

Ministry of Griefshare at St John's Vancouver

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Date: 06 April 2014

Preacher: Edie Rittinger

- [0 : 0 0] Talk about intimidation. It's bad enough that Bruce Hindmarsh spoke last Sunday. They have my friend Jim Packer up here talking about somebody I didn't quite recognize.
- I am fully intimidated. But for a lot of years I've actively resisted opening my mouth here at Learners Exchange. But I do feel this is something that I think it's time we shared with people.
- Well, because sooner or later all of us will walk this road of grief. Many of us in this room already have. But it is a unique and personal journey.
- And the reason that it came to St. John's is how I want to begin my talk. Because it's not just grief share. It's how has grief share affected and changed the community of St. John's that I believe has had an effect.
- The title of the whole grief share program is From Mourning to Joy. And that is a continuum that I see clearly.
- [1 : 0 9] is mourning is the initial shock and trauma and dismay and distress of losing a loved one. And joy, as the Bible says, cometh in the morning.
- It's a process of working toward. And we teach that joy and pain have a coexistence. You don't move from one to the other.
- It is surrounding us and integral to who we are. And I've learned that again preparing this talk. I've been surprised and almost ambushed by the pain it has brought back to me personally.
- Not for my own personal loss so much as the names of people who've come over the years in acute distress. Many of them have never had a connection with St. John's.
- But somebody knew about grief share and brought them. And the stories that came to my mind. People totally paralyzed in their grief, unable to speak.
- [2 : 1 5] And maybe seven or eight weeks into the program, finally began to get the courage to speak what has been the huge loss in their lives.
- Now, there are many experiences of loss that have nothing to do with death. But grief share is explicitly for the death of a loved one. We can lose a job.
- We can lose our money. We can have a thief steal our car. And that's all grievous to us. But there's nothing as profound and deep and painful as losing someone you love.
- So I'm not a clinician and I'm not a theologian. But I am able to give some kind of a personal slant, I think, to what has gone on. I was in a museum in Holland last September.
- A Van Gogh Museum. And I came across this sketch of a painting called Sorrowing Man or At Eternity's Gate. It was painted just a few weeks before Van Gogh died.
- [3 : 2 4] This is his sketch. The painting I have brought if you want to look at it later. But to me, it epitomizes the state of people who come for help at grief share.
- Profoundly affected by what has just happened to them. And the question they are asking, what has happened to me? My life is in shatters. Can it ever be good again?

And yes, it can. Well, how did it happen to come to St. John's? When I was first hired at St. John's, I was an assistant to Bill Lovell.

That would have been in 1996, approximately. And shortly after I came, he took me on a visit, a pastoral visit, to a widow who had suffered the loss of her husband.

And the funeral had been held about three weeks prior. So we sat and had tea in this lady's elegant living room. And she sat stiffly in an armchair. We drank tea. Bill spoke words that only Bill could speak.

[4 : 28] And we said goodbye. And that was the end of it. This lady never reappeared on the scene. And there was no follow-up.

And I thought, this just isn't right. How could a loving, large, Jesus-loving church be letting people fall through the cracks?

Not deliberately. It's just that there's really no prolonged excuse to go back to visit somebody if they don't invite you back. So there needed to be something.

And I knew not what. But a few months later, a woman who I had befriended here at St. John's experienced the death of her husband. And a few weeks later, she phoned and she said, Edie, can't you do something?

Is there anything that will help me? And I had just had a notification that there was a grief group beginning at St. Mary's. So I sent her to that. Two weeks later, she phoned and she said, this isn't going to work.

[5 : 26] She said, I want Jesus. I don't want a pad of paper and a pencil. So I said, okay, I'll see what I can do. And in my research, I found this ministry in South Carolina who not only produced grief share but divorce care, which we have both made very good use of here at St. John's.

So then what do we do to get a group together? The first group certainly had to be a success or it was going to go nowhere at St. John's because the critical eye is always upon something new.

And so I invited three gentlemen to come. Two of them had lost a wife. And the other one was the chaplain at Women's and Children's Hospital.

And they all graciously accepted, I think, after phoning Felix and saying, do I really have to come? And he said, yes, you really do. But they never admitted it to me.

There were 12 people came. Seven of them were from St. John's. Five were from elsewhere. Two women. One of them, of course, was the woman who had asked for help.

