

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS – Faith Church 2025 Women’s retreat.
September 6, 2025
BREAKOUT: GRIEF - Visitor—Not a Permanent Resident
Kitty Chappell

Thank you for sharing your time with us at this workshop today. Let us open this special time with prayer.

PRAYER

I want to begin by sharing with you one of my favorite videos about grief. Sorry I’m not set up to show you this brief little video but I can describe it.

The scene is a cemetery. An older man is kneeling by a tombstone sobbing his heart out. Two young men walking nearby are touched by this lonely figure, deep in grief. The man sobs and says aloud “Why, oh why, did you have to die? Life for me was wonderful when you were alive! I was happy, full of joy and looked forward to every day! Because you died, I have nothing to look forward to. Every day is miserable! Oh, why did you have to die?”

As he knelt there crying softly, they walked quietly up to him and wanting to comfort him, one of them said, “We are so sorry for your loss, sir. Tell us, was it your wife who passed?” The old man sighed and replied, “No, it was my wife’s first husband.”

Though this is a humorous little video, we know that death is no laughing matter.

As we know, there are all types of grief, but our focus today will deal with grief and emotions involving death.

After I accepted this assignment, Old Slew Foot, Satan, started throwing doubts at me.

“What credentials do you have giving you authority to even approach this topic? You don’t have an MD, PHD, no training or license in grief counselling. You’ve never read one book about grief or even attended one grief share session! What makes you think you have anything of value to offer on this subject?”

“I’m wondering about that, too, Satan. I better ask my Lord about this.”

So, I did, this was His answer.

“Experience is what you have, my child. Experience with ME in multiple areas of grief involving death, but each a successful experience using My power, My strength and My Word.” Then He reminded me.

1. After your son was born, you lost three precious babies in miscarriage, one a baby girl when you were almost six months pregnant, that required a burial.
2. You lost two grandbabies, that you know of, due to abortions.
3. You lost your mother due to a heart attack.

4. You lost your father due to his suicide, after he murdered his second wife.
5. You lost your only baby sister due to cancer.
6. You lost your husband, the love of your life and best friend, after 47 years of marriage.
7. Each year you lose another friend or relative.

And with each loss, you came to Me, the Mighty Counsellor, and gave me your broken heart, without questions, demands, complaints, or self-pity and through it all I made you what you are today. A strong daughter of the King. Yes, you **can** speak on this subject and with authority!”

But I want to make it clear, I am not speaking to you today as the voice of authority on how you or anyone should handle grief. I speak with authority only on how God helps me handle mine..

WHAT DOES GRIEF LOOK LIKE?

Each of us has pictures of what grief looks like, based upon our personal experiences.

My earliest picture involving grief and death was when I was 12 years old. It was of my beloved maternal grandfather lying in his casket in the living room of their farmhouse in Ark. I didn't fully grasp death, but I was told grandpa had gone to heaven and I was sad because I would miss him.

I was aware of lots of loving people coming in, speaking and crying softly, hugging a lot as they brought in delicious smelling food.

As the years passed, I gained more pictures of death, some harsh and unkind. I heard comments such as “Well, it's obvious Helen didn't care a whit about poor Harry! We didn't see her shed one tear at his funeral! Now, poor Jane, when her Jim died, she cried day and night for over a year! She really loved him!”

My young mind concluded that a person's love for someone who died was measured by the loudness and length of their grief.

The truth is, God created each of us in His image, beautiful, rare individuals, as unique as snowflakes, no two of us are alike. We don't grieve the same way or the same length of time.

Nor does every death require grief because all deaths do not involve the same circumstances. Sometimes death is sudden, unexpected and knocks the breath out of us, especially if that person is young, or it is a violent death. Other times death is a blessing, a release, freeing a loved one from the chains of pain that no drug can ever ease, and sometimes it is just a matter of a person passing on—the way we would all like to—peacefully in our sleep.

Reminds me of a poster I saw at a truck stop that said, “When I die, I want to go peacefully in my sleep like my 95-year-old grandfather. Not screaming hysterically like the four passengers

in his car.”

WHAT DOES THE LORD SAY ABOUT GRIEF to those of us who love Him?

1 Thessalonians 4:13 • But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”^[a]

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And what is our victory? The resurrection where Jesus conquered death and we don’t have to fear death or grieve forever!

Psalm 30:5

Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

In John 16:21,22 Jesus compares death to labor pains:

A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² So with you: Now is your time of grief, but . . . you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.”

