

Grief is an emotion common to the human experience, and we witness the process of grief throughout the biblical narrative. Multiple Bible characters experienced deep loss and sadness, including Job, Naomi, Hannah, and David. Even Jesus mourned (John 11:35; Matthew 23:37-39). After Lazarus died, Jesus went to the village of Bethany, where Lazarus was buried. When Jesus saw Martha and the other mourners weeping, He also wept. He was moved by their grief and also by the fact of Lazarus's death. The astounding thing is that, even though Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, He chose to partake of the grief of the situation. Jesus truly is a high priest who can "sympathize with our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15).

One step in overcoming grief is having the right perspective on it. First, we recognize that grief is a natural response to pain and loss. There is nothing wrong with grieving. Second, we know that times of grief serve a purpose. Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, "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." This verse implies that grief can be good because it can refresh our perspective on life. Third, we remember that feelings of grief are temporary. "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psalms 30:5). There is an end to mourning. Grief has its purpose, but it also has its limit.

Through it all, God is faithful. There are many Scriptures that remind us of God's faithfulness in times of mourning. He is with us even in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalms 23:4). When David sorrowed, he prayed this in Psalms 56:8: "You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?" (ESV). The touching image of God catching our tears is full of meaning. He sees our grief and does not disdain it. Like Jesus entered into the grief of the mourners in Bethany, God enters into our grief.

At the same time, He reassures us that all is not lost. Psalm 46:10 reminds us to “be still” and rest in the knowledge that He is God. He is our refuge (Psalm 91:1-2). He works all things together for the good of those He has called (Romans 8:28).

An important part of overcoming grief is expressing it to God. The Psalms contain numerous examples of pouring out one’s heart to God. Interestingly, the psalmist never ends where he began. He may start a psalm with expressions of grief, but, almost invariably, he will end it with praise (Psalm 13; Psalm 23:4; Psalm 30:11-12; Psalm 56). God understands us (Psalm 139:2). When we commune with Him, we are able to open our minds to the truth that He loves us, that He is faithful, that He is in control, and that He knows how He is going to work it out for our good.

Another important step in overcoming grief is to share it with others. The body of Christ is designed to ease the burdens of its individual members (Galatians 6:2), and fellow believers have the ability to “mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15). Often, the grieving tend to shun others, increasing feelings of isolation and misery. It is much healthier to seek counseling, and group settings can be invaluable. Groups offer listening ears and helpful encouragement, camaraderie, and guidance in working through the grief. When we share our stories with God and others, our grief is lessened.

Sadly, grief is part of the human experience. Loss is part of life, and grief is a natural response to loss. But we have the hope of Christ, and we know that He is strong enough to carry our burdens (Matthew 11:30). We can give our hurt to Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). We can find solace in the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Paraclete (John 14:16). In grief, we cast our burdens on Him, rely on the community of the church, delve into the truth of the Word, and ultimately experience hope (Hebrews 6:19-20).