

OUR GRIEF AND GOD'S ETERNALITY

Isaiah 40:25-31

Introduction: Coming To Terms With Grief Through Our Eternal God (Mt 5:4; Jn 16:20; Ps 42:5; Eccl 3:4; Ps 6:6)

I. The Eternal God Is More Reliable Than Anything That Wears Out (25; cf. 18-23)

25 To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

II. The Eternal God Is To Be Periscope'd (Lifted Perspective) From The Depth Of Our Temporary Problems (26a)

26a Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?

III. The Eternal God Knows And Sustains Everyone And Everything He Created (26b)

26b He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing. (cf. Col 1:17; Heb 1:3)

IV. The Eternal God Knows All That We Are Going Through From Beginning To End (27)

27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"? (cf. Psalm 39:4-6)

The Concerns About Death

- Death Is Not Part Of God's Original Design (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12)
- Death Is An Enemy To Be Overcome (Heb 2:14-15; 1 Cor 15:55-57)
- Death Is A Victorious Finale In This Lifetime For Those Saved In Christ (Lk 2:29-30; Phil 1:21-24; 2 Tim 4:7; Ps 116:16; Rev 21:4; 2 Cor 5:6-8)
- The Real Questions About Death Are Not Why, When & Who, But How And Where (1 Thess 4:16; Heb 11:13; Ezek 3:18-19; Jn 8:24; Job 14:14; Heb 9:27; Mt 25:46)
- Death Is An Exercise Of Faith (Heb 11:21-22)

V. The Eternal God Never Gets Exhausted Sustaining Us (28a; cf. Dt 33:27)

*28a Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the **everlasting** God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary*

Because God Is Eternal: 1) God knows our future like the past and present (Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8; Isa 46:9-10); 2) God will never tire on us

VI. The Eternal God Has An Infinitely Wise And Purposeful Plan For Us (28b)

28b his understanding is unsearchable.

A. Perspectives On Suffering: The Lord is intimately involved with grief (Isa 53:3; 2 Cor 1:3)

B. Purposes For Suffering

1. To Remind Us Of The Fallen World We Live In (Rom 8:18-25)
2. To Realize We're Dependent Upon God's Deliverance (2 Cor 1:9-10)
3. To Rest In The Sovereignty Of God (Rom 8:28)
4. To Rework Our Character (James 1:4; 2 Cor 4:17; Rom 5:3-4)
5. To Reflect The Strength Of God And His Sufficient Grace Through Our Weaknesses (2 Cor 12:7-10)
6. To Return The Comfort We Received From God To Others Who Hurt (2 Cor 1:3-5)

VII. The Eternal God Gives Us His Strength When Our Strength Weakens (29-30; cf. 1)

29 He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. 30 Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;

VIII. The Eternal God Is Not In A Rush – Wait And Be Renewed (31)

31 but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

A. Wait (cf. 27:14)

B. Renew

Conclusion:

1. **Lift Up Your Eyes** – Ascend from our limited perspective to God's eternal perspective.
2. **Wait On The Lord** – Learn the purposes of our suffering, the sufficiency of His grace and the hope of His glory.
3. **Renew Your Strength** – Depend on His strength when ours has waned.

Discussion:

1. How does the world's view of death bring hopelessness and despair? How does viewing God as the Eternal Creator counter this?
2. What does it mean to "wait on the Lord?" How is this profitable?
3. The solution to depression is perspective, as it is with grief. How does "lifting our eyes" to God's eternal perspective help us in dealing with loss and hurt?
4. What other "false gods" or "idols" do we tend to go to first for comfort and hope during our most hurting times? How is God better than those?
5. When is the appropriate time and best way to share the hope of God's eternal power and perspective with one who is grieving?

OUR GRIEF AND GOD'S ETERNITY

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Introduction: Coming To Terms With Grief Through Our Eternal God

A. Terms Concerning Grief

1. **Grief** - "Grief is defined as intense emotional suffering caused by loss, disaster, misfortune, etc.; acute sorrow, deep sadness. Grief" is derived from Latin verb meaning "to burden"
2. **Mourn** - "to express sorrow"; from Gothic verb meaning "to be anxious", which comes ultimately from Indo-European word meaning "to remember, to think of"
3. **Bereave** - "to leave in a sad or lonely state, as by loss or death"; from Old English word meaning "to deprive or rob"

B. Scriptures Concerning Grief

Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

John 16:20 "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy."

