

Title: Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning

Greetings all,

1. Just posted a new essay and ministry aid regarding bereavement, grief, and mourning. This is the document we were working on immediately before the terrorist attacks.

2. Intercession: We continue to need and appreciate intercession. I have been sick with one thing or another almost continuously since the work we did with the renewal meeting ~5 weeks ago. This connection continues to seem strategic to us, and we have wondered whether we might be experiencing more harassment. We are hoping to be involved with a similar, but much larger renewal meeting in November, so would especially appreciate prayer. We would also appreciate prayer for our October travel. We will be visiting some colleagues in Virginia Beach to fellowship and learn from each other, and will then be taking a couple weeks to write.

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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### **Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning**

(Revised 9/17/2001)

- I. Introduction: We will all experience loss at some point in our lives. Dr. Smith has discovered that Theophostic prayer can minister powerfully to the emotional pain associated with loss. This essay provides a brief summary of our thoughts and of Dr. Smith's writings regarding the application of Theophostic principles to bereavement, grief, and mourning.
- II. Definition of terms: Bereavement, grief, and mourning are used somewhat interchangeably by the general public. To avoid confusion, I would like to use the following definitions: **Bereavement** is the state of being deprived of something important. We usually think of bereavement as being the loss of a loved one, but all the same phenomena and dynamics can occur with other losses, such as the loss of a pet, the loss of a career, the loss of a dream, the loss of a bodily functions (for example, blindness or paralysis). **Grief** is the subjective feeling associated with bereavement. **Mourning** is the grieving process – the process by which grief is resolved.
- III. My current perception is that a number of different phenomena contribute to grief.
  - A. Emotional pain due to underlying wounds and lies that are triggered by the loss: A loss

in the present can often trigger old, unresolved wounds and lies. This phenomena of a recent bereavement triggering the lies and emotional pain from deeper wounds is a common cause for “grief” that seems to be exaggerated and/or stuck. For example, a person may appear to be experiencing exaggerated grief over the loss of a pet, but in reality the death of his pet merely triggered unresolved pain from his childhood loss of a younger sibling. A person may display what appears to be exaggerated grief over the loss of a brief romantic relationship, but in reality the loss of her boyfriend merely triggered unresolved pain from being abandoned by her father. A person may perceive that she is “stuck” in the grieving process for the death of an adult child, but in reality the lingering emotional pain “that just won’t go away” is the guilt and grief from an abortion with which she has never dealt. A person may experience exaggerated and persistent “grief” after losing a limb in an automobile accident, but in reality he is experiencing emotions of hopelessness and powerlessness from triggered memories of being unable to protect himself from physical harm at the hands of his alcoholic father. The “grief” in each of these situations will never fully resolve until the underlying wounds and lies have been discovered and resolved.

- B. Emotional pain due to lies associated with the loss: In the process of exploring with Theophostic, Dr. Smith discovered that much of the “grief” pain associated with bereavement is not truth-based pain, but rather painful emotions coming from lies associated with the losses. For example, combat veterans and accident survivors will often experience false guilt from lies such as “It’s my fault my friend died because I missed the trip wire” or “It’s my fault my brother died because I didn’t rescue him.” Christians who lose a loved one to disease will often experience false guilt due to lies such as “It’s my fault my daughter died because I didn’t pray enough” or “It’s my fault my husband wasn’t healed because I didn’t have enough faith.” Survivors of natural disasters often experience powerlessness and hopelessness due to lies such as “I can’t protect those I love – I am powerless” or “The world is too dangerous, anybody I love will die – it’s hopeless.” Anybody who loses a loved one can experience feelings of guilt, abandonment and despair due to lies such as “It’s my fault – I should have \_\_\_\_\_ (called, checked, waited, etc.),” “I am all alone now,” “I won’t make it, I can’t live without my husband,” and “I will never be happy again.”

Traditional wisdom has been that the pain of bereavement (grief) can only be resolved by going through a long and painful grieving process (mourning). Regarding the usual duration of the grieving process, Kaplan and Sadock comment: “Traditionally, grief lasts about six months to one year, as the grieving person experiences the calendar year at least once without the lost person. Some signs and symptoms of grief may persist much longer than one or two years, and a survivor may have various grief-related feelings, symptoms, and behavior throughout life.”<sup>1</sup> Dr. Smith has discovered that this

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<sup>1</sup>See Kaplan, Sadock, and Grebb, Kaplan and Sadock’s Synopsis of Psychiatry, Seventh Edition (Baltimore, MD: Williams & Wilkins, 1994) p.80-86 for a well-written, brief summary

does not need to be the case. He discovered that Jesus could dramatically shorten the usual grieving process by resolving the lies that are usually metabolized much more slowly in the process of “normal” mourning. When the lies associated with the loss(es) are discovered and removed, most of the “grief” pain resolves immediately.