[6 : 37] There were two other very elderly, dignified widows. One of them, St. John's. The other one, not St. John's. And a young woman whose husband had died in the car on his way home from playing a game of ball.

And she was absolutely traumatized and so angry with God. That was sort of the chemistry of this group that came together. And I thought, oh, my goodness.

What are we going to do with all of this? But forge ahead. I took out a few little letters I had received over the years this week and looked through them to see if there was anything that would remind me of how grief share was received in those early years.

And Dr. Ted Robbins, I know he wouldn't mind me using his name, who is a wonderful man. He was one of the men who came to the initial grief share group, had written me a note.

And he said two things. That it helped rearrange his life. And then he said nonbelievers would think it ironic that you would suffer the loss of your mother midway through the grief share program, which I did.

[7 : 49] Six weeks into the program, my mom died in her sleep. And it was not unexpected. It was God's grace that at age 98, God would just let her go to sleep.

But nevertheless, I learned one thing. The group learned another thing. I learned that grief is not already grieved when you know it's a long goodbye.

No way is it over. And the group began to care for me and comfort me. And they learned that as they came outside of themselves, out of their own grief, they were transformed by caring for others.

So it was not a bad experience to have happen the way it did. And it reminded me of 2 Corinthians where we use this scripture a lot in grief share.

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 tribulations, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted.

[9 : 00] It's very appropriate for grief share people. So what is grief share anyway?

First of all, it is a Christ-centered, 13-week support group. Nothing functions without a lot of prayer because we believe that Jesus is the healer, not our program, not any words we say, but the Lord himself will heal.

It's much more than simply watching a video. It does not follow the pattern set out by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, the five stages of grief, which everybody thinks, well, I've got to go through denial and anger and bargaining and depression and acceptance, or I'm not grieving properly.

That's hogwash. Some of those things happen. They happen out of order. They happen over and over again. And some periods of, say, anger might be very short, but there's a lot of depression.

Sometimes people feel in a huge sense of relief that their loved one is no longer in pain here in the world. So there's not that same depressed feeling.

[10 : 18] So we can't put a pattern together for grief. It is unique to each person. I call it an emergency room ministry because people who are in deep, deep distress come in hope of finding some kind of help.

Many of them come with suicidal thoughts. It's a guide to healing. All the topics addressed week by week are carefully designed to assist people in sorting out their lives.

And I always begin each new group by saying this. You have lost someone you love, and life is never going to be the same again for you. But that does not mean it cannot be good again.

It can. It is our hope and prayer that we, the ministers, will somehow be used by God to help the participants begin to see that just one glimmer of hope for a good life once again.

And learn to rely heavily on the Lord for his healing and help. I have a little drink of water. And wonderfully, it's a tool for evangelism and outreach.

[11 : 38] It has been an amazing outreach ministry from St. John's. And people have indeed come to the Lord. Over the years, people would phone and say, I've heard about this program.

What's it about? And as we talk, I'd say, well, do you have a personal faith? Well, no, I don't go for that stuff. Then likely it's not for me. I always say, yes, likely it is for you.

But you need to know that we pray, that we're not preachy, and we'd like you to come and try us. Sometimes they come and leave after two weeks. But notably, some come and stay.

And here's where I want to tell my first story. One young woman came. She was 27 years old, had never gone to church after escaping Sunday school that her parents insisted.

And she was deeply troubled, didn't have much to say at first, but she was able to say that both of her parents had been killed instantly when lightning struck their home.

[12 : 38] And she had not much more than that to say at the start, but gradually it came out she was consumed by guilt because she had been a rebellious child, had had it very strained, and indeed they were very distant in their relationship by the time this tragedy happened.

And following the third week, she said to me, I don't think I belong in this group. And I said, yeah, I think you do. Just give us a try.

Give us a chance. So she stayed. And a couple weeks later, she told me quite confidentially that she had started going to a church in her neighborhood area. And I said, well, that's a good church.

You keep going. Well, we did pray to receive Jesus before the end of Grief Share. And there was a big celebration. I remember we all went out for dinner at a Thai food restaurant, and everybody was able to be happy about that.

There is a workbook that comes with the program. It's quite extensive. And if people use this the way they should, the healing is much more profound and rapid.

[13 : 54] There are five days of little bit of homework each week on the topic we've covered. It's all based on Scripture. And the purpose is to really help that person begin to examine and be honest with themselves about their feelings, their emotions, the state of their life as it is, whatever it is, and to journal.

