

Guiding Grievors to God and His Grace

Dr. Mark E. Shaw

Director of Counseling, Grace Fellowship Church

INTRODUCTION

Not the Process

Not the Issue

Guiding the person; moving the person toward Christ.

Three goals in this workshop:

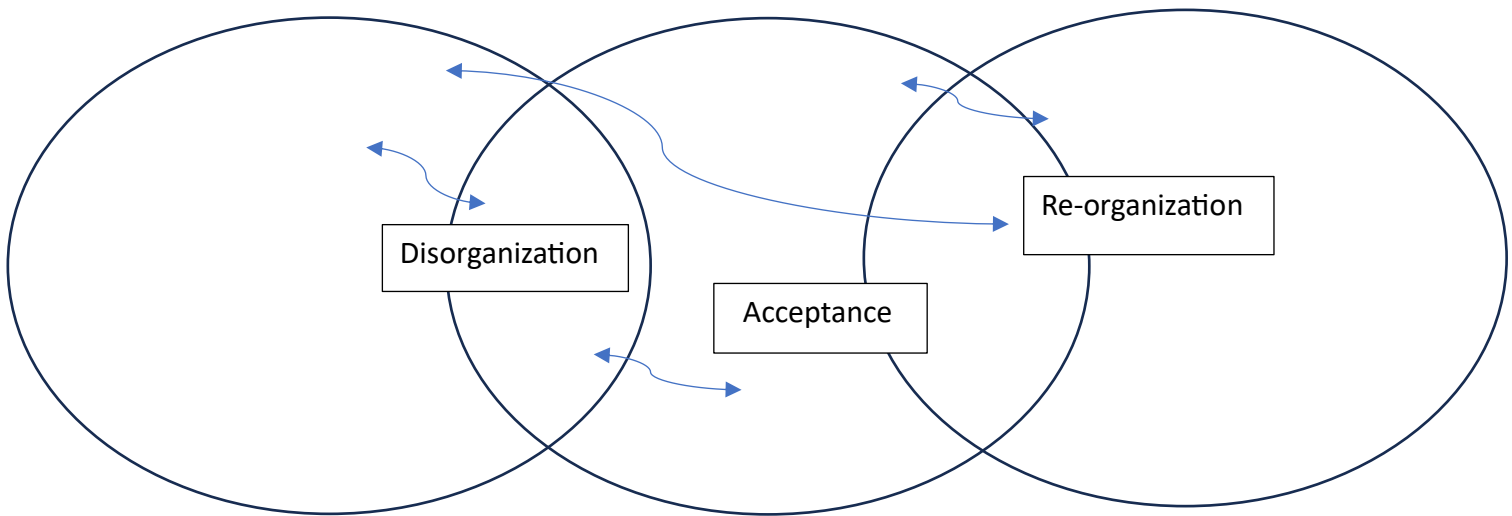
1. Counsel the whole person who is grieving by *entering into their sorrow*. 2 Cor. 1:3-5 ***Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.*** (ESV)
2. Better understand hurt, suffering, calamity, and “trauma” in a big picture way.
3. Learn the very basic elements of lament and how to encourage counselees to lament.

COUNSELING THE WHOLE PERSON

Why do we grieve?¹

DIMENSIONS OF GRIEF: UNDERSTANDING WHERE YOUR COUNSELEE MIGHT BE

Dr. Howard Eyrich’s booklet, *Grief*, on page 31 --- Dimensions of grief (not stages)²



1. Disorganization: “A relationship is deconstructed. The orderliness of life is distorted. There is often an infusion of entangled responsibilities.” - quote from page 31 (John 11:21-46 Martha & Lazarus).

¹ Howard Eyrich, *Grief: Learning to Live With Loss* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2010), 11.

² Howard Eyrich, *Grief: Learning to Live with Loss*, Resources for Biblical Living, (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2010) 20.