Dr. Smith provides an excellent case study example in Beyond Tolerable Recovery:

...a client came in who was grief stricken over the loss of her 18-year-old daughter who had recently been killed by a drunk driver. The accident occurred a few months before, and the reality of this loss was painfully acute with this mother. She told me she did not know how she could go on with such deep pain and hopelessness... In our first session I tried to give her a sense of hope that the pain would lessen with time and she would at some point experience healing from the loss...

When she returned for her second visit, she asked me if Theophostic Ministry could help her. I had no intention of using this method with her since her wound was so fresh. I sadly informed her how it was only being used on historical trauma and would have no effect on her grief. I informed her that grief was true pain and had to be processed over time. As I spoke these words... I sensed God saying, “Give her this gift of healing.”

My mind could not comprehend what my heart was sensing. How could I ask this woman to “stir up the darkness” and embrace the horrible pain of loss and separation? I also thought “what are the lies? She is experiencing real loss, real grief, real pain.” ...Then I heard her make several statements, “I can never survive. The pain is too great. I am so alone. I cannot live without my daughter.” It was not the truth of the event causing the pain, but rather the lies...

I took a deep breath and asked her if she would be willing to try this process with me. I told her I had never done this with anyone in her condition before. She said... “If you think this will ease my pain in any way, please do it.” As I began the session, I asked her to go to the memory of hearing the news of her daughter’s death. She had hardly arrived at the memory when she confessed she could see Jesus with her. We began at this memory and processed the lies which surfaced. We walked through a series of painful memories which all were a part of the storyline of her daughter’s death. Jesus appeared in every episode and spoke healing words of truth. In this one session, she went from paralyzing grief to the “perfect peace of Christ.”

She returned for her next session two weeks later. She reported that she was still feeling peace and a sense of relief... NOTE: It has been over three years since the writing of this section, and she continues to be free from the acute pain of her daughter’s death... She reports the pain of her loss is now gone and replaced with a

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of the mainstream mental health perspective on bereavement, grief, and mourning.

comforting sense of peace.<sup>2</sup>

- C. Truth based loss/sadness/grief residue: Not all emotional pain is coming from lies. After all the lies have been removed, there will often still be truth based loss/sadness/grief *residue* due to the real losses that the person experienced. For example, the person receiving ministry will experience relief from worthlessness when the Lord removes the lie “My father left because I wasn’t smart/pretty/etc. enough for him to want to stay,” but this doesn’t change the sad truth that she went through her childhood without a father. The person receiving ministry will experience freedom from false guilt when the Lord removes the lie “It’s my fault my brother died because I didn’t rescue him,” but this doesn’t change the sad truth that he watched his brother die in a car wreck. The person receiving ministry will experience freedom from fear, powerlessness, and shame when the Lord removes the lies from her sexual abuse memories, but this doesn’t change the sad truth that she was robbed of her innocence. The person receiving ministry will experience freedom from loneliness, abandonment, and despair when the Lord removes the lies from her loss trauma, but this doesn’t change the sad truth that her daughter was killed by a drunk driver.

There are bereavement support groups who teach that this truth-based sadness/loss/grief residue will never resolve completely, and I have heard many individuals concur that this has been their own experience: “I have never been the same after \_\_\_\_’s death,” “I’m not mourning any more, but the pain of the loss has never gone away.” In the process of exploring with Theophostic, Dr. Smith was surprised to discovered that Jesus can miraculously remove even this truth-based loss/sadness/grief residue. See Beyond Tolerable Recovery, pp. 89-91, 152, 165, and 355-358 for additional comments and a brief case study example.

- IV. The grieving process will not move forward to normal resolution if the lies get “stuck:” My perception is that bereaved people get “stuck” in grief when they are unable to metabolize the lies associated with the loss. When the lies are exposed and removed, the “normal” grieving process then begins to move forward again. See Beyond Tolerable Recovery (Fourth edition, 2000) p.168 for additional comments and a brief case study illustrating this principle.

Guardian lies seem to be an especially common cause of the normal grieving process becoming stuck. For example, many combat veterans have described to me how staying in their pain feels like a way to honor the dead – they believe that it’s not okay to receive healing and move on with their lives because then they will no longer be honoring the dead. Others hold on to grief as part of their denial, and believe guardian lies such as “If I let go of

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<sup>2</sup>See Ed Smith, Beyond Tolerable Recovery (Campbellsville, KY: Alathia Publishing, 2000) p.165-168 for additional comments regarding this principle and for the complete text of this case study example.

the grief, then she is *really* gone.” Some hold on to grief as a way of doing penance, and have guardian lies that tell them they don’t deserve to be healed: “It’s my fault – she wouldn’t have died if I hadn’t been drinking. I deserve to suffer. Maybe God will forgive me if I suffer enough.” Guardian lies obviously have to be removed in order to release the person to move forward with appropriate grieving and/or healing.

