

# Spiritual Health Check: Grieving Over Sin

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome here for this Sunday, July 10th. It's always funny to me, as I said before, Vern said, we don't have a lot of people here. Well, look around now. It's funny, hey? It's Baptist Standard Time.

Church starts at 11-ish. So, ish has come, and here we are. We're all ish together. So, just a quick pastoral announcement.

Our family will be hitting the road for a family vacation this Tuesday. We're heading to the mountains for a few days, thanks to Vern and Kathy and their condo in Canmore.

We're going to be enjoying a few days there. And then we're heading south to attend a memorial service, which is one of the ways families gather, right? And spending some time relaxing with family over the next week.

So, I need to keep doing my rehab while we're away. Most of you know this story. I won't get into it again. So, I have a virtual occupational therapist appointment on Zoom next Friday.

[ 1 : 02 ] So, that could be fun. But it is what it is, and it's an ongoing process. So, God is good, and he's teaching me patience. He's teaching me reliance on others instead of on myself.

Reliance on him. And it is a road that I cannot accelerate. It is a journey that I cannot change or amend.

I am in it. I am on it. And it is what it is. As I said last Sunday, that is my mantra. It has been for a long time. But it is what it is, and God is good.

So, we appreciate your prayers for safe travels, for patience for me, because I'm usually the driver. So, I get to sit passively in the passenger seat, biting my tongue.

And reminding that all Michelle has to do is squeeze, and I'll behave. So, but much needed fun and rest for us as well. The four of us have been cooped up, thanks to COVID, and thanks to this nonsense, and all the other things.

[ 2 : 13 ] So, it'll be good to get away and just spend some time in the mountains, spend some time laughing with family, and spending some time together. So, my good friend, and most of you have experienced his preaching before, Dr. Jerry Shepard will be our guest for the next three Sundays.

And I kind of said to him, okay, what do you think you want to preach on? And he said, well, he said, have you done a series on the Ten Commandments since you've been at Braemar? And I said, I have not.

And he said, well, I'd like to do the first three. And I said, that sounds great. So, Dr. Shepard will be doing that. For those of you who don't know, Dr. Shepard was my Old Testament prof at Taylor Seminary here in Edmonton.

He's awesome. He's a good man. He's one of the two or three individuals. The sound of his voice doesn't put me to sleep, but it creates some sort of a euphoric sense in me, which is, I've told him that.

He's very soothing. In a good way, though. But you will learn a lot over the next three weeks. And so I'm looking forward to hearing. I'm looking forward to hearing what Jerry has to say as well as your impressions of it.

[ 3 : 26 ] I've also reminded him that 45-minute sermons are much longer than most people can handle. So he has promised me, and you can hold him to this task, keep it in the 25 to 30 range.

So hold him to it. He will be good with you holding him to it. If you do one of these, or wrap it up, Dr. Shepard. But he will be a blessing to you when he is here.

I have great faith in that. So over the past several weeks, we've been spending time together in a sermon series called Spiritual Health Check.

And I've suggested to you that it's important for us to set a baseline, a healthy standard upon which we can measure things in the future, according to as far as our spiritual health goes. Because when we know what healthy should look and feel like, then we can recognize what normal is for us, right? And then we can better determine when warning signs begin to pop up, when we begin to feel like we're off track.

[ 4 : 39 ] And when you feel like you're off track, when you're starting to go off track, perhaps, you can better adjust it. You can better course correct before things get completely out of hand.

So as Christians, as followers of Jesus, it's important for us to recognize, and I've said this before in our series, that our spiritual health is even more important than our physical health.

So over the course of this series together, we've taken a closer look at some of the ways we can assess our spiritual health. Ways that we can identify important things to which we need to pay attention.

We've considered whether we personally long for a deeper and closer relationship with Jesus, with God. We've considered whether we're allowing ourselves to be directed by God's word.

Whether our relationship with Christ makes us more loving towards other people. Whether we're growing more aware of God's presence in our lives.

[ 5 : 49 ] Whether we're more concerned with the physical and spiritual needs of other people. Whether we actually delight in the church, in the bride of Christ, and God's plan for it.

And how we can engage, last week we looked at how we can engage the spiritual disciplines in our lives to stoke and rekindle the fire of our faith.

And as I said last week, I had planned to consider a few more topics together in this series. But my injury obviously sidetracked that. Sidetracked that timeline. And as I often say, here it comes again.

It is what it is. So we're wrapping up the series today with a sermon titled, Grieving Over Sin.

Thought about this a lot this week.

