
Culture of Grief: Journey to Holistic Healing

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APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether grief is profitable to facilitate holistic healing of the spirit, soul, and body. This is pertinent to everyone who experiences loss and grief but is critical to the well-being of spiritual leaders and those they lead, mentor, serve and care for.

Grief is a natural and normal emotional response to loss. Loss occurs when losing a thing or a person that is of significance and value. Grief follows loss and becomes an organic, active, and powerful force of emotions and feelings that must be reckoned with. The emotions that one experiences are varied and are usually difficult to handle. If they are not processed in a systematic and loving way, un-health can affect the whole person. Grief counseling or grief work is indicated to help arrive at and maintain the equilibrium that has been disturbed by the loss.

Grief has typically been viewed as a static event that can fit into a set pattern, run its course and end on its own. This research will explore the core of grief, its liveliness and dynamic rhythm and the process of completion and recovery from its pain.

I learned how God grieves, works through His grief, and gives a picture of how spiritual leaders are to follow suit. To embrace and take responsibility for one's whole health and the health of others especially when loss and grief occur will be presented. The detriment to holistic health will ensue when this process of pain is dismissed, ignored, and repressed. The process or grief work is one that I believe spiritual leaders must take hold of, activate in their lives when a loss event occurs to effectively work as a leader in the Kingdom of God.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Grief is a natural phenomenon woven into the fabric of humankind. It is an entity comprised of feelings and emotional energy that is in tandem with loss. A response to the loss of anyone and anything deemed significant is normal and expected. Grief is that response. It is a human response. Cultural, ethnic, or racial background may shape that response; however, the nature of grief is common and shared by all people groups. The largeness of grief can be considered a type of culture in and of itself.

As common as the reality and the occurrence of grief is, it can present and be perceived as a static event. It happens, runs a defined course, and then is neatly tucked away for another time. However, for grief to emerge, a loss must precede. Loss and then Grief. Two events that are essentially linked that suggest a dynamic relationship. As we will see later, a dynamic relationship with movement. This pairing of loss and grief, although characteristically generic in nature, is personally unique and impacts every part of our being, spirit, soul, and body.

Set against the backdrop and certainty of the many losses experienced by all of humanity, grief is fundamentally purposeful and intentional. It demands action of some sort and is necessary to sustain a healthy equilibrium of the three-part essence of us all. To satisfy and maintain this balanced well-being, there is a process or a “working out” that must be acknowledged and assumed by all especially those who are spiritual leaders. A life of health for these leaders and those they counsel, teach, mentor and encourage rests on a personal engagement with this loss and grief.

Recognizing grief's reality and interconnectedness to the totality of who we are is God ordained, God experienced, and a part of the divine movement of God. To gloss over, neglect and repress this God given opportunity for healing is a deterrent to moving effectively on the road to holistic health. To ignore or simply remain reticent of the necessary component of working through the pain of grief is unhealthy and unbiblical for all and that includes the spiritual leader.

A. Research Objectives

The objectives are twofold: 1) Investigate the background, dynamics and construct of loss and grief; 2) Integrate the role and responsibility of Christian leaders using grief work to facilitate holistic health of others and themselves.

B. Significance of Study

This research reveals that it is critical to evaluate the effect and responsibility spiritual leaders have in addressing the impact of grief and loss. God's word states, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." (3 John 1:3)

C. Problem Statement

As real, normal, and telling that loss and grief are, our society including our spiritual leaders often tend toward a polite and often ritualistic response that stagnates the process of grief. Grief is uncomfortable, for the griever and the one called to help. Once the loss event has occurred there can often be an imposed timer placed on the griever to "get over" the loss and a press to "move on." The reluctance to work towards their own healing and thus the healing of others presents a challenge.

D. Hypothesis

If spiritual leaders fail to fully embrace the grief work that is needed for holistic health, they, and others in their sphere of influence will struggle with their effectiveness in God's Kingdom work.

E. Methods

This study includes affirmed and proven resources and references including the Bible and the evidence-based study on Loss and Grief from the Grief Recovery Institute® and The Grief Recovery Method®. Interviews with spiritual leaders are included as part of this research.

F. Limitations of Study

Limitations to this study include:

- the lack of a wide range of research on the impact of grief work done by spiritual leaders.
- the possibility of forgetfulness of the participants interviewed, although they were willing.
- the culture and language gap between the author and one of the subjects who is Asian-American.

G. Use of Terms

Culture – A way of life that includes:

- customs
- mores

- rituals and traditions
- social institutions of a nation or people groups

Grief – The normal and natural reaction to loss of any kind and the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior.¹ Can also referred to as sorrow.

Grief Work – A methodical and healthy processing of the event of Loss and Grief often with the help of a spiritual leader, pastor, therapist, counselor, specialist, or lay person.

Loss – The fact of and state of being that is associated with losing someone or something of significance and value often associated with grief.

Mourning – The outward expression that displays grief and sorrow and can include tears, rituals and traditions such as funerals, timed events, wearing of certain attire, etc.

Heart – A person's core self or spiritual center, where one's physical, mental, and emotional lives come together as one in relation to God.²

Holistic – A description or approach to the whole person, spirit, soul (mind), body that is interconnected as one entity.

Movement of the Spirit – The guiding power that facilitates spiritual formation with a spiritual motion indicating a God-ward rhythm of His activity in our lives.

Soul Care – Compassionate, loving care given to someone suffering from sorrow, pain, and tribulations and the trials of life.

¹ John W. James and Russell Friedman, *The Grief Recovery Handbook 20th Expanded Edition* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), 3.

² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), viii.

Spiritual Formation – The process of being shaped by God to reflect His image often referred to as a faith journey initiated and orchestrated by the Spirit of God.

Spiritual Disciplines – Practices, relationships and experiences that give people space in their lives to “keep company” with Jesus.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition, Dynamics, and Rhythm of Grief

1. Definition of Grief

Our society provides us with a plethora of information about how to acquire things. In our western culture particularly, we are conditioned to be on a continuous trek of gaining knowledge on how to do better, be better, get more and keep on getting. There is an abundance of resources of all types in every format that provide a wealth of methods, steps, and templates on “how to” get what you need and what you want. When the correct information is applied, and a specific and well thought out plan is worked then success produces the desired result. Feelings of happiness, joy, satisfaction and even exhilaration usually follow. But what happens when we lose something or someone that is significant and of value to us? We learn how to acquire them, but do we know how to lose them?

The feelings and emotions that are automatically generated when we lose things or people produce a state of grief. The same abundance of information available to us in the acquisition is sadly lacking when we lose them. Grief follows loss. They go hand in hand. “Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss of any kind. Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior.”³

Losses are abundant and need to be grieved. They are interwoven to life experiences. Some losses are rather obvious and easy to identify – the death of a loved one; a divorce; the loss

³ James and Friedman, *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, 1.

of a home due to foreclosure or natural disaster, etc. There are other losses, tangible and intangible that also need to be grieved.