## V. Summary and conclusions regarding grief, lies, and Theophostic

### Summary of data points regarding grief, lies, and Theophostic

- Bereavement-associated negative cognitions (lies) are widely recognized in the mental health community. For example: “It didn’t happen” and “I can fix it/bring them back” during the denial/protest stage, “I need \_\_\_\_ in order to be happy” and “I can’t live without them” in the searching/yearning stage, “Life has lost it’s meaning,” “I will never be happy again,” and “There’s no point in going on” during the stage of disorganization and despair. Many authors who have studied grief also recognize that bereaved persons frequently experience guilt in association with “I should have \_\_\_\_\_ (done something different) – it’s my fault” negative cognitions. These negative cognitions (lies) and their associated emotions are so common that they are accepted as normal aspects of bereavement and grief.<sup>3</sup>
- It is also widely recognized that the “normal,” successful grieving process includes metabolizing these negative cognitions to the point where the bereaved person can move on to embrace the corresponding truths.<sup>4</sup> Denial and “It didn’t happen” are replaced by acceptance and “He’s gone. I’ll see him in heaven, but not before.” Searching/yearning for the lost loved one and “I can’t live without her” are replaced with beginning new relationships and “There are other people I can love just as much as I loved \_\_\_\_.” Despair and “There’s no point in going on” are replaced with moving on to new ventures and “There are important things the Lord wants me to do.” Guilt and “I should have \_\_\_\_\_” are replaced with self acceptance and “I did the best I could,” or “I have been forgiven.”
- The “normal” grieving process seems to become stuck if the person is unable to metabolize the lies associated with the loss.
- Even if the person has been stuck in grief for years, the “normal” grieving process immediately begins to move forward again (is immediately completed?) when the un-metabolized lies are exposed and resolved.
- The grieving process appears to come to immediate completion when the lies associated with the loss are resolved, even if this is done only weeks after the initial loss.

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<sup>3</sup>See again Kaplan, Sadock, and Grebb, 1994, p.80-86. See also Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994) p.684-5.

<sup>4</sup>Kaplan, Sadock, and Grebb, 1994, p.80-86.

These data points indicate that the *primary* task of the grieving process is to metabolize any lies associated with the loss. This implies that the trouble-shooting tools and techniques for “stuck” Theophostic sessions should be *routinely* effective in helping those who are “stuck” in grief. It also implies that the “normal” grieving process can be *dramatically shortened* if Theophostic is used to expose and resolve the lies associated with the loss. NOTE to all Theophostic practitioners: These data points and conclusions only became focused so clearly as I wrote this essay in August of 2001. Please test these hypotheses and let us know what you find.

## VI. Sample prayers (truth-based grief), practical comments

This prayer is to be used AFTER all the lies have been removed from the traumatic/loss memories. The person will describe feeling sadness/grief/loss, and when you ask “why” questions to clarify the source of the emotions, they will describe *truth-based* thoughts. For example, “I am just thinking how sad it is that I never had a childhood – I lost my childhood because of the sexual abuse,” “I still miss my brother. I was thinking about the things we used to do together that I do by myself now,” or “It makes me sad to think that I will never see my daughter get married, it makes me sad to think that I will never have grandchildren.”

Common problems: 1. The most common reason the person receiving ministry doesn’t receive relief with these prayers is that the pain being addressed is not purely truth-based residue. 2. As with almost every aspect of Theophostic work, guardian lies can block the healing process.

No relief: If the person receiving ministry does not experience relief from their pain, check for deeper/earlier wounds and lies that are being triggered by the target memory/loss, check for remaining lies associated with the target memory/loss, and check for guardian lies.

Guardian lies: As with any Theophostic target, guardian lies can be detected by asking “Are you sure you are ready to be free of this \_\_\_\_\_?” and then investigating any ambivalence. If the person does not experience relief from the grief/pain, you can scan for guardian lies by going through the prayer again and having the person watch for guardian lie type statements that “just come into his/her mind” during the process.

## Sample Prayers, Truth Based Pain/Grief/Sadness

*This prayer is to be used AFTER all the lies have been removed from the trauma/loss memories. Ask "Are you sure you are ready to be free of this loss/sadness/grief?" and investigate any uncertainty for possible guardian lies.*

*To the person receiving ministry: "Focus on whatever is still painful about the loss. Try to stir up the pain/grief/sadness." If necessary, help them find painful details and stir up the painful emotions.*

*To the person receiving ministry: "Let the painful emotions settle in your body. If you can feel the pain in your body, focus on the physical pain and let it become intense."*

*"Lord Jesus, we ask you to please take this burden of pain and grief onto Yourself. We claim the truth that you have already done this on the cross, and ask that you would now release this truth into \_\_\_\_\_'s life."*

*To the person receiving ministry: "Look for Jesus, listen for His voice, try to sense His presence. Watch, follow, listen to whatever he does and/or says. As you are able, describe any thoughts, images, emotions, or physical sensations that are coming to you."*

*When the Lord seems to be done with whatever He is doing, encourage the person to focus on the loss and try to find the pain/grief/sadness. The person will usually discover that they are gone.*

*If the pain is gone, thank the Lord for His grace. If the person receiving ministry does not experience relief from his/her pain:*

- 1. Check for deeper/earlier wounds and lies that are being triggered by the target memory/loss*
- 2. Check for lies associated with the target memory/loss*
- 3. Check for guardian lies.*