



Taking the Journey of Grief with Hope

Presentation By:

Brad Hambrick, M.Div., Th.M.

Pastor of Counseling, The Summit Church

“TAKING THE JOURNEY OF GRIEF WITH HOPE”

Table of Contents

Introduction:

What Can I Hope to Get from this Seminar?	3
Where Do I Begin?	4
What are Freedom Groups?	5
The 9 Steps of Freedom Groups	6

Hour One:

Chapter 1. “Preparing for Your Grief Journey” PREPARE yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually to face your suffering	7
Chapter 2 “Identifying the Pieces of My Story” ACKNOWLEDGE the specific history and realness of my suffering	10

Hour Two:

Chapter 3. “How Has My Life / Story Changed?” UNDERSTAND the impact of my suffering	15
Chapter 4. “The Darkest Part of My Journey” LEARN MY SUFFERING STORY which I used to make sense of my experience	17
Chapter 5. “The Journey Is About More Than the Destination” MOURN the wrongness of what happened and receive God’s comfort	20

Hour Three:

Chapter 6. “My Loss Story in His Story” LEARN MY GOSPEL STORY by which God gives meaning to my experience	23
Chapter 7. “Where is ‘Better’ on This Journey?” IDENTIFY GOALS that allow me to combat the impact of my suffering	26
Chapter 8. “Beginning to Live the Rest of My Story” PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me	29
Chapter 9. “Living the Rest of Your Story” STEWARDSHIP all of my life for God’s glory	31

Appendices

A. Memorial Ceremony for an Unborn Child	34
B. Applying the Grief Seminar to Losses Not Caused by Death	37
C. Small Group Care Plan for the Whole Journey.....	40
D. Healthy Ways to Capture Memories	44
E. Bible Readings on Grief	NB*
F. Recommended Books	NB*
G. Parenting Tips and Family Devotions for Each Chapter	NB*
H. What Do I Do Now?	45

NB* indicates these material are available in the full notebook (not this listening guide edition). To get a copy of the full seminar notebook (a.k.a. mentoring guide or study guide) referenced in this presentation. Summit members can pick up a copy of the notebook in the church office. For those outside the Summit family, you can request a PDF copy from Amy LaBarr (alabarr@summitrdu.com), office administrator over counseling.

What Can I Hope to Get From this Seminar?

Whether you are here due to personal need, the needs of others, or for a general interest in the topic, we hope this seminar will benefit you. If we do our job well, parts of this seminar will speak to you personally. There will also be parts that speak to aspects of this subject that are different from your own experience. What follows are **six unavoidable facts** that should help you profit from all of the material you hear (bold faced text taken from Paul Tripp and Tim Lane *How People Change*):

1. Someone in your life had a problem this week. That person may be you. Even if you are here for yourself, chances are you know or will know others who struggle in this area. Because we live in a fallen world and have a sin nature, we can be certain that we will battle with sin and suffering in our lives. Because we love people, we can be certain we will be called on to love and assist others in their battle with sin and suffering.

2. We have everything we need in the Gospel to help that person (2 Peter 1:3). God has given us Himself, the Gospel, the Bible, and the church and promised they are effective for all things that pertain to life and godliness. Our task as Christians is to grow in our understanding of and ability to skillfully apply these resources to our struggles. These resources are the essence and source of "good advice," and we hope to play a role in your efforts to apply and disseminate this "good advice." We do not aim to present new material, but new ways of applying the timeless, eternal truths of the Gospel found in Scripture.

3. That person will seek help from friends, family members, or pastors before seeking professionals. Counseling (broadly defined as seeking to offer hope and direction through relationship) happens all the time. We talk with friends over the phone, crying children in their rooms, spouses in the kitchen, fellow church members between services, and have endless conversations with ourselves. We listen to struggles, seek to understand, offer perspective, give advice, and follow up later. This is what the New Testament calls "one-anothering" and something we are all called to do.

4. That person either got no help, bad help, or biblical, gospel-centered help. Not all counseling is good counseling. Not all advice that we receive from a Christian (even a Christian counselor) is Christian advice. Too often we are advised to look within for the answers to our problems or told that we are good enough, strong enough, or smart enough in ourselves to overcome. Hopefully you will see today how the Bible calls us to something (rather Someone) better, bigger, and more effective than these messages.

5. If they did not get meaningful help, they will go elsewhere. When we do not receive good advice (pointing us to enduring life transformation), we keep looking. We need answers to our struggles. This means that as people find unfulfilling answers they will eventually (by God's grace) come to a Christian for advice. When they eventually come to you, we hope you will be more prepared because of our time together today.

6. Whatever help they received, they will use to help others! We become evangelists for the things that make life better (this is why the Gospel is simply called "Good News"). We quite naturally share the things that we find to be effective. Our prayer for you today is that you will find the material presented effective for your struggles and that you will be so comforted and encouraged by it that it will enable you to be a more passionate and effective ambassador of the Gospel in the midst of "normal" daily conversations.

“Where Do I Begin?”

In life and counseling, finding the starting point can be difficult. Life is fluid enough that identifying where to begin with a life-dominating struggle can feel like finding the beginning of a circle. In order to help you with this very important question, Freedom Groups have developed a progression of five levels of starting points.

A struggle in one of the higher categories may have many expressions or contributing causes in the lower categories, but unless the upper level concerns are addressed first (i.e., substance abuse should be addressed before conflict resolution skills), efforts at change have a low probability of lasting success. The degree of self-awareness usually increases as you go down the page. The level of denial usually increases as you move up the page.

1. **Safety** – When the basic requirements of safety are not present, then safety takes priority over any other concern. Safety is never an “unfair expectation” from a relationship. If safety is a concern, then you should immediately involve other people (i.e., pastor, counselor, or legal authorities).

This category includes: thoughts of suicide, violence, threats of violence (to people or pets), preventing someone from moving freely in their home, destruction of property, manipulation, coercion, and similar practices.

2. **Substance Abuse / Addiction** – After safety, the use of mind or mood altering substances is the next level of priority concern. Substance abuse makes the life situation worse and inhibits any maturation process. The consistency and stability required for lasting change are disrupted by substance abuse.

This category includes: alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription drug not used according to instructions, inhalants, driving any vehicle with any impairment for any distance, and similar activities.

3. **Trauma** – Past or present events resulting in nightmares, sleeplessness, flashbacks, sense of helplessness, restricted emotional expression, difficulty concentrating, high levels of anxiety, intense feelings of shame, or a strong desire to isolate should be dealt with before trying to refine matters of character or skill. Trauma is a form of suffering that negatively shapes someone’s sense of identity and causes them to begin to constantly expect or brace against the worst. **The mentoring and Freedom Group materials for the grief seminar are written for a trauma level struggle.**

This category includes: any physical or sexual abuse, significant verbal or emotional abuse, exposure to an act of violence, experience of a disaster, a major loss, or similar experience.

4. **Character** – This refers to persistent dispositions that express themselves in a variety of ways in a variety of settings. Because both the “trigger” and manifestation change regularly and hide when convenient, it is clear that the struggle lies within the core values, beliefs, and priorities of the individual. Skill training alone will not change character.

This category includes: anger, bitterness, fear, greed, jealousy, obsessions, hoarding, envy, laziness, selfishness, pornography, codependency, depression, social anxiety, insecurity, and similar dispositions.

5. **Skill** – With skill level changes there will be a high degree of self-awareness that change is needed in the moment when change is needed. However, confusion or uncertainty prevents an individual from being able to respond in a manner that it is wise and appropriate.

This category includes: conflict resolution, time management, budgeting, planning, and similar skills.

Hopefully, after reading these five points, you will have less of a “jump in anywhere and try anything” mentality towards your struggles. Change is hard but knowing where to start helps to establish confidence. Remember, you are not alone. Christ will meet you and the church will walk with you at any of these five points.

WHAT ARE FREEDOM GROUPS?

Freedom groups are struggle-specific small groups where individuals commit to investing a season of their life in overcoming a particular life-dominating struggle of sin or suffering.

Bible-Based & Gospel-Centered: Programs and information do not change people. God changes people through the power of the Gospel and the wisdom of His Word. The relational structure of Freedom Groups is the vehicle God has ordained to transport the Gospel and Scripture into the lives of His beloved, enslaved, and hurting children.

Recognize the Difference Between Sin & Suffering: Freedom Groups recognize that struggles of sin are different from struggles of suffering in terms of cause, dynamics, emotional impact, relational influence, and other ways. While every believer is simultaneously a saint, sinner, and sufferer, there are a fundamental differences (practically and theologically) between a struggle an individual does (sin) and those that happen to the individual (suffering).

Built On Honesty & Transparency: The courage to be honest about our suffering or sin is often the essential expression of faith God calls for in overcoming a life-dominating struggle. Freedom Groups create an environment that fosters honesty and transparency by incarnating the love of God and protecting confidentiality within the group.

Issue Specific: We do not advocate a one-size-fits-all approach to life struggles because of the tendency of such programs to become cliché or offer generic advice. Christ bears many names, has many titles, and serves many roles. Freedom Groups upholds the breadth of Christ as greater than the complexity of life. We believe our Savior is as personal as our struggles and service to Him is the only way from bondage to freedom.

Gender Specific: During a time of intense struggle and personal sharing having members of both genders in a group is unnecessarily distracting and, in many cases, can exacerbate the struggle or stifle genuine sharing.

Time Limited: Freedom groups have recommended durations for each group based upon the time necessary to *solidify* change on a given subject.

Avoid Struggle-Based Identity: We recognize that when an individual has struggled with one issue for an extended period of time that struggle begins to define them. Freedom groups are structured in content, duration, and philosophy to alert the participants to this temptation and guide them away from it. Freedom Groups strive to teach and model what it means to live out of an identity as a dearly loved child of God.

Embedded Within the Church: Freedom Groups are not a "program" put on by the counseling ministry, but a part of church life. Recovery groups that become a program, tend to diminish the confidence of the participants in the ability of the church to understand and willingness to care about their struggle.

Blend Discipleship, Accountability, & A Guided Process: Freedom Groups are more than a Bible study on a given subject. They develop a practical theology of their subject during the group study and guide members through an intentional process during the personal study while the member hold each other accountable.

Transitions Into Larger Small Group Ministry: The goal is for each Freedom Group member to be in a general small group within a year. Group members may choose to be a general small group the whole time. If desired, at "graduation" the Freedom Group leader would direct the participant to a small group with a leader who has completed personal study and counseling exercises for that area struggle. It would be the participants choice whether to disclose that was the reason for choosing that leader's small group.

The 9 Steps of Freedom Groups

We do not believe there is a one-size-fits-all solution to the struggles of life. Neither do we believe there is any magic in these particular steps. However, we do believe that these steps capture the major movements of the Gospel in the life of an individual. We also believe that it is through the Gospel that God transforms lives and modifies behavior as He gives us a new heart.

In Freedom Groups we attempt to walk through the Gospel in slow motion with a concentrated focus upon a particular life-dominating struggle. We do this in a setting of transparent community because we believe God changes people in the midst of relationships.

We believe that the Gospel speaks to both sin (things we do wrong) and suffering (painful experiences for which we are not responsible) to bring peace, wholeness, and redemption. We also believe that every person is both a sinner and a sufferer. However, we believe the Gospel is best understood and applied when we consider how the Gospel relates to the nature of our struggle. The nine steps below are those used by Freedom Groups to address struggles of sin.

Sin-Based Groups	Suffering-Based Groups
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 1. ADMIT I have a struggle I cannot overcome without God.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 1. PREPARE yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually to face your suffering.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 2. ACKNOWLEDGE the breadth and impact of my sin.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 2. ACKNOWLEDGE the specific history and realness of my suffering.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 3. UNDERSTAND the origin, motive, and history of my sin.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 3. UNDERSTAND the impact of my suffering.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 4. REPENT TO GOD for how my sin replaced and misrepresented Him.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 4. LEARN MY SUFFERING STORY which I use to make sense of my experience.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 5. CONFESS TO THOSE AFFECTED for harm done and seek to make amends.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 5. MOURN the wrongness of what happened and receive God’s comfort.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 6. RESTRUCTURE MY LIFE to rely on God’s grace and Word to transform my life.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 6. LEARN MY GOSPEL STORY by which God gives meaning to my experience.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 7. IMPLEMENT the new structure pervasively with humility and flexibility.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 7. IDENTIFY GOALS that allow me to combat the impact of my suffering.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 8. PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 8. PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 9. STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STEP 9. STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.</p>

To learn more about Freedom Groups visit www.summitrdu.com/counseling

Chapter I

"Preparing for Your Grief Journey"

PREPARE yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually to face your suffering.

**"Living in denial about my loss would be more costly than anything
God would take me through in the grieving process.**

God is good for bringing me to the point of addressing my suffering.