The Grief Recovery Handbook records over 40 categories of losses. Some of the feelings and painful emotions connected with the loss will vary in intensity but the opportunity for grief exists. The following list is not exhaustive but includes some of those mentioned and others have been added:

- Death of a former spouse
- Death of a pet
- Moving
- Starting school and graduation
- Marriage
- End of addiction
- Abortion, Miscarriage, Stillborn baby
- Major physical health changes
- Major mental health changes
- Major spiritual health changes (death or replacement of spiritual leader, church division and conflict)
- Retirement and career changes (include job loss)
- Aging

- Financial changes – positive or negative
- Holidays
- Legal problems
- Empty nest (and return of adult children)
- Loss of trust and security
- Trauma events (rape, molestation, war, destructive weather events)
- Pandemics

2. Dynamics of Grief

Grief is a highly active and powerful emotion. The many feelings that are apparent during grief are normal, natural and were built-in when we were fashioned by the Creator, God Himself. They are strong, dynamic and can mimic an internal explosion or emotional implosion with debris that is unhealthy if contained. Grief seems like an attack, an assault on every part of our being, spirit, soul, and body.

When grief is experienced by the griever, there is often shock and a feeling of being hurled into a state of personal chaos and calamity. It is unruly, disorderly, and complex. It is energy, full of force and power that needs somewhere to go.

It is not only uncomfortable and disruptive for the one who is grieving but for those around them. It has a communal effect. It was meant to be a shared event.

There are no rules on how to feel and when to feel. An attempt was made to fit grief into five predictable stages identified by Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. She identified those stages as 1)

denial, 2) anger, 3) bargaining, 4) depression, and 5) acceptance and in that order. Dr. Kubler-Ross' work, however specifically related to a person who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. "While Dr. Kubler-Ross's contributions brought heightened awareness about the process of *dying*, her work has been accompanied by some unfortunate collateral damage. Many people, professionals and the general public alike, have attempted to apply her stages to the emotions that arise after a loss."⁴ It has been found that grieverers may experience some or all of these emotions but not necessarily in that order and not in any specific or set period of time. To know this is a relief and a release that can contribute to a healthy approach to loss and grief.

While grief is and of itself common and normal to every human being, it is unique in how it may display and move about. There is no template that can be successfully applied from person to next. It is truly a "case by case" event because the relationships attached to the grief are unique. The type of loss may generically be the same, i.e., loss of spouse, parent, child, employment, etc., however each relationship is distinctly different.

3. Rhythm of Grief

Grief is energy. Grief is unbridled power. Grief moves about. It has its own rhythm that can be likened to a dance of sorts. This dance that is not enjoyed, cannot quite keep up with the beat because the notes and sounds from the instruments are unrecognizable. The griever would probably prefer to "sit this one out."

The score that was written for this "dance" is a lament or a dirge accompanied by an inward and/or outward expression of wailing, groaning, and moaning. The dance floor is slippery and littered with tears that cause an unsteadiness on the feet. There is sometimes a heavy haze

⁴ James and Friedman, *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, 12.

that hovers resembling suffocating smoke that takes your breath away. This fog of grief makes it difficult to see, hear, smell, touch and taste the reality of it all. The dance hall can be called the House of Mourning. Mourning is an outward expression of grief that can come in the form of a funeral or memorial service that honors the deceased. Cultural traditions and rituals such as a repast (meal) after the service; a certain attire, usually black is often associated with mourning. Certain cultures may observe a set time of mourning that lasts for days and includes specific events during that time.

The rhythm of grief is also like poetry. The Bible is replete with rhythmic emotions that run the gamut of feelings as found in the book of Psalms known as the poetic and wisdom writings.

Experience the rhythm and poetry of grief with all five senses as I pen the lament of loss and grief in the following words.⁵

Dirge of Grief

”Maybe if I hold my breath and refuse to breathe,

It will unlock me from its grip so I can run away.

They yell at me, “breathe, c’mon now, breathe” as if giving birth,

only this thing is death delivered.

I’d much rather be somewhere else, anywhere else but here.

Even if I escape and run until I’m out of breath, I’ll be found.

⁵ Renee Hill Carter, *What About Me? Staying Healthy and Whole While You’re Helping Others* (Stockbridge GA: Dream Releaser Publishing, 2018), 171.

They say it will have its way with me until it's done.

It masquerades to seem complete, then sorely winks that it's not.

So have your way for now. Run. Sit. Lay down with me.

Make your way to that once forbidden place

where it's dark, dank and quietly loud.

Where other pains of loss slept fitfully undisturbed until now.

I'll follow if I must, trowel in hand for this merciless dig.

Deep into the bowels of my earth, cutting, scooping up what's been waiting.

It's where WHY lives.

I may choose to join them, kick at them, prodding my discovery.

Breathe into them so we can talk.

Stay as long as I want.

When it's time to go, I will ask them to walk up with me

into the light for a breath of fresh air.

And then send them on their way."

B. Theology of Grief

1. Origin of Grief

Author Vaughan Roberts, in his book, *God's Big Picture*, groups distinctive sections of the Bible that trace its storyline. These eight segments or periods of time show us God's

unfolding plan to restore His kingdom after the devastating fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden.

Roberts begins with the first two chapters of the bible, Genesis one and two with the pattern of the kingdom [of God]. “It is an idyllic picture of the good life as it was meant to be. We see in the garden of Eden a pattern of the kingdom of God. God’s people, Adam and Eve, live in God’s place, the garden of Eden, under God’s rule; as a result, they enjoy God’s blessing.”⁶ Sadness, sorrow, and pain did not exist, only feelings of pure joy as Adam and Eve enjoyed the presence of God in its fulness. And then something happened that shattered this perfect relationship between God and the male and the female He so lovingly created for His good pleasure.

Sin entered and demolished the perfect pattern of His kingdom on earth. This kingdom is no more and became what Vaughn Roberts refers to as the “perished kingdom.” Adam and Eve are evicted from their perfect home not being allowed to return. Most devastating was their separation from their Perfect and Holy God. They experience the heavy burden of sin and pass on this legacy of separation from God to future generations. Not only is all of humanity now filled with sorrow, but God is sorrowful. He is grieved. “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was on evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Gen. 6:5,6). The Bible shows us the first instance of grief from God. God can and does experience grief. We see His grief throughout the Bible. The ability to grieve is, therefore, one of the many attributes of our God.

⁶ Vaughn Roberts, *God’s Big Picture Tracing the story-line of the Bible* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 32.

