

Karl D. Lehman, M.D.



Charlotte E.T. Lehman, M.Div.

## **Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning**

(Revised 8/12/2003)

- I. Introduction: We will all experience loss at some point in our lives. Dr. Smith has discovered that Theophostic<sup>®</sup> Ministry can minister powerfully to the emotional pain associated with loss. This essay provides a brief summary of our thoughts and of Dr. Smith's writings regarding the application of Theophostic<sup>®</sup> principles to bereavement, grief, and mourning.
- II. Definition of terms: Bereavement, grief, and mourning are used somewhat interchangeably by the general public. To avoid confusion, I would like to use the following definitions: **Bereavement** is the state of being deprived of something important. We usually think of bereavement as being the loss of a loved one, but all the same phenomena and dynamics can occur with other losses, such as the loss of a pet, the loss of a career, the loss of a dream, the loss of a bodily functions (for example, blindness or paralysis). **Grief** is the subjective feeling associated with bereavement. **Mourning** is the grieving process – the process by which grief is resolved.
- III. My current perception is that a number of different phenomena contribute to grief.
  - A. Emotional pain due to underlying wounds and lies that are triggered by the loss: A loss in the present can often trigger old, unresolved wounds and lies. This phenomena of a recent bereavement triggering the lies and emotional pain from deeper wounds is a common cause for “grief” that seems to be exaggerated and/or stuck. For example, a person may appear to be experiencing exaggerated grief over the loss of a pet, but in reality the death of his pet merely triggered unresolved pain from his childhood loss of a younger sibling. A person may display what appears to be exaggerated grief over the loss of a brief romantic relationship, but in reality the loss of her boyfriend merely triggered unresolved pain from being abandoned by her father. A person may perceive that she is “stuck” in the grieving process for the death of an adult child, but in reality the lingering emotional pain “that just won't go away” is the guilt and grief from an abortion with which she has never dealt. A person may experience exaggerated and persistent “grief” after losing a limb in an automobile accident, but in reality he is experiencing emotions of hopelessness and powerlessness from triggered memories of being unable to protect himself from physical harm at the hands of his alcoholic father. The “grief” in each of these situations will never fully resolve until the underlying wounds and lies have been discovered and resolved.
  - B. Emotional pain due to lies associated with the loss: In the process of exploring with Theophostic<sup>®</sup> Ministry, Dr. Smith discovered that much of the “grief” pain associated with bereavement is not truth-based pain, but rather painful emotions coming from lies associated with the losses. For example, combat veterans and accident survivors will often experience false guilt from lies such as “It's my fault my friend died because I missed the trip wire” or “It's my fault my brother died because I didn't rescue him.” Christians who lose a loved one to disease will often experience false guilt due to lies such as “It's my fault my daughter died because I didn't pray enough” or “It's my fault

my husband wasn't healed because I didn't have enough faith." Survivors of natural disasters often experience powerlessness and hopelessness due to lies such as "I can't protect those I love – I am powerless" or "The world is too dangerous, anybody I love will die – it's hopeless." Anybody who loses a loved one can experience feelings of guilt, abandonment and despair due to lies such as "It's my fault – I should have \_\_\_\_\_ (called, checked, waited, etc.)," "I am all alone now," "I won't make it, I can't live without my husband," and "I will never be happy again."

Traditional wisdom has been that the pain of bereavement (grief) can only be resolved by going through a long and painful grieving process (mourning). Regarding the usual duration of the grieving process, Kaplan and Sadock comment: "Traditionally, grief lasts about six months to one year, as the grieving person experiences the calendar year at least once without the lost person. Some signs and symptoms of grief may persist much longer than one or two years, and a survivor may have various grief-related feelings, symptoms, and behavior throughout life."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Smith has discovered that this does not need to be the case. He discovered that Jesus could dramatically shorten the usual grieving process by resolving the lies that are usually metabolized much more slowly in the process of "normal" mourning. When the lies associated with the loss(es) are discovered and removed, most of the "grief" pain resolves immediately.

Dr. Smith provides an excellent case study example in *Beyond Tolerable Recovery*:

...a client came in who was grief stricken over the loss of her 18-year-old daughter who had recently been killed by a drunk driver. The accident occurred a few months before, and the reality of this loss was painfully acute with this mother. She told me she did not know how she could go on with such deep pain and hopelessness... In our first session I tried to give her a sense of hope that the pain would lessen with time and she would at some point experience healing from the loss...

