

A Time to Mourn – Lesson 4

An Honest Complaint

*“Trust in him at all times;
ye people, pour out your heart before him:
God is a refuge for us. Selah.”
Psalm 62:8*

Anger is Processing

- As observed in the popular “five stages of grief”, our initial response to grief or loss is often *denial* which is then followed by *anger*.
- Once we accept the reality of or trauma and our minds being to process the new reality.
- As the numbness of denial wears away, we enter a strongly emotional reaction.
- The initial emotion that often appears is anger.
- Anger can be expressed in frustration, impatience, irritability, resentment, short-temper, isolation, or pessimism.
- This can be expressed in questions like: “Why is this happening?”, “Who is to blame?”, or “How can anyone understand what I am dealing with?”

Anger and Frustration

- The anger we may feel is frustration we are feeling in processing our grief.
- Our emotions are raw, and we can lash out like a wounded animal to those around us.
- We may become more frustrated at the strong emotions that we are feeling or attempt to bottle them up.

The Christian Response

- As a Christian, we believe that the Scripture teaches against acting in anger – Ephesians 4:26-27,31
- These strong emotions cannot be dismissed and must be released, so God has provided an outlet in expressing them to Him.
- Just as we saw in our last lesson that we combat denial with accepting the truth, we must combat anger by expressing the truth about our emotions to God.
- We are invited to pour out our hearts to God – Psalm 62:8, 142:2
 - Albert Barnes: “The idea is, that the heart becomes tender and soft, so that its feelings and desires flow out as water, and all its emotions, all its wishes, its sorrows, its troubles, are poured out before God. All that is in our hearts may be made known to God. There is not a desire which he cannot gratify; not a trouble in which he cannot

relieve us; not a danger in which he cannot defend us. And, in like manner there is not a spiritual want in which he will not feel a deep interest, nor a danger to our souls from which he will not be ready to deliver us. Much more freely than to any earthly parent - to a father, or even to a mother - may we make mention of all our troubles, little or great, before God.”

- In Bible terms, when we express our frustration to God it is called a complaint or lament.

Curse or Complaint?

- We must be careful in that we are freely invited to pour out our *complaint* to God, but we are not to *curse* him.
- Kelleman defines *complaint* as “vulnerable frankness about life to God in which I express my pain and confusion over how a good God allows evil and suffering.”
- Cursing, on the other hand, simply disparages God in His character, plan and ability.
 - In cursing Him we push Him further away from us.
- The example of Job:
 - If anyone had reason to pour their grief and anger out to God, it was Job.
 - His wife wanted Him to “curse God and die.” – Job 2:9
 - Job did not curse God, but he did offer his complaints – Job 7:20-21
 - Job did not lose faith in God – Job 13:15
 - God could then help Job come into the right perspective – Job 42:1-6

Helps for Dealing with Anger

- Remember that what we *feel* or *perceive*, especially while processing grief, may not be absolute *truth* of the situation.
 - Anger is a deceptively irrational emotion.
- Be honest with God.
 - The Bible gives us many examples of being frank with God about our frustrations – examples: Psalm 73, 88 102
- Part of expressing anger or frustration is that we are feeling vulnerable.
 - God is promises to be near us when are brokenhearted – Psalm 34:18