And do a little checkup on themselves so that they can see they are making progress or maybe they are stuck and need some help. So I always encourage people to use the workbook.

There is also a place for them to follow along during the video and take notes if they wish. On the video, there are people who are real-life people.

They are absolutely you and I and the neighbor next door talking about their experiences. Whatever the topic is being covered that week, they will talk about what they experienced.

And then there are very well-known Christian counselors who provide input on the video as well. It's generally about 30 to 35 minutes long. And so a typical session always begins with the essential tea and coffee and chatter for 15 or 20 minutes.

[15 : 14] And then it's time to sit down and watch the video. We begin with prayer for Jesus to be present with each one and for the Holy Spirit's guidance and teaching and for the comfort of God to be present in the room and in each person.

And the people on the video are the ones who have experienced every imaginable kind of loss. And they speak of their own feelings in working through, whether it's the suicide of a son, the death of an infant, the death of a spouse, the death of a father and mother, whatever it is.

There are people who have lived that in real life. And it's profoundly instructional for people who are wondering, what really has happened to me? And then following the video, we have ample time for discussion in a group.

This is the time for people to share what they may have had triggered as they watched the video, or they may just share something else that is really troubling them. And no discussion is too small to be paid attention to.

No grief is unimportant. And we try and minister to each person there. What happens over the weeks is profoundly moving to me in that people, when they first come, are rather veiled.

[16 : 44] They maybe reveal a little bit of what the reason for their grief is. But as the weeks go by, and the topic comes up in that week's video, they begin to open up.

I think of one woman who wanted us to know that she finally disclosed that she had lost her husband of 60 years, but he was not her first husband.

Her first husband had committed suicide. She was never allowed to talk about it. And then two weeks later, her 16-year-old daughter was killed in a car accident.

And all of that had just been forced to be bottled up in her. And over the weeks, she came to two sessions, actually, two series. Over those 26 weeks that she came, a lot of change happened for her.

But I think she was right in saying she would never truly recover fully because it had been bottled up for so long. The sessions run stand-alone, and people can join at any time.

[17 : 52] But I feel it's far better if they start at the beginning because of the way the topics are arranged. Session one begins titled Living with Grief. And it introduces people, explains what living with grief is like, why participants shouldn't be ashamed of their grief, and why they shouldn't rush their healing.

And the main topics would be, what is grief? And then people will, someone on the video will talk about it's a maddening experience. Somebody else will say, I think I'm going crazy.

And it's the beginning to recognize that you truly have lost someone that you love. No, they're not going to walk back through the door. They really are gone.

And it's not said forcefully, but it just is beginning to encourage people to realize the finality of death. And we use the word death. We don't, you know, beat around the bush and call it something pretty.

It's death. Grief is normal. It's not a sign of weakness. It's difficult to convince men of that at first.

[19 : 02] Because boys, growing up, are told, boys don't cry. Suck it up. Be strong. And so it's a privilege to provide an arena where men can be fully people, human, and weep, and talk about what really has caused them profound pain.

There was a Chinese pastor who brought people, oh, for about four years in a row, he would bring people from his congregation to the grief share group.

And one time he brought me two youngish men. And I thought, I wonder how they're going to relate to all of us and if they're going to be able to open up and share.

Well, they did. It was just lovely, very healing. And I have to say that this is a mixed blessing. I believe grief share is a blessing for others, but it has been a great blessing for me as well to experience what happens in people's lives and indeed to sometimes relate to my own personal losses that have occurred in my own life.

But one thing we do learn as leaders, none of this is about me. It's all about the participants. The grief Jesus understood and experienced in his life is very instructional, and we are sure and quick to refer to Scripture that way, always emphasizing Jesus was a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief, and no grief is too ashamed.

[20 : 40] You shouldn't be ashamed of grief and hide it. We're often unprepared for grief. Many people avoid thinking about death these days.

They call it passing on, and there's very few funerals anymore. They're just a memorial service. Sometimes the ashes are present, sometimes not. And the whole youth culture is very strong.

And so to just be able to say death is real and death is normal and death is going to happen is helpful, I think. And then we provide some helpful hints on learning, beginning to learn to live with grief.

And one thing we always say is be true to yourself and begin to believe that you are going to make it. You're going to make it through this. We counsel people strongly, don't make any big decisions right now.

