

Growing Through Grief

Restoring My Soul – Session #6
Based on *Restoring My Soul* by Bill Flatt

Some Stages of Grief

1. Shock and Denial
 - This stage seems to have a survival function – the human system is overloaded and we can't stand the pain. The numbness and denial puts pain on hold for a while.
 - This reminds us that often the most difficult times in loss can come days and even weeks after the funeral, when this stage fades away.
2. Anger and Guilt
 - This occurs when the initial shock wears off and the reality settles in to our mind.
 - Anger is close to jealousy, an emotion that we may feel when we see those who are enjoying blessings we don't have.
3. Suffering and Withdrawal
 - This is the stage most of associate with grief – hurting. This pain just does not seem to want to go away. We often try to control it, though we cannot.
 - Often, we seek to withdraw. We don't feel like being around others – our social behaviors, self-image, work, and identity may change.
4. Panic
 - This feeling can come at any time during the grief process, when it feels as if the whole world is on your shoulders.
 - When this happens, the enormity of the grief might seem so overwhelming that it feels impossible for things to get better.
5. Depression
 - It is likely that we will not be able to completely turn our grief around before we go through this phase. In this phase, we may even feel guilty for brief periods of enjoyment, because we feel that we aren't supposed to be happy.
 - During this time, major decisions need to be postponed until rational thought is easier to maintain. Give yourself time to reflect on where you have been, and think about all those who care for you.
6. Adaptation
 - You make emotional, mental, and behavioral adjustments. You are a different person, adjusting to the loss and re-affirming your life.
 - Dr. Flatt chooses not to use the term "recovery," since we are never truly the same once we experience grief. It changes us.
7. Growth
 - You reinvest in life and initiate positive things.
 - 93% of those Flatt studied stated that they had grown through the grief process.

Example of Grieving: Jesus

1. Jesus talked.
 - Mark 10:32-34
 - Even before Jesus was arrested and crucified, He knew what He would endure. It is very difficult to adjust to grief without talking.
2. Jesus cried.
 - Hebrews 5:7
 - Jesus offered up prayers with tears. If anyone understood the brevity of physical life, it was Jesus, yet He cried at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35).
3. Jesus lamented.
 - Matthew 27:46
 - On the cross, Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1, which is a psalm of lament.
4. Jesus experienced physical symptoms of grief.
 - Luke 22:43-44
 - Sometimes, we can experience physical symptoms because of grief.
5. Jesus surrendered.
 - Luke 23:46
 - When He was overwhelmed on the cross, He surrendered to God.
6. Jesus forgave others.
 - Luke 23:34
 - Jesus made the statement, "Father, forgive them" on the cross, at what would be the most difficult time to think about the forgiveness of others.
7. Jesus accepted hostile feelings.
 - John 11:11-37
 - When Mary and Martha were upset with Jesus for not arriving earlier when Lazarus died, Jesus did not respond in an upset manner.
8. Jesus continued to work.
 - John 21:3
 - The apostles returned to what they knew, fishing, after the resurrection.
9. Jesus offered hope.
 - Matthew 5:4, John 4:13-14, John 16:33, John 14:27
 - God knows that we all need hope when facing despair.
10. Jesus adjusted to reality.
 - John 11
 - Jesus placed His life in the hands of His Father.