Psalms 42:5 "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

Ecclesiastes 3:4 There is "a time to weep and a time to laugh."

Psalms 6:6 "I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears."

Isaiah 53:4a "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 "The...God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."

C. Grief Is A Periscope Opportunity To See God's Eternality

- "Grief is the human system reacting to the pain of loss, and as such it is an inescapable reaction. Our part as Christians is not to forbid grief or to pretend it is not there, but to maintain humility and practice doxology as we live through it."
(J. I. Packer. *A Grief Sanctified* ((Including Richard Baxter's Timeless Memoir of His Wife's Life and Death)): Through Sorrow to Eternal Hope. Kindle Locations 36-37. Kindle Edition.)
- Bereavement becomes a supreme test of the quality of our faith. Faith, as the divine gift of trust in the triune Creator-Redeemer, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and so as a habit implanted in the Christian heart, is meant to act as our gyroscopic compass throughout life's voyage and our stabilizer in life's storms. However,
(J. I. Packer. *A Grief Sanctified* ((Including Richard Baxter's Timeless Memoir of His Wife's Life and Death)): Through Sorrow to Eternal Hope. Kindle Locations 32-34. Kindle Edition.)

Proposition: Isaiah 40 gives us the program guide of what we see about our Eternal God when we "lift up our eyes" from our sorrow to His glory.

I. The Eternal God Is More Reliable Than Anything That Wears Out (25; cf. 18-23)

25 To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

Historical context:

- 701 BC under Hezekiah's reign
- Assyria is now a threat to Judah
- Negotiations failed
- Judah finds Egypt as a political ally (30:1-7; 31:1-3; 36:6)
- Assyria targeted Judah for joining up with Egypt
- Hezekiah offers money for peace (2 Kings 18:13-16), but they reject it (Isa 33:1)
- Hezekiah trusted the Lord and was victorious over Assyria (36-37)
- But Hezekiah waffled in his faith by being seduced by Babylon (38-39)
 - Downfall: Hezekiah drawn by Babylon
- Turn in Isaiah's 2nd Act: The Prophecy Of Redemption
 - The Salvation of God the Father (ch. 40-48)
 - The Suffering of God the Son (ch. 49-57)
 - The Significance of God the Spirit in the Future Kingdom (ch. 58-66)

25 To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

- God is incomparable!
- *Yahweh* has no comparison among the false gods and idols in Isaiah's time and ours

- God is eternally incomparable – this is the conclusion of Isaiah 40:18-23

Isaiah 40:18-23 18 To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? 19 An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. 20 He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. 21 Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22 It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; 23 who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

- Yet we rely on business plans, education, medicine, psychology, philosophy, prophets, gurus, politicians and luck
- We rely on ourselves in the spirit of Horatio Alger’s “pull up your own bootstrap”
- But who are we before God
- We had a beginning – God does not
- We die – God does not
- He doesn’t learn anything because He knows all things in eternity – We need to learn, but don’t learn well enough
- **When we seek hope in our hopelessness, our Eternal God is uniquely reliable!**
- We relied on a doctor, a surgery, a prescription, a treatment – but death still calls us all
- Rely on Christ who resurrects the dead as He resurrected Himself
- We rely on the false doctrine of “justification by death” – that all who die are automatically in heaven
- We must rely on the true doctrine of “**justification by faith**” – by faith, we rely that Christ’s death on the cross paid for our judgment of sin and His resurrection empowers our eternal life from physical death

II. The Eternal God Is To Be Periscoped (Lifted Perspective) From The Depth Of Our Temporary Problems (26a)

26a Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?

- The Babylonians, who captured Judah, worshipped those stars and heavens
- Zodiac horoscope people rely on their future from those stars
- Why not rely on the God who created them?
- The universe is a *creation*.
- God is **THE CREATOR!**
- **When we are sunken in grief, lift our eyes to our caring Creator!**
- **Lift up our eyes** – not to the stars, not to the horoscope, not to the heavens
- But to the Eternal God who created all those things
- Lift up your eyes – **periscope up!**

- Ie/ As hurt children, we run crying to Mommy and Daddy.
- Ie/ As hurt children of God, we can run to our Abba, Father – our caring Creator.