- a. Be a good listener. Ask questions, especially clarifying questions.
James 1:19 (ESV) ***“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”***
 - b. Use soft, kind, gracious, and sweet words at all times.
Prov. 16:24 (ESV) ***“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”***
 - c. Ask God for wisdom to discern the timing of your words; Err on the side of silence.
Ecc 3:1, 7b (ESV) ***“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ... a time to keep silence, and a time to speak...”***
 - d. Show compassion.
Col 3:12 (ESV) ***“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...”***
 - e. It's okay to cry with your counselees. Rom. 12:15 (ESV) ***“...Weep with those who weep..”***
 - f. Acknowledge that it is *normal* to experience pain, doubt, disorganization, confusion, and emotions like anger, sadness, and anxiety. Psalm 31:10-12 (ESV) ***“For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away. ¹¹ Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. ¹² I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel.”***
2. Acceptance: “There is a realization that life will never be the same again, coupled with a willingness to engage new frontiers of life. See Luke 24:13-35 ‘Road to Emmaus’” – (from *Grief*, Eyrich, p.31)
 - a. “Respond to “why” questions with “Who” answers.
 - i. Attributes of God.
 - ii. Names of God.
 - iii. Focusing upon the character and Person of God to foster a relationship.
 - b. Sometimes you are simply encouraging and pointing them to begin walking the path (Prov. 3:5-8) of trusting Christ in a greater way (sanctification).
 3. Reorganization: “The individual will make the choice to honor God, others, and self by the reconstruction of relationships, life structures, and responsibilities. (Acts 1:12-26)” (Matthias chosen to replace Judas) – quote from (Eyrich, *Grief*, p.31)
 - a. A new mindset
 - b. Recognition that God is both good and sovereign
 - c. Maturity to understand that “Suffering is a Faith Assignment from our good and sovereign, Father God”³
 - Think of Thankfulness as a Discipline to be Practiced
 - 1 Thess. 5:18 (ESV) ***“...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”***
 - Being thankful is a choice first. It is not our ‘default’ so to speak!
 - Being thankful is purposeful. It takes determination.
 - Being thankful often requires looking back and remembering God's goodness. ***“You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you,***

³ Fred and Lauri Bucci, “How to Minister to Suffering,” *The Addiction Connection 7th Annual Leadership Summit: Christ, His Church, and Addiction*, August 4, 2023, <https://theaddictionconnection.thinkific.com/courses/leadership-summit-2023>, video.

testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.” Deut. 8:2 (NASB)

- Being thankful is **“practiced”** like you would practice playing a musical instrument. (Phil. 4:9)
- Being thankful focuses on God and His character rather than one’s temporary circumstances. In this way, it is eternal.
- Being thankful requires creativity in searching for what is good. Philippians 4:8
- While the circumstances are not “good” in this life, God is redemptive, meaning He brings good from bad situations and circumstances. Genesis 50:20-21

²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” (ESV)

BETTER UNDERSTAND HURT, SUFFERING, CALAMITY, AND “TRAUMA” IN A BIG PICTURE WAY

1. Use biblical words.
2. Primary problems with the secular approach to trauma are...
3. How do people respond to deep affliction, horrendous suffering, and terrible emotional/physical pain? ⁴

LEARN THE VERY BASIC ELEMENTS OF LAMENT AND HOW TO ENCOURAGE COUNSELEES TO LAMENT

Not exhaustive, but a brief overview. More detail coming in September at Advanced CDT...

Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy (Vroegop) Chapter 1 “Life begins with tears.” That’s the human experience. Psalm 77 For the choir director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph. My voice [rises] to God, and I will cry aloud; My voice [rises] to God, and He will hear me. ² In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; In the night my hand was stretched out without weariness; My soul refused to be comforted. ³ [When] I remember God, then I am disturbed; [When] I sigh, then my spirit grows faint. Selah. ⁴ You have held my eyelids [open;] I am so troubled that I cannot speak. ⁵ I have considered the days of old, The years of long ago. ⁶ I will remember my song in the night; I will meditate with my heart, And my spirit ponders: ⁷ Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? ⁸ Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has [His] promise come to an end forever? ⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious, Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Selah. ¹⁰ Then I said, “It is my grief, That the right hand of the Most High has changed.” ¹¹ I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. ¹² I will meditate on all Your work And muse on Your deeds. ¹³ Your way, O God, is holy; What god is great like our God? ¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders; You have made known Your strength among the peoples. ¹⁵ You have by Your power redeemed Your people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. ¹⁶ The waters saw You, O God; The waters saw You, they were in anguish; The deeps also trembled. ¹⁷ The clouds poured out water; The skies gave forth a sound; Your arrows flashed here and there. ¹⁸ The sound of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; The lightnings lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook. ¹⁹ Your way was in the sea

