



## **GRIEF: SO MUCH TO GRIEVE DURING COVID**

You and I have so much to grieve these days. There are so many losses in our personal lives. Some of us have lost loved ones and not been able to give them a proper good-bye. Each of us have lost our normal routine in work and relationships. Some have lost jobs. What we know is that time does not heal the wounds of loss. Rather we must be honest with ourselves about the pain we know and learn to carry our grief forward with us into the future.

There are irreversible losses in our lives where the landscape changes permanently. There will be long term consequences because of what is now gone. There will be a new normal someday – but all the layers of our loss need to be grieved. We can run away from our grief – but grief always gets its way. We need to take the time to chase it down, to face it. Otherwise it will hijack our life at a later date and take us places we may not wish to go. Grief can have great power over us. It is best to walk with our grief.

*In the losses we are going to encounter regret, guilt and confusion. We must take every loss seriously. Of course a death or divorce is serious, but so is the loss of a dream job, or a pet, or a regular celebration, or worship gathering.*

We can try and run away, or fill our pain with other activities, or medications or alcohol. But how do we face this grief? How do we walk with our grief?

1. ***Pray about it.*** Take time every day to be quiet before the Lord. If you can no longer believe in a God who is present with you, be honest about this. Let the silence create space for you to be absolutely honest. Maybe focus on only one loss per day.

2. ***Identify the loss.*** Name it and remember what this person or event or responsibility meant to you. Dr. Sittser and Kay Warren talk about running toward the West to capture the light of the sunset. But to truly find the light again you have to turn and face the East and the darkness. If you move into the darkness of your loss, the light will break as the morning dawn, sooner rather than later.

3. **Take a reality check.** No one's grief is like the other. But we never grieve alone. And when we cannot handle this by ourselves – we can ask others in our Christian community to believe and sing and pray for us. Let the church be the church for you. Let the Holy Spirit carry you. Romans 8:26:

*“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

Sometimes we think that reality is defined by what we believe – for life is all about us personally. Life is about us living in community – it is our duty and responsibility to carry one another.

4. **Take an action step.** Develop some new rules for your life to order your days. Be patient with yourself. Plant some new things, create new practices around the memory of that which you have lost. Claim a new joy. Know that one can experience sorrow and joy at the same time.

5. **Ask: “Can God be with me in these empty spaces, in the losses of my life?”** What other questions are you asking? Can I experience sorrow and joy at the same time? (Yes!)

**Reflect on these verses:**

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matthew 5:3-4*

*‘Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’? Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” John 16:19-22*

**And, pray it through:**

Lord,

*Thank you for being with me in all the moments of my grief – even when my eyes are swollen with so many tears. Hang onto me. Give me courage to reach out to others and let them hold onto me as well as I pass through the valley of so much death. May my sorrow be soothed and may I begin to sense joy again. You faced death for all of us so that you could bring us new life, resurrection life, eternal life. Guide me in life to name my sorrows and claim the gift of joy. In Jesus name. Amen.*

*(Inspiration from an online conversation hosted by Kay Warren with Dr. Jerry Sittser)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Elev0oGnbMA>