

**FREE TO GRIEVE: PASTOR WILLIAM A. LEE, JR., VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH OF GOD-
CLASS 2 "THE NATURE OF LOSS, STEP ONE- SHOCK"**

For many persons, the loss occasioned by death is the only loss worthy of significant attention; but the losses to which we do not pay attention or heed to may have a more profound impact on us in the long run. As a matter of fact, how we handle early losses may dictate how we handle and respond to the death of loved ones.

Question: Can you recall your earliest loss and how you responded?

The losses that we experience throughout life can be divided into six major types, each with its own specific meanings. People may minimize the impact of one or more types of loss but they all deserve recognition and careful discussions.

SIX MAJOR TYPES OF LOSS

1. MATERIAL LOSS- Material loss is the loss of a physical object or of familiar surroundings to which one has an important attachment. Frequently, material loss is the first loss a child is consciously aware of.

Job 1:14-15 One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, 15 and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

2. RELATIONSHIP LOSS- The ending of opportunities to relate oneself to, talk with, share experience with, make love to, touch, settle issues with, fight with and otherwise be emotional and/or be in the physical presence of a particular other human being.

Job 1:14

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

3. INTRA-PSYCHIC LOSS- the experience of losing an emotionally important image of oneself, losing the possibilities of "what might have been," abandonment of plans for a particular future, the dying of a dream. Although often related to external experiences, it is itself an entirely inward experience.

RUTH 1:3-4

3 Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

Ruth 1:6-14

6 When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. **7** With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. **8** Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. **9** May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud **10** and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!" 14 At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

4. **FUNCTIONAL LOSS**- Powerful grief can be evoked when we lose some of the muscular or neurological functions of the body; we call this functional loss. It often carries with it the loss of autonomy.

2 Samuel 4:4

4 (Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became disabled. His name was Mephibosheth.)

2 Samuel 9:3-4

3 The king asked, "Is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?" Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is lame in both feet." 4 "Where is he?" the king asked. Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."

5. **ROLE LOSS**- The loss of a specific social role or of one's accustomed place in a social network.

2 Chronicles 20:117-21

And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God. 19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar.

20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. 21 And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

6. **SYSTEMIC LOSS**- the loss of a system in which we are accustomed to functioning in. (family, church, work)

Ezra 3:11-12

11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

GRIEF- The normal but bewildering cluster of ordinary human emotions arising in response to a significant loss, intensified and complicated by the relationship to the person or the object of loss. Grief is the inevitable response to a significant loss; there is no loss without grief. It is possible, however, not to grieve. One may choose not to express the feelings that accompany loss. When that happens, grieving is delayed and the grief is stored up with unfortunate consequences.

THE GOAL- Grieving is a process in which the deep feelings aroused by the loss are acknowledged and relatively fully expressed. It is a process by which our attachment to the lost person or object are not entirely given up, but are sufficiently altered to permit the grieving person to admit the reality of the loss and then to live without constant reference to it.

In successful grieving, the mourner gradually becomes able to make attachments and investments in other persons and things once again.

For the person of faith, grieving is a process in which a belief system, significantly challenged or altered by loss, is restored.

STEP 1. SHOCK: God has so made us that we can somehow bear pain and sorrow and even tragedy. However, when the sorrow is overwhelming, we are sometimes temporarily anesthetized in response to a tragic experience. It is a temporary escape from reality. As long as it is temporary it is good. If the person stay in that dreamworld for too long it then becomes unhealthy. In the beginning, shock and numbness are necessary and welcome. Shock is the initial stage of grief. In the beginning, shock and numbness are necessary and welcome. Shock is the initial stage of grief. The news overwhelms the emotions and instead of shutting down completely, the emotional system pauses as if it is to “feel nothing” for a period of time. It allows us to receive the devastating news and still function. It carries us through the first agonizing minutes until we can begin to absorb the horrendous news. An organism faced with the shock of a traumatic loss usually protects itself from the full impact of the loss by entering into a period of numbness.

Shock is often manifested in all or some of the following ways.

- * The absence of feeling
- * Hot flashes
- * Cold sweats
- * Insomnia
- * tightness in the Chest
- * rapid breathing
- * A muting of affect
- * An insistence that the loss has not actually occurred.
- * Aimless wondering about
- * Loss of appetite
- * Nausea
- * Detachment and disorientation

We tend to equate faith with stoical attitude, not with tears.

The period of numbness may last for hours or days. If there are supportive people available, the bereaved are likely to remain numb only as long as they absolutely need to.

HOW DO WE HELP DURING THIS STAGE?

- * **LET THEM KEEP FAIRLY BUSY**
- * **ALLOW THEM TO CARRY ON THEIR USUAL ACTIVITIES**
- * **BE SUPPORTIVE BUT DON'T TAKE OVER (SURGERY PATIENTS)**
- * **ALLOW FOR EMOTIONAL CATHARSIS AND INCONSISTENCY**

THE SOONER THE PERSON HAS TO DEAL WITH THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS AND MAKE DECISIONS AGAIN, THE BETTER. BE NEAR THE PERSON AND AVAILABLE IF EVERYTHING BREAKS DOWN BUT NORMALLY DO NOT TAKE AWAY FROM HIM THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF DOING EVERYTHING HE/SHE CAN DO FOR THEMSELVES. THIS IS WHAT WILL HELP A PERSON MOST TO COME OUT OF THE TRANCE AND GET ON WITH THE WORK OF GRIEF.

EVEN THOUGH A PERSON DOES COME OUT OF THE INITIAL SHOCK, HE WILL UNDOUBTABLY EXPERIENCE TIMES IN THE SUCCEEDING DAYS AND MONTHS WHEN THE UNREALITY OF THE LOSS COMES OVER HIM. THE BIGGEST HURDLE IS ACCEPTING IT EMOTIONALLY.