⁴ For more detail about helping those who experienced a traumatic event, watch Dr. Curtis Solomon’s Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) lectures on the GFC Counselor platform (www.graceky.thinkific.com)

And Your paths in the mighty waters, And Your footprints may not be known. ²⁰ You led Your people like a flock By the hand of Moses and Aaron. (NASB)

Counseling Goal: Join others in their grief. Enter into their sorrow.

Lament invites us to grieve and to trust.

Psalm 13 ESV

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ² How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? ³ Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, ⁴ lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. ⁵ But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ⁶ I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me. (ESV)

(Vroegop, *Dark Clouds Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament*, Crossway, 2019, continued)

WHAT IS LAMENT?

1. "Lament is a prayer of honest hurt and pain and the promise of God's goodness."⁵
 2. "Lament is a transition between pain and promise... a path from heartbreak to hope..."
 3. "Lament asks two questions: 1) Where are you God? 2) If you love me, why is this happening?"
 4. Faith is required to lament because you are talking to God honestly versus keeping silent in despair (not talking to God is faithless)
 5. Biblical lament brings you to the place of trusting God because He is good – must believe this attribute of God!!
 6. Biblical lament allows you to grieve honestly, but not aimlessly or selfishly.⁶
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In the devotional journal by Dr. Vroegop, he says there are 4 critical components in a biblical lament:

- 1) Turn toward God (not silent treatment with God)
- 2) Complain to God (honestly; expressing raw emotions but not sinfully because He is to be respected)
- 3) Asking Him for deliverance and relief in this life (doing so in accord with biblical truths)
- 4) Trust (strengthened confidence in God's character and trustworthiness) <- that is FAITH (Waiting is one expression of trusting God!)

⁵ Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Crossway, 2019) p. 26

⁶ Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Crossway, 2019).

Learning to Lament—Learning from Lament—Living with Lament⁷

These are Vroegop's chapter titles and the Biblical passages he teaches in his book (see the Table of Contents from the *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy* book)

- Keep turning to Prayer (Psalm 77)
- Bring your complaints (Psalm 10)
- Ask boldly (Psalm 22)
- Choose to Trust (Psalm 13)
- A Broken World and a Holy God (Lamentations 1-2)
- Hope Springs from Truth Rehearsed (Lamentations 3)
- Unearthing Idols (Lamentations 4)
- A Road Map to Grace (Lamentations 5)
- Making Lament Personal
- Let Us Lament

⁷ Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Crossway, 2019) Contents, Ch 1-4.

To review for our OPEN HOUSE COUNSELING events on Monday nights (5 pm – 8 pm at the Ft. Thomas Campus)

Dr. Curtis Solomon taught us that when you meet with a counselee who has been hurt deeply or is grieving:

1. Focus on discovery first by asking lots of questions. Be gentle. Ask clarifying questions. Gather data.
2. Identify “triggers,” both known and unknown (or unaware), in both the outer man and inner man. How are they responding now? What are their thoughts about the event? What are their emotions?

