

LESSON SEVEN: FREE TO GRIEVE, VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH- PASTOR WILLIAM A. LEE, JR.

STAGE NINE AND TEN: HOPE COMES THROUGH AND REALITY IS AFFIRMED

Psalm 27:13-14

13 I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living. 14 Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!

“Something quite unexpected has happened. It came this morning early. For various reasons, not in themselves at all mysterious, my heart was lighter than it had been for many weeks.

And suddenly at the very moment when, so far I mourned H.. Least, I remembered her best. Indeed it was something (almost) better than memory; an instantaneous unanswerable impression. To say it was like a meeting would be going too far. Yet there was that in it which tempts one to use those words. It was as if the lighting of the sorrow removed a barrier. — C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed

C.S Lewis was one who seemed to use writing to work through his grief as he mourned the death of his wife. In his writings on grief entitled “A Grief Observed”, he notes the unexpected but much-appreciated appearance of healing and hope. For we who grieve in a healthy manner we will at some point in the grief experience began to feel like we are finally coming home after a long and trying journey. It is there that we begin to sense some hope. This being a hope for the lessening of grief, but not the lessening of memories that we carry of our loved ones. We hope for the returning of some kind of normal rhythm, even when we may have been reluctant to enter it. We begin to hope to move again into new relationships, perhaps new loves and new friendships. We begin to gain a clearer understand of how much God truly loves us and when we can think of the future and we start to feel anticipation rather than anxiety, we know that hope is coming through.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. Psalm 42:11

In grieving we must understand that the process is never a straight line and orderly. The process will often go back and forth. It may stall in uncomfortable places or sometimes move too quickly in others areas. Sometimes hope will shine through at certain points and will seem to move away or disappear at others.

Make a list of five reasons you have hope for the future.

Two opposite ideas: grief and hope. And, both can exist in our lives at the same time. As our pain is mitigated, our hearts begin to slowly heal. And, a heart in healing will invite moments of joy, love, laughter, and hope to seep into the places where pain and sorrow once burrowed deep. This begins the **work** and **process** of reconciliation. It is important to note that two keywords in the definition above, work and process. Loss is an event, but reconciliation is both “work and a process,”.....and it isn’t exactly a fast one. Grief offers for us an opportunity for personal growth. For many people, it may eventually lead to renewed energy to invest in new activities and new relationships. Some people seek meaning in their loss and get involved in causes or projects that help others. As a result of the pain they have suffered, some people find a new compassion in themselves. They may become more sensitive toward others and that may serve to strengthen relationships. Others find new meaning and independence they never knew they had before. Some may even find new emotional

resources that had not been apparent before. These are all things that can take place when the grieving began to look up and grab ahold of hope.

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

1. What symbols of the past are you still holding onto?
2. If they are not helpful how might you let go?
3. What steps have you taken to work through your grief?
4. How could you repeat them when fresh grief breaks into your sense of hope?

AFFIRMING REALITY

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

As we began to complete our grief stages we reach a point in which we finally begin to affirm reality. It is important to note that we do not say that we become our old self again because when we go through any significant grief experience we come out as difference people. We come out either weaker or stronger, healthier in spirit or sicker depending upon the way we responding to

the event. For those whose faith is mature and healthy they come through in a way that makes them better able to help people who face similar grief experiences and tragedies.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

They also come out of it with a deeper faith in God. Those who have an immature and childish faith tend to face the loss in a variety of unhealthy ways, They more than likely will never really work through their grief and months, even years later will still find themselves fighting inner battles. Spiritually mature persons seem to be able to wrestle with grief more effectively because they carry the conviction that God is with them and that He is always behind the scenes working.

Matthew 28:20

“...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Hebrews 13:5

21st Century King James Version

5 ...For He hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”;

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

“I am convinced of the importance of keeping at the task of nurturing ones faith because I have seen how such people demonstrate greatness under trial. Conversely, I have seen what happens to people who have not taken seriously the necessity of working at their faith when the going was good. These people seem unprepared to handle even the smaller losses that face all of us from time to time. “ (Granger Westburg)

To affirm something is to say that it is good. Those who have faith can find the good even in tragedy in that we understand that although the particular loss is not good, we still have not lost everything. As we begin to struggle to affirm reality, we find that we need not be afraid of the real world. We can live in it again and can even love it again. For a time we thought there was nothing about life we could affirm. Now the dark clouds are beginning to break up, and occasionally, for brief moments, the rays of of the sun come through.

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:3-4)

Accepting loss is a slow and gradual process with steps backward as well as forward. What experiences have you had that have taught you something you can use in the future?

In what ways could your grief experience help someone else who is dealing with loss?