Grief. It's something that we all have in common. Don't we? We can also recognize that, like it or not, grief is inherently part of what it means to be human.

[ 7 : 02 ] And it's important to recognize, I reflected on this a lot, that when we grieve deeply, it's generally because we felt or loved deeply.

So why do we experience grief? I'm not going to be up here and say that I'm an expert. Far from it. But I believe that we most often experience grief because that we have lost something. We sense that we have lost something that we can never get back.

Or perhaps even we've lost an opportunity that got away from us. I'll share just one thing briefly. I had a voicemail from my dad wishing me a happy birthday.

And I didn't get a chance to call him back. And a few days later, he was gone. One of the deepest things I grieve to this day is, I don't know what happened, but that voicemail got erased.

[ 8 : 09 ] And I tried. I phoned Telus and I said, I need this message back. And they said, it's gone. So I grieve the loss of that. Obviously, I grieve the loss of my dad as well.

But most often, I think we can recognize that as human beings, we grieve the loss of a relationship, don't we? Whether that's happened through a death or some other breakdown in relationship.

I know lots of people who are estranged from siblings or parents or other family members, and they grieve the loss of that relationship. And we can also recognize, I believe, that there are other things in life that we can potentially grieve just as deeply as the loss of a human being or a relationship that we valued.

People may deeply grieve the opportunity they wished would have happened but never came to be. Like a new job, perhaps. Or a trip somewhere that didn't pan out or was canceled.

People may also deeply grieve a change to their circumstances. There's a giant ant on the pulpit. He's huge. I'm grieving that, that he's right there.

[ 9 : 28 ] So people may grieve the plans that they had, such as an injury. That changes plans. We can grieve that. A health concern that comes up that we didn't expect or will not seem to go away.

Or a change in our financial circumstances. We can grieve that just as deeply as well. This is not what I had planned for my life. You've maybe even thought or said those words yourself.

And I believe that grief can also stem from fear. Fear of the unknown. Or fear of our circumstances being different than, as I said, we hoped or planned for them to be.

We grieve change. If you're familiar with the cartoon character Charlie Brown. I'm getting rid of that ant. It's a spider, actually.

Which is even worse. Okay. I'm an arachnophobe. Oh, my goodness. That spider's still right there. Don't. This is the worst.

[10:41] God is laughing at me right now, just so you know. Michelle has gone to rescue me because she knows how much spiders bother me. So if you know Charlie Brown, everyone knows Charlie Brown, right?

I hope. So what's Charlie Brown's expression? Good grief. So while Charlie didn't mean it in that context, I can almost guarantee that.

I believe there can be such a thing as grief that is good. Grief that is legitimate. What the heck? That happens in circumstances when God will bring comfort. Can you consider that? Good grief. When God can bring comfort.

When God can bring healing. So for anyone listening, the comedy of errors around the pulpit spider, we'll forever refer to him as pulpit spider, continues.

[11:52] So anyway, good grief, right? Speaking of back on track. Hopefully we can recognize, though, that there are also unhealthy types of grief.

Right? There are unhealthy types of grief in our lives that may come from, probably not surprising, selfish desires. Grief may be more keenly felt at times of the year as well when someone we love has died.

Right? You grieve the loss of someone who has passed at Father's Day, as we've talked about over the years. At Mother's Day, at Christmas time.

Birthdays. When I've talked to people in pastoral counseling, and when I've had pastoral counseling done with me personally, it's that series of firsts, right?

You go through that first year of the first Father's Day. The first birthday. The first Christmas.

[13:02] And all of those things that make that grief feel more raw. When memories can make grief more noticeable and more significant for us.

So let's take a different approach here. I believe our society can be extremely uncomfortable with grief.

Can you recognize that? We encourage people. What do we say? Everything will be okay.

I think I've shared with you before, one of my seminary colleagues and I, his mother died around the same time my father died while we were in seminary.

And we did a presentation in one of our theology classes where we talked about, here are the things that people say when someone dies. Here's how they're helpful. And here's how they're not.

[14:00] And so it gave us the opportunity from our own context to recognize that grief makes people very uncomfortable. We become speechless when we recognize someone else is grieving, right?

We have no words. We may not know what to say. We may not know how to comfort them. And you know what? The two best words you can say to someone who's grieving?

I'm sorry. You can't take it away as much as you want to. One of the worst things you can say? I'll tell you this, and I made Michelle promise me to never say it again to someone else.

Let me know if you need anything. Do you see how it's super helpful, and you can see the heart behind it, but you've just given the other person the responsibility to engage with you?