III. The Eternal God Knows And Sustains Everyone And Everything He Created (26b)

26b He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

- The first part of v. 26 points out the fact that God created out of nothing
- The second part of the verse points out that He perfectly knows and sustains everyone and everything He created.
- God is the One who upholds Creation! (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3)

Colossians 1:17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:3a He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

- **When we grieve a loss, look up to the Creator who sustains a universe and us!**

IV. The Eternal God Knows All That We Are Going Through From Beginning To End (27)

27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"? (cf. Psalm 39:4-6)

- "O Jacob" – 42x in Isaiah, 2/3rds of them are found in chapters 40-66
- "Jacob" – the name before Israel
- When God calls Israel "Jacob" – he is pointing to their past life, their sinful rebellion, their unworthiness to be the Chosen People
 - Jacob means "heel tripper"
- But to also call them "Israel" is to remind them that God gave Jacob a new name after He wrestled with Him (Genesis 32:28), a new appointment
 - Israel means "prince with God" – Israel will rule with God

Genesis 32:28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

- Don't we wrestle with God with our problems in life?
- Don't we wrestle in grief?
- It's ridiculous to make claims like God doesn't know
- We pray sometimes like we're informing God of what He doesn't know
- The questions being posed in v. 27 indicates that we try to reduce God to our level of understanding and capabilities
- We question His knowledge and what He is doing

- Because God is eternal, He knows our plans
- He knows what will happen to a nation like Israel (even America)
- He knows what will happen for each individual
- Our way is **NOT HIDDEN** from the Lord

Psalm 39:4-6 (ESV) 4 "O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! 5 Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah 6 Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!

- **When we grieve a loss and life, we can rest in the sovereignty of God's eternal plan.**

The Concerns About Death

- Paul Tripp: "Death is an emotionally volatile event that is painful in unexpected ways. Death digs up buried memories. It brings some people together and drives others apart. It begins some things and ends others. Death mixes happiness with sadness." (*Grief: Finding Hope Again*, Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2004, p. 8)

1. Death Is Not Part Of God's Original Design (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12)

Genesis 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned

2. Death Is An Enemy To Be Overcome (Heb 2:14-15; 1 Cor 15:55-57)

Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- "The euphoric death of Socrates paraded in Plat's *Crito* is not the idea of death portrayed in the Bible...According to the Bible, life should be viewed as precious." (H. Wayne House, "Die and Let Live", Kindred Spirits, Autumn, 1988, p. 9)

3. Death Is A Victorious Finale In This Lifetime For Those Saved In Christ (Lk 2:29-30; Phil 1:21-24; 2 Tim 4:7; Ps 116:16; Rev 21:4; 2 Cor 5:6-8)

Luke 2:29-30 [Simeon:] Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation

Philippians 1:21-24 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Psalms 116:16 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

Revelation 21:4 He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

4. **The Real Questions About Death Are Not Why, When & Who, But How And Where**

Usual Questions:

- Why am I dying?
- When will I die?
- Who will die?

Scripture's Concern:

a. **How will you die?**

- 1) Dying In Faith (1 Thess 4:16; Heb 11:13)
1 Thessalonians 4:16 *dead in Christ*
Hebrews 11:13 These all *died in faith*
- 2) Dying In Sin (Ezek 3:18-19; Jn 8:24)

Ezekiel 3:18-19 When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die'...and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall *die in his iniquity*.

John 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will *die in your sins*, for if you do not believe that I am He, you will *die in your sins*

b. **Where will you go?** (Job 14:14; Heb 9:27; Mt 25:46)

Job 14:14 If a man dies, shall he live again?

Hebrews 9:27 It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.

Matthew 25:46 These will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

5. **Death Is An Exercise Of Faith** (Heb 11:21-22)

Hebrews 11:21-22 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

V. **The Eternal God Never Gets Exhausted Sustaining Us (28a; cf. Dt 33:27)**

*28a Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the **everlasting** God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary*

Deuteronomy 33:27 The **eternal** God is your refuge, and underneath are the **everlasting** arm

- God is *El Olam* – the everlasting God
- C.S. Lewis “If you picture Time as a straight line along which we have to travel, then you must picture God as the whole page on which the line is drawn.”
- **God is assumed eternal (Gen 1:1; Isa 44:6; Rev 1:8; 21:6)**

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning, God

Isaiah 44:6 I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.

Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

- **“I AM who I AM” = God is always in the present tense**

Biblical Words For “Eternal”/“Everlasting”

(chart from David Hocking’s *The Nature Of God In Plain Language*)

<i>OT word</i>	<i>Usage</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Examples</i>
NETSACH	34x	Completeness	God’s anger (Ps 103:9) God’s presence (Ps 16:11)
AD	48x	Longlasting	God’s guidance (Ps 48:14) God’s throne (Ps 45:6)

QUEDEM	60x	Ancient, Old	Eternal God (Dt 33:27; Hab 1:12)
OREC	93x	Length (no limits)	Believer in God's house (Ps 23:6) God's holiness (Ps 93:5)
TAMID	103x	Continuity or Perpetuity	God's eyes on Israel (Dt 11:12) David's sin (Ps 51:3)
DOR	129x	Dependability	God's covenant (Gen 9:12) God's counsel (Ps 33:11)
OLAM	400x	Everlasting; Unending	God's protection (Dt 33:27) God's lovingkindness (Ps 100:5) God Himself (Gen 21:33; Ps 90:2)

<i>NT Words</i>	<i>Usage</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Examples</i>
AIDIOS	2x	Continuous	God's power (Rom 1:20) Chains of darkness (Jude 6)
AIONIOS	6x	Unending	Eternal life (Jn 3:16) God's covenant (Heb 13:20) God Himself (Rom 16:26)
AION	100x	Endless period of time	God's Word (1 Pt 1:23,25) God's throne (Heb 1:8) God's life (Rev 4:10) Jesus Christ (Heb 13:8)

Because God Is Eternal:

- **God knows our future like the past and present (Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8; Isa 46:9-10)**

Psalm 90:4 For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

2 Peter 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

- J. Carl Laney: "He sees the past and the future as if they are the present. And while human beings are limited in their knowledge by succession of events, God knows no such limitation....Nothing ever takes Him by surprise." (*God*, p. 75)
- We're linear creatures - see things in succession of events

ie/ see parade - from one point on the street, one side of the street, occasionally see down both sides of the street, but can't see around the corner
 - can only see beginning and end of parade as separate events
 - if in Goodyear blimp - get perspective of whole parade
 - see beginning and end of parade at same time

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'

- **God will never tire on us**

- The Akkadian fable of the Tamarisk and the Palm, it states that the "gods became tired" (cited by David Baker in *Isaiah: Zondervan Illustrated Bible Commentary*, Kindle Location 5074)
- In the Erra epic, the warrior god Erra is called out to battle, but 'Erra himself felt as weak as a man short of sleep.'" (ibid)
- In the Gilgamesh Epic, the pagan gods descended upon Utnapishtim's sacrifice 'like flies' because they were desperate without food and drink (ibid)

the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary;

VI. The Eternal God Has An Infinitely Wise And Purposeful Plan For Us (28b)
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28b his understanding is unsearchable.

- Haddon Robinson cites an old Arab proverb: "All sunshine makes a desert."
- God allows suffering in our lives purposefully
- We don't know why immediately – but God's "understanding is unsearchable"

A. Perspectives On Suffering

1. Erroneous Views:
 - a. God has nothing to do with suffering.
 - b. God is loving and powerful and could not allow suffering.
2. Correct View: The Lord is intimately involved with grief

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

B. Purposes For Suffering

1. **To Remind Us Of The Fallen World We Live In** (Rom 8:18-25)

Romans 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in

hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

2. To Realize We're Dependent Upon God's Deliverance (2 Cor 1:9-10)

2 Corinthians 1:9-10 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

3. To Rest In The Sovereignty Of God (Rom 8:28)

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

4. To Rework Our Character (James 1:4; 2 Cor 4:17; Rom 5:3-4)

James 1:4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

Romans 5:3-4 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

6. To Reflect The Strength Of God And His Sufficient Grace Through Our Weaknesses (2 Cor 12:7-10)

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

7. To Return The Comfort We Received From God To Others Who Hurt (2 Cor 1:3-5)

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

- All Comfort Comes From God
- Comfort Is Meant To Be Passed On

VII. The Eternal God Gives Us His Strength When Our Strength Weakens (29-30; cf. 1)

29 He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. 30 Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;

- **Isaiah 40:1** Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
- Comfort = *com* (with) + *forte* (strength)
 - Music – “F” = *forte* (play with strength, even more with *fortissimo*)
 - The NT Greek word for “Comfort” is *parakletos* (called alongside)
- Paul Tautges: “When Isaiah says to us, ‘Be comforted!’ it is not a word of pity but of power. God’s comfort does not weaken us; it strengthens us. God is not indulging us but empowering us.” (*Comfort The Grieving*, Revised & Updated, Zondervan, p. 15)

VIII. The Eternal God Is Not In A Rush – Wait And Be Renewed (31)

31 but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

A. Wait

Psalm 27:14 **Wait** on the LORD; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; **Wait**, I say, on the LORD!