**Therefore, I will put myself in the best physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual
position possible to face my suffering."**

Memorize: Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV), "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- "Come to me" – Jesus wants to give you more than an answer or a process. He offers Himself.
- "Are heavy laden" – Times of significant loss are intense. God recognizes the weight of this season in your life.
- "I will give you rest... for your souls" – God wants to give his children rest at the deepest part of our being.
- "Learn from me" – Jesus is well-acquainted with the journey ahead of you (Isaiah 53:3). He knows the way.
- "I am gentle" – Jesus will travel this journey at a pace you can bear. His concern is for you, His companion, more than the destination (lessons you may learn or ministry for which you are prepared).

Presentation Notes

"Death is so deeply emotional and stunningly final that there is nothing you can do ahead of time to sail through your moment of loss... Don't feel guilty or embarrassed if you feel unprepared to face it. There is no way to prepare for what you are going through. But just knowing that may help you (p. 3-4)." Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

- We PREPARE for big things. Why didn't I PREPARE for this?
- Goal: Clean grief unpolled by unwarranted experiences of guilt, embarrassment, or fear.

"Grieving cannot be completed in a lesson, a lecture, or an appointment. Such structured commitments can be useful parts within a whole helping relationship, but grieving takes place over a long period of time, and helping must also be a process over time. Grief does not usually happen on a schedule (p. 29)." Judy Blore in "How to Help a Grieving Child" from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter 1998).

- Our goal is not to cut your anticipated grieving time by at least 50%.
- That would result in you beating yourself up with a message of comfort.
- Equivalent: Teaching pre-teens about puberty; not to rush them through the experience, but to help them not be alarmed by the experience and encourage them to invite healthy people into their experience.

"You don't need to be fixed (p. 1)... Cars and refrigerators break down; people don't. We shed tears, cry, or weep. We were created to cry. It's a fitting response to sorrow (p. 32)... Grief brings you into the world of the unknown (p. 4)... Grieving is a disorderly process. You won't control it, nor can you schedule its expression (p.12)." H. Norman Wright in *Experiencing Grief*

- You won't "overcome" grief like you might experiences of anger, anxiety, or depression.
- Category: Emotional Struggle vs. Identity Struggle

"Everyone who loves will experience [grief] sooner or later, and the greater the love, the greater the grief when the time of loss arrives (p. 143)... The loneliness of grief is one of the worst and most draining things about it – and, be it said, one of the most dangerous too (p. 145)." J.I. Packer in *A Grief Sanctified*

- Grief is a secondary choice or reaction; the primary choice is whether we will love.

"Many people find that the hardest part of the grief journey is simply getting started (p. 31)." Bob Kellemen in *God's Healing for Life's Losses*.

Areas of Preparation

You are preparing for a journey; a journey for which none of us are ever fully prepared. With that said, there are six areas of life that are important to consider as you seek to maintain the physical and emotional stamina that grief requires. You should not feel pressured to do them all or to do them well in order to accelerate the grieving process, but to receive them as a gift from God who loves you and is caring for you in this difficult season.

1. Sleep

2. Diet

3. Exercise

4. Community – Appendix C

As you interact with these friends, here are some important things to avoid.

1. Avoid saying "I'm okay" or "I'm fine." If this is not true, it will impair their ability to care for you. If it is true, give them more information about what is going better so they can join in your encouragement.
2. Don't feel like your answers have to be a little better every time you see them. Change doesn't occur on an uninterrupted incline. Don't give in to the temptation of thinking you're going to disappoint them if you admit you're not doing as well as you were last time.

3. Pray honestly; not “spiritually.” Prayer is an easy time to become fake and cliché. It can be refreshing and strengthening to pray honest prayers to God in the presence of another person. That is what a large number of the Psalms are – honest, public prayers during seasons of suffering.
4. Avoid those who think they can cheer you up. The journey through grief is about more than being happy again. If that is someone’s primary focus at this stage, then they are likely not the best companion for this journey.
5. Don’t hurry yourself. Hopefully this study will provide structure so that you have an idea of what is “next” but it contains no pacing guide. Trying to measure the process is most often counter-productive. If you “gave yourself” two months to grieve, how would you know if you were half way there in one month? Chances are, pace would become a distraction from the process.

5. Ceremony – Appendix A (Unborn Child) and Appendix B (Losses Not By Death)

6. Decision Making

Time Frame	Decisions to Make
This Week	
This Month	
Next 3 Months	
Next 6 Months	
A Year or More	

“There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in. It is so uninteresting. Yet I want the others to be about me. I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk to one another and not to me (p. 1)... In grief nothing ‘stays put.’ One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I am on a spiral? (p. 67).” C.S. Lewis in *A Grief Observed*

- Community won’t “make grief better” but isolation will “make grief worse.”
- Grief is a highly repetitive journey (example Psalm 136).
- You are learning a process, not gaining a cure.
- Grief is part of your history to assimilate, not a “problematic emotion” to put away.

Chapter 2

“Identifying the Pieces of My Story”

ACKNOWLEDGE the specific history and realness of my suffering.

**“I will look at my life and acknowledge what has happened as my history.
I will not try to move forward out of a false history or with no history.
I trust that God can and will redeem what is and what has been.
Evidencing my faith in God I acknowledged my specific history to [name].
This brought great fear [describe] and then relief [describe].”**

Memorize: Psalm 31:9-10,14-15 (ESV), “Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away... But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutor!” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- Psalm – These words were given to you by God to speak back to God because He knew you would need them.
- “Wasted from grief... spent with sorrow” – God does not expect you to be “strong enough” to handle this alone.
- “Soul and body” – Grief is more than an emotional experience. Physically and spiritually grief is draining.
- “But I trust” – “But” implies that the psalmist’s trust is emerging even as facts exist that would tempt him to doubt.
- “My times are in your hands” – The psalmist begins by turning to a truth that is beyond doubt – the matters that bombard him are beyond his control and ultimately influenced by the hand of God.

Presentation Notes

“We kissed her cheek and straightened her sheet as if she were there. We simply didn’t know how else to act (p. 2).” Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

- Don’t you hate the feeling of powerlessness as you read this!
- Suffering is insulting, not just painful.

“Denial is used to block out the unthinkable, but it brings with it the fear of the unknown since you are denying the reality of what happened. As denial lessens, the pain begins to settle in; and as it does, the fear of the unknown diminishes (p. 10).” H. Norman Wright in *Experiencing Grief*.

“Denial is a common initial grief response. I believe that this initial response can be a grace of God, allowing our bodies and physical brains to catch up, to adjust (p. 24).” Bob Kellemen in *God’s Healing for Life’s Losses*.

Denial: Healthy to Unhealthy

Too often we hear the word “denial” and we think it means simply the willful resistance to acknowledging an obvious fact. When you’re in the midst of denial, you wish it were that simple and overt. The question, “How do I live as if they are really gone?” is not a simple question.

- The continued use of present tense verbs.
- Waking up and later remembering they are gone.

- Resisting the sadness that would come with their loss.
- Focusing exclusively on caring for others who are grieving.
- Using sleep, food, drugs, work, or activities to distract from grieving.

"Part of the grieving process is putting your loss into words. Talk to a friend or family member about your grief. If you are not ready to talk to someone, make a list of the different ways you are grieving. Go ahead and remember the good times... Grieve for the dreams that never came true... Allow yourself to feel the emotions and sadness and put it into words. As you do this, remember that God is listening to you (p. 6)." Winston Smith in *Divorce Recovery: Growing and Healing God's Way*

- This paragraph represents the full journey of steps 1 through 9; not where you should be in step 2.

Exercise: This exercise will be one you will refer to several times throughout the rest of this study. So you will want to take the time to do it well and may add to it as you go through future chapters. This may take several pages. Write out the facts of your loss chronologically (in the order in which those facts occurred). You can do this as bulleted points. This list of facts should start with the beginning of your relationship with your loved one. Grief is a response to the loss of something good, so grief usually has a happy beginning. Continue through your current circumstances and add significant events as they occur on your grief journey.

If you are having trouble experiencing your grief as something that happened to you, this list will be helpful. Review your list from the beginning and note when you get to a point where the events you are recording no longer feel like "your story" but merely facts on the page. This will alert you to where acknowledging facts needs to become part of your personal story. Being aware of this point and the events you are incorporating into your story will help you make better application of the materials to come.

"But when Jesus weeps, we see that he doesn't believe that the ministry of truth (telling people how they should believe and turn to God) or the ministry of fixing things is enough, does he? He also is a proponent of the ministry of tears (p. 4)." Tim Keller in "Truth, Tears, Anger, and Grace" from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Fall 2001).

- When grief hurts we are prone to ask ourselves, "Am I doing this right?"
- We want to "figure grief out" and when it still hurts we feel more and more like we're failing or drowning.
- Jesus Example: Truth without tears – clichés and platitudes.
- The most valuable thing we have to offer someone who is grieving is our presence

"Death doesn't wait till the end of our lives to meet us and to make an end. Instead, we die a hundred times before we die; and all the little endings on the way are like a slowly growing echo of the final *Bang* before that bang takes place (p. 26)." Walter Wangerin in *Mourning into Dancing*.

Grief Evaluation

Below is an evaluation to help you see (acknowledge) how you are doing with the different challenging experiences that grief brings. At this stage in the journey, it is tempting to begin comparing your loss with others. Inevitably, we begin to think, “Others have it so much worse than me. Why am I down?”

Resist the urge to compare your loss with the loss of others. Just because Person A got hit by a truck does not mean that Person B’s knee surgery hurt any less. The purpose of acknowledging the history and realness of your grief is not to give you a tool to downplay your loss (that would be another form of denial). The purpose is to help you identify the terrain that you will walk with the Good Shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:1-21).

Instructions: Read the following descriptive statements. As you read them, consider your response to your recent loss or losses. If your grief is not for a physical death, some of these questions may not apply directly and this will affect the scoring at the end of this evaluation. Mark the answer that best fits how you respond:

(N) almost never, (R) rarely, (S) sometimes, (F) frequently, or (A) almost always

For the most accurate results, ask one person from each major sphere of your life (i.e, home, work, social, church small group, etc...) to complete this survey on your behalf and compare results.

Additional copies of this evaluation can be found at: www.bradhambrick.comgriefseminar.

1. I have a hard time accepting that my loss really happened.	N	R	S	F	A
2. I accidentally use present tense verbs to speak of who/what I lost.	N	R	S	F	A
3. When I remember my loss it is fresh, like it just happened.	N	R	S	F	A
4. I try not to be sad.	N	R	S	F	A
5. I distract myself from grief by caring for others.	N	R	S	F	A
6. I have parts of my life or home I refuse to change.	N	R	S	F	A
7. When I think about my loss I get angry.	N	R	S	F	A
8. I am more short-tempered with people now than before my loss.	N	R	S	F	A
9. I am cynical or ambivalent about things I enjoyed before my loss.	N	R	S	F	A
10. My relationship with God has become more cold or distant.	N	R	S	F	A
11. I take a “functional” approach to life with things I enjoyed before my loss.	N	R	S	F	A
12. I find myself bracing against life or people letting me down.	N	R	S	F	A
13. It is harder to trust people because I might lose them.	N	R	S	F	A
14. I avoid making plans because life now feels uncertain.	N	R	S	F	A
15. My general level of anxiety is higher than what is normal for me.	N	R	S	F	A
16. I try to avoid being alone.	N	R	S	F	A
17. I am second guessing decisions more than what is normal for me.	N	R	S	F	A
18. I dread the morning because I have to get through the whole day.	N	R	S	F	A
19. I dread being alone and feel like my friendships are different now.	N	R	S	F	A
20. I feel “broken” and like no one would want to be with me.	N	R	S	F	A
21. I think having fun with others would betray the one I lost.	N	R	S	F	A
22. My life feels empty and meaningless now.	N	R	S	F	A
23. I fear getting close to someone again because I don’t want to lose them.	N	R	S	F	A
24. I am getting in too close, too quickly in relationships to counter my grief.	N	R	S	F	A
25. My days, weeks, and months have lost any sense of rhythm.	N	R	S	F	A
26. Planning is something I have stopped or don’t know how to do.	N	R	S	F	A
27. I no longer have dreams, hopes, or ambitions for the future.	N	R	S	F	A
28. I have stopped keeping a budget and bills are overwhelming.	N	R	S	F	A
29. I am facing major decisions that I do not know how to make.	N	R	S	F	A
30. I no longer enjoy the things I did before my loss.	N	R	S	F	A
31. I am not sleeping well or in a normal sleep cycle since my loss.	N	R	S	F	A
32. I am experiencing frequent headaches.	N	R	S	F	A
33. My eating habits have become less healthy or my appetite has changed.	N	R	S	F	A

34. I have been sick more frequently since my loss.	N	R	S	F	A
35. I am fatigued even when I get my normal amount of sleep.	N	R	S	F	A
36. I am frequently experiencing an upset stomach or constipation.	N	R	S	F	A
37. I am unsure how to introduce myself or talk to new people.	N	R	S	F	A
38. I don't feel like I know who I am anymore.	N	R	S	F	A
39. Decisions that once seemed obvious are hard to make now.	N	R	S	F	A
40. I don't know what "group" of people I belong to now.	N	R	S	F	A
41. I am questioning beliefs that I have held for a long time.	N	R	S	F	A
42. I don't know how to define what makes me productive or useful now.	N	R	S	F	A
43. I have begun to use food, work, or hobbies in unhealthy ways.	N	R	S	F	A
44. When I feel down because of grief I use alcohol or drugs.	N	R	S	F	A
45. I have become (more) avoidant of unpleasant emotions or conflict.	N	R	S	F	A
46. I have allowed a new relationship to take the place of grief.	N	R	S	F	A
47. I am keeping myself so busy I do not have time to think about grief.	N	R	S	F	A
48. All I want to do is sleep.	N	R	S	F	A
49. I fantasize about being with my loved one in heaven.	N	R	S	F	A
50. I wish I could die.	N	R	S	F	A
51. I have made plans about how I would kill myself.	N	R	S	F	A
52. I have a specific plan for how I would kill myself.	N	R	S	F	A
53. I have the things necessary to kill myself.	N	R	S	F	A
54. I am planning to take my own life.	N	R	S	F	A

Key to Survey Scoring: Give yourself one point for an “S” response, two points for an “F” response, and three points for an “A” response. If your total score matches the total number of questions, that is an area of concern. If your total score exceeds or doubles the total number of questions, it is a significant concern. If your total score more than doubles the total number of questions, it should be considered a life-dominating struggle.

