




Myths about Grief

As we move on down the list, we get to a tied position for eight, and the first one is grief. Now, compared to  twenty-four years ago, this slid down the list a little bit.

Myth 1. Grief Can Be Avoided by Being a Good Christian

Let's start with myth number one: Grief can be avoided by being a good Christian. You may be starting to see some common themes with these myths, even though they're applied to different problem areas. This is maybe wishful thinking—grief can be avoided by being a good Christian. This is, again, kind of the formula approach: “If I just work a good Christian formula, I'll have a life that's untouched by difficulty or problems.” 

And it's certainly not true when it comes to grief. Of course, we have the prime example with Jesus experiencing grief and also expressing grief. So it's actually a very unhealthy thing to try to avoid grief.  Whether you're a good Christian or not a good Christian, it's inevitable that in our brokenness, in a broken fallen world, we all will have experiences with grief—sense of loss of what we wish [or] unwanted change that comes into our life.

Myth 2. Grief Should Be Avoided and Can Be Avoided If You're Strong Enough

Myth number two: Grief should be avoided, and you can actually avoid it if you're strong enough.

Myth 3. Grief Is an Evidence of Weakness

Related to this, we'll just move to the next myth: Grief is actually an evidence of weakness. What each of these two myths would be tapping into that would be wrong is the sense that I can actually be untouched by grief, and maybe it's not about me being a good a Christian, but if I'm just smart enough, if I'm nimble enough, if I'm strong enough, if I'm clever enough, I can deflect it. I can move my way around it. I don't have to be touched by it. It's kind of a pain-avoidance strategy, and I'm just using my own self-reliant strengths, strategies, [and] efforts to not be touched by the pain of grief. It's ironic, however, that when we do this, we actually create bigger problems in our effort not to deal with the problem.

So the truth of the matter is, as broken humans in a broken world under attack by Satan, it is going to be our experience to have grief, and this is actually our opportunity to experience a redeeming work of God in our life while we're experiencing grief 🕯️ . It also makes us more human. To avoid grief, or to think that I can be exempt from grief, will make us less human. It reduces our experience of things that we need to experience to be able to relate in a more human way to one another.

Myth 4. Grief Is Sinful

Next myth: Grief is sinful. In other words, the fact that I had a problem is understandable, maybe, but the fact that you're still wrestling with the problem means that you're having sinful choices; you are not trusting God enough. You shouldn't still be wrestling with the problem. It's kind of the "Job's counselors" thing. Of course, this is a myth as well, and it's not the experience of grief that's sinful, but it could be our responses to our experiencing of grief that may be

sinful. So one of those big ones would be if I'm avoiding, but I could also be looking to and using other sinful, maladaptive coping strategies to deal with my grief.

Myth 5. Grief Should Be Confronted

The next myth: "Grief should be confronted." In other words, this is kind of the "Job's counselors" thing again. Anytime you see somebody experiencing grief, you don't want them to be missing God's so-called joyful Christian living, and so you need to confront them out of the grief so they can get back into God's joyful Christian living thing again. Totally a myth.

Actually, what tends to happen for people who feel compelled to confront, if you look at that at a deeper level, I think, it's [that] what's motivating their confrontation is not their concern for the well-being of the other person so much as it is for them. They don't want to have to deal with the fact that a person who loves God and follows God and serves God would also have to have a grief experience. So it kind of helps them maintain their false formula: "If I can just get you out of your grief and get you back into victorious Christian living again, then that kind of confirms in my way of thinking that as long as I keep working the formulas, then I won't have to experience grief either."

Myth 6. Grief Should Receive the Ministry of Proclamation

The next myth is that grief should receive the ministry of proclamation. In other words, if you are going to come alongside somebody and grieve, the best thing you can do for them is preach truth to them. This reminds me of a great book that was written by Joe Bayly called *The View from a*

Hearse. He was a minister, and at three different times in his life he lost three different sons and had to go through that funeral process. And he learned so much about how other people responded to him during that process.

He said, “Repeatedly, people would come to me during this process with the so-called ministry of proclamation. And when I was in that moment of grief, I could not wait for them to leave. In contrast, when people came to me and came alongside me and sat with me, and they gave to me a ministry of presence , when it was time for them to leave, I didn’t want them to go.” It doesn’t mean that—especially as a pastor—you don’t have this important role of the ministry of proclamation, but the timing of that is very important. And especially, when people are caught up right in the moment of their grief, what they most need from you at that point is the ministry of presence.

Myth 7. Grief Processes Can Be Speeded Up with Strategies

Myth number seven for grief: Grief processes can be speeded up with strategies. Now, you might be familiar with [how] there’s a number of different models on grief that have emerged, and these are representing stages in the process of dealing with grief. I don’t want to overstate the importance of these, especially so that they don’t get used in terms of a recipe if you move from stage one to stage two to stage three to stage four and five—however many stages [are] in that particular model. This is just the straight-line linear model of getting yourself out of grief, and as long as you stay on the model, you can just keep that process moving along and speed it up.

But what it is good to understand is that even though it’s

not a linear model, it does have its ups and downs—maybe more of a spiral. But it has necessary stages that involve a process. People have to be given permission to be in a process. You can't bake a cake too fast. It takes a certain amount of time and experience, experientially, that you have to go through. People need support in that process. They don't need to be rushed through that process.

Myth 8. Grief Is Linear and Predictable

Myth number eight: Grief process is linear and predictable. Well, we just addressed that in the above explanation.