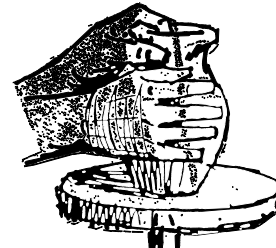


His Workmanship at Westside

*"For we are His
workmanship, created in
Christ Jesus for good works."
—Ephesians 2:10*



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Isaiah 64:8

Embracing Grief and Loss *by Dave Bootsma*

Our culture trivializes tragedy and loss. We watch devastation on the evening news, but are given just the facts, with no opportunity to grieve. Children dying of starvation, masses killed by an earthquake or Tsunami should break our hearts. We need to pause to grieve such tragedies.

Grief in the US is typically treated as something to be "gotten over with" as soon as possible, or minimized as if "certain things are not worthy of grief." If others were not impacted the same way as we, then we have the problem. There doesn't seem to be any room for people responding differently when it comes to sorrow. We are also taught that "real men don't cry," or "don't be a baby."

I. WHAT IS GRIEF? In 1974 The Handbook of Psychiatry defined grief as "the normal response to the loss of a loved one by death." In 1984, Dr. Terese Rando—a noted grief specialist, researcher, and author—defined grief as a "process of psychological, social, and somatic reactions to the perception of loss." In 1991, the Grief Resource Foundation of Dallas found that a good practical definition of grief was "the total response of the organism to the proc-

ess of change." Although grieving the death of someone may be the most universal and most intense grief, it is not the only cause of grief.

So what is grief and what produces it? A helpful equation, which proves itself daily is **Change=Loss=Grief** (TLC Group, Dallas). Basically, grief is about coming to terms with the fact that things will never be the same again. Something is lost and is never coming back. It may be something obvious or tragic like the death of a family member or friend; divorce; disability; rape; or it may be the loss of health, youth, beauty, wealth, status, fertility, or the shattering of a lifelong dream; retirement from work or a position or a sport; moving; leaving home; friend, neighbor, or family member moving away; a house burning down or car wreck; loss of valuables due to fire, flood, or theft; last child out of infant stage, toddler stage, teenage stage; empty nest; loss of opportunity; sin, lost souls..

The intensity of the grief depends on how the loss is perceived. If the loss is not perceived as significant, the grief reaction will be barely felt.

II. PROCESSING GRIEF: **grief is not to be avoided but entered into.**

What do we do with our grief? The most common responses: avoid, escape, get over, medicate. In John 11 we find Jesus Himself weeping over the death of a friend. Why? After all, He knew that he would raise Lazarus within minutes. "The answer is because He is perfect. He is perfect love. He showed perfect love. He will not close His heart even for ten minutes. He will not refuse to enter in," said Tim Keller.

We need to accept the reality of the loss and the pain that it brings—to cry, weep, express our pain, disappointment, regret, even anger. For some of us that might mean going way back or deep down and uncovering the pain we buried a long time ago but never dealt with—divorce of parents, molestation, loss of innocence, the loss of childhood itself. Over and over the Bible characters expressed their sorrow by crying out to God in their pain: "*Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage,*" Ex 2:23. "*When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sack-*
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"In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears. " —Psalm 18:6

cloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry," Esth 4:1.

After Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle, David wrote a song—a moving, beautiful, detailed lament of the horror that has occurred. *"Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen... Saul and Jonathan in life were loved and gracious.... O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul."* David anguished over the catastrophe three times: *"How the might warriors have fallen."* Consumed with grief, David addressed Jonathan, *"I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother."* David ordered the people to memorize and sing the lamentation he had written, 2 Sam 1:17-27. Can you imagine? David poured out his grief with tears about the enormous loss Israel faced. He recognized that something precious in Israel was gone. David wanted all the men to learn it, memorize it, and sing it, as their own experience, not simply his. Why did David order the people to stop and pay attention? Why did he want them to express sorrow over the death of Saul and Jonathan? Wasn't there a lot of work to do now that there would be a transition to a new government? According to Pete Scazzero, *"David understood how indispensable grieving is to spiritual maturity. David knew we are deepened by taking the time to grieve our losses before moving on. He knew how important it was for the people to stay connected to reality and not run from their pain."*

1. Pour out your heart to God. A Christian doesn't just express his grief but directs it. Prayer enables us to process our grief in God's presence. *"God approves of your tears,"* wrote Paul Tripp. About half the Psalms are laments or songs of mourning; Lamen-

tations, Job, and Jeremiah are books of expressing grief to God. *"My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember as I pour out my soul...I say to God my Rock, 'Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?'"* Ps.42:3-4, 9. Years ago, four-year-old Connor Clapton fell to his death in New York City. After the tragedy, his father, rock guitarist Eric Clapton, said, "I turned to stone. Then I went off the edge of the world for a while."