Grief and Depression: Depression is not one of the nine expressions of grief listed below, because of the significant overlap in the two experiences. Depression also contains elements of anger, fear, loneliness, and identity transition. One way (helpful, although incomplete) to think of grief as “depression triggered by loss.”

➤ Questions 1-6: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **denial**. This means that the reality of your loss has not been acknowledged in a way that allows you to take the rest of the journey of grief in a healthy way. If your loss is more than one to two months in the past, this is a reason for concern.

➤ Questions 7-12: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **anger**. Grief is a response to something that was wrong. People were not made to die. Health was not made to break. Relationships were not made to be abused. These are products of the Fall. Anger is an appropriate response. Anger as a response within grief (John 11:38 – the Greek for Jesus being “deeply moved (ESV)” is speaking of anger) should not be confused with sinful anger in response to a desire not being fulfilled (James 4:1-3).

➤ Questions 13-18: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **fear**. Grief brings many kinds of uncertainties. It also reminds us of the brevity of life. In the face of grief we ask many questions about the purpose of life and whether our life is accomplishing anything of eternal significance. These are intimidating realities and reflections. Unless this fear begins to impair one’s ability to live effectively, then it should be considered a natural response to the magnitude of grief.

➤ Questions 19-24: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **loneliness**. Grief is often because of the loss of a significant relationship and grief always changes relationships by changing the griever. Loss often affects our willingness to trust or love others. So for obvious and less obvious reasons, one struggle that often accompanies grief is loneliness.

➤ Questions 25-30: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **life disruption**. Grief changes (directly and indirectly) our finances, schedule, social relationships, decision making process, and many other facets of life. We are forced to adapt to these changes while carrying the burden of heavy emotions. For many people this personal chaos inside an emotional firestorm is overwhelming.

➤ Questions 31-36: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **health impact**. Grief is an extremely stressful process and season of life. One of the significant effects of stress is that it suppresses our immune system. The body cannot give more energy to grieving without taking those resources from somewhere else. Unless this is understood a grieving person can feel like they are under severe oppression when they keep getting sick in the midst of their grief.

➤ Questions 37-42: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **identity transition**. We tend to define ourselves by the people and things we love. Often these things come with "titles": parent, spouse, pastor, banker, athlete, achiever, successful, etc... When these are lost or redefined, we can struggle with our sense of identity. This does not mean that everything we loved was an idol. It does mean that we must learn to love and serve God in ways or roles that are new to us.

➤ Questions 43-48: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **escapism**. It is not bad to avoid pain. It is bad to avoid pain in a way that creates greater pain or life disruption. It is wrong to avoid unpleasant experiences if the lessons we must learn through them are essential to a healthy, God-honoring life. If you scored high on escapism, then you need to look carefully at what you are running to as you run from the pain of grief.

➤ Questions 49-54: (Total: _____ in 6 questions)

This set of questions describes grief that is disrupting life through **suicidal thoughts**. Grief naturally brings death to our mind. Someone or something that we loved dearly is now on the other side of eternity and we would like to be with them. That is not irrational. However, if you score high on this scale, then you need to speak with a pastor or counselor immediately. Until you can do so, contact family or friends to stay with you, do not consume alcohol or drugs, and separate yourself from objects with which you could harm yourself. While your feelings are understandable, your solution is not. There is hope even if you cannot find it right now.

Post-Traumatic Stress: Many forms of grief can overlap with post-traumatic stress. If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms three months or longer after your loss, you may want to seek counseling for PTSD as you process the grief of your loss.

- _____ Intrusive recollections of the events surrounding your loss.
- _____ Recurrent dreams associated with your loss.
- _____ Flashbacks where you feel like you are re-experiencing the events surrounding your loss.
- _____ Intense distress when you experience things that remind you of your loss.
- _____ Feelings of detachment from others.
- _____ Difficulty concentrating at your normal levels.
- _____ Hypervigilance – always looking for what is about to go wrong

Chapter 3. "How Has My Life / Story Changed?"

UNDERSTAND the impact of my suffering.

**"I used to fear my grief and would not look at it,
so I expected myself to live as if my loss never happened [describe].**

I can see how my loss has affected me [describe].

It was wrong to interpret the impact of suffering as sin or weakness.

God is more gracious than that and I must agree with Him and not my fears.

The impact is starting to make sense and help me see life differently [describe]."

Memorize: Psalm 102:2-7 (ESV), "Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call! For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. My heart is struck down like grass and has withered; I forget to eat my bread. Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh. I am like a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places; I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop." As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- Psalm – God gave you these words to speak to Him. He knew you would need them and wants to care for you.
- "Do not hide" – Suffering makes God feel far away and like he doesn't care. The psalmist felt it too.
- "My heart is struck down" – Grieving well does not mean we are unmoved throughout the experience.
- "I am... I am..." – Grief is more than an emotional struggle. It is an identity crisis. Who am I now?
- "I lie awake" – Night time was hard for the psalmist too. God heard him in the dark and he hears you too.

Presentation Notes

"Understand": It is important to clarify what "understanding the impact of my suffering" does and does not mean at this point. Understanding will not mean knowing "why" you experienced this loss. It does mean that you can see the number of ways that this loss is affecting you, grasp how those influences are connected with your loss, and continue to trust God as you see how He will bring comfort and redemption in the midst of your grief.

"It's not just the loss of your loved one that is so painful. It's all the other losses that occur because of this one. The way you live your life, love, sleep, eat, work, and worship are all affected. Often the death of your loved one brings up not just grief for what you lost but also for what you never had or never will have. There is a loss of the present as well as the future (p. 24)." H. Norman Wright in *Experiencing Grief*.

- One loss can have many meanings and many impacts.
- In this sense, grief in the singular can be a misleading term.

What Determines Impact?

The place to begin is to understand the factors that determine how a particular loss will impact you. Use the list below to begin to piece together influential aspects of your loss.

1. Did you have time or reason to anticipate your loss?
2. What type of loss did you experience?
3. What kind of support system do you have?
4. What was the age of the person you lost?
5. How old were you at the time of your loss?
6. How do you generally handle painful emotions?
7. What other losses have you experienced and how much time has passed?

8. How has this loss affected your social environment?
9. What significant events surrounded your loss?
10. What was the cause of your loss?
11. What was your level of emotional stability before your loss?
12. How was the loss discovered and how was it reported to you?
13. Was there a body that allowed for closure?
14. Were those involved at peace with God, self, family, and others?
15. What are your beliefs about death, suffering, and eternity?

"I think I am beginning to understand why grief feels like suspense. It comes from the frustration of so many impulses that had become habitual. Thought after thought, feeling after feeling, action after action, had [my wife] for their object. Now their target is gone... So many roads lead thought to [my wife]. I set out on one of them. But now there's an impassible frontier-post across it. So many roads once; now so many culs de sac (p. 55)." C.S. Lewis in *A Grief Observed*

Grief changes the way we think:

- New emotional connections
- Changes how much we value things (both less and more)
- Big pieces of our life have new meanings

Other Impacts of Grief

1. Loss of a sense of time.
2. Short term memory loss.
3. Changes in relationships.
4. Guilt.
 - A. Taking responsibility for the loss.
 - B. Not spending enough time together.
 - C. Unresolved issues in relationship. Survivor's Guilt.
 - D. Not recovering from guilt "right" or quickly enough.
 - E. Time of reflection over life – failures and purpose.
 - F. A way of punishing myself to prove my love for my loved one.
5. Relief.

"The death of a child is likely the most tragic of griefs as it appears so unnatural to the life cycle. The impact of a child's long-term illness and death has profound impact on the marital relationship. Studies found that in cases where the children were hospitalized, 70 to 90% of those marriages resulted in separation or divorce (p. 370)." Sharon Hart May in "Loss and Grief Work" in *Caring for People God's Way* edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager.

"A child will also revisit the event of death and the ensuing grief as she matures. At each stage of emotional and cognitive development, she understands the universe with more maturity. As she does so, she will also seek to understand this important event better. This means that two things are true about helping a grieving child. First, the task is never finished until the child reaches adulthood. Second, everything you say now is a building block for a more mature understanding later (p. 27)." Judy Blore in "How to Help a Grieving Child" from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter 1998).

Two things we learn:

1. The task of grief is never finished.
2. Each season of clean grief is a building block for the next.

Chapter 4. "The Darkest Part of My Journey"

LEARN MY SUFFERING STORY which I use to make sense of my experience.

**"I formed beliefs [define] about myself, life, and God from my grief.
I lived out of those beliefs [describe] because they were all I knew and they 'worked.'
Those beliefs became the guiding themes of my life story.
Putting those beliefs into words scares me [describe why].
I reject that life story and am committed to learning how my life fits into
God's great story of redemption."**

Memorize: Psalm 22:1-2 (ESV), "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest." As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- Matthew 27:46 – These words also entered Jesus' story. They are one of the common themes of a fallen world.
- "Forsaken me" – Grief makes it feel like God has turned His back on us.
- "So far" – More than back turned, grief makes it feel like God is walking away from us.
- "Do not answer" – When God does not end the pain of grief it is easy to believe He is not hearing our prayers.
- "No rest" – In the storm of grief it is easy to think God is a liar for not keeping His promise (Matt. 11:28-30).

Presentation Notes

"As we struggle with the ache of loss, the grip of our grief imposes a kind of relational paralysis. Perhaps grief is a true reflection of hell, where the ache of losing God and all good, including the good of community, will be endless. Be that as it may, a most painful part of the pain of grief is the sense that no one, however, sympathetic and supportive in intention, can share what we are feeling, and it would be a betrayal of our love for the lost one to pretend otherwise. So we grieve alone, and the agony is unbelievable (p. 144)." J.I. Packer in *A Grief Sanctified*

Grief and Hell

1. Helpless
2. Separated
3. Pain
4. Unending
5. Hopeless... apart from God

7 Themes of Our Suffering Story

1. God is not good.
2. God does not care.
3. God is not able to help.

4. I deserve this.
5. Relationships hurt.
6. Life is meaningless.
7. Evil wins.

"Meanwhile, where is God?... You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become... Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?... I have gradually been coming to feel that the door is no longer shut and bolted... The time when there is nothing at all in your soul except a cry for help may be just the time when God can't give it: you are like a drowning man who can't be helped because he clutches and grabs. Perhaps your own reiterated cries deafen you to the voice you hoped to hear... After all, you must have a capacity to receive, or even omnipotence can't give (p. 53-54)." C.S. Lewis in *A Grief Observed*

- C.S. Lewis putting his suffering story into words.

Read Psalm 88. This is the darkest psalm in the entire Bible. It fully embraces the destructive themes described above. Read the words of Paul Tripp as he describes how we can find hope from the fact that God inspired such dark words to be included in Scripture.

"Psalm 88 gives us hope in our grief precisely because it has no hope in it! It means that God understands the darkness we face. He is right there in it with us, "an ever-present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). The Lord of light is your friend in darkness. The Lord of life stands beside you in death. The Lord of hope is your companion in your despair. The Prince of Peace supports you when no peace can be found. The God of all comfort waits faithfully near you. The Source of all joy is close by when death has robbed you of joy (p. 5)." Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

"Numerically, there are more psalms of complaint and lament than psalms of praise and thanksgiving... A mood of faith trusts God enough to bring everything about us to Him (p. 33)." Bob Kellemen in *God's Healing for Life's Losses*.

- Psalm 44

"It is an act of faith to bring that complaint to him in the pattern of these psalms. Your faith in God should never silence you in the dark hours of grief. Rather, this is when we begin to understand how deep, rich, and sturdy God's love for us really is (p. 9)." Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

- The eerie silence of an orphanage
- The first part of receiving God's comfort is trusting him with our tears and fears.

