

# Hearts Fit for the Journey

## Making the Void Bearable

### Walking with Grief – Lk.22:39-46

#### I. Introduction

##### A. *C. Everett Koop*

1. In 1968, C. Everett Koop who served as the United States Surgeon General from 1982-89, lost his son David in a mountain climbing accident in New Hampshire
2. He later wrote about his family's permanent void following the death of his son
3. People, he said, told him that God would fill the void in his life in some way
4. He writes that this never happened
5. "The void, he says, was never really filled, but somehow God made the void bearable"

##### B. *Grief*

1. Is something that we must all deal in this life
2. It is not a question of if, but rather when, because grief is inevitable
3. How we deal with this often crippling emotion will in many respects determine whether we enjoy this journey called life or not
4. The fact is that all too often, many have failed to properly deal with this thing called grief, and as a result are dealing instead with the consequences
5. First and foremost the inability to enjoy life as God intended for us to do

6. **It is only when we come to understand that grief is a natural part of life that we can begin to deal with it and walk with it when it comes to our lives**

*C. In our lesson I want to do 3 things*

1. **Learn what grief is**
2. **Understand how grief works**
3. **Examine grief in the life of Jesus so that we might see how to overcome it in the way the He did**

## **II. Looking at what Grief Really Is**

*A. Grief—a deep distress caused by a loss*

1. **This can be any significant loss and when we experience such losses, grief is the normal response**
2. **These losses can include but are not limited to:**
  - a. **Death of a loved one—not just family members**
  - b. **Breakup of a marriage or any significant relationship**
  - c. **Loss of a job**
  - d. **Health concerns**
  - e. **A missed opportunity**
  - f. **Children leaving the home**
  - g. **Succumbing to temptation**
3. **As we consider grief we need to understand that grief can be all encompassing**
4. **Grief can affect us:**
  - a. **Physically—by literally making us sick**
  - b. **Emotionally—by producing depression that can cripple us in our ability interact with others**

- c. **Socially—because we are unable to properly interact with others**
  - d. **Mentally—by causing us to make irrational decisions and at times even blame God for our misfortune**
  - e. **Spiritually—by making us unable to focus on our spiritual health and spiritual service to the Lord and our fellow man**
5. **David provides us with a biblical illustrations of the effects of grief—his was caused by guilt**
- a. **Ps.32:3-4**
  - b. **Thus grief, when it is improperly processed and dealt with, can produce great distress in our lives from a number of different vantage points**

***B. Grief—the process of feeling and experiencing grief***

- 1. **Grief is often correctly observed to be a journey or a process—it is not a singular event**
- 2. **Grief is not really something that we just get over, grief is something that we learn to walk with and with God’s help we can do so in a manner that does hinder our ability to enjoy life and live it successfully**
  - a. **A family really never gets over the loss of a child—David and Bathsheba didn’t**
  - b. **A devoted spouse never really gets over the loss of their life-long companion**
  - c. **We never really get over a lost career, or business or bankruptcy**
  - d. **One never really gets over the devastating news that they have cancer or some other dreaded disease**
  - e. **On and on we could go**
- 3. **The point is simple—grief is not something we necessarily get over, it is something we learn to live through**
  - a. **I doubt that Peter ever really got over denying His Lord**
  - b. **Paul never got over persecuting the Lord’s church**

- c. **But both of them learned to walk through their losses and served the Lord faithfully in spite of them**

**4. In grief**

- a. **It is God who makes the going on possible**
- b. **It is God who makes it bearable**
- c. **It is God who makes life enjoyable again**
- d. **While there may always be an empty place in our hearts for that which we have lost it does not have to stop of from living the life God wants us to live**