Prayer enables us to process our grief in God's presence.

In time, Clapton put his tortured feelings in a song. Saying or writing our feelings helps us heal. *"I cried out to God with my voice; I cried out to God to hear me, and He heard. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out my hands, and my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered you, O God, and was troubled; I groaned, and my spirit was overwhelmed,"* Ps.77:1-3. The comfort for the Christian is that God is listening. He sees our tears. *"I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you,"* 2 Kg 20:5. *"[God] heals the brokenhearted, binding up their wounds,"* Ps 147:3. *"The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them ...The Lord is close to the brokenhearted,"* Ps.34:17-18. God numbers our tears: *"You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?"* Ps. 56:8.

When you come to Jesus you come to the One Who is the *"man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,"* Is.53:3. Use the Psalms and other laments to get you started, e.g., Ps 13, 22, 38, 42, 55, 59, 61, 73.

2. Focus on the hope of Christ in the midst of your grieving. If we don't, we may enter into sinful despair. *"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope,"* 1 Thes 4:13-17. What is that hope? Jesus said to Martha, *"I AM the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die,"* Jn 11:25-26. Death itself will die, and its effects of decay and destruction will be reversed. What happened to Lazarus is but a foreshadowing of a greater resurrection. One day God is going to fix everything that was broken and restore everything that was lost. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away,"* Rev 21:1-4. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. He is most anxious to comfort us, like any good and compassionate parent when he hears his child crying in pain.

There will be no more sorrow, no death, separation, disappointment, sin, regret, pain. Throughout eternity we will know health, love, righteousness, dignity, wholeness, life, peace, satisfaction, glory, astonishment.

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Psalm 133:1



**Fill your can-
teen in 2013**

“May you be filled
with all the full-
ness of God.”

—Ephesians 3:19

Embracing Grief from p. 2

Heaven is the place where nothing will ever be lost and things change only in that they will improve through learning, “from glory to glory.” Christ offers the good news of the God Who weeps with us, over us, and will one day wipe our tears away forever. The good news is that Jesus is the incarnation of grief, as well as compassion and mercy. The cross is God’s response to grief—His as well as ours (through the fall God lost us). On the cross Jesus “has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,” Is 53:4, felt His own sorrow, “my soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death,” Mt 26:38, but he also caused great sorrow. The cross is the greatest grief-causing event in history, since it is when and where the most was lost: God gave up His Son! What a testimony of His love! There was no other way in which we could be restored to Him, and no other way that all our losses could be restored.

3. Allow the old to birth the new. In Paradise Lost John Milton described the evil of history as a compost pile—a mixture of decaying substances such as animal excrement, vegetable and fruit peels, potato skins, egg shells, and dead leaves. If you cover it with dirt, after a few years it smells wonderful. The soil has become a rich, natural fertilizer for growing fruit and vegetables. But you have to be

Discipleship Here At Home

willing to wait five to ten years! Milton’s point was that the worst events of human history that we cannot understand, even hell itself, are only compost in God’s wonderful eternal plan. Out of the greatest evil, the death of Jesus, came the greatest good. God transforms evil into good without diminishing the awfulness of the evil.

II. WHY GRIEF IS IMPORTANT (or THE GOODNESS OF GRIEF).

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted,” Mt 5:4. There is no joy without grief. Whereas we want to get over the pain of grief as soon as possible, God is seeking to use our losses and the grief of them to enlarge us and mature us. But “[embracing grief] is the only pathway to becoming a compassionate person like our Lord Jesus,” says Pete Scazzero. Gerald Sittser lost his wife, daughter, and mother in a car accident. What effect did such loss have on him? This is what he concluded about grief: “Catastrophic loss by definition precludes recovery. It will transform us or destroy us, but it will never leave us the same. There is no going back to the past... It is not therefore true that we become less through loss—unless we allow the loss to make us less, grinding our soul down until there is nothing left. Loss can also make us more. I did not get over my loved ones; rather I absorbed the loss into my life until it became part of who I am. Sorrow took up permanent residence in my soul and enlarged it... One learns the pain of others by suffering one’s own pain, by turning inside oneself, by finding one’s own soul... However painful, sorrow is good for the soul... The soul is elastic, like a balloon. It can grow larger through suffering.” Sorrow can result in inner changes. We become compassionate as our Father in heaven is, cf. 2 Cor 1.