"You are not exactly who you were. The person you lost was part of your identity. You were someone's mother or aunt or spouse or brother. You continue to be that person in your heart and memory, but there's a vacant place where your loved one stood (p. 22)." H. Norman Wright in *Experiencing Grief*

- These are unwanted changes to our lives, but we need to weave them into our story with the 7 destructive suffering themes.

From Facts to Themes to Story

How do we develop experience into a story? The answer to this question is very personal. While we may all interpret life according to similar themes or combination of themes, the way we move from events to story can be quite unique. The stories themselves are as unique as we are.

Rather than me proposing a model of story development that seeks to capture the thought process of every person, it would be better to provide a guided, inductive tour of how you have moved from experience to story. Start with the material you wrote in chapter two detailing the chronological facts of your loss.

You marked a point where you felt like the facts became "unstoried." Look at the facts beyond this point and reflect on the materials from this chapter.

- How you have already begun to make sense of them with the seven themes above?
- Which of the seven themes do you naturally gravitate towards?
- Is this gravitation new with this grief or a tendency you have had for a while?
- How have these themes distorted your interpretation of new life events not directly related to your grief?
- How have these themes caused you to reinterpret past events in light of your recent loss?
- What phrases or thoughts capture your preferred theme(s)? How often do you say them to yourself or others?
- What kind of things do you find yourself naturally arguing with in the words and actions of others?
- Who or what has become more and less trusted during your grief?

As you reflect on these questions, it should help you see how you have (or are) moving from facts to story. If you do not like what you discover, do not be alarmed. *The fact that you can see the destructive themes as "not good," means that the destructive themes do not have the place of dominance in your heart and mind.*

Chapter 5. "The Journey Is About More Than the Destination"

MOURN the wrongness of what happened and receive God's comfort.

"I am willing to agree with God emotionally about my loss.

**I can see that God does not just want me to 'get over this'
but to 'love me through my loss.' [describe difference]**

**I will accept that 'blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matt 5:4)'
as expressed by God's loving me personally through this group.**

Mourning my suffering with God and this group has changed me [describe]."

Memorize: Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 (ESV), "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting for this is the end of all mankind and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- "Better" – Mourning is better because it fits the occasion (Eccl. 3:1-8) and honors the good gift from God you lost.
- "Feasting... laughter" – This passage does not condemn feasting and laughing (Eccl. 7:14).
- "House of mourning" – Mourning always hits "home" because it is always linked to things that we love.
- "The end... lay it to heart" – Mourning is a time we remember that we were not ultimately made for this world.
- "By sadness... made glad" – The sadness of grief is not minimized, but is seen as the pathway to honest, lasting joy.

Presentation Notes

There are many definitions of mourning, but I will still add my own to the list. Mourning is the celebration of a good gift from God expressed through sadness because of its absence and a residual aching for its return at the time when all things will be made right in the new creation.

"Death is the enemy of everything good and beautiful about life. Death should make you morally sad and righteously angry... It is biblical to treat death as the sad, unnatural thing it actually is (p. 4)... In times of death, Christians should be sadder than anyone else. We know how sin brought death into the world. We mourn not only for the loved one we have lost, but also for the fact that death continues to destroy... God doesn't call you to stifle your grief when you are crushed. He doesn't expect you to hide behind religious clichés and theological platitudes. God approves your tears (p. 8)!" Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

Grief and Time

Psalm 13: I might be the universal prayer of grieving people, "How long, O Lord?" We want to know how long it will (or should) take. When will it be over? Am I on pace? Can I do this any faster? What steps do I need to take to help the process along? God, if there is a lesson I need to learn, please tell me what it is so I can be done with the sorrow.

God does not give you a pacing guide. God gave you Himself. With this in mind your goal is to balance two things as you mourn: (1) do not give yourself a time limit on your grief, and (2) give yourself permission to stop mourning without feeling guilty.

No Time Limit: If you give yourself a time limit to experience grief, you will start doing emotional math (which never works). If I give myself two months to mourn, then I should be ¼ finished in two weeks, ½ finished at one month, and ¾ finished in six weeks.

Permission to Stop: If you do not give yourself permission to stop, then relief will trigger a sense of condemnation. You will never feel like you have been sad "enough" to honor your loved one well, because any ending to grief will feel like an insulting declaration of how loved or lovable they were. "Enough" is a slave word when making any emotional appeal. It

tries to force us to put a finite value on an eternal soul. It also compels us to honor an eternal relationship within the limits of a finite human body which is deteriorated by the stress of grief.

What are some realistic expectations for grief? As long as you promise not to do any emotional math, we can talk about that. The time allotments below come from the counseling experience of H. Norman Wright (*Experiencing Grief*, pages 69-70; bold text only). This outline focuses on the difficult emotional or physical effects of grief.

3 Months – Numbness Wears Off: It takes a while for a major loss to feel real. During this time, the grief will likely feel fresh as it sinks in... again. As reality sets in your emotions may feel very cyclical or repetitive.

6-9 Months – Stress Impacts Immune System: The body will hold up for a little while before it starts showing the signs of additional stress it endured during the time of grief. Physical lethargy and emotional downs, which come with a depressed immune system, can feel like a setback to whatever emotional progress has been made. This time range will be affected by your level of health prior to grief and your care for your body during grief.

1 Year Anniversary – Grief Often Returns at Initial Level: There will be many emotional triggers which call back memories of your loss around this calendar date. The magnitude of being bombarded by these triggers takes many people off guard. If this is an intense time for you, it should not be considered a "set back."

18 Months – Episodal "Grief Bumps": During this time it is common to have times of peace disrupted by episodes of grief. Often these bumps will have clear triggers (a special date, someone tells a story about your lost loved one, etc...), but these may also include unprovoked memories accompanied by sadness. So long as you do not socially isolate, experience sleep impairment, or avoid responsibilities, these "bumps" should be considered normal and a part of healthy grieving.

2 Years – Total Recovery from a Natural Death: A natural death is the passing of someone at an expected point in the life cycle in a way that is considered common – a child losing a grandparent, an adult losing a parent, or an elderly person losing a sibling or friend. "Total recovery" is not the absence of sadness, but the ability to control one's emotions (instead of your emotions controlling you) and enjoy memories of your loved one. This will be defined more in chapters seven and eight.

3 Years – Total Recovery for a Traumatic or A-Typical Death: An a-typical death involves the passing of someone at an unexpected point in the life cycle – a child (born or unborn) or an adult "in their prime." A traumatic death involves a means of passing and would include a car accident, murder, suicide, bizarre accident, and similar causes of death. The time line for recovery from a traumatic or a-typical death can vary widely and the additional guidance from a counselor or support group is often beneficial.

"[Referencing John 11:35] If you knew you were about to turn everything around, would you be drawn down into grief, entering into the trauma and pain of their hearts? Why would Jesus do that? Because he is perfect. He is perfect love. He will not close his heart even for ten minutes (p. 4)." Tim Keller in "Truth, Tears, Anger, and Grace" from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Fall 2001).

- Let us be challenged in the way we love those who are grieving.
- Realize Jesus was perfect not because he was strong enough abstain from being sad, but the opposite.
- We often feel like we are arguing with God in we mourn and miss that he's mourning with us.

"We all need to learn to say goodbye, acknowledge the pain that is there for us so we can eventually move on to another hello. When we learn to say goodbye we truly learn how to say to ourselves and to others: Go. God be with you. I entrust you to God. The God of strength, courage, comfort, hope, love is with you. The God who promises to wipe away all tears will hold you close and will fill your emptiness. Let go and be free to move on. Do not keep yourself from another step in your homeward journey. May the blessing of our God be with you (p. 7-8)." Joyce Rupp in *Praying Our Goodbyes*.

Grief & Good-Bye

We want closure, but we don't want to say good-bye. This is another aspect of the common emotional tug-of-war that goes on within the grieving process. This tension is often made worse by the words that we often use to describe "progress" in the grieving process. These phrases too often seem disrespectful to our loved one or condescending towards our experience: moving on, getting over it, or putting the past in the past.

It may still be hard to make this transition. One thing that many people have found helpful is writing a good-bye letter. A letter can capture many of the conversational nuances you enjoyed in the relationship and allow you to talk about the past, present, and future. The letter below is an expanded version of a sample letter written by H. Norman Wright in *Experiencing Grief* (pages 73-74).

Dear [name],

This is a strange letter. I never planned to write to you after your death. I didn't intend for you to go. There are many things I never planned to do, that I am now learning to do. I am sure you are proud. But your leaving has left a painful hole in my life. I don't like the empty grieving feeling I have inside.

I miss you. I miss it all – your voice, your presence, your laughter, the way you raised your eyebrows, your stubbornness. You know what else I miss? Your dreaming out loud. I miss our dreams and the future we won't have together. I feel cheated. This was not the time for you to die. Or it wasn't the time I thought you should. I am having to learn to look at the calendar again. It is hard to look forward and not just count how many days or months have passed.

I've cried buckets of tears over you. I've cried for me and raged at you and God and me and everyone else who still has someone. I've wanted you to come to me, and I wish I could come to you. I don't like being alone. Oh, I know there are others around, but they aren't you! I am still accepting that enjoying others is not replacing you. I almost feel guilty for the moments I don't actively miss you and I know that is not what you would want.

It's been months. I've stabilized now. I'm learning to rest in the hope that someday we will see each other again. I'm taking a big step now by taking baby steps to embrace the next chapter of my life. I feel strange saying this to you, but you went away, you were taken from me, but I have been holding on to you. Now I'm letting you go to live life again.

I have our history together, memories together, and a rich life because of you. You blessed me well, so well in fact it's hard to enjoy those blessings without you. Thank you. I'm letting you go, but I will never leave you. You are a part of me. I will have to let you go many more times. I know that. I miss you. I love you. You are never forgotten.

Love,
[name]

"And so it is in our sadness that we discover a new aspect of God's character and reach a new understanding of Him that we could not have known without loss. He is acquainted with grief. He understands. He's not trying to rush us through our sadness. He's sad with us (p. 51)." Nancy Guthrie in *Holding on to Hope*.

- Don't rush yourself through grief. If you do, you will likely "learn" things about God that will plague you for the rest of your life.

Chapter 6. "My Loss Story in His Story"

LEARN MY GOSPEL STORY by which God gives meaning to my experience.

**"I have already told you how my loss shaped my life [review step 4].
Letting go of that story, identity, and set of beliefs left me with only God.
It was good to begin rebuilding my life from that solid foundation.
Now I am beginning to understand my life with God and the Gospel at the center
[examples from previous list reinterpreted]."**

Memorize: John 11:23-26 (ESV), "Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life, Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'" As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- "I know...last day" – What Martha believed about Jesus seemed very far off from where she was at the moment.
- "I am" – What Jesus offered Martha was Himself. There was no answer to give meaning to suffering outside Him.
- "Do you believe this?" – Our suffering story begins to be reinterpreted as we understand Jesus more fully.
- "I believe" – Martha was not resistant to believing, however her experience of grief continued... but with hope.
- "Who is coming" – Even in Jesus' first coming his solution for grief was only "made sure" while not yet fulfilled.

Presentation Notes

"In so far as this record was a defense against total collapse, a safety valve, it has done some good... I thought I could describe a state; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow however, turns out to be not a state but a process. It needs not a map but a history (p. 68-9)." C.S. Lewis in *A Grief Observed*

- C.S. Lewis tried to create what we all want and discovered something more valuable.
- Journey does not imply traceable steps. Story does not imply a universal script.

"Every time someone dies, it reminds those watching that God's work is not yet complete. Because of sin, death entered the world. Only when sin is completely defeated will death cease to be part of the equation... As you weep, know this: the One who weeps with you is not content for things to stay as they are. His death was a cry and his resurrection a promise. The living Christ will continue to exert his power and you will grieve no more (p. 6)." Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

Who am I?

Temporal

We are eternal creatures in a temporal world. We were made for Heaven and live on earth. Therefore, our life on earth will end. We put so much into living (literally, all that we have) that it is easy to forget this. Death gets our attention and causes us to look up from our toils. When the fact that life has an end becomes a reality to us, it changes the way we interpret the middle (where we are now). This shock is not bad, but it can be very unsettling.

Relationally Changing

Relationships come with roles. Roles impact identity, shape choices, affect other relationships, and influence the rhythms of life. Death disrupts all of that. We still have the same general life mission (i.e., to know God and enjoy Him forever, to love

God and love others, etc...) but one or more of the most frequent recipients or contexts of that mission is now absent. How we respond to these changes will be one of the more lingering impacts of our grief.

Under the Curse of Sin

Death is the consequence of sin (Gen. 3:3, Rom. 6:23). But the impact of this truth goes beyond personal death for personal sin. While this truth technically answers the, "Why is this happening to *me*?" question, it only reframes the question to, "Why is this happening to *us*?" Grief is an intensely personal experience in all the ways we have explored. However, death is not personal in that it does not play favorites or pick on certain individuals. When we personalize death we make it our intellectual and emotional quandary to solve rather than God's enemy to conquer on our behalf.