And I'm sure you can all recognize that when you're grieving, that's probably the last thing you have the capacity to do. Sometimes I've even gotten the impression from people that they feel like someone should just get over it.

[15:16] It's time. It's time. You've been sad. Move on with your life. Is that familiar? I want each of you to hear and receive these words this morning.

If you are grieving right now, or if you find yourself experiencing a trigger that reminds you of past grief, there is nothing to be embarrassed about.

Nothing. Don't apologize for grief. Don't feel embarrassed if you're grieving a loss.

Don't feel that you have to explain it away. And don't feel that for any reason, you just need to get over it.

Believe it or not, the ability to feel grief, feel the emotion in deep ways in our life, it's a gift from God.

[16:24] It absolutely is. And it's also a reminder that we cared deeply, and we loved well. After my mom passed and my dad decided he was ready to remarry, I still keenly remember some family members being shocked, being shocked over the timing, feeling like the timing was too soon, inappropriate, the whole range of things.

For me, an individual's timing for overcoming and processing grief is as unique to them and for them as anything else would be.

I would venture to say, how dare someone impose their timeline on someone else's grief. We should no more wish for someone to continue grieving after they have processed it than we should wish for a wound not to heal.

Grief is the last act of love we have to give those whom we have loved. A quote I read this week put it like this.

Grief I've learned is really just love. It's all the love you wanted to give but cannot. That's so beautiful. It's all the love you wanted to give but cannot.

[ 18 : 03 ] All of that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and that hollow part of your chest.

Grief is just love with no place to go. Grief is just love with no place to go. So as I prepared this sermon I recognized a question I had and maybe you have it too.

What's the difference seems basic and you might be going oh pastor can't that's easy. What's the difference between mourning and grief? grief? Well mourning is the outward expression of grief.

So mourning is the tears. Mourning is the sadness on the face. The emotions and pain that are exhibited on the outside are as a result of the grief that is being experienced on the inside.

Does that make sense? Mourning is the outward expression of inward grief. So there's your grief intro. So but in the context of our spiritual health what does it mean to grieve over sin?

[ 19 : 24 ] Which is our sermon this morning. In considering that particularly in relation to sin I believe it's important to recognize that there's an idea of godly grief versus worldly grief over sin.

We experience worldly grief over our sins when really we're ultimately sorry for the effect our sins might have on our life. Might have on the lives of someone else.

Worldly grief is the immediate awareness of the consequences. sense of guilt right? A sense of immediate recognition ooh I shouldn't have done that because I can immediately recognize what I've done.

Or perhaps when we feel a sense of guilt that sense of conviction that I believe comes from the Holy Spirit that sense that we've been caught in something right?

Have you ever sinned done one of your patterned sins that you know one of your respectable sins as our series looked at a few months ago? A sin that you tend to just minimize but then oops you recognize you got busted right?

[ 20 : 40 ] Someone caught you in it. That's worldly grief. Does that make sense? But godly grief over our sin comes from recognizing that we have acted against God whether intentionally or unintentionally that we have chosen our way versus his.

That's godly grief over our sin. When we recognize or we're confronted with our sin or sinful behavior in our lives I believe we may tend to react in prideful ways and deny the truth of what we've done.

and I believe that we may do that rather than recognizing the opportunity to repent to receive God's forgiveness we're embarrassed and ashamed like Adam and Eve in the garden right?

We react out of being caught rather than reacting in a healthy way of repenting and confession and in resisting repenting of our sin and seeking God's forgiveness in an intentional healthy way we begin to get caught in a perpetual loop of sin that keeps us away from God rather than relishing that opportunity we have to repent to receive forgiveness to draw closer in relationship to him so if you experience grief this is rhetorical don't feel like I'm going to look for hands do you grieve deeply over your sin or is that something that you even consider do you recognize sinful patterns in your life or do you not really worry about it do you not consider asking God's forgiveness as you go about your daily life do you just assume you're forgiven my free pass my pass that when I accepted

Christ covers all of this so I don't need to repent I don't need to ask for forgiveness I don't need to recognize that I have sinned as it happens is that perhaps a perspective that you've adopted that's where those perpetual sins those patterns of sinfulness in our lives when we can get caught up in those we may sin without even recognizing it as being sin when we did our respectable sins sermon series I had so many people come up to me afterwards or comment to me and say wow I never thought of X as sinful I do that all the time or I never thought of such and such as being something that was against God's will for my life I do that without even thinking about it so we may sin without even recognizing it as sin then we may as a result feel we don't even need to ask for forgiveness