DEATH OF MY HUSBAND JERRY— I only had a week’s notice that my husband Jerry was going to die.

At that time, things were looking good. Five years earlier, after Jerry had been diagnosed with non-Hodgkins Lymphoma, he had undergone radiation and chemotherapy with very few side effects, but now was cancer-free. Life was good. Jerry had designed a single-story home he wanted to build because his bad knees couldn’t handle the large two-story we were in, and we were looking at different pieces of property to build it on.

But as we were making plans, one day Jerry had a sudden congestive heart failure and was hospitalized. That first week he did well, the hospital planned to discharge him, and we made plans to go look at some property.

Suddenly, his cancer spread throughout his body, and a week later, he was gone.

What do you do with the grief that almost overwhelms you when the love of your life, and the best friend you’ve ever had for almost half a century is suddenly gone—and you are 70 years

old with no family members in your state to lean on? Oh, you rejoice that you will see him again in heaven but what do you do until then? Do you even want to hang around this old earth without him?

After leaving Jerry's lifeless form at the hospital and opening the door to our home, grief doubled up its fists and hit me in the pit of my stomach when I saw Jerry's recliner. I began sobbing and said aloud to an empty room, "Each time I look at that chair, my heart is going to split into because I'll know I'll never see him in it again!"

The room was empty, but my heavenly Father heard me, for He remembered my prayer to him five years earlier when I first began this cancer journey with Jerry. I would have made a good Boy Scout because I like to be prepared, as well as I can for anything. and I wanted to prepare myself should Jerry go to heaven before I did.

"I know it will hurt, Lord, but could you help me by not letting it hurt so bad? I don't want to grieve so hard that I have a stroke like my elderly friend Joyce had when her husband passed. So, if and when that time comes could you ease my pain just a little so I can bear it without damaging my health?" My Heavenly Father remembered what I had asked him years before, and as clear as day, I heard in my mind these words:

"No, your heart won't split in two! Because this is what I want you to do. When you feel your grief will rip your heart apart again, I want you to raise your eyes to heaven and through your tears, smile and say, 'Honey, I am SO happy for you! You have escaped the Tempter's snare! Never again will you feel pain or be tempted. You are FREE and I wouldn't wish you back here again on this sad earth for ten seconds!'

"Then" He said, "I want you to **always focus on where Jerry IS, not where he ISN'T!**"

What an amazing gift He had just given me! It was brilliant! Why? Because dwelling on where Jerry **is** and not on where he **isn't** prevented self-pity which encourages prolonged misery. Each time I faced difficulty, and there were many I had to face as a new widow, I would have been handicapped by self-pity, focusing only on me and not the joy my Jerry was experiencing.

"Oh, poor me, if only Jerry were here I wouldn't have to do this. I could ask him, he would know what to do . . . If only he were here . . ."

INSTEAD, grabbing the gift God gave me, focusing on where Jerry IS, enabled me to let him go. Because he was gone, that realization pushed me straight into the strong arms of Jesus. I was not alone. Jesus is the One I would depend upon, the one whose guidance I would seek.

OKAY, THAT SOUNDS GOOD but what does focusing on where our loved one **IS** look like? Jerry was a builder; he loved to create and build things.

So, when pain stabbed my heart, I pictured Jerry in heaven actually talking with people we've only read about, such as Noah. I could just see him asking Noah, for the umpteenth time, how he designed specific parts of the ark. Such as how did he design an air flow system that would prevent them all from suffocating from all of the animal poop smells?

I pictured him talking to the builders of the temple and maybe asking if he could be involved in helping design the New Jerusalem.

Dwelling on where Jerry is helped me to not miss him so much. Did I hurt? Of course. But the pain didn't damage me and its presence was shortened.

One thing you will never hear me say is, "Oh, how I still miss my Jerry." **I do not miss him!** Not because I didn't love Jerry, but because I let him go and my life is so full of the Lord's presence. Grief was just a needed temporary visitor.

WE SHOULDN'T DWELL ON CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH

When Jesus compared death to labor pains in John 16, this comparison helps us see that death and circumstances leading to it are merely labor pains pushing that loved one into his new world where Jesus reigns. What it boils down to is it doesn't matter how sick, how long, or painful the process is, those were labor pains. And we mothers know some labor pains are harder and longer than others.