Who is God?

Loving

It is important to remember that we are God's children (1 John 3:1-2) and we, like all children, are maturing into what we were meant to be. Children do not like letting go of things they've grown attached to (i.e., a blanket, a stuffed animal, a special shirt). But because of love, parents are willing to endure their children's grieving and require them to let these things go. Particularly special things usually get placed in a position of honor (i.e., framed or a shadow box). Similarly, we were not made for this world, so in love God places our loved ones in the place of our full maturity and eternal residence – Heaven.

Outside of Time

We often struggle to understand God like a fish struggles to comprehend a bird. The fish exists inside of water and is limited by water's presence. A bird does not know these limits. We exist inside of time and are limited by time. God does not know these limits. We sometimes struggle to see God as loving because He lives free from time. We live as if this moment is all there is. God lives in the full reality of our reunion with our loved one.

Incarnational

When Jesus took on flesh, He did not just enter our world, He also stepped into time. Jesus bridges the gap of everything that may have made God seem detached in the previous reflection. God does not just see your reunion. Jesus chose to put on your shoes. Jesus cried (John 11:35). Jesus begged for a miracle that did not happen (Matt. 26:36-45). Jesus felt the searing pain of the severing of His most intimate relationship (Matt. 27:45-46). Jesus did not redeem us from a distance. Jesus took on the full human experience (not just sin, but also the suffering of grief) so that we would know that he is able to "save to the uttermost" and that he can intercede for us with an accurate knowledge of our experience (Heb 7:25).

What is Death?

Real

Movies slowly fade to black when they are over with soft music playing. Most of them (the good ones anyway) build to a climax and then have an ending with most of the plot lines resolved. Death is more real than that. Often there is no fading but only a rude intrusion. Before grief, death may have seemed like a tame and distant hypothetical reality. After grief, death seems wild, near, and possible. In light of this must we learn to rely on God's protection in a way we never had to in our innocence (which was not a bad thing).

A Door

From our current perspective death feels more like a wall than a door; a barrier more than a passage. When we view death as a barrier, then we interpret grief as God keeping something from us. The barrier image also carries with it the sense of death being "the end." When we rightly view death as a passage then we see our loved one's passing as God inviting them to a better place and it carries the sense of "graduation."

A Defeated Enemy

During grief we realize that death, the result of sin's presence in the world, is an enemy we could never defeat. Its mere presence in our life causes us to wither emotionally. How much more helpless would we be when death touches us personally? Death is not just sad. It is a scary reminder of our future without Christ. While death is a door, it would be followed by a bottomless pit unless this foe was vanquished on our behalf.

Is Love Worth Grief?

Yes!

Love is worth it. Yet the journey we have been on should make those words more than a platitude. We now know the cost of what we are saying. "Love is worth grief" is the battle cry of anyone who would strive to be Christ-like. However, after grief, this assent is more sober than sentimental. We now know that to love someone means more than to enjoy their presence, it also means accepting the pain of their absence.

When we are tempted to surrender to the negative story line (love is not worth grief) we must look at how that traps us within ourselves. Safety by isolation is its own prison with the cruel warden of fear. The willingness (i.e., risk) to love is the key to the cell and a power the warden cannot resist. It is a magnet that calls others to your side so you will not have to fight alone. Love provides the assurance that you will not bear love's cost alone when times of grief return. Love is worth it.

What Am I Living For?

Purpose More than Idolatry

While we may find things that were too important to us, idolatry does not need to be the only explanation for changes in our sense of purpose. Changes after grief can be like other areas of spiritual maturity. If you have been a Christian for a while, hopefully you have experienced time when you came to realize a new aspect of the Gospel. This does not mean you were a heretic before, but that the miracle of God's grace was far more relevant than you realized. A gap may have been filled as much as an error was corrected. This new insight may change significant parts of your life and choices without repentance being needed. You experience more of what God intends for you without a sense of condemnation for prior ignorance. This is often what the lessons we learn in grief are like.

"Death is, in fact, what some modern people call 'ambivalent.' It is Satan's great weapon and also God's great weapon: it is holy and unholy; our supreme disgrace and our only hope; the thing Christ came to conquer and the means by which He conquered (p. 125)." C.S. Lewis in *Miracles*.

- Our response to death should call our attention to how profound an event it is.
- It is amazing how hard we try to make sense of life by avoiding or ignoring death.

"Why doesn't God tell us more about heaven? The children in the workshop concluded, 'It's a surprise!' We then talked about the surprise party He is preparing for all who love Him. Jason got his invitation earlier than the rest of us. But we are invited as long as we have Jesus in our hearts. He will let us know when it is our turn to come to the party (p. 30)." Judy Blore in "How to Help a Grieving Child" from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter 1998).

- Exercise: Identify the 5 themes of this chapter in the quote above.

Chapter 7

“Where is ‘Better’ on This Journey?”

IDENTIFY GOALS that allow me to combat the impact of my suffering.

“I can now see that innocence and powerlessness are not the same thing. I used to think ‘it was not my fault;’ was the same as ‘there is nothing I can do about it.’ My old suffering story came with a way of life that I lived. The new story, identity, and beliefs that come with the Gospel allow me to actively live differently without giving into the old false shame or regret. I can change [describe how] without a sense of condemnation [describe why].”

Memorize: Lamentations 3:20-24 (ESV), “My soul remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “My soul remembers” – It is normal to remember. To expect to live as if nothing happened would be non-human.
- “Bowed down” – With the memory of a loss, sadness will accompany it even when grieving is healthy and clean.
- “I call to mind” – Even Jeremiah had to remind himself of aspects of God’s character he was tempted to doubt.
- “New every morning” – This “calling to mind” was something that Jeremiah had to do regularly, even daily.
- “Your faithfulness” – This is the first time in the passage Jeremiah directly addressed God (“you”). As he engaged the false interpretations of his suffering, Jeremiah was able to regain his more personal connection with God.

Presentation Notes

Goals and grief can be hard concepts to mesh. We wish they got along better. We want to be able to say, “I have Saturday open so I plan to get half my grief out by journaling, looking at pictures, having an extended time of candid prayer, crying several times, and then updating my good-bye letter to capture the progress I’ve made during the day.” But thinking of goal setting as a time table or schedule, will become extremely frustrating and ineffective.

We did not cause grief, so we cannot “uncause” it. Grief is not a character defect or sin, so we cannot “put off” grief. Grief is part of our story and because of that there will be times when its significance continues to impact our life. Our goal in this chapter is to further understand what healthy grief is, what healthy grief looks like, and what we can do to “grieve well” during some of the difficult times ahead.

“It is something altogether different to say His grace is sufficient for today when tomorrow holds no hope of any significant change (p. 21).” Joseph Lehmann in “Believing in Hope” from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter 1998).

“One of the things you can do is to demonstrate how to be sad and to hope and trust at the same time (p. 29).” Judy Blore in “How to Help a Grieving Child” from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter 1998).

What Is Progress?

- Progress does not mean that you can or should forget.
- Progress does mean that you are able to enjoy good memories. Appendix D
- Progress does not mean that you no longer feel pain because of your loss.
- Progress does mean you experience a lessening of the pain.
- Progress does not mean that you believe life is fair or understand "why."
- Progress means you can accept the different aspects of your loss.
- Progress means remembering your loved one realistically.
- Progress means you feel free and have a growing desire to form new friendships.
- Progress means you feel free and have a growing desire to try new things.
- Progress means you are growing in your walk with God.

"Times of deprivation, ill health, and even war don't preclude the need for pleasure; on the contrary, such seasons accentuate the need to find and perhaps rediscover the simplest pleasures of all (p. 184)." Gary Thomas in *Pure Pleasure*

- The "adhedonia" of grief – the loss of pleasure in things you would normally enjoy.
- Begin with simple, small pleasures and savor them.
- Realize any guilt over enjoying life is an intrusion of destructive themes from your suffering story.

"The griever encounters four often difficult and time-consuming tasks: to accept the reality of the loss, to feel and consciously admit the pain of the loss (this includes untangling oneself from the ties that bind one to the deceased), to adjust to an environment in which the deceased person is missing, and to form new relationships. The last stage seems to be the most difficult because people feel both guilty and insecure about reinvesting their energies in new relationships (p. 347)." Gary Collins in *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*

Predictably Hard Times

- Have a plan for the day.
- Start the day.
- Begin and end with God.
- Take time to remember.
- Plan an activity that celebrates the day and honors your loved one.
- Don't try to do too much.
- Make sure you have some time with people.
- Use this as a time to reflect on "progress."
- Begin to think through new or modified traditions.
- Identify elements of your suffering story that are attached to the activity.
- Meditate on 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.
- Decide on your long-term memory plans first.
- Decide whether you want to complete the task alone or with others.
- View this activity as a passage not a chore.
- Start with smaller changes.
- Give things no longer needed to support a cause important to your loved one.
- Write a letter about what you are doing and why to relax repetitive internal conversation.
- Allow yourself to enjoy the changes guilt-free.

Unpredictably Hard Moments

- Big Question: Where will I run when unpredictably hard moments come?

If only all our hard moments were predictable, we would feel less crazy. We would feel more prepared to re-engage life. The world would feel like a safer place to live in again. But there are times when grief hits out of the blue. We have hard moments when, even after reflection, we cannot explain why.

Our response to these unpredictably hard moments are the times when grief can lead to some of its most destructive and unhealthy choices. We begin trying to create stability and relief for ourselves. We begin to believe that everything outside of our control is dangerous and a potential threat. We begin to live to not be hurt again. We begin to seek or create our own rock, refuge, or hiding place from life rather than seeking those things in God.

Because unpredictable hard times are unpredictable, we cannot prepare or lay out a strategy for them like we have other challenges in this chapter. However, there are two things we can do.

First, we can resolve not to face these unpredictably hard times alone. When these times come, share them with your counselor, mentor, or small group.

Second, we can identify the themes of our suffering story that trigger to re-emerge during these unpredictably hard times. While you cannot directly control the frequency or intensity of these struggles, this exercise will help keep the grief "clean." Keeping these unpredictably hard times as "clean" as possible is how the frequency and intensity of such struggles are decreased.

"Grievers seek comfort. But where do they find it? The Bible reminds us that all true comfort has its source in the Lord (2 Cor. 1:3-4). In grief, we often seek our other comforts: memories, material things, distractions (TV, CD player, exercise, reading, crafts, work, food, people). They all provide some measure of comfort but none can fill the one place where grief causes us to feel so empty – our hearts (p. 9)... When you grieve, you are vulnerable to temptations you would normally resist. The enemy of your soul attacks in your weakest moments (p. 10)." "Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

- Know Yourself – What unhealthy forms of self-rescue are you prone towards?
- Make Yourself Known – Who in your circle of relationships do you need to talk to?

Chapter 8

“Beginning to Live the Rest of My Story”

PERSEVERE in the new life and identity to which God has called me.

**“Some of my grief related to my loss remains [describe] but it defines me less and less.
But I am also experiencing more of what God has for me.
I never knew life could include [list of experiences] again.
I see now that God was not withholding these things from me, nor did I forfeit them.
I am learning to enjoy them without the guilt, fear, or guardedness.
I have come to realize that ‘healthy’ means more than the absence of grief.
I am learning to trust and enjoy God in the rise and fall of my circumstances.”**

Memorize: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (ESV), “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Now” – This verse applies to each moment you call “now.” There is no need to fear God’s comfort will expire.
- “Who loved us” – Responding to God’s love is the fuel for perseverance and why Satan causes us to question it.
- “Eternal comfort... comfort” – God understands that even eternal comforts needs to be applied repeatedly.
- “Good hope” – During this step we become convinced again that our hope is more than wishful thinking.
- “Work and word” – As you enter this stage of grief, there should be a renewed balance in serving for others and being cared for by them.

Presentation Notes

New and normal are words that do not belong together. But that is precisely what step eight is all about, establishing a new normal. For most of us, at this stage in our journey, we still do not want a new normal. The residual grief in our heart still longs for the old normal. If this conflict exists within you, do not let it pull you backwards on your journey. It is not hypocritical to pursue a new normal against your heart’s desire when reality insists that you must.

“Sometimes grief is so powerful that it feels like you died too... But, remember, though you are surrounded by death, you still live. Your soul needs to be fed. Your heart needs to be encouraged. Don’t quit. Don’t give up. Don’t let go of the good habits of faith that shaped and strengthened your relationship with Christ before your loss (p. 13).” Paul Tripp in *Grief: Finding Hope Again*

Marks of a New Normal

1. Grief Changes from Burden to Treasure
2. Energy Level Returns to Normal
3. Decision Making Becomes Easier
4. Appetite and Sleep Cycle Return to Normal
5. Able to Enjoy Time Alone
6. Begin Looking Forward to Events
7. Able to Use Your Experience to Comfort Others
8. Freedom to Worship Returns
9. Sense of Humor Returns
10. New Relationships are Built
11. Experience Peace Even During a “Grief Spasm”
12. Appreciate Your Growth Because of Grief

"But this is tantamount to arguing that God is like the husband who gives his wife a new toaster for their anniversary when she was expecting a romantic trip for two to a bed and breakfast. No matter how much she may need a toaster, she is unlikely to see it as a deep expression of her husband's love... God had offered me genuine comfort in good faith, but I had failed to appreciate them as such. If this is true, then God's comfort is not relative, but absolute, with discrete characteristics which we can learn to recognize (p. 23)." Joseph Lehmann in "Believing in Hope" from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter 1998).