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Expecting Liz Kosik, early April; blood platelets low; Christina Adams’s daughter Traveling The Kenny Boyd family

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here and away

Jordan and Tracy Corray, Michael Bennett, and three friends were injured Fri night when a drunk driver hit them broadside on I-25; all hospitalized overnight, two remain in critical care, but all are expected to recover. The Corrays are home with bruises and cuts

Delmar Hice, Pat Campbell’s father—at home, bleeding ulcer; Pat in AR with him Mark Campbell—improving at Rocky Mtn Brain Injury Service in CO Springs Eric Perry’s coworker’s son Faylin, age 12—stroke, paralysis in face

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Logan Corray; Rocco Sangellino Jr; Addison Tope; Pat Wilkes—asthma Pearl Chapman—leg pains; pancreatitis Nell Free—pacemaker, heart; back pain Rod Green—thyroid trouble Autumn Hadders—epilepsy Jonathan Hadders—RA Danielle Huelsman—vertigo, CV syndrome Kirk Johnson—worsening MS; needs help around his house Menards—aging; Lloyd, diabetes, weak; Virginia, worsening rapid macular degeneration; high BP Sandra Perry—neuropathy from diabetes Cheryl Reames—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia Judy Sartin—spinal stenosis; severe arthritis Judy Sartin’s grandson Tristen—autism Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung

Job concerns Linda Szymanski and Andrew Tope are seeking jobs.

Bereaved Vicki and Jim Reingrover and Marci Bennett are in MI for the funeral Wed of Vicki’s mother Janet Whitener, who suffered a fatal fall last Wed; donations in lieu of flowers to Autism Alliance of MI, 26500 American Dr, Southfield, MI 48034 Andrea Arvola lost her brother Steve to pancreatic cancer suddenly 10/16 Caleb Howell’s boss, Sean Frank, lost his wife, age 44, suddenly week before last.



Exposing current thoughts & trends

Proposed Bill Opens Door to Pedophilia

California Congresswoman, Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA), wants to federalize a CA state law to prohibit counseling to change a person's sexual orientation. Under the bill's language, a mental health counselor could be sanctioned if there was an attempt to get any person to change his/her behavior or to speak negatively about his/her behavior as it relates to sexuality. For the time being, this legislation has been blocked with a preliminary injunction, but many questions still remain.

This bill establishes a dangerous precedent for normalizing the behavior of pedophiles while stripping parents of their rights and peace of mind. The bill called on states to prohibit efforts to change a minor's sexual orientation, even if the minor requests help, saying that doing so is "dangerous and harmful." The text of the legislation doesn't specifically ban homosexual conversion therapy. Instead, it prohibits attempts to change a person's sexual orientation. The bill says, "*Sexual orientation change efforts* means any practices by mental health providers that seek to change an individual's sexual orientation." Brad Dacus, president of Pacific Justice Institute, said, "This language is so broad and vague, it could include all forms of sexual orientation, including pedophilia."

Embracing Grief and Loss *from p. 3*

Henri Nouwen rightly said that grief is the way to compassion. "*There is no compassion without many tears... To become like the Father Whose only authority is compassion, I have to shed countless tears and so prepare my heart to receive anyone, whatever their journey has been, and forgive them from the heart.*" Absorbing our own pain, we learn to forgive. We have a greater concern for the poor, the widow, the orphan, the marginalized, the wounded. We understand them. We are less covetous, less idolatrous. We rarely say, "I've got to have this, or I'll die." Life is stripped of its pretense and non-essentials. We are more apt to rid ourselves of the unimportant things in life others so desperately want—power, control, money, or approval. God really becomes the center of our lives, not superficial, trivial pursuits. There is an enhanced sense of living in the immediate present, rather than postponing life until retirement. We easily learn to rearrange life's priorities to be with our spouse and friends. Heaven is real, something we long for on a new level. We begin to understand we're aliens and sojourners. We will finally be at home with ourselves and with God. "*Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him,*" Ps 126:5-6.



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Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

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Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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This morning: Reflections on the Home, Larry Campbell

This afternoon: Kory Tope