[ 23 : 51 ] I didn't realize I did anything wrong why should I seek God's forgiveness for it but then do you see how that cycle can begin and can continue and continue without being checked can you recognize that how that may have been an issue for you in the past or even right now the apostle Paul recognized the grief that he personally experienced over sin in his life in his letter to the Romans chapter 7 verses 15 to 25 and I'll read that for us now I do not understand what I do for what I want to do I do not do but what I hate I do and if I do what I do not want to do I agree that the law is good and as it is it is no longer

I myself who do it but it is sin living in me for I know that good itself does not dwell in me that is in my sinful nature for I have the desire to do what is good but I cannot carry it out for I do not do the good I want to do but the evil I do not want to do I keep on doing now if I do now if I do not want to do sorry Paul's tangling me now if I do what I do not want to do it is no longer I who do it but it is sin living in me that does it yikes so I find this law at work although I want to do good evil is right there with me for in my inner being I delight in

God's law but I see another law at work in me waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work in me I always whenever I read this next couple of verses I always think boy if this is what Paul said about himself I in trouble what a wretched man I am Paul says who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death here's the good news thanks be to God Paul says who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord thank you Donna amen so having a sense that you struggle with sin and that you may experience a sense of grief over the sin in your life that's a good thing

I'm going to tell you that's a good thing that's the struggle that we see here with the apostle Paul as he speaks in his letter to the Romans remember my friends people who don't recognize or follow Jesus Christ don't generally have these kinds of struggles or experience this grief at all can you recognize that at all it's not an issue for them sure they may disappoint themselves for not living up to their own standards that personal standard issue or the standard of someone they respect or a mentor or someone but in the same they don't in the same way that Christians must they don't agonize over being unholy before God a God who as 1st Peter 1 15 reminds us is holy and who calls those who follow him to be holy as well so are you able to recognize sinful patterns sinful actions sinful behaviors in your life we've got that respectable sins sermon series on the website it's a good refresher do do you think about those things do you recognize them do they concern you or are you indifferent about it as I touched on a moment ago

I mean but I've been safe from my sin I'm forgiven done moment in time done do you bring your sin to God do you ask for his forgiveness in an intentional ongoing way do you ask for his help to change your behavior if you're trying to change your behavior on your own it probably won't work I can say firsthand I have tried to in sin in my life I have tried to say this is wrong I'm not doing it anymore digging in my heels not doing it anymore do I do it again yep but there have been situations where I've said God I cannot stop doing this I need your help showed up I can tell you stories of victory over sin in my life that are only because God made it happen

[ 29 : 34 ] I'm stubborn I'm thorough but I can't overcome sin on my own my friends you truly mourn over the sin in your life do you grieve over it or have you become complacent about it so I'm not talking about stressing over or obsessing over it to keep you up at night but I'm talking about experiencing that kind of good grief that I mentioned earlier that causes you to recognize your sinful behavior or do you worry that worrying about being concerned about feeling guilty about grieving over your sin somehow makes you a bad Christian right if you're feeling like if I'm grieving over sin I must be a bad Christian I must be doing something wrong no it means you're right on track with the apostle

Paul see that he struggled with it remember you take nothing else away this morning remember being aware of and repenting of your sin in your life is a good sign because it means that you recognize it as being wrong and you are seeking to repent and change does that make sense as theologian A.W.

Pink explained this is so great it is not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors of faith it's not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors of faith are you aware of the sin in your life now that you may not have been as aware of in the past maybe you were committing sins in your life in the past that you didn't even recognize but now you have grown now you've come to recognize those things not okay that's growth that's progress that's fantastic as discouraging as

fresh exposure and reminders of our sins can be at times do you feel that squirming sense of oh yeah that was not great what

I just said or did there as painful as it may be to have ever deeper layers of sin in our lives exposed there's something positive here we need to recognize increased sensitivity to increased awareness of your sin is as I said a moment ago a mark of growth it means that you're likely making spiritual progress beyond where you were years ago because back then you may not even have recognized those things were sin does that make sense my friends the closer you come to the light of Christ the more his holy light will expose in you in the words of 19th century Bible scholar Thomas Bernard he said our sense of sin is in proportion to our nearness to

God isn't that cool our sense of sin our awareness of sin is directly in proportion to our nearness to God my friends may we be people who truly experience good grief over sin so that we will continue to remain spiritually healthy and so that we will draw closer to the eternally living and forgiving Father God we also need to continue to support one another in this journey as we seek to be committed and engaged and forgiven disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ amen amen