2. God Grieves

As a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist®, I was humbled and inspired to gain an expanded picture of God's grief. Grief is one of the attributes of God that we seldom ascribe to Him. "One thing we don't do is we don't see God as grieving. The early church fathers taught that God was impassive that He had no emotion because they were trying to protect Him from sin. The Bible says we are made in His likeness and it is clear in many verses that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit grieves. The Bible is full of instances of grief and loss."⁷

*Ecclesiastes 3:4 implicitly says that there is "a time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to **grieve** and a time dance. "*

*Genesis 6:6 – "And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it **grieved** him at his heart."*

*Isaiah 53:3-4- "He is despised and rejected by man, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our **griefs** and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken Smitten by God and afflicted."*

*Isaiah 53:10 "But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to **grief**;*

*Ephesians 4:30 – "And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*

Hebrews 4:15-16 - This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. "

The book of Hosea is a stark portrayal of God's constant and never-ending love, deep emotions, and His grief over His way-ward people then and now. "God had a prophetic imagination or dream for Israel, but they refused to follow Him or return to Him, when He

⁷ Carter, What About Me?, 154-155.

called. Can you feel the grief in all of this? Furthermore, God has dreams for each one of us, in conjunction with our church. Consider how our sins must break His heart. Sin is not a matter of transgressing a law, but of breaking the heart of the Father!”⁸

As we continually move through the Bible, God’s story is replete with suffering, pain, loss and grief. There is an entire book of lament and grief called Lamentations. The rhythm of grief, despair, sorrow, joy, worship, hope, and more are prevalent in the poetic book of the Psalms. “The fabric of the Bible consists of various strands and threads-family histories and national archives, letters and poetry, epic battle and love stories-all woven together in a remarkable tapestry that features a loving God who cares for *real people*. The Bible portrays these real people in living color, with their complex personalities, strained relationships, and a variety of problems. We can learn a great deal about pain and suffering from its pages-comfort for those who suffer and wisdom for those who care.”⁹

3. Grief work is God ordained

God had worked so meticulously on His Creation. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof and they that dwell therein.” (Ps 24:1) It was evident that He was pleased with all His hands had created in six days. “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31)

Since the severed relationship between God and humanity and the pattern of His perfect kingdom disintegrated into the perished kingdom, God saw an urgent need of restoration and healing. Because He lost someone that was most valuable and significant to Him, God’s heart

⁸ Johnson, Josephus F. III, Bishop, *The God Who Grieves* (USA: Xulon Press, 2016), 89.

⁹ Haugk, Kenneth C., Ph.D., *Don’t Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart - How to Relate to Those Who Are Suffering* (St. Louis: Stephen Ministries, 2004), 19.

was broken. His perfect earth and all that was in it was also marred and continues a downward spiral of decay. Even today we the experience the sights and sounds of sorrow from the atmosphere due to global warming. The residual effects of the sin of greed and lust will not allow the earth to rest. “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” (Rom. 8:22). His loss was so profound and so deep that grief ensued. He was compelled by His great Love to do something so that His healing would be enacted in the earth and in His people.

So, God began to work. Just as He had worked to create in Genesis one and two, He began the journey and the work that moves toward renewal, restoration, reconciliation, redemption and ultimately a culmination of what He had in His Mind from the beginning. This great work spurred by His grief is Grief Work. We are part of this work. (Phil. 1:6) A full and final completion will occur when all things are made new in God’s perfected Kingdom. (Rev. 21) Initiated by Love and undergirded by Hope, I am excited to have gleaned from my Bible Overview class, this ongoing activity of God. Throughout the history of time, His movement is active as depicted in the eight segments of God’s Kingdom in *God’s Big Picture*.¹⁰

The Old Testament

- (1) The Pattern of the Kingdom
- (2) The Perished Kingdom
- (3) The Promised Kingdom
- (4) The Partial Kingdom
- (5) The Prophesied Kingdom

¹⁰ Roberts, *God’s Big Picture*, 22.

The New Testament

(6) The Present Kingdom

(7) The Proclaimed Kingdom

(8) The Perfected Kingdom.

God's divine grief work gives us a pattern that ordains and validates our need to do grief work. God is the Wonderful Counselor and provides a model of the kind of spiritual leader needed for the work. First, the spiritual leader must recognize the need for this work. The leader then assumes the responsibility of working toward personal holistic health in order to effectively help others do the same work. This grief work must be based on and motivated by the pure love of God and for God and in obedience to His command. "Jesus said, 'You shall love the LORD God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love you neighbor as *yourself*'" (Matt. 22:37-39).

C. Sociology and Physiology of Grief

1. Sociology of Grief

Grief is not only a personal event; it involves others with whom the griever has relationships. It extends even beyond close relationships to indirect relationships. Loss and Grief naturally have elements of relationships and community. They are very much social in nature. The definition of sociology is 1: "the science of society, social institutions, and social

relationships specifically: the systematic study of the development, structure, interaction, and collective behavior of organized groups of human beings.”¹¹

Regardless of the nature of the loss, grief follows. Whether it is the loss of a loved one, a “not so” loved one, a job, safety, or any of the losses that have been mentioned, all the elements of “relationship” exist naturally. A common saying is that life is a series of relationships. Working through the grief that follows the loss involves “community”. Family, friends, acquaintances, and distant others come together to console the griever. In the instance of grieving the death of someone, some type of event is common in most cultures. Mourning events or outward expressions of the grief occur. Funerals, memorial services and other rituals happen. “Community” happens. Godly community happens. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun cites in her book, *Spiritual Disciplines*, “Residents of the United States live in a nation founded on the Declaration of Independence. Independence is a wonderful gift so long as it does not keep us from the right sort of dependence. Jesus taught his followers that they were part of the family of God. They were not meant to be lone rangers but part of a living organism, Christ body (1 Corinthians 12). No part of the body functions by itself, nourishes itself or serves itself alone. Every part is for every other part-whether hurting or rejoicing.”¹²

Grief is one of the most common events where “collective behavior of organized groups of human beings” is evident. Regardless of the diversity of culture, ethnic, racial and social, people groups come together. “Sitting shiva” is a commonly held practice of Judaism and has its roots in the Bible. Some form of this concept of creating an environment of comfort and

¹¹ Merriam-Webster Online, “Definition of Sociology”, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sociology>.

¹² Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2015), 151.

community for mourners is typically found among other people groups. “Shiva” in Hebrew means “seven”. There are numerous instances mentioned in the Bible. Genesis mentions Joseph mourning the loss of his father and patriarch Joseph, for seven days. (Gen. 50:10). Job 2:13 is cited, “They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was great.” Our contemporary culture practices this community through funerals, wakes or visitations, gathering at the home of the griever with food and company. For health’s sake, after this “prescribed” or usual form of community is over, the griever should not be left alone. A relationship between the griever and counselors and other forms of help must be present to assist in the healing journey toward holistic health.

As of this writing, it is remarkable that the whole earth is experiencing the ravages of the COVID-19 virus more commonly known as the coronavirus. Millions of people are suffering, and hundreds of thousands have died. All the world systems are affected or shut down; quarantines and stay at home orders are in place. An apocalyptic tone is in the air. Loss is overwhelming. I am grieving, we all are grieving the horrendous effects of this unheard-of loss in our lifetime. This grief is a shared event, like it or not. It is global, national, local, and personal. Our spiritual leaders must be among the first responders to help process this pain and help lead people to a state of newness and holistic health.

2. Physiology of Grief

Grief impacts the whole self, spirit, soul, and body. It usually creates disturbances to the science and make-up of who we are. This disturbance caused by grief and the host of emotions, thoughts and feelings need to be reset to a desired state of health. See Figure A.

