

Appendix

1

**Denial &
Isolation**

NOPE

2

**Anger &
frustration**



6

Hope

Hope

**6 STAGES
OF
GRIEF**



Acceptance



5

Depression



4

Bargaining



3

Appendix:

6 Stages of Grief

Suffering and grief is not the same for everyone, but everyone experiences it.

Dr Elisabeth Kubler-Ross identified 6 stages of the grief process and whereas I am loathed to apply clinical analysis to such trauma, her stages provide a useful scaffold from which to discuss the reality of the grief of divorce, or indeed of any loss. As each of our sufferings can be so different, even if I shared with you my reality, it may still be a far cry from what you are going through:

- Denial and isolation;
- Anger / frustration;
- Bargaining;
- Depression;
- Acceptance;
- Hope.

If you are not keen on my words, may I use our Lord and his experiences?

My experience, and that of others, I suspect, is that these processes don't happen in the order given, and there is probably a repeat or two of each stage of suffering. I have loosely applied these principles, my take, on the suffering of our dear Lord Jesus on his approach to the cross from John. In our tear-filled moments of despair, we can turn to Him, because he does understand, and know what it is like. His example offers hope and compassion in the darkness.

I hope these thoughts offer some insight for those special people who would seek to help those grieving. Again, it is not the same for everyone, but you will certainly get the point. I pray also, that maybe in some small way it may encourage someone reading and looking for help, any help.

6 stages of grief, including divorce – with reference to Dr Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Marriage. Two lives blessed and living as one. One in the Lord and one flesh. Little is said, however, when things start to go wrong. It is hardly even acknowledged publicly that it even happens, let alone caring, godly shepherding to help and support in such a situation.

The reality is that it does happen and happens more and more and not only are two lives shattered but invariably one, maybe two of those lives lose fellowship with their local Church and with the Lord.

“They fell down and there was none to help.” Psalm 107 v 12.

But what if there was first-hand pastoral help available? Godly, caring non-judgemental people to pray, listen, talk, advise, support and love you through those difficult times?

It could be a different story for many. I am testimony to that and hope to spur on these pastoral carers and friends to take up the challenge and step forward to help.

*“Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help.”
Psalm 22 v 11*

It may also be that by reading this, it may challenge all believers to look at these shattered lives with new, loving, non-judgemental eyes and build up instead of staring down on their brothers and sisters in Christ.

“Reproach has broken my heart and I am full of heaviness, I looked for someone to take pity but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.” Psalm 69 v 20

These verses convey some of the desperation, the complete shock that is invariably felt by at least one of a couple when separation is immanent. There are two words that do not appear in the contemplations of a Christian couple on marriage. Separation and divorce. Amen, you might say, and it is ‘amen’. But it still happens.

Up until this point, these words still do not appear in your mind. It will work out, you believe. We are believers in the Lord, you just need to talk and pray about it. This is even if you know something is not right – there are many to whom a partner comes in one day and delivers the line ‘I don’t love you anymore, I’m seeing someone else; it’s not you, it’s me; I don’t want to be married anymore.’

Let me tell you this does happen (if you can put aside any pre-conceptions and prejudice for a moment and lovingly listen). It is like being hit by a truck, you are in shock and disbelief – numb.

But the rub is, who do you turn to? You are ashamed and confused, embarrassed – this doesn’t happen. But where do you get help? The double rub is, either or both of the couple may initially act as if nothing has happened – and you would have to use your ‘spider sense’ to even notice. I know of a couple who after being told one of the above lines in the morning, dutifully turned up in the afternoon to play the organ for a service. How sad is that?

This separate diary isn’t another book about divorce. It is the actual diary **of** a divorce.

There are plenty of books around giving doctrinal advice about the ‘fors’ and ‘against’ of divorce and others with mostly second-hand anecdotal thoughts or happenings about a divorce or divorcees. I have physically tossed aside books I have read that have offered to give insight and little comfort in a separation/divorced situation, sad again that there is no genuine insight at all.

This has made me think hard about why I’m publicly offering my personal experience of a divorce and will someone, somewhere, toss this aside, desperate for help but finding none? In my reflections, I believe the Lord laid on me the reality of the One who has suffered more than we can imagine.

Divorce, for those unhappily in the know, is the same as the dying or death of a loved one. The difference is that it is often more protracted and sympathy and support can be in much shorter supply.

A SHORT STUDY IN THE SUFFERING OF OUR LORD

John 12

Bethany. The place where a feast of joy is being given in His honour. The place where resurrection has already happened is also the place where Jesus is anointed in advance of his death. He knew the significance of Mary's humble action even if those around did not. From here on in we see the isolation suffered by the Lord, just when, humanly speaking, he needed them the most. Judas protested at the wrong thing and tried to give it credence by saying the cost of the precious ointment could be given to the poor.

