



Discover the Treasures Buried in Grief and Loss

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- God gives us treasures on the pathway through grief that we could never anticipate or choose for ourselves. They are treasures hidden in darkness (Isaiah 45:3).
- Learning to welcome and hold sorrow and grief before God is central to the work of discipleship.
- We resist loss and grief because we resist losing control and we have a faulty theology that interprets losses as interruptions.
- Our culture and our churches are loss denying and grief phobic. Our society has trained us well to pay attention to success but not to loss and pain. In order to keep these feelings at bay, we develop a variety of coping strategies to redirect our attention away from whatever painful reality we might be facing.
- A refusal to embrace our sorrows and to grieve them fully condemns us, and our churches, to a shallow spirituality that blocks the work of the Holy Spirit in us.
- God's three phases for processing grief and loss:
 1. Phase One: Pay Attention to Pain
 2. Phase Two: Wait in the Confusing In-Between
 3. Phase Three: Allow the Old to Birth the New

DISCUSSION

1. What stood out most to you from this chapter on “Discover the Treasures Buried in Grief and Loss”?

2. We accumulate a vast array of losses over a lifetime. In which of the categories listed below have you experienced some form of loss in the last six to twelve months? Briefly share how you grieved, avoided grief, or otherwise responded to the loss(es).

- ☐ *Devastating losses:* premature death of a loved one, disability, mental illness, divorce, abuse, trauma, serious illness, suicide, betrayal, job loss, bankruptcy
- ☐ *Unexpected losses:* cataclysmic events (terrorist attacks, pandemic, chemical spill), natural disasters (earthquake, hurricane, tornado, tsunami, drought), crime, fire, flood
- ☐ *Internal losses:* loss of identity, purpose, self-worth, confidence, sense of safety
- ☐ *Natural or expected losses:* graduation, retirement, geographic move, growing up, end of a small group, death of an elderly loved one
- ☐ *Leadership losses:* departure of key staff or volunteers, restructuring, layoffs, unrealized dreams, economic downturns, broken relationships, moral failure, role change
- ☐ *Other:* _____

3. The Christian community often has a problematic response to grief and loss, viewing it as a loss of control or an interruption to be overcome. As a result, many of us try to avoid it or numb it with a variety of coping strategies.

- In what ways, if any, have you experienced the church or other Christians as “loss denying and grief phobic”?
- Embracing grief and loss require surrender, descent, and a loss of control. These are never easy experiences for anyone, but why might they be especially challenging for you right now?
- For leaders especially, one big obstacle to grieving is that we are sometimes the ones who created the situations that caused us and others such pain in the first place. What do you think it means to grieve in such situations?

4. One consequence of refusing to embrace our sorrows and grieve them fully is a shallow spirituality.

- Briefly recall the recent services, programs, and various events of your church or organization. When was the last time you devoted time and attention to collective lament, grief, or sadness? How did people respond?
- For your ministry or organization as a whole, how would you characterize the shallowness or depth of spirituality when it comes to grief and loss? For example, how readily do people acknowledge their own losses and engage others about them? How readily do they minimize or ignore the pain of their losses?

5. The chapter explored three phases for processing grief and loss: pay attention to pain, wait in the confusing “in-between,” and allow the old to birth the new.
 - Which of these do you find most difficult? Briefly share why.
 - In connection with the loss(es) you identified in question 2, which of the three phases are you in? Or, which do you feel God may be inviting you to enter?
6. The promise of embracing our sorrows is that there are treasures waiting for us that we can’t receive any other way. Scazzero identifies five treasures of resurrection we experience on the other side of loss and grief. Which statement below comes closest to describing a treasure you need from God right now? Briefly share why.
 - ☐ I need God to offer me a revelation of himself.
 - ☐ I need God to make me softer and more compassionate.
 - ☐ I need God to give me a greater revelation of myself.
 - ☐ I need God to make me more of my true self in Christ.
 - ☐ I need God to make me more truly alive to our astonishing world.

READING ASSIGNMENT



Before your next meeting, read Chapter 7, “Make Love the Measure of Spiritual Maturity.” Between now and then, become an observer of your routine interactions, noting when you are and are not able to be fully present with others. Do so without making self-judgments and without shaming. The goal is simply to be a respectful observer.

GOING DEEPER

- Take a personal grieving retreat. Set aside several hours or a whole day to name and grieve your losses. Consider losses from childhood on by decade. Consider personal losses as well as leadership losses. If you find it helpful, plot them out on a timeline. For each loss, consider the degree to which you have or have not grieved. Ask God to guide you as you navigate the three phases for processing loss and grief.
- Listen to one or more of the following Emotionally Healthy Leadership podcast episodes:
 - ☐ “Why the Confusing In-between Is Where God Wants to Meet You,” accessible at <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/podcast/detail/Why-the-Confusing-in-Between-is-Where-God-Wants-to-Meet-You/?v=4096ee8eef7d>.
 - ☐ “Why Great Leaders Are Great Grievors, Part 1,” <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/why-great-leaders-are-great-grievors-part-1/?v=4096ee8eef7d>.
 - ☐ “Why Great Leaders Are Great Grievors, Part 2,” <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/why-great-leaders-are-great-grievors-part-2-eh-leader-podcast/?v=4096ee8eef7d>.