NOTE:

In crisis, people react differently either in fight or flight – freeze or faint. Some are mentally engaged during the event, while others disassociate or disengage. Ask about their senses that were engaged (i.e. smells, sounds, etc that are associated with the event); what do they remember and/or think about now that the event is over? (i.e. are they afraid of bridges or swimming pools or a certain animal...depending upon their event)

3. Acknowledge the loss. That you understand. (don’t share a personal story of loss at this time because it may be perceived as a ‘one up’ or misinterpreted in another way)
4. Address grief before guilt. The idea is that you enter into their sorrow before addressing guilt they may feel. *My note: But do not neglect to recall the Gospel that all our sins can be acknowledged before a holy God and forgiven in Christ Jesus because of his substitutionary death and atonement for our sins. By grace through faith, not a result of works, so that no one may boast... (Eph. 2:8-9) and that we can receive reconciliation. Rom 5:8-11 ESV ***“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”*** (ESV)
5. Counsel slowly; don’t press or push them to move too quickly.

APPENDIX A:

Fred and Lauri Bucci serve as biblical counselors in a church in Cleveland. They lost their son tragically. Here are some notes from the Bucci's in a presentation they gave on how to help the sufferer.⁸

Suffering is not unusual in this life...

John 16:33 says, ***"In the world you will have tribulation..."*** (NASB95)

1 Peter 4:12 says, ***"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, when it comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you."*** (NASB95)

James 1:2 says, ***"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials..."***

Greek word for trials indicates an "overriding meaning of testing the worth and character of men."

Ps. 31:1-4 ***"To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! ² Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! ³ For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; ⁴ you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge."***

"The idea that God promises trials, suffering and grief is completely foreign today because our culture views trials, suffering and grief as being wrong or that you did something wrong. ~ Philippians 1:29, 2 Timothy 3:12

Remember:

- God did not prevent His own Son from suffering.
- God uses suffering for our good, to conform us to the likeness of His Son. (Rom. 8:28-29)
- We must develop a proper biblical theology of trials, suffering and grief in order to give wise counsel to those experiencing them.
- A proper theology of God will help counselors to teach and exhort sufferers in sound doctrine, and to gently help those who do not know the truth yet. ~ Titus 1:9
- Man's suffering is temporary and tolerable if he is in Christ. Romans 8:18 ***"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."*** (ESV)
- Examples of God's providential, sovereign hand in good and evil:
 - Isaiah 45:7 says, ***"The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these."*** (all the following are from NASB®)
 - Lamentations 3:38 says, ***"Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth?"***
 - Ecclesiastes 7:14 says, ***"In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider – God has made the one as well as the other..."***
 - "Augustine stated centuries ago that nothing therefore happens unless the Omnipotent wills it to happen. He either permits it to happen or brings it about Himself." ~ Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God Even When Life Hurts*

⁸ Fred and Lauri Bucci, "How to Minister to Suffering," *The Addiction Connection 7th Annual Leadership Summit: Christ, His Church, and Addiction*, August 4, 2023, <https://theaddictionconnection.thinkific.com/courses/leadership-summit-2023>, video.

- Providential, Sovereign Suffering Is For God's Glory & Our Good
 - Man was created to bring God glory in **all** circumstances of life.
 - ***"Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory..." ~ Isaiah 43:7***
 - ***"...so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever... But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name glorify God." ~ 1 Peter 4:11, 16***

Appendix B:

Some individual Psalms of Lament⁹

Psalm 4: A lament to read at bedtime.

Psalm 5: A lament to read in the morning.

Psalm 13: A lament for days it feels like this trial will never end.

Psalm 25: A lament when shame seeks to overtake you.

Psalm 28: A lament asking God to hear your cries and carry you.

Psalm 31: A lament during times of distress.

Psalm 43: A lament asking for God's light and truth.

Psalm 54: A lament for days you feel your need for God's help.

Psalm 56: A lament for sadness and fear.

Psalm 57: A lament to help you remember that God is steadfast.

Psalm 64: A lament for days you dread an enemy.

Psalm 70: A lament for times you are poor and needy.

Psalm 71: A lament after you've run out of strength.

Psalm 77: A lament to help you remember God's past faithfulness.

Psalm 86: A lament that recalls God's goodness and forgiveness.

Psalm 139: A lament for remembering that you are precious to God.--

⁹ I cannot recall from where this resource was originally located. I found it helpful. If you know the source please let me know so I can credit the writer. Thanks.