- Notice that he is able to reflect back on his resistance towards God without shame because of his trust in God's patience and grace. This is evidence that steps 4-6 were completed well in his journey.
- We will not persevere in God's ways when we doubt God's character.
- Another way to define the completion of our grief journey is the ability to rest in God's care again.

"You are secure not because you have control or understanding. You are secure even though you are weak, imperfect, and shortsighted. You are secure for one reason and one reason alone: God exists and he is your Father (p. 31)... The temptation, in times of waiting, is to focus on the things we are waiting for, all the obstacles that are in the way, our inability to make it happen, and all of the other people who haven't seemed to have had to wait... All of this increases our feeling of helplessness, our tendency to think our situation is hopeless, and our judgment that waiting is futile (p. 48)." Paul Tripp in *A Shelter in the Time of Storm*.

Preparing for Transition

Make sure you are in a small group.

Learn accountability on a broader scale.

1. Voluntary
2. Trusted
3. Mutual
4. Scheduled
5. Relational
6. Comprehensive
7. Encouraging

Have a plan for future study.

Make a formal transition plan.

Chapter 9

“Living the Rest of Your Story”

STEWARD all of my life for God’s glory.

**“God has shown me great grace; grace greater than my grief.
I am learning what it means to live out of my new identity in Christ.
That has pushed me to ask the question,
‘How can I be a conduit of God’s grace to others?’
As I have sought God, examined my life, and consulted with fellow believers,
I believe this [describe] is what it looks like for me to steward God’s grace now.”**

Memorize: I Peter 4:19 (ESV), “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” As you memorize this passage reflect upon these key points:

- “Those who suffer” – This passage will apply to every person many times in the course of their life.
- “God’s will” – Hopefully, at this stage in your journey you can read this without hearing it as God’s punishment.
- “Entrust their souls” – Life is a choice between entrusting our souls to God or seeking to protect ourselves.
- “To a faithful Creator” – If you made it to this point in the study, you have many evidences of God’s faithfulness.
- “While doing good” – Without a returning sense of mission, suffering would drain our vitality for engaging life.

Presentation Notes

“My sorrow now feels less an oppressive weight, more a treasured possession. I can take it out and ponder it, then put it safely and carefully away (p. 79).” Testimony of an anonymous woman in *Experiencing Grief* by H. Norman Wright.

“After a close partnership and marriage of twenty-seven years, learning to walk alone again was no easy task... It took me many years to learn that no man on this earth can satisfy the deepest longings of a woman’s heart. Only One can do that. He is also the only one who can help me live with that deep hole, that deep pain in my heart... The pain is still there. He hasn’t filled it up yet, but he has made a bridge over it. I can live with it now and I can stand on this bridge and reach out to others (p. 43-45).” Ingrid Trobisch in “Let the Deep Pain Hurt” *Partnership*

- The Christian answer (real and true) did not cancel out the personal pain of her journey.
- Elements of her story:
 - “Hole and alone” – honesty about the themes from step four
 - “Bridge and satisfaction” – the reality and hardship of suffering did not take forefront over step six
 - “Reach out” – she begins to ask some of the questions you’ll consider in step nine

“There is no doubt in my mind that God is right now equipping you for future opportunities when others are afflicted in this way! We are all ‘comforters-in-training’ (p. 64).” Paul Tautges in *Comfort Those Who Grieve*.

1. Am I willing to commit my life to whatever God asks of me? This is a "do not pass go" question. If your answer is "no," it will bias the answers you give to each subsequent question. Do not get lost in guilt or pretend that it is "yes." Rather, identify the obstacle. What aspect of your suffering story (chapter 4) makes this sacrifice seem too risky?

Are there specific things you believe God is asking of you? Be sure to record your thoughts on this question before reflecting on the subsequent questions.

2. What roles has God placed me in? The first part of being a good steward of one's life is to fulfill one's primary roles with excellence. When Paul says in Ephesians 5:17 that we are to "understand what the will of the Lord is," he goes on to describe God's design for each of our major life roles (spouse, parent, child, and worker in 5:22-6:9).

3. What are my spiritual gifts? Stewarding your life for the glory of God involves utilizing the spiritual gifts God has given you. God gives spiritual gifts that coincide with the calling He places on each individual's life. Read Romans 12:1-8 and I Corinthians 12:1-30. If you need further assistance discerning this, talk to a pastor about taking a spiritual gifts inventory.

4. For what group of people (age, struggle, career, ethnic, etc...) am I burdened? From God's earliest covenant with people His intention was to bless us that we might be a blessing to others (Gen 12:2). By investing your life in those you have a burden for, it allows you to be other-minded and find joy in it.

5. What am I passionate about? At this point in the stewardship evaluation, you can begin to see Psalm 37:4 fulfilled in your life. There is a level of vulnerability involved in being passionate again, but allow yourself to express faith in God through this vulnerability and pursue the life He has for you.

6. With what talents or abilities has God blessed me? These need not be spiritual gifts. Read the amazing description of abilities God gave Bezalel and how he used those abilities to serve God (Exodus 31:1-11). Think through the skills and expertise you have accumulated in your life.

7. What are my unique life experiences? Both pleasant and unpleasant experiences should be listed. We are sometimes tempted to think that God can only use the good or spiritual experiences of our lives. God is glad to use our successes (Matt. 5:16), but God also delights in displaying His grace by transforming our suffering from flaming darts of Satan meant for our destruction to bridges of ministry carrying many people to life in Christ (2 Cor. 1:3-5).

8. Where do my talents and passions match up with the needs in my church and community? We should seek to steward our lives in cooperation with our local church. God's way of blessing and maturing those we serve is through the Body of Christ, the church. By identifying where your gifts, burdens, passions, and abilities fit within or expanding your church's ministries, you are maximizing the impact your service can have on those you are seeking to bless and protecting yourself from discouragement through isolation.

9. How would God have me bring these things together to glorify Him? This is not a new question, but a summary question. Look back over what you have written. Talk about it with your Christian friends, family, mentor, or pastors. Dedicate a time to prayerfully ask God to give you a sense of direction. Then begin serving as a way to steward your life for God's glory.

"Suffering reduces us to nothing and as Soren Kierkegaard noted, 'God creates everything out of nothing. And everything which God is to use, he first reduces to nothing.' To be reduced to nothing is to be dragged to the foot of the cross (p. 136)... To believe in God in the midst of suffering is to empty myself; and to empty myself is to increase the capacity...for God. The greatest good suffering can do for me is to increase my capacity for God (p. 137)." Joni Eareckson Tada & Steven Estes in *When God Weeps*.

- This is an "end of the journey truth." Truth is timeless, but not all truths are for all times.

Most Christians know (whether they quote or cringe) verse 28, "All things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." But few recitations of this passage trace the journey of how Paul applied this truth; as a result the sovereignty of the Father is emphasized to the neglect of the compassion of the Holy Spirit. Let's take a journey from verse 25 to verse 28.

"But if we hope for what we do not see..." (v. 25) - Paul is writing to hurting, longing, waiting Christians. They want something (every indication is that their desire is for a good thing) but they do not have it. God seems silent to their prayers and they are struggling to maintain an accurate view of Him as gracious and good.

"...we wait for it with patience." (v. 25) - Patience is a pretty word on paper. It sounds nice. We use it as a compliment. But patience is a virtue only necessary because of sin, so it feels like Hell. In the perfect rest of Heaven patience will be as irrelevant as time. So these waiting, hoping believers are withering as they cling to a belief in God's faithfulness with their patience.

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness..." (v. 26) - We know their wasting away because Paul speaks to their growing weakness. In this moment the Holy Spirit softly enters the text... and our lives. "Likewise" reveals how much the Spirit embraces our sorrows. The Spirit is there to help. But if the Spirit's help is like much of the help we get from those who lead with Romans 8:28 during our suffering, we may be hesitant to receive it.

"...for we do not know what to pray for as we ought..." (v. 26) - These weak Christians, wearied by waiting for God to deliver, are beyond words to speak. When asked, "What's wrong?" They shake their head as if to say, "I don't know where to begin... Reciting it again would only magnify the echo of sorrow... I've talked to God and He was silent; what good would it do tell my sorrows to you?"

"...but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." (v. 26) - What is going on here? The Spirit is speaking truth, but He is speaking to the Father, not the weary believers. The Spirit is not saying "just do this" or "something good is about to happen." The Spirit is taking our pain and despair to the ear of the Father. Even our hopeless silence cannot be silent in the Father's presence because of the Holy Spirit.

"And he who searches hearts..." (v. 27) - The words of the Holy Spirit are not just "on our behalf," they are the exact representation of our heart. The words coming before the Father in our suffering are everything we would say if we had the wherewithal to articulate our hope depleted soul-aches. Our pain screams we are alone. The prayers of the Spirit remind us we are known.

"...the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (v. 27) - Not only is our heart's cry translated to God, our soul's essence is knitted with God's will (i.e., direction) for our life. The reach of the Spirit's prayer is so great that it can connect our pain and God's redemptive agenda. The distance that leaves our mind speechless is not too far for the Holy Spirit.

"And we know..." (v. 28) - This ministry of intercession by the Holy Spirit is what gives Paul confidence to speak into suffering. Paul is not offering a quick answer. Instead Paul is summarizing the implication of the tender, personal ministry of the Holy Spirit. We should only speak this truth to others in the same pastoral way that the Spirit brought Paul to this truth, through much listening and great compassion.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matthew 5:4

Appendix A

Memorial Ceremony for an Unborn Child

Grieving the loss of an unborn child can be particularly difficult. No one else had the privilege of knowing your baby and, therefore, many of the rituals of grief (i.e., sharing pictures or stories of how the lost loved one touched other's lives) cannot be engaged. Because no one else knew their baby, parents often try to take this journey of grief alone.

What follows are suggestions for how to honor your lost child and facilitate your own grieving process. Do not consider this appendix to be a recipe to be followed directly, but as a collection of ideas to take what best applies to your situation. Some families who lose their baby may choose not to utilize a service like this one. A small group or church family should be considerate of the family's wishes when offering to help in this way.

The suggestions recommended below will be incorporated in the memorial service outlined at the end of this appendix.

Name Your Baby: This will be important for not only the memorial, but for the on-going grief process. This will allow you to reference your child in future conversations (which is healthy). Without a name, you and others will be more likely to begin to live as if the loss never happened within a matter of weeks. Parents may change the name they intended to call their child without feeling as they are dishonoring their baby. The goal in naming the baby is to accept the loss as real, not to say that nothing has or can change.

Write a Good-Bye Letter: With many losses we see death coming and get to say good-bye. With miscarriage there is both surprise and your child would not have been able to hear your words. A letter allows you to put your initial grief into words which can be heard by family and friends at the memorial. It allows you to process these early experiences of your grief and to feel more understood.

Memorial Box: This is not a casket, but a place to keep some precious things (i.e., blanket, small toys, birth/death certificates, ultra sound pictures, good-bye letter, notes from friends, your grief journal, etc...). A memorial box can allow your child to always have a place of remembrance in your home without the "enshrinement effect" that comes with having a room devoted to your lost child.

Get a Grief Journal: You will have many thoughts and experience many emotions in the coming months. You may fear forgetting what you are thinking and feeling, because it is all you have left of your baby. A journal is a healthy place to capture those thoughts and emotions. One option many mothers have found helpful is *Mommy, Please Don't Cry* by Linda DeYmaz. This journal also serves as a place to gather your thoughts so that you have an answer when friends, family, or small group members ask, "How are you doing?"

Don't Rush the Memorial: Planning and conducting the memorial is an important part of the grieving process. It confirms that this is a real loss, one to be acknowledged by those who love you, and that there is a journey of grief ahead. It is during the planning and conducting of a memorial that denial can wear off and a network of friends be established to support you in the weeks and months ahead.

Plant a Tree / Garden: Often with a miscarriage one of the difficulties in the grief process is that there is nowhere to go and grieve or to place flowers on your child's birthday and other special occasions. Planting a tree can provide you a place to go and remember. It also provides a visual reminder of the passing of time and personal growth as you see the tree mature. If a family chooses to plant a tree or garden, this would determine the location of the ceremony and would need to be in a place where the property would not be sold or outside a home from which the family planned to move.