Don't sell your house. Don't move to another country. Just stay where you are and wait for God. And number two, don't rush into remarriage.

[21 : 49] Don't replace because it doesn't usually work too well. Session two is beginning the journey. And this session prepares our group for what to expect along the way.

It also emphasizes that everyone's journey will be unique and warrants against comparing your grief with anybody else's because it never does work quite the same way.

A young woman came to a session of grief share, the first one, in a very euphoric state. She was quite happy. And her husband had committed suicide 30 days prior.

And she was just taking it in her stride very well. And I thought, well, this is going to be hard for you before too long. And it was. But she used that crash to teach herself, to examine her hidden anger.

And she kept two journals, a red one and a black one. And the red journal, she wrote everything about her anger and her rage.

[23 : 01] And that, in the case of a suicide, will be a lot of rage against the person who has committed suicide. Much as they love them, there is a lot of anger. How could you do this?

So the topics in this week of learning the journey is that you're unique. And what shapes your journey? Your relationships. Your relationship with the one who has died shapes your grief journey.

Was it a good relationship? Were you reconciled at the time of death? Was there anything that should have been taken care of that wasn't? Was it a relationship fraught with conflict?

All of those things will shape the way that people grieve. An amount of time spending, grieving, before a loved one dies doesn't necessarily mean that you're not going to be profoundly smacked with it when your loved one does die.

That happened to me with my mom. I had said goodbye to her four years prior because she was deep in dementia. But I still was profoundly, profoundly touched by mom's death.

[24 : 12] And it doesn't go away, but it turns into something lovely. And then there are five tasks that we give people this week.

And the first one is to accept your loved one's death. The challenge is out. Accept that this is death. Release your emotions. And this is a tough one, but if you have to cry at home, let yourself cry.

If you need to cry for a whole day, do it. But begin to get in touch with your emotions of this trauma. Begin to store up memories, good memories.

And begin to separate your identity, particularly if you've been in a long-term marriage. The one flesh really does need separation to a whole degree.

And then begin to reinvest in life in one small step at a time. And sometimes it seems unending, this journey, but you can't rush it.

[25 : 18] And you need to know as well that you've lost a whole lot more than your loved one. And we ask people to make an inventory of their losses.

What have you lost in the death of your husband? Well, you even say, well, I've lost my garbage toter-outer. I've lost my go-to-the-store-for-me, dear.

I've lost I need a hug today. All of those things, it works into a long list of deep losses that each one has to be dealt with and acknowledged and prayed about.

And there are times when you least expect that you're going to be ambushed by your grief. And initially this will happen perhaps the first Christmas when you don't have your loved one.

I found myself in a store looking for a card for Mother's Day, and all of a sudden I thought, what am I doing? And it really reintroduces a lot of the pain of the departure.

[26 : 20] And some of the questions that people are asking is, is this ever going to end? And does it mean I have to forget all about my loved one to live a new life?

And, of course, no. But some people feel guilty. They think, oh, gosh, I'm feeling happy today that I shouldn't be. I'm forgetting my friend, you know, whoever it is.

And then, of course, the question of what do I do with his or her belongings? And there's no rule for that either. One dear woman told me she was able to give everything away but her husband's favorite sweater.

And she loved the smell of it. And she's kept it forever. And I think that's just fine. Session three, the effects of grief. I hope I'm not getting too clinical.

I don't want to. I just want you to help see what we do look at in terms of getting through this grief. And the way people respond is looked at in session three.

[27 : 24] And the first one, of course, is denial. And questioning your sanity, memory loss, lack of ability to concentrate, hallucinations, and sometimes physical health suffers.

And there are tangled, tangled emotions that come up. And it looks like this. It's like a ball of yarn.

And can you see that in the middle is denial? There's anger with God.

There's anger with the loved one who's died and left you alone. There's anger with the person who has killed your son in a car accident. There is anger at your own inability to have been forgiving of that person when they were alive.

It's a mixed, tangled web of emotions. Women are a little bit better about understanding their emotions.

[28 : 43] One person I dearly loved said to me one day, How do you know when you're happy? I said, What? What do you mean you don't know when you're happy?

And I realized that men are not really as nearly in touch with their emotions as women are. And that's one of the beautiful differences with men and women, of course.

But it's shocking to realize how much difficulty people have with understanding what they are feeling at that time.

