What Is Grief?

- **Grief** is the painful emotion of sorrow caused by the loss or impending loss of anyone or anything—a person, position, possession, plan, power, or purpose—that has deep meaning to you.

- **Grief** is a God-given emotion that increases with knowledge about the sorrows of life. (See also Ecclesiastes 1:18.)

- **Grief** begins in your heart as a natural response to a significant, unwanted loss.

  "My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me."
  (Psalm 55:4)

What Is Mourning?

- **Mourning** is the process of working through our painful sorrow following a significant loss.

- **Mourning** (also called grieving) is a normal, healthy process that lasts for a period of time. God uses mourning to produce ultimate healing from deep distress and sorrow.

- **Mourning** evokes compassion and expressions of comfort from others.

  "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy."
  (Psalm 30:11)

What Is Chronic Grief?

- **Chronic grief** is emotional sorrow experienced over a long period of time as the result of not accepting a significant loss or not experiencing closure of that loss.

  "Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish."
  (Psalm 25:17)

What Is Unresolved Grief?

- **Unresolved grief** occurs when a person has reason to grieve and needs to grieve, but does not grieve.

  "Even in laughter the heart may ache, and rejoicing may end in grief."
  (Proverbs 14:13)

What Is “Grief Work”?

- **Grief work** involves a step-by-step process through which a grieving person walks in order to reach a place of emotional healing.

  "My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life."
  (Psalm 119:50)

God’s Heart on Grief

In His sovereignty, God can use grief and suffering to ...

- Produce perseverance, character, and hope in us (Romans 5:3–5)
- Save our souls (John 5:24)
- Cause us to cry out to Him (Psalm 142:1–3)
- Humble our hearts (Deuteronomy 8:2)
- Further our faith (1 Peter 1:7)
- Show His strength in our weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9–10)
- Cause us to share in Christ’s sufferings (1 Peter 4:12–13)
- Reveal His heart to us (Job 36:15)
- Conform us to Christ (1 Peter 2:19–21)
- Make us a conduit of comfort to others (2 Corinthians 1:4)
Are You Grieving?

When we initially experience a significant loss, we can plunge into depths of grief and have difficulty coming up for air. Then eventually, after we surface, we simply tread water, not swimming toward a real destination. The reason is called grief.

- Do you feel alone and isolated?
- Do you feel that you are just mechanically going through the motions of life?
- Do you feel resentful toward God for allowing your loss?
- Do you ask, “Why?” over and over again?
- Do you feel overwhelmed, not knowing what to do or where to turn?
- Do you feel emotionally distraught because of your loss?
- Do you have frequent daydreams about your loss?
- Do you feel angry or bitter over your loss?
- Do you have difficulty forgiving those who caused your loss?
- Do you frequently dream at night about your loss?
- Do you see life as an empty struggle without much reward?
- Do you feel helpless, knowing how much others must also be suffering?
- Do you wonder what kind of God would allow your loss?
- Do you view God as uninvolved and lacking compassion?

Regardless of your view of God right now, the Bible says ... “The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.” (Nahum 1:7)

Accept Your Past

Accept that the past will always be in the past.

- **Pray:** Seek God’s wisdom and help in embracing your grief. (Psalm 34:17–18)
- **Recall:** Think back on your loss. List significant events and memories. (Psalm 42:4)
- **Weep:** Allow yourself to have tears. (Job 16:20)
- **Complete:** As you review, beside each event on your list, write the word “past,” which confirms, “I will be content to leave the past in the past.” (1 Timothy 6:6)
- **Memorize:** Write down verses 28, 50, 107, and 156 to memorize from Psalm 119.
- **Give thanks:** Thank God for all that He has taught you from the past and how He will use your past in the future. Pray, “God, thank You for all that You have taught me from my past pain and how You will use that time of grief for my good and for Your glory.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Accept Your Present

Accept that the present offers stability and significance.

- **Choose:** Live one day at a time. (Matthew 6:34)
- **Prioritize:** Put the Lord at the center of your life. (Matthew 6:33)
- **Ask:** Go to God with your specific questions. (Make a list.) (Philippians 4:6)
- **Thank:** Give thanks to God for providing everything you need for life. (2 Peter 1:3)
- **Praise:** Give God praise that He will never leave you. (Hebrews 13:5)
- **Focus:** Concentrate on the joy and satisfaction of helping others. (Make a list.) (Galatians 6:2)

“How to Find Comfort

- **Call upon the God of all comfort.** (2 Corinthians 1:3)
- **Open your heart to God’s purpose for your pain.** (2 Corinthians 1:9)
- **Maintain a clear conscience by confessing past sins and offenses.** (Proverbs 28:13)
- **Find the positive in your grief process.** (Job 23:10)
- **Obtain comfort from those God will send to you.** (2 Corinthians 7:6)
- **Reinforce your faith by sharing the comfort you have received from God with others.** (2 Corinthians 1:4)
- **Trust in the strength of Christ in you for the power to rebuild your life.** (Philippians 4:13)
Key Verse to Memorize

“Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.”
(Psalm 57:1)

Key Passage to Read

Lamentations 3:19–26

Questions and Answers

“I have been told that the death of my young daughter from cancer was a result of my lack of faith. Could this be true?”

The answer is no! You did not cause your daughter’s death. If this was true, then was the death of Jesus a result of His lack of faith? Was Job’s illness a result of his lack of faith? Our faith is to be placed in Jesus—our faith is not to be placed in ourselves or in our own faith! We are told to pray that God’s will, not ours, be done.

“He [The Lord] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

“I find myself questioning God ... asking why I’ve lost the dearest person in the world to me. Now I’m feeling guilty about that. Am I wrong to ask why?”

No. In fact, you’re in good company. The Bible tells of many with that same question. Moses, Joshua, David, Job, Jeremiah—they all asked why. Just as God shares in our joys, He shares in our pain. He knows when our hearts are shattered with the weight of our grief, and He wants us to call on Him at all times.

“In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”
(Ephesians 3:12)

“Every year for the past several years I’ve become depressed during the time of the year when my husband died. Why is it happening, and what can I do to stop it?”

You are experiencing what is commonly referred to as “Anniversary Depression.” Since the depression is triggered by conscious or subconscious memories, you can choose to create new memories around that date.

“The memory of the righteous is a blessing.”
(Proverbs 10:7 ESV)

Related Topics ...

- Death & Heaven
- Depression
- Evil & Suffering ... Why?
- Hope
- Terminal Illness

If you would like more information, biblical counsel, or prayer support, contact:
1-800-488-HOPE (4673)
www.HopeForTheHeart.org

The information in this resource is intended as guidelines for healthy living.
Please consult qualified medical, legal, pastoral, and psychological professionals regarding individual concerns.

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