

A Time to Mourn – Lesson 3

Accepting the Unacceptable

*“For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me,
and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.”
Job 3:25*

Denial is a Reaction

- As observed in the popular “five stages of grief”, our initial response to finding out about the passing of a loved one or other traumatic event is often *denial*.
- We will respond by saying something like, “No, that can’t be true”, or “You are joking, right?”
- Today, psychologists theorize that this is a defense mechanism in our mind that allows you more time to process the trauma.
- In those first moments, we may feel numb, shocked, confused, or disoriented.
- It can continue as in refusing to deal with things related to the loss, avoiding anything that reminds us of it, or staying busy so as not to think about it.
- In worst case scenarios, some people will become delusional and continue to behave as if the loss never occurred.

Don’t Dwell in Denial

- While denial is a common reaction, it is a state that we should not dwell in for more than perhaps a few days.
- You cannot move on to hope and healing without accepting the truth about the situation you are facing.
- In essence, to stay in denial is to dam a river of emotions that needs to be released.
- We don’t overcome grief when we overcome denial, we instead *begin* to overcome it.

The Christian Response

- Robert Kellemen says of denial: “I believe that this initial response can be a grace of God, allowing our bodies and physical brains to catch up, to adjust.”
- Kellemen then describes the Christian response to denial as *candor*: “courageous truth to myself about life in which I come face-to-face with the reality of my external and internal suffering.”
- The Biblical example is to accept the hardships we face and not deny them:

- Job, from the beginning of his journey through suffering, was honest about his situation – Job 3:25-26
- The Psalms are full of honest descriptions of the troubles, external and internal, that we face (e.g., Psalm 42:3-5 and 73:2-15).
- Paul speaks candidly about the trials that both he and we face – II Corinthians 1:8-9, 4:7-12
- However, there is more for a Christian to accept than just the truth of the situation: we also have Divine truth to accept to strengthen us in our grief.
 - Paul wrote that even though we grieve, we can have hope with the truth of God – I Thessalonians 4:13.
 - We are not fatalistic and simply accept that bad things happen, we have faith in God and His word to help us understand the deeper questions we will face.

Helps for Dealing with Denial

- Understand that denial and grief are natural and necessary.
- Denial essentially dams up the river of emotions and processing that needs to flow so that we can heal.
- Sometimes some sort of confirmation of the loss or closure is needed.
- If the loved one we have lost is a Christian, we have hope that we will be together again in Heaven where death and partings do not exist – Revelation 21:4-5
- Know that God is near – Psalm 34:18
- Know that even if it seems that we are unable to bear the grief that God is able to strengthen us – II Corinthians 12:9
- Give yourself time to process and heal, trusting in God's love and grace to get you through.