Those of us who have given birth are familiar with labor pains but we also know the other side of them is the joy of birth. And each year we don't weep and wail because of the labor pains we endured on that date, we rejoice and give thanks because our loved one arrived on that date. So, too, even though the day of a loved one's death is sad, we don't need to invite grief back in and relive the labor pains that preceded their arrival in heaven.

This also helps us not dwell on the circumstances involving someone's death should it be a violent one—an ugly and painful death committed by a deranged evil person or group. Satan delights in having us imagine and relive the horrors that loved one or friend may have experienced before death, but we shouldn't, nor do we have to.

Satan tried that with me when I grieved over a friend who died by violent circumstances, but I rejected him. "I'm not going there, Satan! The terrifying circumstances of her death were temporary, just labor pains that pushed her into heaven and into the arms of Jesus. Where you can never touch her! You better worry about yourself because you are going to fry in hell forever!" I love reminding him of that! Would you hang around someone who talked to you like that? Well, neither will Satan!

James 4:7 tells us to ***"Draw close to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you."***

In the 4th Chapter of Philippians, the Apostle Paul tells us to dwell on positive things that are wholesome and lovely. Dwelling on the painful way someone died is neither wholesome nor lovely.

11 Corinthians 10:5 says “***we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*** We **CAN** control what we think! That is one of the benefits of being created in the image of God.

WHAT IS THE WORLD’S VIEW OF GRIEF?

Prolonged public displays of grief is very important in some cultures. So much so that professional mourners, known as moirologists, hired by family members to make elaborate demonstrations of grief at funerals, is traced as far back as Christ’s day in Egypt, China, and the Middle East. The wealthier the family, the more mourners they could hire. Today professional mourners are still hired in China, India and the UK. It was the professional mourners who laughed at Jesus, when He said Lazarus was only sleeping just before he raised him to life.

I see evidence of this tendency to promote grief in today’s society. Sadly, I’ve read it in Christian literature. In one book, I was stunned by a pastor’s statement when he wrote “You will never stop grieving for that loved one. You will grieve forever!” I was so angry!

Just because something is spoken by a Christian or written in a Christian book does not mean it is always scriptural. I recognized that statement, which I had heard often, as a lie from the pits of hell by Satan who is **still upset over the resurrection! That’s the biggest thorn in his demonic flesh!** He pushes this lie and unthinking, sincere people parrot it without ever questioning it. Then others try to live up to the same lie.

We see it lived out on social media where people (many who are Christians) spread their grief on Facebook openly 10, 15, 20 years after the loss of a loved one, saying they miss them terribly, how they grieve every day of their lives, and will miss them forever! Inviting again, expressions of sympathy over the ongoing grief for that loved one. After all, that’s what they’ve been told! And if they really loved that person, then they must live out the lie. Right?

I’m not saying we should suck it up and not grieve, healthy grieving is beneficial and a needed release. What I am saying is that we should not encourage excessive and prolonged grief, it isn’t healthy..

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 tells us:

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.

Prolonged grieving can lead to chronic stress, which latest research shows has been linked to immune system dysregulation and has been known to even lead to the onset of some autoimmune diseases such as Sjögren's.

Negative thoughts, be it grief, hate, anger or whatever, releases toxins into our bloodstream and should be avoided at all costs so as not to harm our living temple of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION: WHAT KIND OF PICTURE about Jesus and death does the idea that we will grieve forever paint for a lost and hurting world?

We tell our **LOST** loved ones and friends that Jesus loves them, how He will forgive them for every sin they ever committed, how He came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly, how He promised He would **NEVER** leave them or forsake them, no matter how difficult life gets, and we **present scriptures to back up His every promise!**

But when it comes to the subject of death, what pictures do our actions and words paint? Too often it's a false one. "Death of a loved one?" we say, "sorry, Jesus can't help you with that one! Let's face it, you're just going to have to suffer for the rest of your life! You'll **NEVER** stop grieving!"

What happened to the part about Jesus coming that we might have life and have it more abundantly? Where is the abundant living in "you'll grieve forever"?

Phil. 1:27 - ***Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.***

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? Simply put, no matter what kind of circumstance I find myself in, and that includes death, I am to be a witness of Christ's unlimited power and love. Too often, in our pain instead of remembering that we are called to be a witness, we act like we're the prosecutor. We do that by demanding of God, **WHY?**

WE PUT GOD ON THE STAND when we ask Him the question "WHY?" - "God, you are all powerful so **WHY** did you allow this to happen? I **NEED** an explanation or I'm going to be angry at you, I might even stop following you! I'm not sure I can trust you! You're not living up to my expectations!"