When she returned for her second visit, she asked me if Theophostic<sup>®</sup> Ministry could help her. I had no intention of using this method with her since her wound was so fresh. I sadly informed her how it was only being used on historical trauma and would have no effect on her grief. I informed her that grief was true pain and had to be processed over time. As I spoke these words... I sensed God saying, "Give her this gift of healing."

My mind could not comprehend what my heart was sensing. How could I ask this woman to "stir up the darkness" and embrace the horrible pain of loss and separation? I also thought "what are the lies? She is experiencing real loss, real grief, real pain." ...Then I heard her make several statements, "I can never survive. The pain is too great. I am so alone. I cannot live without my daughter." It was not the truth of the event causing the pain, but rather the lies...

I took a deep breath and asked her if she would be willing to try this process with me. I told her I had never done this with anyone in her condition before. She said... "If you think this will ease my pain in any way, please do it." As I began the session, I asked her to go to the memory of hearing the news of her daughter's death. She had

---

<sup>1</sup> See Kaplan, Sadock, and Grebb, *Kaplan and Sadock's Synopsis of Psychiatry, Seventh Edition* (Baltimore, MD: Williams & Wilkins, 1994) p.80-86 for a well-written, brief summary of the mainstream mental health perspective on bereavement, grief, and mourning.

hardly arrived at the memory when she confessed she could see Jesus with her. We began at this memory and processed the lies which surfaced. We walked through a series of painful memories which all were a part of the storyline of her daughter's death. Jesus appeared in every episode and spoke healing words of truth. In this one session, she went from paralyzing grief to the "perfect peace of Christ."

She returned for her next session two weeks later. She reported that she was still feeling peace and a sense of relief... NOTE: It has been over three years since the writing of this section, and she continues to be free from the acute pain of her daughter's death... She reports the pain of her loss is now gone and replaced with a comforting sense of peace.<sup>2</sup>

- C. Truth based loss/sadness/grief residue: Not all emotional pain is coming from lies. After all the lies have been removed, there will often still be truth based loss/sadness/grief *residue* due to the real losses that the person experienced. For example, the person receiving ministry will experience relief from worthlessness when the Lord removes the lie "My father left because I wasn't smart/pretty/etc. enough for him to want to stay," but this doesn't change the sad truth that she went through her childhood without a father. The person receiving ministry will experience freedom from false guilt when the Lord removes the lie "It's my fault my brother died because I didn't rescue him," but this doesn't change the sad truth that he watched his brother die in a car wreck. The person receiving ministry will experience freedom from fear, powerlessness, and shame when the Lord removes the lies from her sexual abuse memories, but this doesn't change the sad truth that she was robbed of her innocence. The person receiving ministry will experience freedom from loneliness, abandonment, and despair when the Lord removes the lies from her loss trauma, but this doesn't change the sad truth that her daughter was killed by a drunk driver.

There are bereavement support groups who teach that this truth-based sadness/loss/grief residue will never resolve completely, and I have heard many individuals concur that this has been their own experience: "I have never been the same after \_\_\_\_\_'s death," "I'm not mourning any more, but the pain of the loss has never gone away." In the process of exploring with Theophostic®, Dr. Smith was surprised to discover that Jesus can miraculously remove even this truth-based loss/sadness/grief residue. See *Beyond Tolerable Recovery*, pp. 89-91, 152, 165, and 355-358 for additional comments and a brief case study example.

- IV. The grieving process will not move forward to normal resolution if the lies get "stuck:" My perception is that bereaved people get "stuck" in grief when they are unable to metabolize the lies associated with the loss. When the lies are exposed and removed, the "normal" grieving process then begins to move forward again. See *Beyond Tolerable Recovery* (Fourth edition, 2000) p.168 for additional comments and a brief case study illustrating this principle.

Guardian lies seem to be an especially common cause of the normal grieving process becoming stuck. For example, many combat veterans have described to me how staying in

---

<sup>2</sup> See Ed Smith, *Beyond Tolerable Recovery* (Campbellsville, KY: Alathia Publishing, 2000) p.165-168 for additional comments regarding this principle and for the complete text of this case study example.

their pain feels like a way to honor the dead – they believe that it’s not okay to receive healing and move on with their lives because then they will no longer be honoring the dead. Others hold on to grief as part of their denial, and believe guardian lies such as “If I let go of the grief, then she is *really* gone.” Some hold on to grief as a way of doing penance, and have guardian lies that tell them they don’t deserve to be healed: “It’s my fault – she wouldn’t have died if I hadn’t been drinking. I deserve to suffer. Maybe God will forgive me if I suffer enough.” Guardian lies obviously have to be removed in order to release the person to move forward with appropriate grieving and/or healing.

