

We have an uneasy relationship with grief. Many of us run from it; some of us are trapped in it. Few of us realize that grief may be a gift, and can even be a ministry. As always, we learn how by studying Jesus.

First though, it's worth noting what we've learned from Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and others: that grief is a natural and necessary process in response to loss – impending or experienced. Famously, she analyzed five stages of grief through which we pass (and at times return to): Denial (“This isn’t happening!”), Anger (“It’s my fault! It’s your fault!”), Bargaining (“If I just do *this*, the outcome will change”), Depression (“Nothing can be done, it’s all hopeless”) and Acceptance (“This *has* happened/*is* happening, and I will be okay”).

1. Think about a season of grief in your life. Can you identify the stages you went through?
2. What would “Acceptance” mean in relation to your own story of grief? Are you “there”?

Jesus knew how to celebrate, but was also “a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). Read Luke 19:41-46. Here, we find Jesus grieving over Jerusalem: a grief not for himself, but for his people.

3. Who or what do you grieve over that isn’t linked to your personal situation?
4. What might the Lord call you to grieve over?

When Jesus grieves, compassion moves in his heart. He could have turned away from the city; instead, it becomes “you, even you!” He addresses the city as though it were a person.

5. How has your grief for others softened your heart toward them?

Loving Jerusalem through his tears, Jesus is able to face the worst prospect for the city with acceptance: doom is at hand, the city will be razed (as in fact it was in AD 70).

6. How has grief enabled you to see things as they really are and accept them?

Although Jesus sees no hope for the city, he does not turn away, or collapse into depression. Instead he chooses a redemptive option, going straight to the temple to strive against its venal commerce, and to call the people to return to prayer – to seeking the Lord, as the proper practice of temple life, whatever doom may lie ahead.

7. How has grief enabled you to find a path forward?
8. When there is really no hope of redemption for the situation or person you grieve over, how will you turn to prayer?

Share your current situation with each other: where you are stuck in grief, or refusing to grieve, or unsure how to. Pray for each other, remembering the words of

Psalm 23: though I walk through the valley shadowed by death I will fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and staff comfort me.