



Session 5: Enlarge Your Soul through Grief and Loss

Introduction

Be open to yourself, to God, and to the people in your group. It is ok if you feel a little bit uncomfortable. Just know you are invited to be as vulnerable as you would like to be.

As a group let's remind ourselves of these guidelines:

1. Speak only for yourself, use "I" statements
2. Keep your sharing to 2-3 minutes, give room for others to share
3. No fixing, saving, or setting other people straight
4. Trust and learn from silence, there is no pressure to share
5. Observe confidentiality

Loss is a place where self-knowledge and powerful transformation can happen, if we have the courage to participate fully in the process.

We all face many "deaths" within our lives. Our culture routinely interprets these losses and griefs as alien invasions and interruptions to our "normal" lives. The choice is whether these deaths will be terminal (crushing our spirit and life) or will open us up to new possibilities and depths of transformation in Christ.

For starters

Grief and loss is a discipleship tool for all Christians. Pete encourages us to (1) Pay attention (lament/pray), (2) Wait in the confusing in-between, (3) Let go of the old to birth the new.

Briefly share one loss or set back you have experienced during your life. How has this loss impacted you?

Scripture: Matthew 26:36-44

The end of Jesus' vibrant, popular, earthly life and ministry was an enormous loss to his disciples and followers. It was also, as we shall see, an enormous loss for Jesus.

36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." 37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." 40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? 41

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” 43 *And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.* 44 *So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.*

- Following is a list of common defenses we often use to protect ourselves from grief and loss. Checkmark the common defenses that you sometimes use and share one or two with the group.
 - ▶▶ Denial
 - ▶▶ Minimizing (admitting something is wrong but in such a way that it appears less serious than it actually is)
 - ▶▶ Blaming others (or God)
 - ▶▶ “Over-spiritualizing”
 - ▶▶ Blaming oneself
 - ▶▶ Rationalizing (offering excuses and justifications)
 - ▶▶ Intellectualizing (giving analysis and theories to avoid personal awareness or difficult feelings)
 - ▶▶ Distracting
 - ▶▶ Becoming hostile
 - ▶▶ Medicating (with unhealthy addictions or attachments to numb our pain)

- It is important for us to remember that Jesus was both fully human and fully God. Spend a few moments focusing on Jesus in verses 36-41. In contrast to the checklist in question 1, what were some of the ways Jesus dealt with and moved through his losses?

- Using the following chart, choose two or three age ranges of your life, and write down your significant losses during those years.

Age range	Losses/Disappointments Experienced	Your Response at the Time
3-12		
13-18		
19-25		
26-40		
41+		

4. What was the experience of filling out the chart like for you? Did it reveal anything new to you? Explain.

5. Now apply what you have learned about yourself and your past. How might you respond differently when the next loss comes to you?

6. Jesus wept when news reached him about the death of his friend Lazarus. What about Jesus' example of grieving most speaks to you about embracing your own grief and loss?

7. One of the central messages of Christianity is that suffering and death bring resurrection and new life. Are there any losses you have not yet embraced where new life is still waiting to be birthed?

8. How have you experience new life after a loss or set back?