"You will always have the poor among you but you will not always have me."

He must have looked around, pained, frustrated. Look at my face guys, I am trying to tell you what is going on; listen to what I am trying to tell you, I'm going to die, but no one understands. You are throwing me a party and all I want to do is be here, in the house of my friends, just spend some quality time. If you don't know what is going on, I do, let me have this moment with you. But they didn't understand. It was turning into a farce.

Now crowds of people were outside jostling to get a look at the man who was dead and is now alive raised by the man who was alive but going to his death. The next day, too, crowds for a pre-ordained entry into Jerusalem. So many people and yet they did not understand (v16). Philip brings people to him now, "...we would like to see Jesus." Did they just want to get a look, an autograph of the miracle maker? Again, so many people but Jesus tells them,

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed..."

Jesus knew he would die alone, a 'single seed', there may be crowds around him now, but he was isolated.

Have you ever been in a place with loads of people, a large gathering of the Church, maybe, but been overcome with deep sadness and isolation? It is irrational, but it is real. Isolation.

"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour." (v27)

The Lord knows what is coming and knew he would have to bear it alone. Acceptance.

Darkness can overtake you, literally (v35). It did for him. There were three dark, terrible hours on the cross to come, even his Father would turn away, briefly. But right at this time when He could become overwhelmed with the isolation, a voice thundered from heaven. His Father! Hope.

Just as this perfect relationship unfolds for our benefit of Father and Son, we can remember that today, this moment, His grace is sufficient for us. Tomorrow is another day, but there will be grace sufficient enough for tomorrow as well. But focus on today.

With all that was going on, so many would still not believe, (v37; 42). No one was listening. Jesus 'cried out' (v44) because they feared men rather than trust in God to keep them. But the Lord graciously tells them that they do not have to stay in the darkness of fear and isolation, He has come to show the way through (v46), not to take them out, but to show them the way through. He would have no one close at his side, but he promises to be with us.

John 13

“Having loved His own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of His love.” (v1)

Such powerful, moving words. Made the more so for us as we now know what was coming but the disciples didn't. Prophetic as well, as the 'full extent of His love' would soon be manifest on a cross for the whole world to see. Imminently, Jesus was washing their feet. Ultimately, His arms would be outstretched in love.

Isolation strikes again in betrayal. Responses and feelings are not linear. Judas, a close friend, was about to let him down. Being let down, again. It cuts like a knife.

“Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” (Ps. 41:9)

Jesus was 'troubled in spirit' (v21) over this betrayal by one whom He loves, and yet those around Him still did not see and understand (v28). The hurt welling up in the statement,

“What you are about to do, do quickly.”

Do not drag it out more than I can bear. So much summed up in the words,

“And it was night.” (v30)

Christ, in all this hurt and frustration (I mean this reverently) still has time for others.

I don't feel it is right to use the term 'bargaining' with regard to the Lord Jesus because there is nothing hit or miss about our Salvation. But maybe 'considerations' is a better word as the 'full extent of His love' reaches others in the midst of this darkness.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (v34)

A new command, but yet not a new command. A gently reminder to us, perhaps, from One who knows, to love others and consider them as well as ourselves. Christ is the benchmark of love given, ‘as I have loved you’.

Thinking about others and doing things for others even when we are hurting is an important part of our healing. It takes the focus off us for a start. God knows we are suffering, He has not forgotten, but He asks us to share even a small amount of our love and time to show God’s love to us to others.

Isolation sweeps back in again (v36),

“Where I am going, you cannot follow now.”

The Lord is speaking to Peter. I am going into this alone, that is how it has to be for me. For us the tears would sting and we would choke up as we know that betrayal is around the corner again. Let down. Again.

John 14

Oh, the compassion that pours out from the Lord at this point where we are looking on in hind-sight, and with all this going on, Jesus turns to His disciples and offers comfort to them:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me.” (v1)

The ‘full extent of His love’ poured out when probably all we would want to do is close the door, put the phone on silent and cry whilst feeding our faces! But Christ feeds us with promises we can hold on to (v6). Still, those close around the Lord know something is going on but don’t quite understand what. Some say silly things to him,

“...show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” (v8)

The frustration flows back again, ‘...don’t you know me?’; ‘...don’t you believe?’ (v9,10). All these years they had been together, friends, and now, when they were needed the most, they were struggling with what to say and what to do to help. Some say and do nothing.

Christ, the Lord of compassion, shows His consideration again for those struggling around Him,

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever-the Spirit of truth.” (v16)

The care pours out like oil on troubled waters, promise after promise from the Lamb of God,

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you...” (v18)

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (v27)

Hold onto these verses - hold on to the One who has gone before and knows.

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