

Beware of These 2 Unhelpful Extremes When Processing Intense Grief

I think one of the most difficult emotions we process is grief.

Grief can happen for many reasons, not just the passing away of a loved one. We grieve for lost opportunities, loss of a friendship or relationship and disappointment or disillusionment.

I'll admit, I've never grieved well.

While I am a sensitive person, in the sense that I feel things very deeply, I am not always very comfortable with extreme emotion either in myself or expressed by others.

And grief is a very extreme emotion.

My response has been to first allow myself to be consumed by it, and then find an escape from it.

My escapes are:

Food

Busyness

Never allowing myself to be alone

Noise

None of these is healthy, and none of them bring true, lasting comfort and peace.

What Does the Bible Say About Grief?

There are two extremes in Christianity. One extreme gives way to emotions and feelings. These Christians glorify feelings above God's Word, which has led to a great imbalance in

theology because truth becomes subjective to your feelings, which are often led by cultural norms.

The other extreme is to negate the importance of emotions and feelings. All extreme feeling, whether sorrow or joy, is “of the flesh”. This causes a suppression of emotions and a desensitization to those around us as well as to the Holy Spirit.

Neither of these extremes is good, both are unhealthy. God created our emotions for a purpose.

In fact, we see in the Gospels that Jesus expressed a lot of emotion: joy that led to dancing, sorrow that led to weeping, anger, compassion and even exhaustion.

The key to dealing with grief, as in any emotion, is learning what to do when the emotion comes.

Isaiah 53:4a says, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;”

We Do Not Grieve Alone

When we think of Jesus on the cross, we think of Him carrying the sins of mankind. But Jesus did not just carry our sin.

Jesus also carried our sickness.

Jesus also carried our grief.

Jesus also carried our sorrow.

Why?

Jesus carried all of these: our sin, sickness, grief and sorrow so that we wouldn't have to. The burden of any of these, and all of these, is too big for the human heart.

He went to the cross not only as our substitute for sin, but as healing for our sickness, grief and sorrow. Then after he

ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit as our Comforter.

What Do We Do With Our Grief?

Grief, just as with any other emotion, is a signal.

While some emotions, such as anger or bitterness, signal that something is wrong, grief is a signal to us that we need to come back to the cross and let Jesus bear our grief.

Does this mean we should not have feelings of grief or sorrow?

No.

It just means that we don't have to bear them alone.

How Do We Respond When Grief Fills Our Heart?

1. Run to the cross.

When the feelings come, when the tears come, when the sense of loss and disappointment comes, we go to Jesus.

We lay them at the cross and remind ourselves of the precious sacrifice Christ paid for us so that we don't have to bear them alone.

2. Dig the Word.

What the does Bible say about the source of our grief? Write those verses down and remind yourself of them each time the emotion comes so that your emotions are expressed through the prism of the Word of God.

3. Seek the Holy Spirit.

In John 14:26, Jesus told His disciples that when He left to return to the Father, the Holy Spirit would be sent to be their comforter, advocate, intercessor, and helper.

When our hearts are burdened and heavy, when we need that

peace that surpasses all understanding, when we need comfort, we need to seek the Holy Spirit's comfort and help. He will remind us of the promises of God, He will comfort us with the truth of the Word that brings us true and lasting peace.

Are you grieving today over a loss?

Are you unsure how to find the balance between becoming overwhelmed or shutting down?

You will find your balance at the cross of Jesus. His sacrifice purchased the healing of your soul.

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