

Embrace Grieving and Loss

Life is characterized by loss. The weather changes. Cars break down. We move into a new house. We leave a community and lose friends. Pets die. We lose our youth and our health. Then there is the loss of a marriage, of a parent, of a vocation, a dream, a life. But though life is full of loss, it's also full of new life. Age brings things that youth can't. Some weather changes are good. We can enjoy new cars, houses, friends, pets, shows. The losses that threaten to overwhelm can enlarge us, deepen us, offer us something unexpectedly blessed on the other side. But the unexpected blessing follows the loss. Hope follows grief. Character follows the furnace in which that character was forged.

So as followers of Christ who want our emotional health to reflect the character and heart of God, in this session we will look at a biblical perspective on grief and loss and focus on how to practice embracing grief and loss.

1. TEACHING ON EMBRACING GRIEVING & LOSS – Being Renewed:

Enter into your Grief (2 Samuel 1: 17-27). It wasn't just that David mourned the loss of his friend. He ordered it to be recorded and taught to thousands; it was written and named. It's not a song with a happy ending. It's just a primal mourning for the loss of a great friend. The world had changed. Goodness had been lost. It ought to be remembered, grieved, commemorated, never forgotten. The depth of our grief reveals the weight of the thing we lost. When is the last time we considered that God is honoured when his people offer songs of lament about their grief and loss? Jesus was a "man of sorrow, acquainted with grief." If grief is a gauge of love, then both his love and his grief was deep. Perhaps we, too, should grieve deeply that which we love deeply, and do it without shame. If nothing else, we show all those around us what matters most in life.

Embrace the Journey.

- Psalm 27:13-14: *"I believe that I will look upon the goodness of the Lord in the Land of the living. Wait for the Lord...be strong...take courage...wait for the Lord."*
- Psalm 33:20: *"My soul waits for the Lord..."*
- *The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.* (Psalm 34:18)
- James 5:11: *"We consider those blessed who remain steadfast..."*

These are not wasted times in the Kingdom of God. Peter Scazzero uses the analogy of compost. As we throw scraps on the garden, we see the broken husks of things that were once full of life but are now empty shells. It seems as if their story is over. But give it time – from that which was dead will spring new life. It's in these times that some of the best formation and preparation happens for the new life that is to come.

See the Loss in the Light of the Gain. God is able to salvage the broken parts of the world. Paul writes in Romans 8:28 that *"All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose."*

This is not a promise of earthly happiness and ease, but of spiritual and eternal goods. How do we know? Because the verses before talk about how "creation groans" in its broken state, and the verses after that don't claim that will change in this life. Paul notes that God will use these situations so that we will be "conformed to the image of His Son." We will be called, then justified (or made righteous) and ultimately "glorified." So in what ways can grief and sorrow conform us to the image of Christ?

Compassion *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."* (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Maturity *"I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can endure all these things because Christ strengthens me."* (Philippians 4:11-12).



Mystery. *“Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” (Job 42:3)*

Community. Paul said his suffering was *“for the sake of the body, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24)*. Our suffering enables us to more fully *“bear another’s burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2)*.

Experiencing God. *“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)*

“Do not lose heart,” said Paul, *“for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding glory that outweighs them all...” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)*. What we suffer is *“not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18)*.

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 *“For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

⁶ *Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad”*

Visit <https://bridgetown.church/teaching/the-emotionally-healthy-church/embrace-grieving-and-loss/> for a helpful talk on how to embrace grieving and loss as a discipleship practice

NOTES & IDEAS TO PRACTICE:

TAKING STEPS TO GROW:

1. To grow in this practice, what is **one idea you want to experiment with this coming week / month?** How will you do that?
2. **Is there someone that you could connect with for mutual encouragement, learning and accountability to deepen in this practice?**¹ It might be your spouse, sibling, close friend, someone in your life group or someone else at this workshop.

¹ This is a practical way we can fulfill our vision together at TCBC *“Transforming lives through Christ-centred community”*

“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).