So that's a good diagram to have. It didn't reproduce very well. It's not a very good color. But there it is. Anger with God is dealt with quite extensively.

But what we do is reassure people that God is a big God. And he can understand your anger. And he can take your questions. But ultimately you have to say, Oops, sorry God.

[29 : 44] I was angry at the wrong person. And we do emphasize on drawing closer to God with regular Bible reading. And getting into a good habit of devotions.

And there are ways to find relief from your grief, temporary relief. To comfort yourself. Maybe you just want to cover up, sit on the couch and watch a good movie that day and drink a cup of tea.

And not think, not do your regular duties. Maybe you want to look at some good old photo album and reminisce. Some people find comfort in that. It is definitely a wise thing to journal your pain.

Not so much at the time. But you can go back and look at it and realize, That's not me anymore. I have come a long way. And don't numb your pain with alcohol and drugs.

That's a huge mistake. And, once again, we emphasize that suicide is not the answer. People will continue, many people will say they continue to have suicidal thoughts for weeks and weeks after the loss of someone.

[30 : 54] The next session is specifically for people who have lost a spouse. But we encourage everybody to come because there's something in it for them as well. The questions asked are, Why does it hurt so much?

And we, once again, regard the one flesh state that is put together by God. And that's like tearing apart two separate pieces of flesh. You find out that your hopes and dreams have died.

So tragically that many married couples save and plan for the day of retirement so that they can travel and have a wonderful life. And that wonderful life is cut very short.

And those hopes and dreams died of what they were going to do. They find out what loneliness really is. And the tragedy is many friends leave you behind.

Widowers, not so much. Men are much more well looked after because they look pretty helpless. But, and generally, I generally advise any new widower, beware of women bearing casseroles.

[32 : 12] And Merv Hansen kind of laughed at me when I told him that. But about two months later, he said, You know what, Edie, you were right. And we do give advice on them.

Oh, and for the widow especially, they may realize that they have financial challenges coming up. Maybe the husband had not left her well cared for in his financial state.

So all of those things they need to be considering. And then how do we move forward? And really, it's all just one word called adjusting to this new reality.

The new way your life is to be reordered and rearranged. And one big thing is that you have to realize you're not betraying your spouse when you start engaging in social events or going out to a movie or, indeed, laughing again.

You're not being in denial of your spouse or betraying him at all or her. And find out who you are. Who is the new you?

[33 : 17] You're single. Many people will speak of the first time they had to fill out a government form and it said, Are you married, single, or divorced? They just could not mark an ex besides single.

And that is a very painful experience at the start. And then there's a lot of advice on managing money and their new reality. Helpful hints. And once again, we say don't make any big decisions quickly.

And get some advice from skilled counselors before you do anything. The Bible says in many counselors it's good advice. So we do that.

And then there's the opposite to maybe having financial challenges. Some women, especially, are left extremely well off. And they feel guilty about it. And so they give it all away.

And then they find themselves impoverished before too long. So, you know, we even caution them about that. And when people comfort themselves sometimes, they comfort it by going on wild shopping sprees and then regretting it.

[34 : 29] So we try and help them, too, with determining what are your needs and what are your wants. And forget about the wantas and just think about the have-tos for now. And then what about a new relationship?

That's covered as well. And there's a fair bit of attention paid to, in the new reality, what you do with your sexual desires. And it's pretty frank talk. And I think it's very helpful to people.

Mainly because we start with what does the Bible say about singleness and sex. The next session is about your family and grief. And it talks a lot about the loss of a child.

Grieving the loss of unfulfilled dreams when a child dies. You're not going to get to walk your little daughter up the aisle. You're not going to get to see your son play his first hockey game.

Whatever it is. One father came to Grief Share. You may have heard about the accident.

[35 : 31] A young woman, doctor, with her infant daughter were aboard a seaplane. She used to come to St. John's, actually. The seaplane crashed and Carrie and her baby were drowned.

And the dad was left with a little three-and-a-half-year-old girl at home. So he was coping with double loss and at the same time needing to learn how to be father and mother to this little girl.

And it was a privilege to have him come to the group. He was very honest in sharing his struggles. Grief Share does have one DVD that they can borrow called Grief Share for Kids.

And it is helpful in helping parents begin to understand how children look at grief. It's a very different process for them. And you need to be able to speak their language.

There can be, once again, this tangled web of bitterness and anger and all kinds of mixed emotions about the loss of a child. How did the child die?