AND SATAN SMILES.

He smiles because we've just used his favorite tool. **WHY, LORD?** The **WHY** question distracts us from realizing who we are, **children of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and in our spiritual DNA dwells the same supernatural power that raised Jesus from the dead!**

Instead of being a witness and manifesting Christ's power within us, we act like a victim bullied

by a God who says He loves us and then abandons us, including the loved one we lost. And our grief is prolonged, going on and on.

A BETTER QUESTION TO ASK IS ‘HOW?’ -

“**HOW** can I honor you, Lord, during this horrific dark stretch of my journey? My heart is breaking, and my brain is foggy, please hold me together, give me grace and wisdom so I can honor you even though I don’t understand.”

HOW, not WHY will help us to live out who we are, because it puts Christ back on the throne where He will be honored, not interrogated!

Only three months following my husband’s death, in the midst of my grief, my heart was dealt another blow when I learned that our young business partner, whom we loved like a son, was trying to steal my half of our glass contracting business from me.

With no family nearby for support, I was forced to get an attorney and engage in a two-year battle, just to protect my half of the business assets my husband had worked so hard for. During that first year I was forced to sell our now too large home because my Social Security couldn’t cover its mortgage payments and living expenses, too.

SATAN TRIED TO TEMPT ME with this **WHY** question but I rejected it and chose **HOW?**

I am still astonished at the wisdom and business savvy God gave me I needed at that time and the ability to exhibit sincere agape love toward someone trying to destroy me, evident to all the unsaved employees in that business as well as my Jewish attorney. Asking **HOW** empowered me to conduct myself in a manner that amazed everyone, especially me! And maybe, God!

AVOIDED STAGES OF GRIEF - Because I concentrated on how I could honor the Lord during my grief and other struggles, I never went through the commonly recognized stages of grief, as outlined in the **Kübler-Ross model**, which are **denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance**. I bypassed every one of those negative stages accepted as a normal role model and went straight to acceptance.

I want to point out one important fact: those negative stages, considered normal, **are carnal, NOT SPIRITUAL**. As born-again believers we do not **HAVE** to go through these stages just because we are human. No more than do we have to commit all kinds of sins like adultery, burglary, or murder just because they are done every day by humans.

I don’t believe our Lord wants us to be in denial, or be angry at Him, or attempt to bargain with Him against reality, and suffer deep depression. He wants us to love and trust Him in every situation, including death. In 2 Cor. 12:9 God promised: “**My grace is sufficient for you.**”

Does He understand our carnal nature? Of course, but that is not His preference simply because

it's commonly given into.

Did I grieve? Of course! My heart hurt so bad and for a while it didn't even know where it belonged, since Jerry was no longer a part of it. But I clung to God's promises, and He kept every one of them!

QUESTION: HOW CAN WE NOT GRIEVE FOREVER if the loved one was lost?

When a loved one or friend dies without ever giving evidence that they were born again, we know, according to scripture, that they will be separated from God throughout eternity. And that breaks our heart. How can we ever stop grieving?

What I do to deal with that kind of grief is give the situation to my Lord and trust in the knowledge that because He loved that person enough to die for him, I can be certain He will send His Spirit to him during his last breath to try and woo him to Himself. And just maybe that person repented and trusted the Lord with his last breath, just as the thief did on the cross. I have an idea we may be surprised to see some people in heaven!

Now we can't rely on that possibility for we must make sure that we tell everyone we know about their need of the Lord **before** their last breath and pray for them but trust the Lord with the results.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER EMOTIONS involving death other than grief, like **guilt and anger?**

Remember, Satan **HATES the resurrection** and always uses death to push added burdens on us. Too often, we make it easy for him by refusing to make any serious attempts to reconcile with estranged family members and friends while we are all still alive. Almost without fail, every time I mentor someone, they speak of being estranged from family members.

In Matthew 5:9 Jesus tells us “***Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called Sons of God.*** We need to forgive people or ask forgiveness without delay. Too many of God's children would rather be “right” than to be righteous and their pride prevents them from having humility and making the first move. We should do everything we can to sincerely reconcile with others. **Always praying before our attempts for without prayer, we will fail.** They may not respond as we hoped, but we will not suffer guilt after their death because we never tried.

SATAN OFFERS GUILT IN MANY PACKAGES - I have several friends who were unable to cry over the death of a loved one. In each case, the deceased had suffered from a terminal condition that either caused excruciating pain uncontrollable by drugs, or their body deteriorated because their mind was gone.