The commotion of grief produces stress of mammoth proportions that show up in ways that upset the function and equilibrium of normal body systems. Dis-ease is likely and can manifest in the body, soul (mind) and spirit. Modern medical science testifies to the physical effects of grief in the body in tangible ways. “Among the most common physical responses to loss are trouble sleeping and low energy...Muscle aches and pains, shortness of breath, feelings of emptiness in your stomach, tightness in your throat or chest, digestive problems, sensitivity to noise, heart palpitations, queasiness, nausea, headaches, increased allergy symptoms, changes in appetite, weight loss and gain, agitation and generalized tension.”¹³

A general awe-inspiring appreciation for the parts that make-up the whole of man is pertinent to grasping the construct of grief and the symbiotic relationship that is generated. Knowing the structure, make-up and of the brain (mind) is helpful to understanding the healing power that the event of loss and grief can have. Dr. Caroline Leaf whose passion is to help people see the link between science and Scripture, assists in this endeavor. Dr. Leaf, a communication pathologist and audiologist, has worked in the area of cognitive neuroscience since 1985. She has specialized in traumatic brain injury (TBI) and learning disabilities, focusing specifically on the science of thought as it pertains to thinking and learning.

In looking at “The Tangled ‘Ball’ of Emotions” (See Appendix -Figure A.), it is not difficult to link fear as the underlying source with many of the feelings shown. In her book, *Switch on Your Brain*, Dr. Leaf, has learned how the brain has the capacity to enable us to be healthier in our mind and body. Her work was motivational to me to learn more in this area. “What you think with your mind changes your brain and body, and you are designed with the

¹³ Liz Gleeson. “How Grief Manifests in the Body”, July 18. 2017, accessed March 20, 2020. <https://www.shapesofgrief.com/grief-stories/2019/1/17/how-grief-manifests-in-the-body-by-liz-gleeson>(Liz Gleeson. “How Grief Manifests in the Body” Accessed March 20, 2020)

power to switch on your brain. Your mind is that switch. You have an extraordinary ability to determine, achieve, and maintain optimal levels of intelligence, mental health, peace, and happiness, as well as the prevention of disease in your body and mind....Science is finally catching up with the Bible, showing us the proof that 'God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind'....Our brain is neuroplastic-it can change and regrow. In addition, God has built in the operating principle of neurogenesis-new nerve cells are birthed daily for our mental benefit. This sounds like Lamentations 3:22-23, 'The LORD's mercies...are new every morning.' This book [*Switch On Your Brain*], shows you how to *get back control* over your thoughts and renew (as in Rom. 12:2) and rewire your brain in the direction you were originally designed to go."¹⁴ Being made fearfully and wonderfully takes on a whole new meaning as I ponder the divine intricacies of the brain-mind connection. In addition, Dr. Leaf has created the 21-Day Brain Detox Plan that can facilitate a state of holistic health. By choosing to rewire your brain and harness the neuroplasticity that God has designed in our brain, this will bring us closer to our original design of perfection (Matt. 5:48) and being made in the image of God as spoken in Gen. 1:26.

¹⁴ Dr. Caroline Leaf, *Switch On Your Brain* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2013), 13-14, 139.

D. Spiritual Formation of Grief

Loss and Grief are an opportunity for Spiritual Formation. The process of being shaped by God to reflect His image often referred to as a faith journey, is initiated and orchestrated by the Spirit of God. This ongoing work of divine transformation sits well with grief work.

Spiritual Formation begins in the heart. Henri Nouwen, world-renowned spiritual guide, counselor and author, sees the heart in its full biblical meaning. We tend to see the heart in a soft rather myopic manner; however, this author enlightens us to a fuller meaning as the place where body, soul, and spirit come together as one entity. "...the word *heart* in Jewish-Christian tradition refers to the source of all physical, emotional, intellectual volitional, and moral energies. It is the seat of the will; it makes plans and comes to good decisions. Thus, the heart is the central unifying organ of our personal life. Our heart determines our personality and the place where God dwells, but also the place to which the Evil One directs fierce attacks, causing us to doubt, fear, despair, resent, over-consume, and so on."¹⁵ How comforting it is to the broken heart to know the potential of healing and recovery of loss and grief. It sets in motion leaving the darkness of sorrow to the light of joy.

Spiritual formation incorporates practices called spiritual disciplines. "Disciplines are intentional ways we open space in our lives for the worship of God. They are not harsh but grace-filled ways of responding to the presence of Christ with our bodies....Offering our bodies to God lands us smack in the middle of our weaknesses and limits....Spiritual disciplines are ways we give our bodies to unhurried rhythms of grace. They are ways we unhurry our souls before God."¹⁶

¹⁵ Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, xvii.

¹⁶ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 22.

Helping grieverers move through their loss and grief, I witness how our whole beings are open and vulnerable to the Spirit of God. There is an assumed desire that presupposes a desperation to be free and unencumbered by the pain of grief. What an opportune time to fill the “hole in our soul” with the healing power that pain can produce. Processing the pain of grief gives way to God given desires that “may reflect your needs, an area of struggle, desperation; barrenness in routines or relationships; concern with lack of motivation and what is not working in your life.”¹⁷

In my grief work and Spiritual Formation studies, I see how many disciplines integrate well with incorporating spiritual formation and the tools used in processing the emotions of grief. A brief overview of a few of the many disciplines from Calhoun’s *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, creates a guide for spiritual leaders and others towards wholeness.

Breath Prayer – to pray a simple, intimate prayer of heartfelt desire before God.

Care of the Earth – to honor the Creator by loving, nurturing, and stewarding his creation.

Confession and Self-Examination – to surrender my weaknesses and faults to the forgiving love of Christ and intentionally desire and embrace practices that lead to transformation.

Forgiveness – to live into Jesus’ forgiving heart and stop the cycle of vengeance

Gratitude – to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to live with a grateful heart, cognizant of God’s work in my life and my abundant resources.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Inner Healing Prayer – to assist the emotionally broken and wounded as they seek God for the healing only He can give.

Journaling – to be alert to my life through writing and reflecting on God’s presence and activity in, around and through me.

Prayer of Lament – to take my complaints, anger, sufferings, frustrations, and heartaches to God.

Rest – to honor God and my human limitations through restful rhythms.

Self-Care – to value myself as my heavenly Father values me.

Silence – to free myself from the addiction to and distraction of noise so I can be totally present to the Lord; to open myself to God in the place beyond words.

Slowing – to curb my addiction to busyness, hurry and workaholism; to learn to savor the moment.

Spiritual Direction – to give caring attention to my relationship with God, accompanied by the prayerful presence of someone who helps me listen well to God.

Visio Divina (sacred or divine seeing) – to worship God in the beauty of created things.

Waiting – to patiently trust in God’s goodness and timing in the events and relationships of my life.

These spiritual disciplines and spiritual formation are then complicit to the continuum of healing from grief for which our soul yearns. When the disciplines of spiritual formation are practiced in concert with grief work, a healing of the heart is possible. Space is created for God

to cleanse, transform, and renew us. The word of God in Psalm 51:10 becomes activated for this divine work, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

A poignant illustration of the spiritual discipline of “Visio Divina” or sacred seeing is manifested in a young lady who did her grief work with me. She is a faith filled, powerful, praying woman of God, yet she uncovered incomplete grief in various relationships. On her journey to holistic healing, grief work opened her heart to discover repressed feelings and emotions that did not serve her well. By dealing with her discovery in a healthy way, she created more space for God to continue His transforming work. Her spiritual gift gave expression of itself in poetry one day as she was working in her garden. Her love for God and shared grief over the current condition of the whole earth and His people, provoked a beautifully scripted poem, “Mother Earth Weeping For Her Children” found in the Appendix-Figure B.

