

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **1Corinthians 15:53-57**.

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. [55] "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" [56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [57] but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Grief is universal and is felt by every person during the course of a lifetime. Any kind of loss and bring about grief.

C. Tonight, how to (overcome) cope with grief. The first half of the lesson will have many scripture references, and the second half will be practical in nature.

II. THE BIBLE AND GRIEF.

A. X has changed the meaning of grieving.

B. Note the following passages that give hope and comfort in death (1Th 4:14,17,18; see 1Cor. 15:52-57; Heb. 2:14,15; Jn. 11:25,26; 2Cor. 5:6-8).

(1Th 4:14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

(1Th 4:17,18) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore comfort one another with these words.

(Jn 11:25,26) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

(2Cor 5:6-8) Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-- [7] for we walk by faith, not by sight-- [8] we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

(Heb 2:14,15) Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; [15] and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

C. X has demonstrated the importance of grieving (Mt. 5:4; 26:38; Jn. 11:35).

(Mt 5:4) "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

(Mt 26:38) Then He said^ to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."

(Jn 11:35) Jesus wept.

D. Even for the Xian, grief is normal and healthy. But it, also can be pathological and unhealthy.

III. NORMAL/ABNORMAL GRIEF.

A. Normal grief would include:

1. Intense sorrow, pain, loneliness, anger, or depression.
2. Physical symptoms and changes in interpersonal relationships.
3. A period of deprivation and transition which can last up to 3 yrs.

B. Abnormal grief would, include:

1. A delay in grieving, hyperactivity, a "giving up" attitude.
2. Helplessness and hopelessness, with intense guilt.
3. Strong self-condemnation, extreme social withdrawal, or moodiness.
4. Antisocial behavior, excessive drinking, and suicidal threats.

C. There are three things that a person who is grieving has to do, to work through their pain:

1. Untangling the ties that bind them to the deceased.
2. Readjusting to an environment with the deceased person missing.
3. Form new relationships.

IV. EFFECTS OF GRIEF AND THE GRIEF CYCLE.

- A. The three most commonly observed reactions to grief are:
 - 1. CRYING. This expresses deep feelings and releases tension.
 - 2. RESTLESSNESS. Including sleep disturbances.
 - 3. DEPRESSION. Withdrawal and extreme sadness.
- B. The closeness to the deceased, suddenness of death, and age of the deceased, each influence the mourner's reaction to the death.
- C. *The Grief Process* by J. Morris Smith:
 - 1. First Stage: SHOCK.
 - a. From the point of death until after the funeral.
 - b. Symptoms of unawareness, shortness of breath, disbelief and sometimes nausea.
 - c. Get the bereaved to accept the death and vent hostilities.
 - 2. Second Stage: FANTASY.
 - a. From the funeral until 6 weeks to 3 months.
 - b. The bereaved relives many experiences (daydreams a lot).
 - c. Becomes upset over seemingly foolish things.
 - 3. Third Stage: CATHARSIS.
 - a. Begins about 2 to 3 months after funeral.
 - b. The bereaved has crying spells, nervous periods, etc.
 - c. Very anxious and very talkative. Fear and anxieties can be dispelled by "talking it through."
 - d. Will show much hostility toward the church, family, and others that are close.
 - e. Feelings of inadequacy and insecurity may turn into guilt.
 - 4. Fourth Stage: SELECTIVE MEMORIES.
 - a. Some physical disorders such as gastritis, insomnia, etc.
 - b. Feelings of hurt, loneliness, and recalling of important events.
 - c. Possible withdrawal from common group activities.
 - 5. Fifth Stage: ACCEPTANCE.
 - a. Can come as early as 6 months or a year depending on factors surrounding the death.
 - b. Can take up to 3-5 years if the bereaved was extremely close to the deceased.

V. COUNSELING AND PREVENTION OF ABNORMAL GRIEF.

- A. Before the time of death. Some things you can do are:
 - 1. Develop healthy attitudes in the home.
 - 2. Clarify family relationships.
 - 3. Build friendships.
 - 4. Have various recreational activities.
 - 5. Learn to handle the "little crises."
- B. At the time of death. Some things to do:
 - 1. Communicate the news calmly, firmly, and not too slowly.
 - 2. Giving support by just being there; you don't have say much.
 - 3. Plan the funeral to please both the deceased and the bereaved.
- C. After the time of death. Some things to do:
 - 1. Be present and available.
 - 2. Make it known that the expression of feelings is good and acceptable in your presence.
 - 3. Be a receptive, careful listener and expect outbursts of emotion.
 - 4. Provide practical help rather than theological explanations.
 - 5. Do not discourage grieving rituals (e.g., visiting the gravesite everyday for several weeks).
 - 6. Pray for the bereaved and comfort them with Scripture.

VI. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Grieving is a good thing. It is psychologically healthy, and spiritually correct.
- B. Focus attention on Jesus, who will allow our grieving to be as easy and brief as possible.
- C. Be patient and allow the bereaved to work through all the stages and cycles of the grieving process.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians.