



# *Beauty for Ashes*

*"...He will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair." ~ Isaiah 61:3*

*Written by Kay West*

*Revised and presented by  
Jesus Cares Ministries*





*The Bible speaks the language of grief  
fluently...*

## ***Bible Descriptions of Loss***

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?	Psalm 22:1 (GW)
I cry out day by day, but you do not answer...I find no rest	Psalm 22:2 (GW)
Humiliation has covered my face	Psalm 69:7 (GW)
My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer	Psalm 32:4 (NIV)
Forgotten as though I were dead	Psalm 31:12 (NIV)
I have become like broken pottery	Psalm 31:12 (NIV)
My bones grow weak	Psalm 31:10 (NIV)
Tears blur my eyes. My body and my soul are withering away	Psalm 31:9 (NLT)
My strength fails	Psalm 31:10 (NIV)
I am cut off from before your eyes	Psalm 31:22 (NKJV)
I am desolate & afflicted	Psalm 25:16 (NKJV)
The troubles of my heart are growing and growing	Psalm 25:17 (The Complete Jewish Bible)
My heart is like wax, melting within me	Psalm 22:14 (NLT)
My guilt has overwhelmed me	Psalm 38:4 (NIV)
I am come into deep waters, and the streams run over me	Psalm 69:2 (Geneva)
I've cried my eyes out; I feel hollow inside	Psalm 31:9 (MSG)
How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?	Psalm 13:1 (NAS)
I am numb and completely devastated. I roar because my heart's in turmoil	Psalm 38:8 (GW)
I am weary of crying: my throat is dry: mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God	Psalm 69:3 (Geneva)
I dress myself in clothes of mourning, and they laugh at me	Psalm 69:11 (GNT)
My children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed	Lamentations 1:16 (Geneva)
Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me...?	Lamentations 1:12 (NIV)
There is no one to comfort me	Lamentation 1:21 (NIV)

## *Biblical Remedies to Loss*

You brought me up from the grave	Psalms 30:3 (NLT)
When you cross deep rivers, I will be with you, and you won't drown	Isaiah 43:2 (CEV)
You are my hiding place. You protect me from trouble	Psalms 32:7 (GW)
You surround me with songs of victory	Psalms 32:7 (NLT)
In returning and rest you shall be saved	Isaiah 30:15 (NKJV)
My cry did come before him, even into his ears	Psalms 18:6 (Geneva)
Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing	Psalms 30:11 (KJV)
The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped	Psalms 28:7 (KJV)
Now I stand on solid ground, and I will publicly praise the Lord.	Psalms 26:12 (NLT)
Look on my affliction and my pain, And forgive all my sins	Psalms 25:18 (NKJ)
When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet	Proverbs 3:24 (NASB)
...let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee	Psalms 25:20 (KJV)
You saw my pain, you disarmed my tormentors	Psalms 31:10 (MSG)
I will sing to the Lord, because he hath dealt lovingly with me	Psalms 13:5 (Geneva)
A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, <i>Is</i> God in His holy habitation.	Psalms 68:5 (NKJV)
God places lonely people in families	Psalms 68:6 (GW)
I will pour out my Spirit into your children and my blessing upon your descendants	Isaiah 44:3 (NCV)
And they shall build the old waste places	Isaiah 61:4 (Geneva)
Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase	Psalms 85:12 (ESV)
I am confident I will see the LORD'S goodness while I am here in the land of the living	Psalms 27:13 (NLT)

## ***A Time for Everything***

*(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NAS)*

***There is an appointed time for everything.  
And there is a time for every event under heaven—***

***A time to give birth and a time to die;  
A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.  
A time to kill and a time to heal;  
A time to tear down and a time to build up.  
A time to weep and a time to laugh;  
A time to mourn and a time to dance.  
A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones;  
A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.  
A time to search and a time to give up as lost;  
A time to keep and a time to throw away.  
A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;  
A time to be silent and a time to speak.  
A time to love and a time to hate;  
A time for war and a time for peace.***

## ***Psalm 116 – A poignant picture of grief***

***I love the Lord, because He has heard My voice and my supplications.  
Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.***

***The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;  
I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord:  
“O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!” Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;  
Yes, our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple;  
I was brought low, and He saved me. Return to your rest, O my soul,  
For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For You have delivered my soul from death,  
My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling.  
I will walk before the Lord In the land of the living.  
I believed, therefore I spoke, “I am greatly afflicted.”  
I said in my haste, “All men are liars.”***

***What shall I \*render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me?  
I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord.  
I will pay my vows to the Lord Now in the presence of all His people.***

***Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints.***

***O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant;  
You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
And will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord  
Now in the presence of all His people, In the courts of the Lord’s house,  
In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.***

***Praise the Lord!***

***Hebrew meaning of the underlined words found in this passage:* something tight, distress, strait, sorrow, tightness, rival, adversity, affliction, grief, pains, oppressed, emptied, dry up, fail, be impoverished, made thin, depress, abase self, chasten self, humble, weaken, ravish**

***New King James Version, definitions from the Strong's Concordance***

# Beauty For Ashes

## A Seminar on Grief

### I. Unpacking the Baggage of Grief

Grief is a natural reaction to loss. Grief happens. To avoid grief you would need to avoid love. To avoid love we would also be depriving ourselves of joy. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 teaches us that there is a time for everything, including weeping, losing, mourning and dying!

#### Definitions

##### **Grief:**

- The painful emotion of sorrow caused by the loss or impending loss of anyone or anything that has deep meaning to you. (*Grief Recovery* by June Hunt)
- Keen mental suffering or distress over affliction or loss; sharp sorrow; painful regret (Dictionary.com)

##### **Chronic Grief:**

- An unresolved, emotional sorrow experienced over a long period of time as the result of not accepting a significant loss or not experiencing closure of that loss. (*Grief Recovery* by June Hunt)
- Also called incomplete grief, an unresolved, deep sorrow experienced over a long period of time and characterized by misconceptions that result in a failure to move through a grief process. (*Grief Recovery* by June Hunt) Common misconceptions: “My grief will never end.” “I will go crazy.” “I’m not trusting God if I feel this way.” “Strong people don’t cry.”

##### **Repressed Grief:**

- Occurs when someone is unable to process painful emotions and memories, stuffing
- Can exhibit negative lifestyle patterns as a coping mechanism without understanding why (*Grief Recovery* by June Hunt). Examples of unhealthy coping patterns can include: compulsive spending, alcohol, drugs, withdrawing, role playing such as “the clown” or “the scapegoat” or “the caretaker.”

##### **Grief Work:**

- Involves a purposeful process of taking steps that will enable the grieving person to reach a place of healing and acceptance
- Can be done with the support of a trusted friend, counselor, pastor or professional

##### **Common Grief Responses:**

- Denial – numbing to protect from pain, unconscious or conscious refusal to accept reality
- Anger – usually accompanied with the pain and frustration of not being able to control the loss
- Bargaining – wondering if the loss can be reversed, changes enlisted, possible blame
- Sadness – a range of emotional pain, feelings of sorrow
- Depression – the loss is overwhelming, hopelessness and helplessness, withdrawal can occur
- Acceptance – finding good in the loss, healing, still sadness but not overwhelming

These responses do not always occur in order and a grieving individual may experience one of these responses more intensely than another. The individual's history and support system can determine how grief is processed. Unpacking the bags (emotions, memories) buried in the closet of our hearts is not an easy task but necessary to begin the journey towards healing. God’s light must shine in all the places of our heart that have been wounded by loss. Some grief counselors will place a time frame of 12-18 months for normal grief recovery. Others say one to seven years and still others say grief lasts forever, but dysfunction should pass! The Bible tells us:

“...Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” - Psalm 30:5b





## II. Gender Differences in the Grief Process

- Male vs. female
- Healthy grieving is not just for women.
- Allowing a loved one to process rather than trying to “fix” them is key.
- Many tools are available to help the grieving individual. What works for some doesn't for others!

## III. Grief Work is about Acceptance and Healing

There are physical, emotional, mental and spiritual repercussions if we do not go through the grieving process. We deal with grief by:

- Experiencing feelings
- Externalizing feelings

Be assured that Jesus walks us through the grief process. Countless Scripture passages remind us that He is aware of our pain, ready to listen to our sorrows and available to pour out His grace. These are just a few of the verses that can remind us of His faithful care.

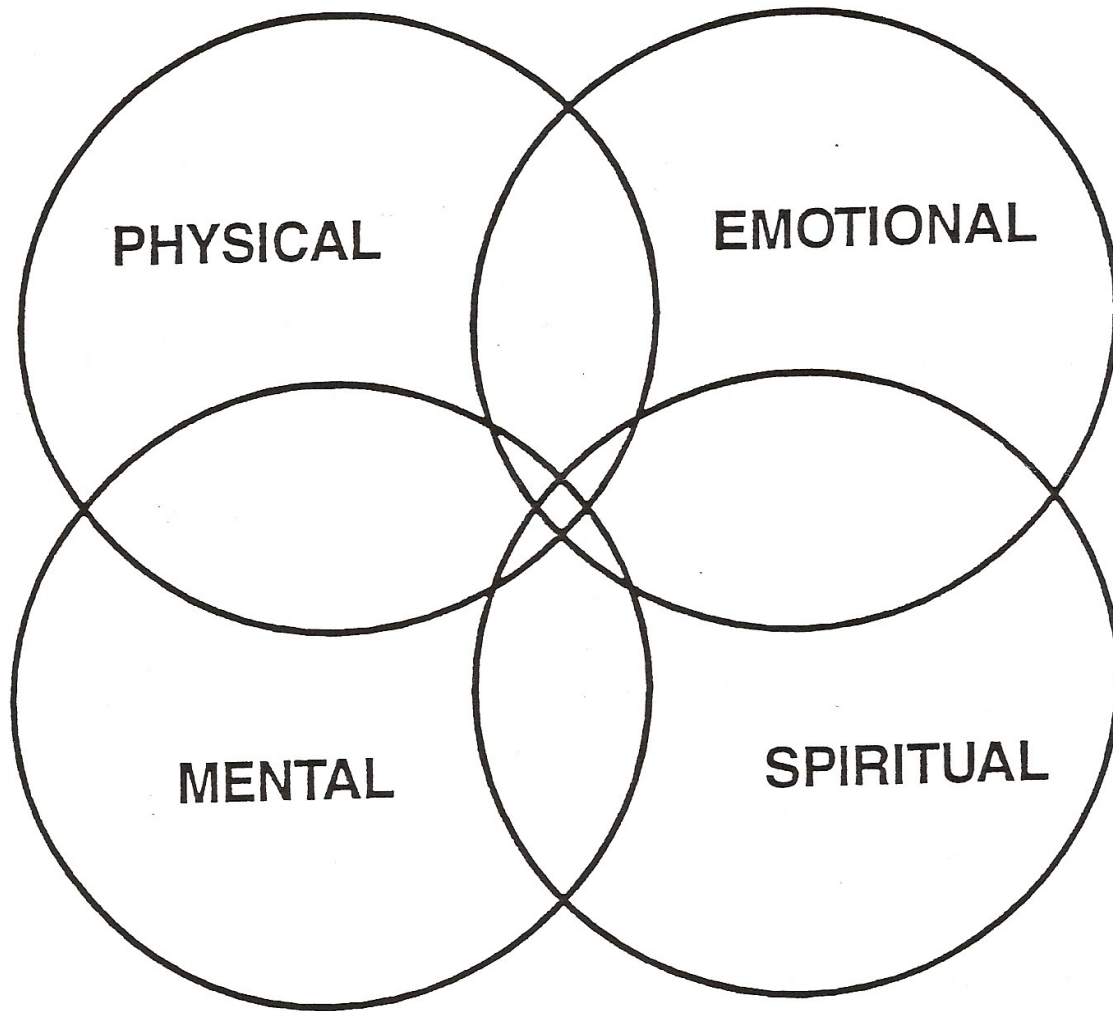
- Psalm 23
- Psalm 32:8
- Psalm 57:1
- Lamentations 3:19-26
- Lamentation 3:32-33
- Isaiah 41:9-10
- John 14:27
- II Corinthians 1:3
- Hebrews 4:15-16
- Hebrews 13:5

**Grief is a crossroad of life. What we do in response to our grief will determine whether or not we will replace that loss with the stuff of heaven or the stuff of earth.**

*That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. - II Corinthians 4:16-18*



*The Four Dimensions of Grief*



# ***Potential Symptoms of the Acute Grief Response***

## **Physical Symptoms**

- fatigue, feelings of exhaustion
- weakness
- shortness of breath
- tightness in the throat
- palpitations
- nausea
- diarrhea
- constipation
- aches and pains - abdominal, stomach pain, back pain, headache, pain in legs
- lightheaded, dizziness
- trouble sleeping
- change in appetite, increased or decreased leading to change in weight
- change in sex drive
- crying, sighing
- restlessness

## **Emotional Symptoms**

- emotionally labile (apt to change)
- sadness
- anger, irritability
- panic, anxiety
- meaninglessness, helplessness, hopelessness
- apathy
- numbness, disbelief, denial
- longing
- abandonment, loneliness
- self blame
- fear
- guilt
- relief
- resentment

## **Mental/Behavioral/Psychological Symptoms**

- forgetfulness
- difficulty concentrating, slowed thinking
- wandering aimlessly
- feeling trance-like
- sense of unreality or emptiness
- dreams of the deceased
- hallucinations of the deceased, sensing their presence (visual or auditory)
- assuming mannerisms or traits of the loved one
- needing to retell the story of the loved one's death
- avoiding talking about loss so others won't feel uncomfortable

*(continued on next page)*

## **Spiritual**

- doubting belief system/God's character
- questioning spiritual values
- withdraw from spiritual activities (prayer, Bible reading, fellowship)
- loss of faith
- disappointment in religion, clergy and church members
- feeling betrayed by God
- angry with God
- preoccupied with own death

## **Social Symptoms**

- overly sensitive
- dependent
- withdrawn
- avoiding others/awkwardness
- lack of initiative or interest
- excessive busyness
- relationship difficulties/tension
  - family
  - marital
  - other









*Tools to Assist You in Your Journey*



# *The Grief Bottle*

Denial





## Your own personal "Loss Timeline" with the Emotional Poundage you assign to each event

Complete the timeline below with: ages, emotional turning points, and the emotional poundage you can assign to each event. Examples of loss: loss of a pet, divorce, lost virginity, death of a loved one, a move, health issues, etc... Use the different shaped areas to complete your answers.

**What age were you when these events happened?**

**What was the event?**

**What poundage do you assign each event?**

**Emotional Poundage Key: Use one of the numbers below to assign poundage to each of the events you list on the timeline.**

2 lbs Momentary Challenge	10 lbs Rough Roadblock/Detour
4 lbs Moderate Challenge	12 lbs Dark Path/Intense
6 lbs Difficulty/Momentary Setback	20 lbs Overwhelming Collision
8 lbs Hard Burden	





I'M NOT GOING BACK,  
I'M MOVING AHEAD.  
HERE TO DECLARE TO YOU  
MY PAST IS OVER.  
IN YOU,  
ALL THINGS ARE MADE NEW.  
SURRENDERED MY LOVE TO CHRIST.  
I'M MOVING  
MOVING FORWARD.

I LOVE YOU JESUS.





## Today Worksheet

Today, the biggest thing I'm grieving over is:

---

---

---

The response(s) I am feeling now is/are (circle one or two only): **denial**, **anger**, **sadness**, **depression**, **bar-gaining**. I feel the need to experience this response longer because \_\_\_\_\_ OR, I would like help today to walk through this response and move on. The way(s) God has been working in my heart during this time is/are:

---

---

OR, I feel distant from God right now because:

---

---

I (circle one) do/ do not see how God is using my trial for His glory and/or my good because:

---

---

If you feel "stuck," please explain:

---

---

And what is keeping you from moving on?