- Rest, refreshment, renewal, and regaining perspective can bring us strength in waiting times
- Athletes need down time to renew their strength (unless they’re on steroids). Pitchers are on a 5 game rotation.
- The waiting time is not about failure. It’s waiting, resting and preparing for the next game.

Sometimes Waiting Processes The Emotional Stages Of Accepting Death.

(Norman Wright - *Crisis Counseling*)

Stage 1: Denial and Isolation

Job 2:13 So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

What we can do: visit, listen, don’t judge, be with them in their loneliness

Stage 2: Anger

Job 7:11 “Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

What we can do: don't judge, don't say you shouldn't feel this way, be a listener, allow honest communication lead to understanding

Stage 3: Bargaining

Psalm 39:13 Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength, Before I go away and am no more."

Isaiah 38:1-3 In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.' " Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Isaiah 38:17-20 Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back. For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth. The living, the living man, he shall praise You, As I do this day; The father shall make known Your truth to the children. "The Lord was ready to save me; Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our life, in the house of the Lord."

What we can do: Be a listener (James 1:19)

Stage 4: Depression

Psalm 42:3 My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?"

Psalm 38:17 For I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually before me.

2 Samuel 18:33 Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!"

- a. Reactive Depression - thinking about past memories
- b. Preparatory Depression - thinking about impending losses

What we can do: don't argue or debate; allow them to pour out sorrow, hold hands and listen, encourage with appropriate Scripture

Stage 5: Acceptance

2 Timothy 4:6-7 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

What we can do: be honest with him, don't give time limits when asks how much time he has left

Grief Work (Norman Wright, *Crisis Counseling*)

- a. Emancipating oneself from the deceased (2 Sam 12:23)
- b. Adjusting to life without the deceased
- c. Making new relationships and attachments

(From Norman Wright, *Crisis Counseling*)

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Emotional Level	Impact	Withdrawal Confusion	Adjustment	Reconstruction Reconciliation
Time	24-36 hours	Days	Weeks	Months
Response	Fight-Flight	Anger-Fear- Guilt-Rage	Positive Thoughts Begin	Hope
Thought	Numbness - Disorientation	Ambiguity - Uncertainty	Problem Solving	Consolidation Of Problem Solving
Direction	Search for Lost Object	Bargaining Detachment	Search For New Object	Reattachment
Search Behavior	Reminiscence	Perplexed	Focused Exploration	Reality Testing
Guidance Needed	Acceptance Of Feeling	Task-Oriented Direction	Support, Spiritual Insights Important Questions: 1. Lord, what have I learned through this experience? 2. Lord, how can I grow through this? 3. Lord, how can you be glorified through this?	Breakthrough, Reinforce, Hope

B. Renew

- Warren Wiersbe: "The word renew means 'to exchange,' as taking off old clothing and putting on new. We exchange our weakness for His power (2 Cor. 12:1–10)." (*Be Comforted - Isaiah*, The BE Series Commentary, p. 132. David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.)
- "Did you know that an eagle knows when a storm is approaching long before it breaks? The eagle will fly to high spot and wait for the winds to come. When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the



storm. While the storm rages below, the eagle is soaring above it. The eagle does not escape the storm; it simply uses the storm to lift it higher. It rises on the winds that bring the storm. When the storms of life come upon us, we can rise above them by setting our minds and our belief toward God. The storms do not have to overcome us; we can allow God's power to lift us above them. God enables us to ride the winds of the storm that bring sickness, tragedy, failure, and disappointment into our lives. We can soar above the storm. Remember, it is not the burdens of life that weigh us down, it is how we handle them." (<http://www.allaboutprayer.org/waiting-on-god.htm>)

Conclusion:

1. **Lift Up Your Eyes** – Ascend from our limited perspective to God's eternal perspective.
2. **Wait On The Lord** – Learn the purposes of our suffering, the sufficiency of His grace and the hope of His glory.
3. **Renew Your Strength** – Depend on His strength when ours has waned.