E. Soul Care and Healing Power of Grief

“Weeping my last through the night, but joy comes with the morning” (Psalm 30:5)

The disciplines discussed previously can serve as agents or tools as the movement toward health is ongoing. The brokenness of the heart as Nouwen defines “heart”, is filled with sorrow and is in search of joy. Here, we will use the word “soul” interchangeably with “heart”. This leg of the journey, from sorrow to joy is indeed an arduous one. There are prerequisites, however, before our soul can experience this joy that seems so distant.

“Loss is not the enemy, not facing its existence is.”¹⁸

¹⁸ H. Norman Wright, *Recovering From Losses in Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 9-10.

We are aware by now that losses are experienced by everyone. “The question is not whether you have experienced loss, but rather how you live your losses. Are you hiding them? Are you pretending they aren’t real? Are you refusing to share them with fellow travelers? Are you trying to convince yourself that your losses are little compared with your gains? Are you blaming someone for what you have suffered and lost? There is another option---the possibility of mourning. Yes, you can mourn your losses. You cannot talk or act them away, but you can shed tears over them and allow yourself to grieve deeply. You can never get to the joy if you dare not cry, if you do not have the courage to weep, if you don’t take the opportunity to experience the pain. The world says, ‘Just ignore it, be strong, don’t cry, get over it and move on.’ But if you don’t mourn you can become bitter. All your grief can go right into your deepest self and sit there for the rest of life.”¹⁹

Grief work involves the heart and soul of mankind. It is a viable and relevant tool of soul care. As this demonstration of compassionate care was at the heart of the mission of Christ, so it should be of spiritual leaders. The whole of man suffers when the heart of man is broken. The following saying has been adapted from the work of the Grief Recovery Method®, “*When your heart is broken, your mind can’t think straight, and your spirit cannot soar.*”

The goal of soul care through grief work is holistic healing of self and others. “In our developed, modern world that overflows with abundance, more and more people are searching for fulfillment by amassing fortunes, pursuing pleasure, or acquiring power. A profound spiritual discontent animates and motivates the pursuit of filling the ‘hole in our soul’. Christian soul care is designed to help people get from wherever they are to a place of greater intimacy with and

¹⁹ Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, 41-42.

maturity in Christ...Soul care starts with Him and asks His Spirit to transform both the helper and the one being helped. Soul care also ends with Him, revealing His Spirit and character alive in us and pouring out of us.”²⁰

A clear example of soul care and grief work has been presented as we traced the storyline of the Bible. The movement from sorrow to joy is evident. The eight kingdoms that portray God’s work has an underlying theme of hope for a better day. That better day is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ who is the hope of glory. We rejoice that our redemption and salvation has come. And we are anticipating the “best day”, the second coming of Jesus, when He ushers in the appearance of the perfected Kingdom. However, for now, let us look at one of the glorious benefits that the first coming of Christ brings.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to *heal the brokenhearted*,” (Luke 4:18)

Fundamental to the journey of healing and whole health is work, a work of faith. There is a yielding that insists on having its way to arrive at this joy. James 1: 2-4 (AMP) presents us with a dilemma to our natural man but is the antidote to the pain of grief. “Consider it nothing but joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you fall into various trials. Be assured that the testing of your faith [through experience] produces endurance [leading to spiritual maturity and inner peace]. “

Bishop Joey Johnson, pastor and Grief Recovery Specialist offers two takes on this pain in *What About Me?* “If you don’t handle your pain, your pain will handle you.” It is in the dark

²⁰ Tim Clinton, *The Soul Care Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), x.

places that God resides. But we are typically afraid of the darkness and we do everything we can to flee from it. But the dark night of the soul is where God manifests Himself.”²¹

I suggested earlier that we have many ways to acquire things, but little guidance when we lose them. One plan or *grief workout* that has proven useful is the Grief Recovery Method™ (GRM) of the Grief Recovery Institute®²² founded by the authors of *The Grief Recovery Handbook*. The GRM is an action program for moving beyond death, divorce, and a multitude of other losses. This evidenced based action program suggests movement and is replete with tools the griever can use long after participating in the program for their continual growth towards health. The goal is recovery or healing. The tools are useful for uncovering deep emotions that may be dormant. I witness grievers as they move through the program as underlying emotions from other events are unearthed and exposed. These deep emotions often include unforgiveness. Bishop Johnson “looks at the GRM as ‘deep forgiveness’ or the process of forgiveness, which we do not have in the church. That is another problem. We will exhort you toward forgiveness, but there is no method of how to do it. There is an action of forgiveness (the Bible says to forgive); there is an attitude (Jesus said to always be ready to forgive); but there has to be a process of forgiveness when I’m dealing with deep pain, which cannot be dismissed in a simple action, event or act. GRM is that process where I deal with the pain. If you’ve been abused by somebody, you cannot simply forgive them. You must work through that pain.”²³.

Unforgiveness is produced and birthed out of hot anger that has grown cold and morphed into bitter resentment. “Resentment is cold, agonizing anger. When hot anger grows cold it

²¹ Carter, *What About Me?*, 140, 154.

²² <https://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/evidence-based>.

²³ Carter, *What About Me?*, 163.

hardens your heart and wreaks havoc in your life. Resentment makes you suspicious, cynical, and depressed. Over the long term, resentment becomes a way of being...Ministers who have a great desire to be close to God and serve the people, and those who work in the helping professions, are particularly prone to resentment. They often feel taken advantage of, which can lead to resentment. Religions and social institutions that seek to support ministers and others in the helping professions often serve as breeding grounds for resentment. That is why resentment has been called the most destructive passion in the Christian church.”²⁴ Further the Word of God speaks of the debilitating and unhealthy effect of resentment and bitterness, “looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” (Hebrews 12:15) It is incumbent upon the spiritual leader to embrace the mandate to have a clean heart, thus a healthy heart and root out any bitterness, unforgiveness and hardened anger. If not, this virus of resentment will spread defiling many and hinder the journey to holistic health.

²⁴ Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, 59-60.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter focuses on the methodology of the study. This includes the subjects, description of subjects, survey instruments and measurements methods.

A. Subjects

This researcher conducted two interviews which included Dr. Sung Kyun Na, Pastor of Charlotte Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC and Pastor Cedric C. Maddox, Refreshing Word Church, Ft. Mill, SC. Dr. Na and Pastor Maddox both gave their permission to have their interviews recorded and included in this publication. (See Appendix – Figure C. and Figure D.)

B. Description of Subjects

Dr. Sung Kyun Na (이영기), is the Senior Pastor, Charlotte Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC. Married for 43 years, he is the father of 3 children and 8 grandchildren. Dr. Na has served in ministry for 43 years, as a Chaplain in the Air Force for 3 years and a pastor in various churches for 40 years. Dr. Na is Asian American.

Pastor Cedric C. Maddox of Refreshing Word Church, Ft. Mill, SC, has been in ministry for 23 years and has pastored for over 15 years. Married for 23 years, he is the father of 2 young adult boys. He completed his grief work with me in 2018 using the Grief Recovery Method. Pastor Maddox is currently working on his doctorate in ministry. Pastor Maddox is African American.