---

---

How would you like this to be resolved?

---

---

How do you feel God wants you to move in this?

---

---

Do you need to confess anything to God or share with the group to help you move forward?

---

---



# *Forgiveness Worksheet*

Matthew 6:14-15, Matthew 18:21-35

The person I am having trouble forgiving is: \_\_\_\_\_

The incident I am having trouble forgetting is: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

The reason I am having trouble forgetting/forgiving is:

---

---

---

---

If I were to repay the offense, I would: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Revenge would accomplish: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Hanging on to unforgiveness accomplishes: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Based on the above, I am now:

- a) Ready to forgive
- b) Closer to being ready to forgive
- c) Not yet ready to forgive

If I were to start doing loving things for this person (if appropriate), it would involve: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---



## *Questions Related to Loss*

What FEELINGS did you have at the time of the loss?

---

---

---

What THOUGHTS did you have?

---

---

---

What did you DO?

---

---

---

What did you WANT AND NEED?

---

---

---

What did you GET from others?

---

---

---

How did you FEEL about how others responded?

---

---

---

What would it take for you to feel/be safe so that you can move through the grieving process? (find a counselor/support system, change jobs or living arrangements, learn coping skills, remove yourself from abusive relationship, etc.)

---

---

---



# *The Benefits of Suffering in Our Grief*

## **Suffering and Trials Test the Strength and Genuineness of Our Faith**

God tested Abraham for this reason in Genesis 22. It is perhaps the most severe trial any human being ever faced.

Hebrews 11:17-19 (CEB) – *By faith Abraham offered Isaac when he was tested. The one who received the promises was offering his only son. He had been told concerning him, Your legitimate descendants will come from Isaac. He figured that God could even raise him from the dead. So in a way he did receive him back from the dead.*

## **Suffering and Trials Humble Us**

I Peter 5:6-7 (Amplified Bible) – *Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.*

## **Suffering and Trials Wean Us Away From Worldly Things**

Colossians 3:2 (NKJV) - *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV) - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

## **Suffering and Trials Call Us to a Greater Realization of Our Eternal Hope**

Romans 8:18, 23-24 (NASB) - *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us... And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved...*

## **Suffering and Trials Show Us What We Really Love**

Mark 10:21-22 (NIV) - *Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

## **Suffering and Trials Teach Us to Value the Blessing of God**

Trials teach Christians that obedience at all costs, even in the middle of a difficult trial, leads to the blessings of God. Joseph's endurance during a long season of trials yielded blessings for him and his family. Genesis 50:20 (GW) - *Even though you planned evil against me, God planned good to come out of it. This was to keep many people alive, as he is doing now.*

## **Suffering and Trials Enable Us to Help Others in Their Suffering**

2 Corinthians 1:3-5(NASB) - *...the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we be will able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.*

## **Suffering and Trials Develop in Us Enduring Strength for Greater Usefulness**

The Puritan Thomas Manton once said, “While all things are quiet and comfortable, we live by sense rather than faith. But the worth of a soldier is never known in times of peace.”

James 1:2-4 (NASB) - **Consider it** all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

*Much of this material was taken from The Power of Suffering , by John MacArthur and then adapted with permission from “Compassion in Action” copyright East Valley Bible Church*





*Continuing the Work...*

# Follow-up Worksheet for “Beauty For Ashes” Grief Workshop

1. This/these is/are the current loss(es) I’m grieving over: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**Action Statements** (choose all that apply):

- Allow myself to identify, acknowledge, and process current response(s) as I work through the grief process
  - Find a way to reach healing and acceptance by joining a faith-based group or class in my area that can help me process in community.
  - Talk to \_\_\_\_\_ and share my feelings
  - Journal
  - Create through my pain—a scrapbook, poem, song, painting . . . . .
  - Visit the site(s) that represent my loss(es)
  - Allow myself to cry
  - Set aside time to grieve
  - Spend time in praise and worship
  - Tell God, “Thank you for the trial,” in prayer, my journal, out loud . . . . .
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

