notice and ask about your change. Are you ready to share the truth with them?

Saturday's Message

Week 10

"What Is Life All About?" Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; 12:13-14

For many people in today's world life is characterized by emptiness. They have never been able to answer with any satisfaction the basic questions of life – such questions as:

Who am I?

Why am I here?

What am I supposed to do?

What is my future beyond this life?

Is history a never-ending meaningless cycle or does history have a purpose?

Is there really a God who cares for me?

It is certainly not wrong to ask questions and to search for answers. God made us with inquiring minds. And modern man is not the first to ask the questions listed above. The Bible – the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God – gives examples of people who asked questions and searched for answers. One such person is the inspired writer of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes – the person who identifies himself in the book as "Preacher."

In the opening verses of Ecclesiastes chapter one the inspired writer asked one of the basic questions in all of life. In so many rambling words revealing a confused and empty life he asks the question: "Is there really any meaning in life or is all life characterized by emptiness?" And then after setting forth the basic question the writer uses the rest of the book to tell about his earnest, intensive search for a satisfying answer to that question. In several ways he tries to find real meaning in life. For example:

1. First, he tries human wisdom. In chapter 1 verse 13 he writes: "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven." In chapter 1 verse 17 he writes: "I gave my heart to know

wisdom." In chapter 2 verse 12 he writes: "I turned myself to behold wisdom." In chapter 7 verse 25 he writes: "I applied my heart to know and to search and to seek out wisdom and the reason of things."

Here is the clear picture of a determined man – a man determined to turn all his attention in the direction of seeking human wisdom. He is searching for meaning in life and in his search he seeks human wisdom.

What did this man accomplish? He gained wisdom. He became one of the most educated men of his day. He discovered that human wisdom is helpful, but in passage after passage he declares that human wisdom alone is not the answer to the basic question: "Is there really any meaning in life?" After all his seeking and searching and learning, he discovered that his mind was expanded and literally stored full of human knowledge and wisdom, BUT HIS HEART WAS STILL EMPTY.

2. Second, the writer of Ecclesiastes testifies that in his search for meaning in life he tried human success. He dedicated himself without reservation to being a success – to being successful in the eyes of his fellow travelers along the pilgrimage of life. And the Book of Ecclesiastes reveals that the man achieved his goal of being successful. He went all the way – got all the things he wanted. In the eyes of his fellowman he was on top of the world. He had it all – all but what he really wanted. He wanted real meaning in life BUT HE DID NOT FIND MEANING IN SUCCESS ANY MORE THAN HE DID IN HUMAN WISDOM.
3. Third, in his earnest, intensive search for meaning in life the writer of Ecclesiastes tried pleasure. In his quest for pleasure he went all the way. He pulled out all the stops. He lived like he wanted to live – according to his own rules.

What did he discover about pleasure? He came to the realization that the life of human pleasure, in the final analysis, is a hollow, empty life. He discovered that pleasure is not the end. Human pleasure will not bring genuine satisfaction to man's burning desire for real, abiding meaning in life.

And so after trying human wisdom, success, and pleasure, the writer of Ecclesiastes is right where he started in the first place. He has not yet found what he is searching for – real meaning in life. But in the last two (2) verses of the book, he puts it all together. He shares with his readers the fact that there is one way – only one way – to know what life is really all about – only one way to find real, lasting meaning in life. In chapter 12 verses 13-14 he writes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments:

for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work unto judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

Since the writer of Ecclesiastes was inspired to write this book, God has acted in an even greater manifestation of His love in helping people find meaning in life. Over 2,000 years ago God sent Jesus Christ and Jesus said: “I am come that people might have life – real life – and have it more abundantly.” Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.” For us today it is God’s plan that we find real meaning in life by being right with God through faith in Jesus Christ who took our place on the cross and died that we might be saved.

Here is life – REAL LIFE. It is found in Jesus Christ.

Reverend Phillip R. Morrow Sr.