C. Survey Instruments

Selected questions based on literature review were used for interviews of subjects.

D. Measurement Method

Responses to interview questions were recorded.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Interview with Dr. Sung Kyun Na (나성균) Ph.D. Senior Pastor, Charlotte Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC on February 26, 2020.

Renée: What is the emotional response of the Asian culture to death and grief?

Dr. Na: I'll answer in two parts. Asians especially the Koreans are very expressive and emotional especially at the funeral services. I conduct three services: 1) Pre-corpse service where the body is put into the coffin. 2) Lifting up the casket service; 3) Graveside or burial site service where the coffin is put down into ground. There is much regret expressed to the deceased. When I'm conducting the services, I would ask one of the family members to assist as the master of ceremonies at the service. When it's a parent who has died, many times it's the first son, who is very important in the Korean culture. Usually they would suppress their brokenness in losing their loved one. They would pound their hearts and pound the ground and would verbally express to the deceased, "Oh my mother/father, I'm really very sorry I did not do my best." It was impressive to the family members and friends. They are very emotional with regretfulness when they lose any loved one, parent or otherwise.

Renée: Can you compare the Asian expression to that of African Americans?

Dr. Na: I'm not certain about the African Americans' expression during death or funerals, but I can speak what I had observed in worshiping the Lord. When I was in Korea, I served as a Chaplain in the Air Force and worked alongside three or four American Chaplains. I

would attend the main worship service with Anglo Americans. There would be another service afterwards because African Americans asked to have their own separate service. I noticed they have the same very expressive way of worshiping the Lord as Asian-Americans by being very vocal. We are both very enthusiastic even to the point of responding back to the preacher, “Yes, pastor, preach pastor; Hallelujah!” The Latina brothers and sisters have the same expression – even louder sometimes. The Anglo brothers and sisters are quieter and calmer, but they seem to be more expressive today.

Also, we as Koreans are very emotional and this can also be seen by composing poems. So, the same feelings can be seen when we lose loved ones---emotional and regretful.

Renée: After some time has passed since the death of a loved one, and someone is still hurting and have problems functioning, would they come to you or do they keep it to themselves?

Dr. Na: According to our tradition, we usually do an annual Memorial Service which helps with the grief. There are however some Koreans and other Asians who maintain some traditionalism that has its roots in Confucianism and Buddhism. The people were socially forced to keep these traditions especially of Confucianism one of which is to refrain from any expression of happiness or joy. Korea’s predecessor, the Lee Dynasty, held to the tradition that for 7 weeks (49 days) one did not shave, take a bath or other rituals that showed how much grief they were experiencing. According to tradition, there were these and other rituals before being converted to Christianity. Sometimes it was three years where they would be confined inside to grieve over their loved ones. Nowadays, it is much different and especially for Christians where these traditions are not fully practiced. An important ritual I failed to mention that is practiced

today is that three days after the burial, they will go to the gravesite to make sure it is as it should be.

Renée: Today since you don't strictly follow the Confucianism traditions and rituals, how do you process the pain and emotions over a period of time?

Dr. Na: Every year, as I said, there is a worship service. I will be asked to go to conduct the Christian memorial service. I am reluctant to tell you however, that because of the busyness in this society, they may forget.

Renée: Do you think that some people may repress or hold in the hurt and the pain because of the busyness or they choose not to deal with it?

Dr. Na: That is true. Many people may be tempted to repress, but in many cases, people are understanding more because of the work of the Holy Spirit who is helping the one who grieves. That is particularly important for those who are still in pain and asking why their loved one died.

Renée: I have found that in most all cultures, grieving those emotions is helpful and healthy. Medical science has proven that with stress and repressed emotions, there is a connection to your physical and mental, health. There are also spiritual implications to deal with where you're reconciling that with the sovereignty of God. As a grief recovery specialist, I work with people and give them an opportunity to talk out those emotions. With talking about it, we find there are other things that come up that cause people to repress their emotions.

Dr. Na: In the past, we have not gone through a counseling process. In the Lee Dynasty there were two social steps. The ruling party and the ruled party. The ruled party was pressed not to express their emotions. They were not allowed to openly show their grief. It was a "face

saving” culture thus no tears. Those in the ruled party suppressed their feelings of sorrow and did not cry. But for the ruling party, under the even with suppressed situation, they were able to be taught by their parents, grandparents to not grieve too much. Yes, it would help to have had counseling steps but not long ones. Today, they try to overcome grief within the family, more with their spouse and children. But if there is a serious problem, one would go to a counselor. I would recommend that.

Renée: Do you have preferred counselors you recommend?

Dr. Na: I’ve not found anyone who needed that. But if so, I would refer them to a counselor. However, I have 3 children and their spouses and 8 grandchildren. If anyone had a problem, I would counsel them myself, but if too serious I think I should send them to a professional counselor or a specialist.

Renée: Let’s talk about COVID-19, the coronavirus that is touching people all over the world including Korea. They are saying it supposedly originated in China and now it’s here in the United States. As a pastor, how do you help people here and those who have direct connections with family and friends in Korea and other Asian cultures?

Dr. Na: Two ways to help them; first spiritually of course. According to Psalm 91, we can trust the word and promises of the Lord to keep us safe. We must pray harder and trust Him more. I believe in miracles. Not only that we must we do our best in daily life not to be contagious. We must take care of our health, drinking more water, washing our hands often. We have to trust upon the Lord with all my heart, knowing God is a God of miracles and strength to take care of us and protect us from all kinds of attacks by Satan and diseases. I will teach my congregation and family to not only trust the Lord more and pray harder but also to take better

care of our health. On a personal note, I have hardly taken any medicine. Modern medical society emphasizes taking a lot of medicine for disease. We must take care to eat well, to maintain your body in a healthy condition. I eat small portions and very nutritiously with lots of fruits and vegetables. Nothing white---no white flour, no white sugar, no white rice. I jump rope 25 minutes every morning and have done so for over 35 years. I do my best to be healthy. I am 70 years old and in good health with no health problems. Praise the Lord! With a strong healthy body, I think you can fight against any disease and spiritually you can repel any attack by Satan. Poor health and disease can be used as one his tactics especially when you have a weak body and weak immune system.

I worry about my brothers and sisters in Korea. I pray for them very hard and let them know that they can fight against the disease by keeping themselves physically and spiritually healthy by standing on the promises of the Lord.

Renée: What about mental health? Depression, anxiety, bipolar, dementia, etc.

Dr. Na: Our soul governs our spirit. For the non-Christians they have to be treated by the specialist in medical society. For the Christians, we must take them to the Bible, teaching them, praying for them, guiding them to trust the providence and sovereignty of the Lord. These mental diseases must be distinguished because some are a result of demon possession as we saw in Jesus' time. And others are problems in our society where bad things happen that are so hard to reconcile and affect our minds and our spirit.

To overcome these difficult mental disorders like depression or dementia, we must trust the Lord that the soul is governing mental disease. At the same time as a pastor, give them counsel and focus on the spiritual power of the soul as the way to overcome.

No matter the pain whether it that comes from depression and feelings of desertion due to divorce, as a Christian, the Lord can change the grief to consolation and the sorrow to joy. I believe we can fully recover and solve the problems, whether spiritually, physically, or emotionally especially when it comes to the pain of grief.