[36 : 34] That's a big thing. And right now in this present group, I have three groups of people who have lost a son, two of them to suicide.

None of them come to St. John's. One family, for the 13 weeks, have not yet spoken out about it. So I'm sure they'll come back to another group.

But it is unbelievably painful. And attached to that is shame and guilt, not only anger.

And then the question is, is my child in heaven? Daryl Johnson, who's the senior pastor now at First Baptist and was a professor at Regent, answered that admirably one night a couple of years ago because their son committed suicide.

And Daryl said they agonized over that. Was he in heaven? And he said God gave them a profound answer. Absolutely he is. If he loved Jesus in life, he will love Jesus in death.

[37 : 44] And Jesus will accept him. And so we can say if your child loved Jesus, he's with the Lord. And if they're infants, of course they're with the Lord.

There's no doubt. Grief in your marriage is, again, the same. Not dealing with the death of your spouse. How do you and your spouse grieve together?

In the loss of your child. There is no way that both husband and wife will grieve in the same way and make the same progress.

And one will wonder, well, why won't they talk to me about it? And the other one will wonder, well, why is he so angry? And they need to learn to understand one another. Why they grieve so differently.

All kinds of things get affected in a marriage. Quite often marriages fail due to the death of a child. Even Christian marriages fail. And of importance, we deal with that sex life is affected as well.

[38 : 48] And how do you exercise patience through that time? And we give some helpful hints on what to do if your spouse won't talk to you at all about it.

Where do you get the comfort from if you can't get comfort from your spouse? And then how to help breathing children. And I've covered that a bit with the case. There's one whole session on the question, why?

Why, God? Why did you let this happen? Why does God let bad things happen to good people? And we begin the video with God's story of the why he rescued us from sin.

And we do as much as we can to help them see that we live in a fallen world. And this is not God's doing. It's our own free will that has brought evil into this world.

And disease and death came into existence. It was not God's original plan. And there are questions that we're not going to have answered. God didn't say he would answer every one of our questions.

[39 : 54] But he didn't say he wouldn't answer any of our questions. So we have to ask God and wait for the answer. Sometimes the answer says, it's not for you to know right now.

And can we be content with that? We know that we will know all of these things one day. But not right now. But it's definitely okay to keep asking God questions.

Daniel and King David, they asked God all kinds of questions. And he replied with some of them and others he didn't. And then we remind them that God has a question for them.

Are you going to believe God's story of redemption and rescue? And are you going to believe in Jesus? That's the challenge that week. And then the next two weeks focus on the uniqueness of grief.

There's too much to talk about the content. But I want to talk a little bit about a couple of people.

[41 : 00] How guilt affects grief. A woman with a strong Italian accent phoned me and asked if she could bring her daughter to Grief Share. I said, well, of course. When they arrived, I discovered the mother was a profound Christian.

The daughter, not so much. For seven weeks, the mother spoke in her halting English. But the daughter said not one word.

She sat stony-faced and rigid. She didn't want to be there. And then the one session about guilt affecting our grief. When it was time for the discussion, the mother poked the daughter and said, you talk.

So she talked. And out came this guilt. Misplaced guilt, which is what we teach.

Is your guilt true or is it false? Hers was false. She had been married to an abusive brute of a man. Tried to leave him several times. He came and got her back.

[42 : 03] He ultimately developed a problem that needed abdominal surgery and died as a result of the surgery. And she wanted him to die.

And he did die. And so she felt guilty. But she finally blurted it all out. And I think we were all in tears before the end of that session.

But it was so helpful for her to learn that her guilt was wrong. And she was right to be angry with this brute. And most often people will admit that at one point or other in a bad relationship they think, why don't you just die?

It's not a good thing to think, but it does happen. We even talk about how murder affects grief because, believe it or not, I've had two cases of people who have had murders in their family.

And there's a whole new set of problems that exist with waiting for justice. Do they know who perpetrated the murder? Why was the person killed? One had been actually part of a drug ring.

[43 : 09] So there was all kinds of shame about that. And there's a very complex thing going on there. We think about the death of a parent, whether we experience and understand our feelings of abandonment if both of our parents have died.

And we find ourselves all alone in the oldest generation now. Sometimes we feel that. But it's good to look at all of this. In all of these things that we talk about, the biggest thing is the word forgiveness.