**C. Mourning—*is the outward expression of the inner feeling of grief***

- 1. Mourning consist of outward actions which demonstrate our inward feelings resulting from our losses and this to is a natural human response**
- 2. Mourning make take many shapes—from tears to the observance of funeral or memorial rituals**
- 3. And again this is a completely normal process that we all go through when we suffer a significant loss of some kind**
- 4. There are numerous examples of such in the Bible:**
  - a. **Job grieved over the loss of his children, wealth, health and the relationship with his friends**
  - b. **Jacob grieved intently over the loss of his son Joseph**
  - c. **David and Bathsheba grieved over the loss of their firstborn son**
  - d. **Jesus wept over the loss of His friend Lazarus**
- 5. Grief is a part of life and there is nothing wrong with**
- 6. The problem is that we often do not understand what grief is nor how it works and thus it makes life difficult to enjoy and that is what I and what God do not want to see happen**

**III. Understanding How Grief Works**

**A. *Grief is a process***

- 1. When we suffer a loss, we are going to grieve**
- 2. When can put off that process, but that is not going to help us avoid it**
- 3. Grief is not a sign of weakness for it is God who created us with the capacity to grieve—so let's learn to deal with it biblically**
- 4. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying* set forth 5 stages of grief—originally she applied these stages to those suffering from terminal diseases and then later realized their application to all who had suffered some personal loss**
- 5. 5 stages of grief**
  - a. Denial**
    - i. I feel fine, nothing is wrong, this can't be happening to me*
    - ii. This is generally just a temporary defense for those dealing with or trying to avoid dealing with grief*
  - b. Anger**
    - i. Why did this happen to me, this is not fair, who is to blame are some of the common mantras of this stage*
    - ii. Because of this anger they become difficult to care for and comfort and those who seem full of life are often viewed with resentment and jealousy*
  - c. Bargaining**
    - i. Just let my loved one come back, give me back my child, I will do anything God if you will just make this go away are common statements of the bargaining stage of grief*
    - ii. It is in this stage that the individual tries to do whatever they can to change their circumstances so that they don't have to grieve*
  - d. Depression**
    - i. It is not until this step that the loss is really accepted and the result for many is depression*

*ii. That is because in this step of the grieving process many lose hope that their situation is going to be resolved or made to have never happened*

*iii. Kubler-Ross says that it is important to not attempt to cheer up the person in this stage of the process because this is an important part of the grieving process*

**e. Acceptance**

*i. Everything is going to be OK—and no that does not mean that everything is going to go away—just that it can be dealt with*

*ii. It is in this stage that a person comes to terms with the reality of whatever loss they have experienced and are now able and willing to confront it head on*

*iii. It is thus here that we begin to experience our first signs of hope since the grieving process began*

**f. While others add various other intricate steps to this process, these are generally viewed as the five steps one suffering from grief deals with**

**6. Important Note!!!**

- a. The amount of time it takes a person to get from denial to acceptance will vary from person to person**
- b. We may not grieve publicly, we may not grieve in traditional ways**
- c. But we must grieve when necessary, and it is not until we do that we will be able to once again continue living life joyfully**

***B. Grief is a very personal process***

- 1. No two people grieve alike**
- 2. Some times we may think that people are not dealing with their grief when in reality they are just doing it in their own way**
- 3. We may grieve:**
  - a. Before a loss occurs because we see it coming as Jesus did in the garden**
  - b. We may grieve during the process of losing a loved one as did Job**
  - c. We may grieve after a loss as did Jacob and David**
  - d. The problem is that sometimes grief is put off for months or even years and this is not healthy and as such can lead to some pretty serious emotional and physical consequences**
- 4. While we may all deal with grief differently, we are all going to have to deal with grief and so the sooner we start the process the sooner we can overcome it**
- 5. And since we all deal with grief differently, lets make sure we are not guilty of trying to force others to grieve as we would**
- 6. Let them decide the time and manner to deal with their loss and then be there to help them in any way we can**

### ***C. Grief has a purpose***

- 1. We grieve because of the realization that we are not going to get to enjoy that which we have lost—whether it be a spouse, a child or a job**
- 2. We grieve because we have lost the future expectation which were built around that which we have lost—retirement savings etc.**
- 3. Thus, the purpose for grief is that it helps us to:**
  - a. Reconcile the loss**
  - b. Put it into perspective**
  - c. Refocus our lives**
  - d. So again, don't try to deny grief**

