

Jacob's Well



Lesson Title: Grief and Loss—Grief Remains



Key Concept: In a broken world, loss and grief are inevitable. Acknowledging grief is a critical part of living life as a truthful disciple of Christ.



Scriptures:

“My complaint is with God, not with people. I have good reason to be so impatient.”

(Job 21:4 *New Living Translation*)

“I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the Lord has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?”

(Ruth 1:21 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Job 21, 23, 30; Revelation 21:3–7; Matthew 5:3–10



Lesson Thoughts:

The story of Job is often used to show the rewards of faith, and how God will respond to commitment. But if we look deeper, beyond the obvious, three facts become apparent. First, God responded to Job’s faithfulness, and gave him more than he started with. Second, God was faithful even as Job was frustrated and questioning. Both these facts are comfortable, familiar ones. But the third fact is equally important, and is one we don’t like to look at: God let Job’s children die, and they stayed dead. God gave him more children, but his loss remained.

The idea of loss is so deeply ingrained in our lives that we almost don’t think about it until it comes for us. We don’t like to consider loss and grief because they are painful. Especially as Christians, our impulse can often be to turn away from grief, to pass over pain, to ignore loss. We parrot the old sayings: “God is good,” “His plans are perfect,” “He will reward us in the end.” And God *is* good, his plans *are* perfect, and our promised reward *is* coming. But also, God doesn’t

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stop our hurt, his plans often involve loss and grief, and the coming reward doesn't change our current suffering.

One of the commonly quoted Scriptures about loss and sorrow is Revelation 21:4, which describes the final reign of Jesus, saying, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain." We love this verse, but we ignore its implications. Why is God wiping away tears? Why does the author of Revelation promise there *will* be no more death, sorrow, or pain? It is because there are still tears. Death, sorrow, and pain are constant afflictions for us. Our grief will not stop, and crying will never leave us, until the day God comes again.

We rejoice because of the coming promise, and we eagerly await the end of grief. This is right. But as followers of the truth—for our God is truth—we must also not shy away from the realities of the world. Just as God promised a reward for those who endure, so did he say that we must endure. When we say that God is good, we speak truth, but our truth is corrupted if we do not also acknowledge the reality of his ways. And the truth is that God has chosen that, for a time, we will live in a world of sorrow. God is indeed good, and yet, our loss is real.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Why doesn't God stop our pain when he so easily could?
- 2) What happens when we don't acknowledge physical pain or injury? What happens when we ignore emotional/spiritual pain or injury?
- 3) Job spent multiple chapters complaining about what God was putting him through, even saying that he had a "complaint . . . with God." What do you think about him saying this?
- 4) Are you willing to complain to God about God and the pain he lets you feel? If so, how, when we know he is never wrong? If not, why not?
- 5) How will God treat those who are honest with him? What does your experience, or your knowledge of the Scriptures, say?

Next Lesson: Grief and Loss—Grieving with Hope

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- 1) There is evidence that long-term avoidance of grief-related thoughts or feelings can lead to negative psychological impacts.¹ Are there any events or circumstances in your life that you've been avoiding thinking about? Have you talked to God about them?
- 2) Ask God how you should talk to him when you don't understand what he's done or why he's done it. The one who began to do something good in you will not abandon you because you ask for his help.
- 3) If you have something that needs said, or something you've avoided talking with God about, say it to him. Share your burdens with the one who cares for you. Tell him how you feel, and then listen to his response. Let the one who loves you show his love.

¹ Amanda Baker et al., "The role of avoidance in complicated grief: A detailed examination of the Grief-Related Avoidance Questionnaire (GRAQ) in a large sample of individuals with complicated grief," *The Journal of Loss and Trauma* 2016, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5482544/>.

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Notes and Reflections, cont.