2. This is/these are the loss(es) from more than 7 years ago with which I probably need to deal with:

---

---

**Action Statements** (choose all that apply):

- Allow myself to identify, acknowledge, and process chronic or repressed grief as I work through the grief process
  - Ask God to show me and help me work through the process to reach healing/acceptance in His perfect time
  - Talk to \_\_\_\_\_ and share my feelings
  - Journal
  - Create through my pain—a scrapbook, poem, song, painting . . . . .
  - Visit the site(s) that represent my loss(es)
  - Allow myself to cry
  - Set aside time to grieve
  - Spend time in praise and worship
  - Tell God, “Thank you for the trial,” in prayer, my journal, out loud . . . . .
  - Forgive \_\_\_\_\_
  - Repent for bitterness (against myself, God, someone else...)
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 
-

3. This is/these are the losses I believe God has healed me of and through which He can use me to help others:

---

---

**Action Statements** (choose all that apply):

- Ask God to show me how He wants to use my former pain for His glory and others' good
- Pray for others in pain (Feel free to name specific names here if God places them on your heart)
- Ask someone who is grieving how they are doing and really listen
- Spend time with a grieving person
- Look for opportunities to share my testimony of His healing, love, patience, mercy, redemption, etc. through my trial(s)
- Spend time in praise and worship
- Tell God, "Thank you for the trial," in prayer, my journal, out loud . . . . .
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. This is/these are the question(s) I have after the workshop:

---

---

**Action Statements** (choose all that apply):

- Research scripture
- Ask grief team members for time to discuss
- Ask my pastor for time to discuss
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. This is/these are the thought(s) I want to ponder more deeply:

---

---

**Action Statements** (choose all that apply):

- Pray for God's guidance
- Research scripture
- Journal
- Set aside special time to process with God
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**For Further Study:**

Find characters in the Bible who exhibit grief and ask God to reveal to me how I can learn from their responses. (A study on Joseph is included on page 35.)



## ***Biblical Character Study on Grief: Joseph***

Read the story of Joseph in Genesis Chapters 37, 39-50. List each loss Joseph suffered (can include relationships, loss due to death, reputation, freedom, etc).

---

---

Specify for each loss how Joseph reacted.

---

---

List other indications of grief experienced by other individuals involved in the Joseph story.

---

---

Do any of these losses compare to losses in your own life? If so, how? If not, why not?

---

---

Joseph chooses very significant names for the sons born to him in Egypt. List the sons with the meaning of their names:

1st Son: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Son: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

How might these names indicate Joseph's level of acceptance for the acts of injustice done to him?

---

---

Imagine you are Joseph and your brothers have come to you for help. What would be your response? Include grief responses mentioned on Page 1 in your answer.

---

---

Describe how Romans 8:28 applies to Joseph's life and trials.

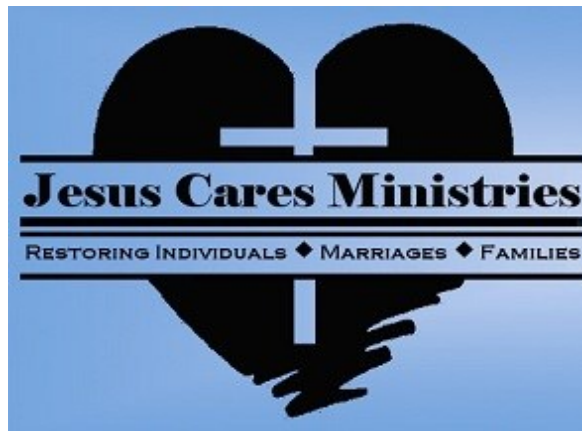
---

---

***Pray and ask God to show you how you can apply this lesson to your own life.***







*jesuscares4u.org*  
480-831-1737