## **IV. Learning to Deal with Grief (The Example of Jesus)**

### ***A. Jesus faced Grief***

- 1. Grief over His:**
  - a. Flock after His departure**
  - b. Betrayal at the hands of one He loved**
  - c. Impending trials and suffering**
  - d. Eventual death on the cross**
  - e. Jesus was well acquainted with death and it is for this reason that the Hebrew writer declares “For in that He himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Heb.2:18)**
  - f. When it comes to grief, Jesus has been where we have been and will be again and is thus able to help us overcome our own grief**
- 2. And so as we look at His life, what He went through and how He faced it we can learn how to walk with our own grief**
- 3. What did Jesus do with His grief?**



***B. Jesus talked about His grief***

- 1. Long before Jesus went to the cross he talked to His disciples about what was to happen to himself—that He would be rejected, suffer many things, be killed and rise again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day**
- 2. Too many times when dealing with grief people make the mistake of saying let's just not talk about it, when in reality, talking about it is exactly what they need to do**
- 3. A preacher tells of the time he was asked to be present during the removal of life support**
- 4. He says that they:**
  - a. Held hands**
  - b. Hugged**
  - c. And most importantly talked**
  - d. Grieving people need to talk about their loss if they are going to overcome it**
  - e. If you are dealing with grief; find someone to talk to, someone to listen, someone you can confide in**
  - f. This is good therapy**
- 5. What is the best thing you can do for those who are grieving?**
  - a. Just be there for them**
  - b. We don't have to do the right things**
  - c. We don't have to know the right things to say**
  - d. In fact we don't have to say anything at all, just be there and listen**
  - e. You will do them a world of good**

***C. Jesus prayed about His grief***

- 1. When you are in the valley of despair and grief there is no better place to go than to your Heavenly Father in prayer—that is what Jesus did**

2. **Before His betrayal, arrest and crucifixion Jesus spent a lot of time in prayer**
3. **He prayed for:**
  - a. **Himself and His Father's plan**
  - b. **His disciples and Apostles**
  - c. **His followers that would come in the future**
  - d. **His accusers and those who would kill Him**
4. **The point is simple; when Jesus was confronted, as every human will be, with moments of fear and grief He sought the comfort which come only from taking it to our Father in prayer**
5. **When you are dealing with grief, take the source of your grief to God**

*D. Jesus even wept in His grief*

1. **This is the mourning that we talked of earlier and we see that even Jesus mourned when He lost His friend Lazarus**
2. **Even though Jesus knew Lazarus was to be resurrected, He still wept for him and in some respects that weeping was for those who were suffering grief because they did not know Lazarus was coming back**
3. **Thus, even the Son of Man when faced with grief was not afraid to cry and we need not be either—and yes that goes for us men as well**
4. **When it comes to grief, crying is:**
  - a. **Therapeutic**
    - b. **Natural**
    - c. **A God-given response to loss and a positive behavior for those who have suffered loss**
    - d. **So don't be afraid to cry when your hurting and when you are grieving**

## **V. Conclusion**

### ***A. Finding Strength in Times of Grief***

- 1. In the end there is ultimately nothing that helps more in times of grief than “Leaning On the Everlasting Arms”**
- 2. God is the one who can help in times of grief so let’s turn to Him**
- 3. 1 Pet.5:7**
- 4. Heb.13:5b-6**
- 5. In times of grief and loss consider the words of Jn.14, Psalm 23, 1 Cor.15 for hope and comfort from God**
- 6. In times of grief and loss it is hope that we need more than anything else**

### ***B. Grief***

- 1. It is going to come; we will all suffer losses of one kind or another**
- 2. How will you deal with it when it comes**
- 3. C. Everett Koop found that God did not feel the void in his life, but He did make it bearable**
- 4. We can be certain that God will do the same for us in our day of need**
- 5. Heb.4:15-16**