Discussion:

1. How does the world's view of death bring hopelessness and despair? How does viewing God as the Eternal Creator counter this?
2. What does it mean to "wait on the Lord?" How is this profitable?
3. The solution to depression is perspective, as it is with grief. How does "lifting our eyes" to God's eternal perspective help us in dealing with loss and hurt?
4. What other "false gods" or "idols" do we tend to go to first for comfort and hope during our most hurting times? How is God better than those?
5. When is the appropriate time and best way to share the hope of God's eternal power and perspective with one who is grieving?

Appendix 1: How Can We Comfort The Grieving?

"It's Quiet Uptown" – by Lin-Manuel Miranda
*There are moments that the words don't reach
There is suffering too terrible to name
You hold your child as tight as you can
And push away the unimaginable
The moments when you're in so deep
It feels easier to just swim down*

...
If you see him in the street, walking by himself, talking to himself, have pity
<http://atlanticrecords.com/HamiltonMusic/>

1. **Visit Them (Mt 25:36; James 1:27)**

Matthew 25:36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

James 1:27 "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble."

2. **Be A Listener (James 1:19)**

James 1:19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

3. **Be A Loving Friend (Prov 17:17)**

Proverbs 17:17 "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

- Listen attentively
- Talk normally – don't heighten their anxiety with yours

4. **Offer Your Services (1 Jn 3:17)**

1 John 3:17 "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

5. **Share In The Joy And Sorrow (Rom 12:15)**

Romans 12:15 "Weep with those weep"

6. **Wait For An Appropriate Time To Pray, Read Scripture And Counsel**

Appendix 2: Physical And Emotional Symptoms Of Grief

1. Illness - ulcerative colitis, duodinal ulcers, hypertension, hostility
 - "1 out of 4 patients hospitalized is there because of unresolved grief in his life." (Phil Manly, "Grief and Loss", Grace To You Newsletter)
 - encourage grievers to take good care of their bodies (rest, eating, good diet)

2. Insomnia - 85% of those who have lost a close family member suffers from insomnia

Psalms 4:4 Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.

Psalms 4:8 I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Psalms 127:2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.

3. Panic - sudden or severe overpowering fright

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

1 Peter 5:7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Appendix 3: Understanding How To Control Grief (Les Carter, *Mind Over Emotions*)

A. Allow For Unpredictable Changes In Emotions

B. Turn Your Eyes Toward God

Psalm 1:1-2 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.

Jeremiah 33:2 "Thus says the Lord who made it, the Lord who formed it to establish it (the Lord is His name):

Isaiah 40:28-29 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.

C. Hold On To Hope And Look Forward To The Future

Psalm 62:5-6 My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Psalm 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

D. Stay In Touch With Routine Matters

Avoid two extremes:

1. Block out feelings to pretend everything is fine
2. Being totally consumed with emotions that nothing else matters

Appendix 4: Understanding Practical Assistance To The Bereaved

(From Phil Manly, "How To Assist Those In Grief", Parts I & II, Grace To You Newsletter)

- A. Get in contact with the bereaved person or someone close to him/her as soon as possible by telephone. Find out how to be of help and when you can visit.
- B. Support the bereaved with your attendance at the memorial service.
- C. Let your words be few when you see the bereaved initially. A brief embrace and a few words of affection with feeling may be all that is necessary. A simple and honest, "I'm sorry" or "we're praying for you" are always appropriate.
- D. Easy answers and cliches should be avoided.
 - Things not to say:**
 - "You'll be surprised at how quickly you'll adjust to your new way of life."
 - "You're taking this too hard"
 - "Just think of all the blessings you still have"
- E. Be a good listener.
- F. Accept the griever where he/she is, not expecting immediate correct thinking. Accept emotions, crying. If angry at God, we don't need to defend Him. Your patience here will afford you opportunity to correct his misconceptions later.
- G. Attend to practical matters.
- H. **Suggestions:** (from M. Heavilin, "When You Don't Know What To Say", Disciple Journal, Issue 60,1990)
 - *Call the pastor*
 - *Call the relatives*
 - *Answer the phone*
 - *Receive visitors*
 - *Call the family attorney*
 - *Locate any existing will*
 - *Call insurance companies*
 - *Locate all insurance policies and bank accounts*
 - *Check on existing retirement funds*
 - *Notify Social Security*
 - *Help write an obituary*
 - *Help plan the funeral*
 - *Go with the bereaved to the mortuary and cemetery*
 - *Provide a guest book for the home*
 - *Find someone to provide family meals*
 - *Have someone record food and flowers brought to the home*
 - *Clean the house*
 - *Mow the lawn*
- I. Church families should take turns caring for the bereaved family.
- J. Do not attempt to tell the bereaved how he/she feels. Don't say "I know how you feel".
- K. Accept silence. Try not to force conversation; often the mourner does not feel like talking. Allow him/her to take the lead, keeping in mind that silence is better than aimless chatter. Avoid talking to others about the bereaved in his/her presence. Prolonged discussion of non-important subject matter may be resented, especially if done purposely to distract the mourner.
- L. Encourage the postponement of major decisions or radical changes in life-style until after the period of intense grief. Often those in grief make haste decisions that they later regret. (ie/

