

Growth Group Discussion Q's

November 16, 2025

Fun Discussion Starter: Name one thing about your day today for which you are grateful

“Navigating Grief During the Holidays” Review:

Though we do not always enjoy talking about it, pain associated with loss is a common experience of our human condition. The holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas, though primarily about gratitude and hope, can often cause some of these painful memories and emotions to come to the surface. How do we navigate these difficult feelings? How can we come alongside others who are experiencing painful emotions in a supportive way?

Experiencing Unwanted Emotions

- How do you interpret the statement made on Sunday: ALL our emotions are from God and are good?
- How do typically difficult emotions like anger, sadness, grief, frustration, fear, or disappointment feel to you? How you feel them in your body?
- From an early age, we develop coping strategies to manage difficult emotions. Pastor Mark listed a few: 1. Numb & Stuff, 2. Escape & Medicate, 3. Make others responsible to manage our unwanted emotions. Can you relate to any of these strategies? How have they helped? How have they been unhelpful?
- Pastor Mark referred to two broad categories of Grief: Acute Grief (associated with sudden and tragic loss) and Ambiguous Grief (residual sadness that lingers long after the event has passed). The second is much harder to understand and interpret due to its ambiguous nature.
- Do either of these definitions of grief resonate with your experience? Why or why not?

Navigating Unwanted Emotions:

- Pastor Mark referred to three helpful strategies to managing and processing Grief. 1. Turn to your heart, 2. Turn to God, and 3. Turn to Others.
- **Turn to your heart.** Often, when we experience unexpected (perhaps disproportionate) emotions triggered by a movie scene, a song or an event (like the holidays), it is our heart's way of revealing something deeper that is going on. Paying attention and being curious is beautiful way to start attending to these feelings. Denying or judging our emotions (“I shouldn't be feeling this way), are not helpful and usually result in our feeling stuck. What are some simple and appropriate ways we can pay attention to our heart during these feelings of ambiguous or acute grief?
- **Turn to God.** Read Psalm 34:17-18; Matthew 5:4. How do these scriptures help us to invite God into our grief?
- **Turn to Others.** Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Galatians 6:2. It is very helpful and healing to share our sorrows with someone who is a good listener and can empathize with what we are

feeling. What have your experiences been if/when you have shared your story with someone? What are common obstacles to opening up like this?

Attending to Others:

- Pastor Mark listed two important tools to utilize when walking with another who is expressing grief: 1. Listening to Understand (Not to Fix) and 2. Validate their Emotions
- **Listen to Understand.** This skill is simple but hard – we must resist the urge to fix. In our desire to be helpful, we want to transition someone away from their difficult emotions to more pleasant ones. The problem with this well-meaning tactic is that it bypasses the importance of communicating ACCEPTANCE. Listening to someone’s pain communicates deep care and concern for them without judgment (you shouldn’t feel this way).
- **Validation.** Validation affirms what one is feeling and simply communicates “I care how you feel.” Statements of validation include: “That makes sense.” “That must be hard.” “Anyone in your position would feel this way.”
- Think of a time in which someone simply listened to you and validated a difficult emotion/circumstance. How did you feel?
- Think of a time when someone diminished what you were feeling by steering you to “cheer up” or “look at the bright side” or said something like, “I think you are overreacting” or “This isn’t that big of a deal.” How did this feel to you?

Final Take Aways

- Was there anything that stood out to you about Sunday’s message that you felt you needed to hear?
- What action steps do you feel compelled to consider as the holiday’s approach?