Create a Time Capsule: It can make the memorial seem more like a real funeral if there is something to bury. With the planting of a tree, you might also bury a time capsule with a copy of your good-bye letter, toys you had purchased, medical bracelets/papers from the DNC visit, a list of the dreams for this child you are surrendering to God, or other memorable items.

Planning the Memorial

As you plan the memorial, remember this is not a means to an end, but a part of the grief process. Taking the time to plan a memorial confirms the reality of your grief. You did not just have a medical procedure. You lost a child, and it is right to grieve.

Planning the ceremony is a time of very beneficial conversation with your spouse and children. Often families are not sure how to talk to one another, what is acceptable to say or feel, or when to bring up the subject. If this ice is not broken, grief becomes stifled for everyone. Planning a ceremony is a good way to open the lines of communication. The outline below should help facilitate these conversations. Each member of the family can feel free to say what he/she likes and dislikes without fearing they may be insulting another family member's idea.

The guest list is also important. It is wise to invite more people than you think will come. The memorial is a way to announce your loss so that you do not have to face as many excited "how's the baby?" questions in the weeks ahead. Also, by inviting people to the memorial, you will feel less pressure to "act normal." Having a ceremony declares that normal has been disrupted in a significant way and that it will be a while before normal returns.

A Memorial Ceremony

Note: Use this section as a suggestion and not a template. Make it your own. The material below is merely meant to give you something to build from at a time when it is hard to concentrate and there are so many other things on your mind.

Officiate: Ask a pastor or small group leader to conduct the memorial. Your role should be to participate in the memorial; not to try to lead it.

Preparation: Depending on what elements of the service you use, some preparation may be needed. It is fine to ask friends and family to help with digging the hole for the time capsule, preparing food for a follow up meal, or handling childcare.

Opening Scripture & Prayer:

Psalms 139:13-18 (ESV), "For you formed my [may choose to use the child's name throughout the Psalm reading] inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts O God! How vast is the sum of them! If you count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you."

Lord, we come to you with broken hearts because Your Word is true. [Name] was fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful and we longed to know them in [name's] life. You knew [name] intimately from conception and know him/her even now. We come because we will not get the privilege of knowing [name] this side of heaven and that hurts us.

- Words of prayer for family
- Words of prayer for mother
- Words of prayer for father
- Words of prayer for siblings
- Words of prayer for grandparents and extended family present

Lord, we do hold your thoughts as precious even when we do not understand them. We admit we cannot understand this and it pains us. We ask that You would comfort us with the knowledge that when we are awake thinking about [name], that [name] is awake with You. Amen.

Reading of Parent's Good-Bye Letter:

This can be done by the family standing together, one member of the family, or by the memorial officiate on behalf of the family. After reading the letter the family can place the letter (and any items of significance referenced in the letter) in the time capsule to be buried.

Reading of Words from Others:

The family might ask certain other people to write their thoughts and reflections to be read at this time. If so, it would be wise to have these pieces written out to ensure they are fitting for a memorial service. At the conclusion of reading each of these the individual would have two copies of his/her statement. First, the individual would walk to the parents/siblings and give them a copy for the memory box. Second, the individual would go to the time capsule and place a copy there.

Planting of Tree and Time Capsule:

Officiate: Throughout Scripture we find that God encourages His people to make places of remembrance for burial of loved ones. We find in this the tenderness and mercy of our God. God was not content to merely bring [name] to Himself in heaven, but He also is concerned to care for [mom's name, dad's name, sibling by name] until they are reunited with [name] in the presence of Jesus.

When we lose an unborn child, families often do not receive the grace of God that comes from a place of remembrance. As those who love and care for [mom's name, dad's name, sibling by name] we wanted to make sure that was not the case for them. We will be planting a tree in memory of [name] (say a few words about the type of tree or location where tree is planted if either has particular meaning).

[Looking at family] God wants you to have a place to remember. He cares for you. And we, as your family and friends, want to be an extension of his care for you in the weeks and months ahead. Having a place to grieve is not all that you will need. You will need to know that you do not have to grieve alone or in silence. We want to be the Body of Christ to you on this journey and sharing your tears will be our privilege.

[Looking at attendees] The [last name] family will be keeping a memory box of precious items from [name's] life. I would encourage you in the days and weeks ahead to write out how God has used [name], the shared experience of joy over pregnancy and grief over miscarriage, and how the [last name] family's example has strengthened your walk with the Lord. These letters will be precious reminders of the impact [name] had and a confirmation that he/she was as real as their pain testifies. As they are stored in their memory box, these letters will become the fond stories they re-visit like the stories you retell with your family about lost loved ones.

Plant tree and time capsule. [For this time having a song selected – whether played/sung live or on CD – to allow for a worshipful meditation and prevent silence from making an awkward distraction before the end of the service.]

Closing Scripture & Prayers:

Mark 10:13-16 (ESV), "And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.' And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them."

Lord, we are grateful for this picture of what [name] is experiencing as we gather. Our loss and grief is made bearable and has hope because of Your love for children. We also come to you as children. In moments like these our world seems bigger than we can handle and we strongly sense our need for our Father's protection. There are things we cannot explain to our children and we ask them to trust us. This is an experience we cannot understand and so we express a child-like faith that is full of questions and emotions.

We pray a special protection over the hearts and minds of [mom's name, dad's name, sibling by name]. Give them a special awareness of your presence and care in the coming days. Amen

[Officiate: Give instructions of how the memorial will conclude.]

Appendix B

Applying the Grief Seminar to Losses Not Caused by Death

Often it can be hard to recognize grief as grief, because of the absence of a death. Major losses can be caused by many other life changes than someone dying. But this difficulty goes well beyond the challenge of rightly labeling an experience. When we do not recognize the grief element in a major loss or life transition, we begin to try to make sense of that experience and overcome its fallout in ways that are not suited for the difficulties that lie ahead.

That is the purpose of this appendix – to prepare you to apply the materials contained in this study to grief experiences that are not the result of the death of a loved one. Throughout this study you will find language that refers to the loss of a person (i.e., loved one, him, her, spouse, child, parent, etc...). If your loss was not a person, then these references may give you the impression that these materials do not apply to you.

However, the major experiences, changes, and challenges of grief are similar enough that once you begin to see how grief disrupts your identity and story, you should be able to apply this material to losses that do not involve the loss of a person. The important thing for reading these materials is (1) that you recognize your loss as a grief event and (2) that you are able to articulate what you have lost so that when you read the personal language in this guide, you naturally think of your loss.

This appendix will examine grief not triggered by death in four categories: the loss of innocence, the loss of a dream, the loss of stability, and the living death of divorce. These categories are not mutually exclusive, but they should help you think through different aspects of a grief struggle that is not triggered by someone's death.

Grief & the Loss of Innocence

This grief is usually related to some form of abuse. In abuse, trust (a key element of innocence) is redefined from a positive quality that blesses a relationship to a dangerous activity that is now akin to naiveté. When that happens something precious is lost, but we often view this experience exclusively as a wound to be healed and overlook that it is also a loss to be grieved.

As you read and seek to apply these materials to the loss of innocence (or the other three categories), it may be helpful to find a physical object that represents the innocence that you lost. It could be a picture of you at the age just before the abuse occurred. Perhaps it is a picture of father or mother who is safe. Maybe you pick something more symbolic like a pillow to represent sleep without nightmares.

Regardless of the object, use it to remind you that you are grieving the absence of something good. In grieving lost innocence, it is easy to get lost in the powerful emotions and memories surrounding the violation that occurred and miss grieving the loss for the innocent person to whom they occurred. If we do this, we silence our grief and magnify our pain; we get distracted from the grief (our present task) and fixate on the violation (a past experience we cannot change). This leaves us trapped in a period of time we cannot change rather than allowing us to embark on a journey of grief by which God can give new meaning to our loss.

As you embark on this grief journey, recognize that healthy trust may be the most difficult and confusing aspect. The interaction you have with your Freedom Group, mentor, or counselor may be the most uncomfortable, yet beneficial, part of the journey. The redemption of innocence lost requires the willingness to embrace trust a blessing again.

A major theme in the journey that is ahead of you is seeing that Christ's righteousness allows you to experience a sense of cleanness and innocence that was taken from you. As a Christian, God does not see you as defiled, and He invites you to see yourself through His eyes. Surrendering to Christ as Lord doesn't just mean doing whatever God says, it also means allowing His perspective to have the final say on our life.

Do not feel rushed by that last paragraph. It may feel very far away. But that is why you are "Taking the Journey of Grief with Hope." The purpose of this section is merely to help contextualize this study for your loss so that you are able to see how grief applies to your past hurt.

Grief & the Loss of a Dream

The loss of a dream can emerge from a variety of experiences: infertility, divorce, job loss, chronic pain, a rebellious child, mid-life crisis, or anything else that prevents you from doing or having something very important to you. In the midst of these kinds of situations we often become so consumed with managing the details of life that we forget there is a loss to be grieved.

When we forget to grieve the loss of a dream, we are left with a nagging feeling that the experience was incomplete, but have no clue what is left to be done. After all, we managed all the details as best we could. What more could life want from me? But there still doesn't feel like there is "closure" (whatever that word means).

In the loss of a dream, closure most often means grieving. In these situations, the theme of "story" in grief which you will find in these materials can be particularly helpful to the grieving process. Your loss affected your future more than your past. You may have painful dreams unfulfilled more than painful memories flooding your mind. You feel like you are walking into grief more than you are walking away from it.

Your loss was part of how you built your future in your mind. Now you feel like a character without a story more than a story with a character (i.e., loved one) missing. Chances are you resist and even resent having to write a new story. This is the loss you are grieving – the loss of a good story (i.e., dream) having to be rewritten.

A major theme in the journey ahead of you will be trusting God as the ultimate Author of history. Based upon your good dream, God has failed and forfeited His role. Having dreams, goals, or ambitions may now feel impossible or painfully vulnerable. However, it is through the journey of grieving your loss that you gain the courage to embrace a story again. It is through honestly engaging with these fears, disappointments, hurts, and anger on the journey of grief that you can begin to see God for who He truly is again.

Grief & the Loss of Stability

If the loss of innocence is past tense grief and the loss of a dream is future tense grief, then the loss of stability is present tense grief. This grief might include an elderly parent surrendering independence to live with children, a fire destroying your home, a natural disaster hitting your city, or a criminal intrusion into your life. In these experiences the fear and anger over the violation or interruption often cause us to overlook the grief experience.

Often the grief over lost stability (present) is closely related to grief over the loss of a dream (future). It is the grief of divorce's impact on my kid's school performance more than a grief related to the possibility of growing old alone. It is the grief of struggling to pay this month's bills, rather than unattainable dream of being VP in this company. It is the grief that drains the motivation to continue in rehab rather than that of the grief of understanding my life story as one that will include chronic pain.

With the loss of stability, the theme of "identity" which you will find in these materials on grief may be particularly helpful. To acknowledge my loss of stability often requires a significant change in my self-perception. However, unless we are careful this change can be a time when many lies and self-deprecating concepts enter our sense of identity.

Once you get through the initial shock of the loss of stability, then this grief process begins to closely resemble the grief related to the loss of a dream. The important thing to remember is that as you deal with the logistical and emotional fallout from your loss of stability, that this is a loss to be grieved and your processing of this event will likely feel incomplete until you have done so.

Grief & Living Death

One of the common descriptions for the experience of divorce is "living death." There is a union and family which dies, but each member of that family (spouses, children, and grandparents) remain alive to observe the slow, painful death and try to figure out how they are to relate to one another. In many ways grief is easier when the person or thing that you lost is not constantly coming in and out of your life or sending messages that have to be interpreted.

As you go through these materials on grief, you may need to give more attention the sections on grief triggers or unpredictably hard times, and rely less on the general guidelines given to the time frame for grief. Grieving a divorce is less orderly than other grief experiences.

You may also find that the experiences of anger and guilt are more pronounced in grieving a divorce than in other grief experiences. In your suffering story (chapter four), it may be harder to weave out the themes of "I deserve this," "relationships hurt," or "evil wins" from your grief. The fact that there is rarely an "innocent party" in a divorce will make the discernment between sin and suffering a more necessary task than in other forms of grief.

Thinking through the changes in relationships will be more involved than with other forms of grief. Most of the same dynamics that are discussed in this material will exist, but with an additional level of complexity. For instance, related to couple friends as a single person will still be different and awkward, but, after a divorce, maintaining friendship can feel like choosing sides for your friends. Overt conversations about these changes are wise.

A major theme in your journey through grief will be patience and reliance upon God. Coming to the same challenges over and over again (i.e., the pain of a weekly visitation schedule, having to decide about holidays, hearing "updates" on your ex-spouse from friends, etc..) will trigger grief regularly. You might ask several key people to pray Colossians 1:9-14 on your behalf regularly, especially verse 11 where Paul asks for "all endurance and patience with joy" for his Colossian friends.

Another theme in your journey will be the resistance of taking on "divorced" as your identity. Whenever we struggle with one thing for an extended period of time, we have a tendency to embrace it as who we are. As you move through the section on learning your gospel story, make sure that you see that divorce is not the defining chapter of your life.

