

“Dealing with Depression”
Week #5: "The Grief Pilgrimage"
By Mark Bowen, May 22, 2022

Icebreaker What loss (concrete and external or symbolic and internal) you have suffered this year?

The Sermon in a Sentence Grieving well brings new healing and joy when loss is faced, fully felt, and followed through to find hope and renewal in Jesus.

General Discussion Read Psalm 84, NLT.

1. Verses 5-6 describe a pilgrimage to meet with God that included passing through a “valley of weeping” – a patch of desert or rocky terrain that was difficult to navigate, easy to get stuck in and tempting to cancel the pilgrimage over. In your faith pilgrimage, what “valley of weeping” have you faced?
2. The initial response to loss is **NUMBNESS**: shock or the sense of being overwhelmed. Numbness gives way to **PROTEST** or **ANGER** – our desire to value and fight for life in a fallen world. As the reality sinks in that we’re powerless to undo most losses, anger gives way to **GRIEF**: a deep sadness or heart-wrenching sorrow. Choose one of the statements below and comment on it.
 - Loss may be concrete and external, or symbolic and internal.
 - Bargaining replays loss: ‘If only I’d done something different, I could have prevented it’.
 - Crying is a cleansing process, but only if we let go.
 - We can’t let go of a loss when we remain in anger or protest.
 - Grief is often messier and more confusing than orderly and linear.
 - We seldom let go of a loss when we’re not ‘held up’ by a supportive environment, adequate time, putting words to our pain, and empathetic community.
 - Grief is a relational thing – best experienced when expressed to God and others.
3. Perhaps like Jeremiah, you have been in a situation where it felt to you like ‘everything I have hoped for in the Lord is lost’? (Lam 3:21) What did you do with your disappointment and sadness?
4. As we “let go”, those parts of us that were attached to whoever or whatever we’ve lost become available to what the Lord has next for us in life. Following grieving a loss, what clues indicate we are available for what the Lord has next for us in life? What clues indicate we are not?

Gospel-Centered Discussion. Read Matthew 5:3-4, NLT.

5. If we mourn loss in the false belief that we deserve better from God, our grief will not bring the blessing of comfort, but the curse of bitterness. Choose a ‘poor in spirit’ statement and comment.
 - God’s grace does not come to people who morally outperform others, but to those who admit their failure to perform and acknowledge their need for a savior.
 - Religion believes ‘I obey – therefore I am accepted by God’. But the operating principle of the gospel is ‘I am accepted by God through what Christ has done – therefore I obey’.
 - The Christian gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and confidence concurrently.

Application/Prayer Quietly pray a prayer for emotional authenticity: Lord, what do you want me to feel that I resist feeling? How can I process my feelings to bring you honor, help myself and bless others? Please help me to live fully human, without letting my feelings dictate my actions. Listen silently for 60 seconds.