For those loved ones, death was a release, they were now free and with their Savior! **That was cause for joy, not tears!** Jealous of their peace, Satan tried to burden my friends with guilt because they had no tears. But each one rejected Satan's guilt gift, saying "no, thank you!"

MY LITTLE SISTER'S DEATH – When my little sister Chris died, my grief was intensified by a bitter anger. Our mother was already in heaven, and Chris was like a daughter to me. I knew she had gone to a number of doctors with symptoms for over a year before finally diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. None of the doctors in their small Texas town paid any attention to her complaints, some inferred that it was "all in her head", didn't investigate, run tests, or do anything until it was too late. Only a little more than a month after her diagnosis, she died in excruciating pain. So, added to my grief was bitter anger at all of those bungling doctors!

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THAT KIND OF ANGER? Anger that prolongs your grief and fills you with a seething need for some kind of justice that you know will never happen?

Those were familiar unwanted feelings for long ago I once had them for my dad, and I did not want to endure their toxicity again. I knew, from experience, that the only way I could rid myself of that anger was to forgive each of those doctors whom I had never met.

Weak, and in the midst of my grief, I couldn't do that. So again, I asked the Lord for help. He reminded me of what a pastor said in Ruidoso Downs, NM after I finished speaking in his church years before. Tears streaming down his face he said, "When I invited Kitty to speak to our church tonight, I knew there was someone here who needed her message of forgiveness. **I just didn't know it was me!**"

"I have been blaming my mother's doctor for her death. But there was no strong evidence to warrant a lawsuit, and it was eating me alive. Tonight, even as Kitty spoke, I forgave that doctor, and thank God, I'm free!"

I hadn't thought of his comments in years! Don't you love how our Lord brings things to mind just when we need them? I forgave those doctors and freed of my anger, I could rejoice that my little sister was free of pain in heaven and asking her own questions of everyone.

So, the good news is, with our Heavenly Father's help, we don't have to grieve forever! And grief doesn't have to damage us. No matter what other emotions attack us, anger or guilt—even if we **are** guilty of neglect or thoughtlessness—Christ will forgive us if we ask. He doesn't want us to carry those burdens. And we certainly don't have to fear death!

We are going to break now for group discussions. I have some more handouts.

GRIEF: A visitor—Not a permanent resident

By Kitty Chappell

September 6, 2025

WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT GRIEF:

Psalm 30:5 Weeping may remain for a _____, but
rejoicing comes in the _____.

In John 16:21, 22 Jesus compares grief to _____
_____ which merely push
_____ us into our new eternal dwelling place.

God told Kitty to focus on where Jerry _____, not where
he _____.

What were the advantages of doing that?

WHAT THE WORLD SAYS ABOUT GRIEF:

The longer you _____ for someone, the greater your
_____.
You will _____ forever.

DEATH: 1 Cor. 15:55-57

Because of the _____ death has lost its
_____.

Satan has never gotten over the _____ because
that is where Christ defeated him.

QUESTIONS REGARDING DEATH AND ITS CIRCUMSTANCES:

_____ is a much better question to ask of God than

_____ puts Jesus on the witness stand

_____ places Jesus on the throne

BONUS PASSOUTS: Kitty's bookmark poem, "When I Hurt,
Lord"

Kitty's poem: "Death Notice"

Death Notice

Oh, Death, I do not fear you,
Nor do I cringe at the thought of your inevitability—
For I know who you are!

You are but a misty veil through which I will one day walk
As I enter into that radiant presence
Of my Redeemer—your Captor—
Who suffered long ago on a lonely hill,
While evil men jeered and good men cried.

You thought you had won
As He yielded Himself to you those three days.
But it was then that He broke your chains of darkness
And set your captives free!

Why should I fear the conquered
When I am loved by the conqueror?
His love shattered your blackness and brightens my path
To a destination that eludes you.

Therefore, death, you are neither a threat
Nor a stumbling block to my purpose for being.

Don't rattle your sounds at me!
Save them for those who have cause to fear—
The blind who wander about
Beneath the weight of broken chains—
Because they don't see the light.

One day I will step through you,
But will not become a part of you,
Because you are a mere steppingstone
That will lead me to the outstretched hand
Of the King of Kings,
And the Lord of Lords
Who awaits my arrival.
When I go
It will be at His bidding
—not yours.

—Kitty Chappell – ©1988

Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave, where is thy victory?
—1 Corinthians 15:55