Appendix C

Small Group Care Plan for the Whole Journey

Caring for a friend facing a significant loss is something that we (as friends and church members) often start well. We bring meals and try to make sure the mundane burdens (like mowing the grass) are handled. But too often this ends after a couple of weeks, and when the care ends the grieving individual often feels like it is no longer acceptable to speak of their loss. The length of our care often becomes the unspoken time table for how long grief is socially acceptable to talk about.

Our care can be an immense blessing when we care well for the duration of the grieving process. The purpose of this appendix is to equip a small group to care for its members after a significant loss in a way that facilitates healthy grieving and demonstrates the present, patient love of Christ through His body, the church. Our goal would be to ensure that when their season of grief comes, every member of a small group would be able to echo this testimony:

"Reading back through journal entries made a decade earlier... I realized I had faced my greatest fear in life—to love and then to lose someone—with my faith intact. My wife's death confirmed rather than threatened my faith because everything that followed conformed to what I had been taught to expect. My church family rallied to my aid, swamping me with love and care; my co-workers expressed deep sympathy and shouldered my responsibilities until I could return to work, and above all God made His presence and His comfort known in special ways (p. 14)." Joseph Lehmann in "Believing in Hope" from *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter 1998).

A Standard Beginning

During the first couple of weeks the goal is simply to be a compassionate presence and to serve your friend by providing the mental-emotional space to process all the changes in his/her life. Your involvement at this stage is very practical, but with the awareness that practical involvement will likely create the opportunity to listen to where your friend is in that moment.

As a small group you will want to:

- Create a plan for who can bring meals for the first 1-2 weeks.
- Find out if there are household chores or lawn work that can be alleviated.
- Attend funeral
- Be aware of appointments (medical, legal, etc...) and provide support for these as needed.

Recording Important Dates

A significant loss has more than one significant date. For instance, in caring for someone who lost their spouse you would need to be aware of more than the date he/she died. You would also want to know birthday, anniversary, when they may have been planning a special get away, Father's/Mother's Day, etc... During the first year there will be more of these dates and special form of contact should be added on these dates to the care plan below.

In the second and third year, several of these dates will be points that you will want to let your friend know you remember the occasion. The tone of these interactions do not have to be somber. It often encouraging and freeing for someone to know that their loved one is not forgotten (there is a great of burden that comes with being someone's sole-rememberer).

Someone in the small group will want to get the dates for the following occasions and share them with the group as needed or appropriate. Making a note or two about what your friend remembers or liked best about these dates with their loved one can be an effective way to care more meaningfully in the future.

- Birthday of Deceased: _____
- Due date for the unborn: _____

- Date of Death: _____
- Anniversary: _____
- Relevant or Favorite Holidays: _____
- Planned or Annual Trips / Events: _____
- Special Time to Loved One (i.e., Start of Hunting Season): _____
- Important Life Marker for Loved One (i.e, Start of School): _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Advice for Grief Journey Companion:

The care plan below discusses someone serving as a “Grief Journey Companion” (GJC). This is a member of the group who will take the time to study through this “*Taking the Journey of Grief with Hope*” seminar with their friend. The GJC does not need to see themselves as a counselor, but as companion who ensures their friend does not have to travel this difficult terrain alone.

It is recommended the grieving friend and GJC meet every other week during the first five to six months of grief. In between meetings each person would watch the videos and study the material in this notebook. Between meetings the GJC would send their grieving friend messages of encouragement or prayers regarding the material being studied.

In addition the GJC would:

- Be available for phone calls when grief is particularly intense.
- Help the individual decide what to share with the small group during prayer times.
- Communicate needs to the small group.

Building a 12 Month Care Plan

The concept and some points of this care plan were adapted from Paul Tautges’ book *Comfort Those Who Grieve*.

Be sure to add to this care plan interaction on the special dates recorded above. While completing a chart like this may seem a bit formal, without it grief care tends only to last for a relatively short time or becomes the responsibility of only one person within the group.

Write the date of loss _____ / _____ / _____

When?	Date	What?	Who?
Week 1	Week of _____ / _____	Bring Meals Help with household chores Attend Funeral	Many Small Group Members
Week 2	Week of _____ / _____	Bring Meals Help with household chores	Many Small Group Members
Week 3	Week of _____ / _____	Two phone calls with specific questions* about grief.	_____ _____

Week 4	Week of _____ / _____	Lunch or Dinner Offer to study through “ <i>Taking the Journey of Grief with Hope</i> ” together	Grief Journey Companion (GJC): commits to bi-monthly interaction for the next 6 months. _____
Week 5	Week of _____ / _____	Two e-mails containing prayers or words of encouragement	_____ _____
Weeks 6	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 1 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 7	Week of _____ / _____	One phone call with specific questions* about grief.	_____
Week 8	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 2 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 9	Week of _____ / _____	Send a list of encouraging Scripture and a prayer.	Small Group Leader
Week 10	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 3 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 12	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 4 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 14	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 5 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 16	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 6 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 18	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 7 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 20	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 8 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 22	Week of _____ / _____	Discuss Step 9 material over visit or phone call.	GJC
Week 24	Week of _____ / _____	Phone call letting them know the small group wants to pray for them on the 6 month anniversary of their loss.	Small Group Leader
Week 26	Week of _____ / _____	During group prayer time ask for report on how the last 6 months have been and pray specifically for them.	Group as Whole
Month 7	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____
Month 8	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____
Month 9	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____

Month 10	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____
Month 11	_____	One point of person-to-person or voice-to-voice contact in which at least two specific questions* are asked about grieving process.	_____
Month 12	___/___/___	During group prayer time ask for report on how the last 1 year has been and pray specifically for them. The small group leader should talk to the person prior to this evening.	Group as Whole
After	When Applicable	The group should continue to keep up with key dates (i.e., birthday, anniversary, etc...) related to the loss in the second and third year after the loss. A card or phone call on these dates can remind the person they are not alone.	Group as Whole

* **Specific Questions:** Throughout the care plan it mentions periodic phone calls with “specific questions” about how your friend is doing in the grieving process. It is important to ask questions which give your friend the freedom to speak of his/her grief. Otherwise, they may feel awkward with answering a generic “how have you been doing?” with a reflection on their grief. If they simply say fine, you do not have press for a more involved response but it is good to follow up with, “I want you to know that if you have a rough day, you have someone to talk to.”

The following questions could be asked during these interactions:

- I know it has been [amount of time] since [name] passed, how are you doing? How is it different from where you expected to be at this point?
- Has there been anything that has reminded you of name [name] recently? How do you handle it when things like that arise?
- Last time we talked about your grief you asked me to pray for [blank], how is that going? Is there anything different I should be praying for now?
- Have you thought of any stories about [name] that you’ve wanted to share with someone lately? What kind of things have caused you to think of him/her most lately?
- What emotions has your grief expressed itself in lately? What do you attribute that to?
- I know [name] really enjoyed [blank] this time of year and they’ve been on my mind lately. How about you?

A printable PDF copy of this appendix can be found at www.bradhambrick.com/griefseminar.

Appendix D

Healthy Ways to Capture Memories

In the end, grief is about how we remember. Memory is powerful. It shapes our lives in many ways. Memory impacts our emotions. Memory shapes the significance we give to current events. Memory influences what we expect from the future. So the effort to grieve well could be reframed as learning to remember in healthy ways.

Too often we try to define "getting over grief" as "moving past" our loss, which implies forgetting or not thinking about our loved one. We rightly resist this conception of grief. But unless we have a healthy alternative, we avoid one error and get trapped in painful remembering.

In this appendix, you should find a list of ways to remember your loved one in a healthy manner. Do not read this as a checklist to complete, but as a brainstorming venue to find ideas that match your preferences and situation. With each suggestion, it is important to remember that you are creating something special rather than sacred. If you venerate your method of remembering, it will add a pressure to do it perfectly and transfer the emotional attachment from your loved one to an object.

When you lose someone dear, you do become, in some sense, their historian. You carry their story, values, and accomplishments to continue the blessing God brought about through their life. But it is important to remember that God promises to equip you for this task in the same way He does for any other task.

Read Luke 12:11-12. The context of this passage is different from grief, but Jesus' promise still applies. The disciples were fearful they would not know what to say when they faced persecution. After all, Jesus said things so well and was always able to answer the entrapping questions of his enemies. But they feared freezing up and forgetting all they learned from Jesus. But his promise to their fear was that the Holy Spirit would prompt their memory in the needed moments. That same promise applies to the fear you may feel about forgetting pieces of your loved one's life. Your loved one is with God, and God is with you. There is a sure connection between you and whatever memory would benefit a given moment.

With these things in mind, consider the following suggestions as you develop an approach to remembering your loved one and, thereby, continue on your journey of grieving with hope.

Personal Journal: A personal journal simply involves recording your memories in a notebook, on a computer, or with the voice recorder on your phone when they arise. Do not worry about trying to develop a chronological or thematic order. That can often make a personal journal feel forced or like a burden. This is not a biography but a series of snapshots from your memory. This type of tool allows it to feel less like your memories are attacking you out of nowhere and then running off to hide. Each memory, even if painful or sad, becomes part of a permanent bank of memories. You do not have to fear losing them (we've already discussed how fear magnifies grief) because they are recorded. Now each memory can be a welcomed guest rather than a painful intruder.

Structured Journal: Many different structured journals exist. Some are meant to help you record your experience with grief. Others ask questions about your loved one for you to write about. If you lost a parent, you might get *A Father's Legacy* or *A Mother's Legacy* journal (which are usually completed by the parent as a gift for their children) and fill in the parts you know. This type of exercise doesn't rely on spontaneous or situationally triggered memory. Such journals can provide a pleasant surprise of how much you remember and give you questions to ask family and friends to learn more.

Scrap Book: Part of the grieving process usually involves going through the loved ones things. In this process you will likely find pictures, letters, diplomas, certificates, and other things that capture the story of your loved one's life. Putting these together into a scrap book can be an effective way to review their life in a highly interactive way that facilitates the grieving process. The end product will be something that you can share with those who would benefit from hearing your loved one's story (children as they get older, grandchildren, or others going through grief).

Memory Box: As you go through your loved one's things, there will be some precious things that wouldn't fit in a scrap book. If you are not careful, there may be so many of these that space becomes an issue or that their prominence in your home becomes a perpetually painful reminder. Having a box where you keep these things will help you limit the collection to a healthy amount and give you something to get out and peruse on occasions when you want to reflect on their life. Some people like to have a special box made to feel like they are giving additional honor to their loved one and creating a family heirloom.

Family Gathering: If your loss was a friend, then the gathering might be with other friends. The objective would be the same; to remember your loved one in a healthy way through shared memory. In combination with some of the ideas above, this can be a sweet time of comfort for all involved. People might read from their journal about unique experiences, share pictures, or talk about items that had significance to the shared loved one.

Appendix H

What Do I Do Now?

A plumb line of the Summit counseling ministry is, "We don't do events; we create resources." That means you should be asking yourself, "What can or should I do with this information now?"

We have created a series of brief videos that answer that what-now question from several different perspectives. Each of these can be found at:

www.bradhambrick.com/whatnow
www.bradhambrick.com/griefseminar

Personal Study or Small Group

Question: I've been to several of the Summit counseling seminars and notice there appears to be a couple of different kinds. You frequently recommend studying them as a small group or with a friend. That seems like a great idea, but since I haven't done that before I'm not quite sure how to start something like that. Do you mind giving me guidance?

Pursue Personal Counseling

Question: After attending this seminar I realized I would like to pursue counseling to help me grow in this area. It sounded like there are several different options available. Would you mind explaining to me what those are and how I could connect with the one that best serves me need?

Leveraging My Workplace

Question: I've heard rumors that I'm supposed to be able to use the Summit counseling seminars to leverage my workplace for gospel influence. My first impression is that it sounds awkward and intrusive; like I'm telling people they've "got issues" or "need help." But I'm also worried about putting up Christian material that might be offensive to some people who visit my workplace. But I would at least like to hear what you've got to say. How would this work?

As a Professional Counselor

Question: I'm a licensed counselor (LPC) and came across the Summit counseling seminars. I'm excited to see the church addressing these kinds of subjects, and I'm curious how you might see someone in my position (or a LCSW or LMFT) using the materials. I can see recommending them to my clients who are open to an overtly Christian aspect to their counseling, but it seems like there could be more uses than just counseling homework. Could you share your thoughts on how those in private practice might use these resources?

Our goal in Summit counseling is to (1) equip the church to care for one another and our community with excellence; (2) provide quality counseling services that allow our people to get involved in the lives of others with confidence – knowing additional, experienced care is available to come alongside them if needed; and (3) create ways for our members and other Christians in our community to leverage their workplace and careers for greater gospel impact in their spheres of influence.

We hope this seminar and these videos give you a vision for how this can happen and stirs a passion in you to be a part of God's work of redeeming and restoring hurting individuals and families.