Renée: So, it's the power of faith and the power of the Holy Spirit that is at work. We have to help people see that and to talk openly and honestly about their feelings. Not disregard the feelings and but help them work through.

Dr. Na: Yes, The power of the Holy Spirit and the power of Counsel. The first step is to build rapport with the person with friendship and fellowship, so the griever will eventually open their mind and their heart to the Word of God and His promises. This first step in the process of the treatment and healing is so important and then they will eventually be led to the word of God and His promises.

Dr. Na has been in America since 1984 and then went back to Korea for missions work. In 1985-1996 pastored a church in Philadelphia. When asked if he goes back home to South Korea for visits, he responded he takes his sabbatical month in Korea, but unable to go now due to the coronavirus.

Interview with Pastor Cedric Maddox, Refreshing Word Church, Ft. Mill, SC on April 3, 2020.

Renée: As a pastor, how important is grief work (counseling) to you? As a man, father, and husband?

Pastor Maddox: As a pastor, grief work is imperative. So often I see persons grieving losses and because of lack of understanding about a past loss, they are affecting current relationships in non-positive ways. Men especially need to know that it's healthy to grieve and then learn how to process grief.

As a husband, oftentimes we don't see the opening or the space to grieve. I was having a conversation with a young man about men and their emotions. He has recently lost his mother as I had. We both felt that pressure to hurry up and get back to be that pillar of strength. To be the person who has the patience to hear venting at the end of the day if need be; to have patience to be there for your wife. As a husband you sometimes do not feel that space.

As a father, because I have boys, how do I teach them how to process and work through this grief. Because of their ages they do not know. My boys are young adults, and with them having to get back into their high school and college work, that says to them they cannot stay there, but they don't know how to get to where they need to be. You need grief work to show you how to get there. Rather than being angry, bitter, and even worse, what I call, "non-emotive". By that I mean that you shut down the most intimate parts of yourself and you don't feel anything, and nothing really moves you. You look for those short-term energy relieving behaviors (referred to as STERB's in Grief Recovery Method®) or those outlets and dive into the emotional release. That non-emotive place is a place where I fell into myself even after the

grief work. The tools that I learned during my grief work, they have to constantly be taken out of your toolbox and used. If I did not have those tools, I would not have been able to pull myself out of that “STERB” behavior.

Renée: You described how you responded to grief or didn’t respond before going through grief recovery. Is that something that was passed down in your family unintentionally? Is that a legacy you received, and you don’t want to pass that same legacy to your boys?

Pastor Maddox: Yes, it is a legacy you receive, but I also want to talk about our current environment and socialization. In our current socialization, we’re seeing more non-masculine behavior and we’re fighting even more to know what masculine behavior looks like. Our social media and main stream media channels are constantly pushing a non-masculine identity of men. So men are fighting even more to say what is and is not masculine and that usually ends up being some form of a non-emotive perception. So, you have the legacy and you have this chronic thing that’s happening in our culture and society. With that current thing going on in our culture, where do you go? How do you process the emotions of grief and simply being a man?

Renée: I had not looked at how current socialization influences this aspect of grief work for our boys and our men. You have opened my eyes to even more how complex this work can be, how we present it and how we shape it so that it is received by our young boys and our men.

Renée: It sounds like you feel and embrace the need for some type of help with grief.

Pastor Maddox: I cannot say that I have always felt that way. As of matter of fact, I viewed grieving as a weak emotion that I as man needed to “stop whining” and suck it up. When we were young boys playing sports we were told to “walk it off” if you were hurt. No one gave you attention for you pain. As we grew, I noticed that if I did get attention for my pain, then I was labeled soft. Even, females would say that a young man was being a “punk” for showing

certain emotions. And though it's politically correct now to say a man can cry, no one really expects him to show vulnerability.

Renée: What has transpired in your life that impacts your view of the need to do grief work/counseling?

Pastor Maddox: When my life experienced multiple losses in a 6-month window, I hit an emotional wall. I was considered depressed. That's when I knew I needed counseling or grief work. In the process I discovered that I had been grieving several losses for years.

Renée: Do you see the relationship in grief work and holistic health (spirit, soul [mind] and body) for yourself as well as those you lead, teach and counsel?

Pastor Maddox: The grief work was healing for the whole man. I believe that certain pains which effect the soul can and will have impact on the physical being. Much like stress can afflict our health in various aspects.

Renée: You mentioned how everyone looks to you for that strength, your wife, your sons, your congregation. Now having gone through your grief work through the Grief Recovery Method (GRM), you have your tools in your toolbox and you are actively aware and engaging in your holistic health. How do you safeguard your health? Physically, Spiritually and Emotionally?

Pastor Maddox: It really became intentional for me to be more responsible about my physical health. It became a hobby for me, working out and in my spare time, I started looking for the latest health care tips like the best foods to help build your immune system or looking to increasing muscle mass, etc. I had to because my last grief experience was so impactful, my primary care physician recommended that I really needed to work out. It moved from something prescribed to something that now I want to do it. I want to be physically fit; I want to monitor what I eat even though I don't always, but I really want to. I'm still working on it!

Spiritually, after GRM, I went to Spiritual Formation and Soul Care with Dr. Barbara Peacock, which was very instrumental to my health, because my soul was so damaged from constant blows of not dealing with grief. As we have talked about, I felt that I *got to keep pushing, keep doing, keep providing, keep being strong*. I didn't realize how much damage was there from years of not dealing with grief. So, after Soul Care, one of the biggest tools she gave me was to do a pie chart of my time. Of the 168 hours of time in a week, how much of that time was me spending time with God? How much time is spent resting? Do I rest 10% of that time. I must admit that I am still convicted because I don't rest 10%.

Finally, emotionally, is a constant reminder of what I've dealt with and how the GRM helped me to deal with those impactful things. I also had to look at what was God doing? I was so angry I couldn't see what God was doing in order to make me simply his son. It had nothing to do with my ministry. I know we like to talk about how God "turned it around"; how He gave me "double for my trouble." The more I look at this, it had nothing to do with this "great coming out overcoming story". But it had everything to do with God saying, "you really don't have intimacy with me."

Renée: All kinds of emotions you mentioned including anger. I appreciate your candor, your emotional honesty. Anger typically presents first with men and then there is another undercurrent of other emotions. That is one of the tools of the GRM, emotional honesty. So with that being said, having gone through GRM, does that have a bearing on how you pastor and mentor those you talk to and care for?

Pastor Maddox: There is an overwhelming sense of compassion that I did not have before going through my grief work. I also recognize that I am helpless in some of their processing of their pain. We pastors talk about some of the more obvious things we need to refer

to others who have like philosophies. With grief, we also need to refer to those who are trained in a systematic process of working through grief if that is not part of our “wheel house” or our area of giftedness or specialty in pastoral care.

Renée: How has global grief associated with COVID-19, the coronavirus, affected how you minister to your congregation, family, friends?