God's forgiveness and our ability to forgive others who have died and left us abandoned, who have maybe been not so nice to us in life and we hadn't really fully worked through forgiveness before they died.

All of those things it's important to understand that there's no sense wanting to want, if you've wronged the person who died, they can't forgive you. But God can.

And you need to believe that God can forgive you. And then we talk about this expression, I can't forgive myself. And we say it's not your job to forgive yourself. It's God's job to forgive you.

[44 : 22] Our job is to believe that God forgives. And then we talk about insensitive people who make insensitive remarks. And we wonder why do they say those things.

And it's probably because they've never grieved themselves. Or they've never been faced with unhelpful, helpful people. And we do know as well that hurt people hurt other people.

Out of their own hurt, they say inappropriate things. I have a little list of things coming up that I say that you should never say. We talk about, in another session, about God's prescription for grief.

And it has to do really with healing, relying on God's mercy and grace. Then there's a session on, are you stuck in your grief? How do you know if you're stuck?

How do you know if you're moving on? And is this normal to get stuck? I know what it is to recognize a person who's stuck. One woman came.

[45 : 26] And I think her marriage relationship had been one where she had a very doting husband. And he really, you know, brought her tea in the morning.

And she was a real princess. And she made the statement the first time. And she made it every week after that. Well, nothing's ever going to be good in my life anymore. I'm never going to get over this.

And I don't think she ever did. But if your identity becomes, I'm a grieving person, then that's who you're going to be.

So your identity needs to be, I'm a person experiencing grief, and I'm moving towards a state of joy again. How to get unstuck?

The saying is, God doesn't move parked cars. So don't expect God to unstick you. You've got some work to do yourself. Pray. Pray, pray, pray. Pray the psalms.

[46 : 24] Pray whatever. When you can't pray, read a psalm. And then you have to ask yourself, am I really trying hard to keep my loved one alive instead of letting them be dead and remembering them?

And there's lots more on anger. And then we do top 20 lessons of what we've learned in grief, and I'm not going to go through them all. And I'll warn the people when we start.

Now, we've already covered this, but you're going to see things you think, oh, I didn't hear that before. Yes, you did. And we have a lot of reason to laugh about the fact that it's very true. You do have memory loss.

You do have an ability to focus when you're grieving. So it's a good reminder. It's kind of like David Letterman's top 10. And the last two is joy and pain can coexist.

And the main one is that God is sovereign, and he is in control. Yes, your life is out of control. But you know what? It never was in control. And you're not going to be in control of your life ever if God is in charge.

[47 : 29] And that's a good thing to remember. Our last session deals with heaven. And that's probably where the most evangelism is done.

Some people receive it well. Others don't. But we talk about what we know about what heaven would be like. We'll talk about, will I know my loved one when I get there?

Am I going to be married to that person in heaven? And who goes to heaven? And we say, Jesus said, by him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

So there's the invitation to come to Jesus. And then we talk about five myths about heaven and the afterlife. There's one myth that says there is no heaven, because if they say that, then there's no hell.

So they don't have to deal with the fact of sin, because sin is not a word people like. There's another myth that says you'll still be married to your spouse. The myth of purgatory is addressed.

[48 : 28] Reincarnation. And the current popular one now is that your loved one becomes an angel. So we want to dispel that belief as well. And two popular beliefs we want to dispel is that heaven is for all, and heaven is for those who earn it.

Both of those are false. So how do I care for a grieving person? Well, a lot depends upon your relationship. If you're just casual friends, be sure to phone or write to them and express your sympathy.

Hug them when you see them. But if they're good friends, two words, be there. Be there. It doesn't mean you have to engage in long conversations. Sometimes the grieving person only wants you to just sit there.

And if they want to say something, you're there. They need to have a hug. They need to have you offer to do some simple household tasks that they just cannot do right again.

Maybe they need you to help plan the funeral. I don't know what it is, but the biggest thing is, don't make a nuisance of yourself, but be there. Some things we should never say.

[49 : 38] I understand just how you feel. Because no, you don't. Don't say, well, God must have needed them more than you. And encourage them.

As the time goes along, encourage them to talk about their loved one. And most of all, don't go away when the funeral's over. So many people are surrounding the family when it's the trauma time.

And then they gradually disperse. And that's life. Everybody has their own lives. But don't forget to invite them over for dinner or go to a movie. Don't exclude them from your social group if they had been part of your social group before.

And I think that that about concludes it.