disposing of property quickly, dropping supportive friends, changing lost-established patterns, move to another state)

- M. Write a letter sharing your love and memories of the one who died.
- N. Allow the "work of grief" to be done. Do not hide clothing, pictures, or other items of the deceased from the griever. Do not criticize seemingly morbid behavior (ie/ repeatedly visit accident site, sleep with husband's pajama's as a pillow, etc.)
- O. Comfort children in the family. Do not assume that a seemingly calm child is not sorrowing. Children should not be shielded from the grieving of others.
- P. In time, gently draw the mourner into quiet, outside activities.
- Q. Assure the bereaved of your personal prayer support and the church's support.
- R. Some grieving persons appreciate books or tapes dealing with dying and grief, while others do not. Be sensitive.
- S. Help the family face the future. (ie/ business & financial matters)
- T. Be yourself and sow your concern in your own way and words. Keep in touch. Be available.
- U. Contact the family on the first anniversary of the death. During the first year, birthdays and holidays can be very traumatic.
- V. Be sensitive to the griever's sense of regret.

Appendix 5: Understanding The Surviving And Rebuilding Process

(From Norman Wright, *Crisis Counseling*)

A. Bridging The Past – Releasing ties, accepting the fact of death

- many widow(er)s make funeral and household decisions as if spouse is still there
- this process involves translating shared experiences into memories
- learn to use the "I" in place of "we"

B. Living With The Present – Role changes

- needs to be a shift in family structure
- children need to support parent and vice versa
- spouse should not attempt to fill the role of deceased (become father & mother)
- child should not assume role of parent (become father or mother)
- other family members may fill some vacant roles, but not completely
- counsel patience in making big decisions (moving, etc)
- give up old habits and establish new ones
- shop alone, take a job, redecorate the house

C. Finding A Path Into The Future – Rebuilding

- widow finds stability in functioning and is able to reorganize without spouse
- develops new relationships (not to replace spouse, nor to ease financial strains, nor to find a parent for children, nor to find comfort or companionship)

Appendix 6: Understanding How Children Grieve

(Doris Sanford, "Grief Comes In All Sizes", Discipleship Journal, Issue 52, 1989; Wright, *Crisis Counseling*)

1. The child must be told of the death immediately. Explain what death means. Avoid phrases like "going to sleep", "passed away", "resting", "going away"
2. Talk about heaven and use Scriptures to describe it.

3. Be sensitive to the feelings and inner turmoil of the child. Children respond to grief differently: some cry, some don't, some express grief physically (beating, pounding, running it out)
 - Any child over age 2 needs assistance to understand what death means
 - The younger the child, the more likely they will try to deny death
 - A Child over 5 may have fantasies for up to a week about the person's returning; under 5 may have them much longer
 - It is hard for a child to accept it all at once (ie/ parent may not be there to play with them, tuck them in, etc.)
 - Guilt is stronger in child's mourning than in adult
 - Despair is greater in a child also
 - Some respond in rebellion or withdrawal
 - The younger the child, the more important it is that a substitute parent is available to spend time with them
4. A child should not be sent away immediately following death - it could panic the child, wonder if they ever return, feel punished for death of family member. Try to maintain a familiar structure.
5. Parents should not hide feelings from children.
6. Involve the child in funeral planning. Let him/her feel productive. You may appoint an "advocate" who can help explain what is going on and help them from being lost in the shuffle.