Pastor Maddox: The global crisis has caused me to shepherd more than lead. The nurturing aspect of the office is needed now more than ever. Faith, hope, and love but the greatest of these are love. Love is craved more than an administrative presence or great vision. This crisis has put spiritual leaders in the position of being asked, “how much do you care?” With this crisis, I began to reflect on something that a woman of great esteem said to me a few years ago and I will never forget it. We were talking about leadership and I was comparing myself to another pastor who I greatly admired and looked up to. I realize now that I should not have compared myself to the point where I wanted to be like him, but I did. This woman of God said to me, “Son, realize that you are a great pastor, the person you’re comparing yourself to was a great leader, know the difference!” We tend to put great emphasis on pastors being great leaders. We ask about their leadership skills; can they build a great team; can they manage through disagreements; can they manage a team?” We forget our number one priority that pastors are shepherds, that we are to nurture and love people. When we’re in a pandemic like we’re in now, the only thing we can do that makes the difference is to pray, love, love and pray. They are not interested in leading them to the next level; in working on the church’s infrastructure or a new system. That means nothing to those who are losing jobs, facing health crisis, losing loved ones and can’t pay their respects to. I lost a loved one and couldn’t go to the funeral. How much more do I care about the flock than the infrastructure of the church? Am I a

pastor or simply a leader? The office calls for both, but we have emphasized leadership over truly pastoring. A common saying is “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

I hope that when we come out of this, we don’t come out focusing on just the administration piece but that we grow authentically and organically through love and leadership; both are needed. One of the last things my Bishop (the late Bishop Phillip Davis) said to me in an email when I was having a hard time planting my church was, “Great leadership is not vision, but great leadership is sacrificial love.” I had observed his great administration, great vision, and organizational skills, but it was those profound words that now mean so much to me.

Renée: Do you see a correlation of global grief, church grief and individual grief?

Pastor Maddox: In my humble opinion, grief simply is. I think global, church, and individual grief may reveal itself diversely, yet it’s all the same grief. The context dictates the way grief may be experienced. Further, because we are experiencing one of the worst possible pandemics that this world could have ever seen, then I believe that we’ll see grief in so many varying shades. Spiritual workers will be overrun with emotional traumatic persons searching for answers that may or may not be discovered on this side. Emotional journeys of those in the pain of grief will need destination points that with the help of the Holy Spirit, grief work can show the way.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

I accept the hypothesis that if spiritual leaders fail to embrace grief as a culture unto itself and the grief work needed for holistic health, they and others in their sphere of influence will struggle with their effectiveness in God's Kingdom work.

Working through grief and loss is not only a healthy response but is ordained, experienced, and sanctioned by God. Grief work produces healing from painful emotions. It is a component of a healthy equilibrium of spirit, soul, and body; disease prevention, sanctification and sits well with spiritual formation.

The subjects in the results and discussion corroborate this supposition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Include a broader representation of the Asian culture in loss and grief research, i.e., Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Filipino, etc.
2. Include response from the Hispanic community regarding loss, grief, and mourning.
3. Expand grief response to include current pandemic caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus.
4. Discuss how children and young adults, i.e., the millennials respond to grief and include the ramifications that not processing the pain of grief might have later in life.
5. Expand on grief due to loss of faith, spiritual beliefs, approach to God and overall spirituality.

APPENDIX

Figure A.
A Tangled “Ball of
Emotions

A TANGLED “BALL” OF EMOTIONS

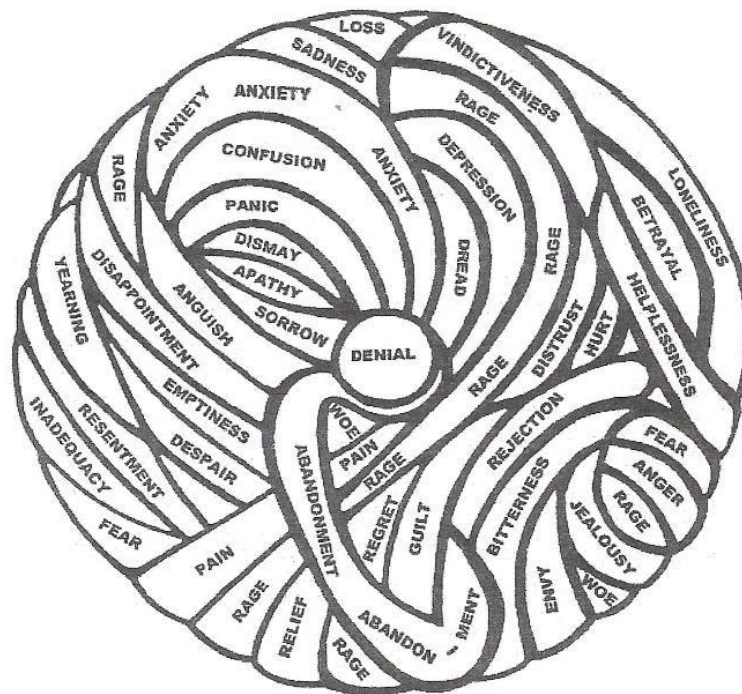


Figure B.

Poem – “Mother Earth Weeping for Her Children”

Mother Earth Weeping for Her Children

*My children, my children
I weep for you deeply*

I see you hurting. I see you dying

I see you lost and confused

I see you frantic and fearful

I see the effects of this virus on your bodies and on your minds and I weep for you.

I weep for you my children

I know what it feels like to be attacked by a virus

I, too was attacked by a virus

*First it invaded my body slowly then it kept coming and coming, year after year, decade after decade,
century after century*

The fumes in my skies

The garbage in my oceans

My forests stripped, uncovering my nakedness

It kept coming and coming. This virus was called all kinds of names, one of them was Progress

This virus ate thru my very bones. I couldn't stop it.

I had to shrink to survive. I grieve the loss of my former strength and beauty but I've survived

And so will you my child So will you.

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Figure C.

Informed Consent Forms

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This interview is being conducted by Renée Hill Carter, a Chun University candidate for the degree of Bachelor of Biblical studies, under the supervision of Dr. Barbara L. Peacock, Chair of Biblical Studies and professor at Chun University, Charlotte, NC.

The purpose of this interview is to discuss the dynamics of grief and how it is instrumental in pursuing holistic health especially for spiritual leaders. The title of my thesis is "Culture of Grief: The Journey to Holistic Healing."

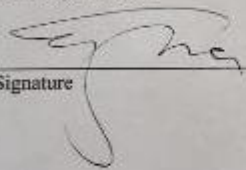
Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the freedom to expound or limit your comments how you deem appropriate. You are also at liberty to discontinue the interview at any time.

With your permission, this interview will be printed in this publication in whole or in part at the discretion of the author, Renée Hill Carter. Your identity will be disclosed as part of the fulfillment of the requirements for this thesis.

If you have any questions, please contact Renée Hill Carter at reenehillcarter@gmail.com or Dr. Barbara L. Peacock at hpeacock888@gmail.com.

Chun University is eager to ensure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. If you have any concerns or questions about the interview or your treatment during the interview, contact Dr. Yeongkee Lee, CAO, Chun University at leeyoungkee@hanmail.net.

Dr. Sung Kyun Na

 _____

Signature

4/18/20

Date

Informed Consent Forms

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Pastor Cedric C. Maddox

Cedric C. Maddox
Signature

4-18-2020
Date

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