#### V. Summary and conclusions regarding grief, lies, and effective emotional healing ministry:

Summary of data points regarding grief, lies, and effective emotional healing ministry:

- Bereavement-associated negative cognitions (lies) are widely recognized in the mental health community. For example: “It didn’t happen” and “I can fix it/bring them back” during the denial/protest stage, “I need \_\_\_\_ in order to be happy” and “I can’t live without them” in the searching/yearning stage, “Life has lost it’s meaning,” “I will never be happy again,” and “There’s no point in going on” during the stage of disorganization and despair. Many authors who have studied grief also recognize that bereaved persons frequently experience guilt in association with “I should have \_\_\_\_\_ (done something different) – it’s my fault” negative cognitions. These negative cognitions (lies) and their associated emotions are so common that they are accepted as normal aspects of bereavement and grief.<sup>3</sup>
- It is also widely recognized that the “normal,” successful grieving process includes metabolizing these negative cognitions to the point where the bereaved person can move on to embrace the corresponding truths.<sup>4</sup> Denial and “It didn’t happen” are replaced by acceptance and “He’s gone. I’ll see him in heaven, but not before.” Searching/yearning for the lost loved one and “I can’t live without her” are replaced with beginning new relationships and “There are other people I can love just as much as I loved \_\_\_\_\_.” Despair and “There’s no point in going on” are replaced with moving on to new ventures and “There are important things the Lord wants me to do.” Guilt and “I should have \_\_\_\_\_” are replaced with self acceptance and “I did the best I could,” or “I have been forgiven.”
- The “normal” grieving process seems to become stuck if the person is unable to metabolize the lies associated with the loss.
- Even if the person has been stuck in grief for years, the “normal” grieving process immediately begins to move forward again (is immediately completed?) when the unmetabolized lies are exposed and resolved.
- The grieving process appears to come to immediate completion when the lies associated with the loss are resolved, even if this is done only weeks after the initial loss.

These data points indicate that the *primary* task of the grieving process is to metabolize any lies associated with the loss. This implies that the trouble-shooting tools and techniques for “stuck” emotional healing ministry sessions should be *routinely* effective in helping those

---

<sup>3</sup> See again Kaplan, Sadock, and Grebb, 1994, p. 80-86. See also *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994) p.684-5.

<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, Sadock, and Grebb, 1994, p. 80-86.

who are “stuck” in grief. It also implies that the “normal” grieving process can be *dramatically shortened* if effective emotional healing ministry is used to expose and resolve the lies associated with the loss. NOTE to all emotional healing ministers: These data points and conclusions only became focused so clearly as I wrote this essay in August of 2001. Please test these hypotheses and let us know what you find.

## VI. Sample prayers (truth-based grief), practical comments

**For truth-based pain/grief/sadness residue:** This prayer is to be used AFTER all the lies have been removed from the traumatic/loss memories. The person will describe feeling sadness/grief/loss, and when you ask “why” questions to clarify the source of the emotions, they will describe *truth-based* thoughts. For example, “I am just thinking how sad it is that I never had a childhood – I lost my childhood because of the sexual abuse,” “I still miss my brother. I was thinking about the things we used to do together that I do by myself now,” or “It makes me sad to think that I will never see my daughter get married, it makes me sad to think that I will never have grandchildren.”

**More than one location:** We have not seen conclusive examples of this phenomena in our own clinical experience, but it seems logical that different internal parts could carry separate pieces of truth-based grief residue from the same loss.<sup>5</sup> If one or more of these parts do not participate in the prayer, their respective portion of truth-based grief would remain. See “General Introductory Comments Regarding Ministry Aids” for additional discussion.

**Common problems:** There are a number of common problems that can get in the way of releasing truth-based grief/pain/sadness residue.

1. Lies still present: The most common reason the person receiving ministry doesn’t receive relief with these prayers is that the pain being addressed is not purely truth-based residue.
  - There may be deeper/earlier wounds and lies that are being triggered by the target memory/loss.
  - There may be lies associated with the target memory/loss that have not yet been identified and resolved.
2. Guardian lies: As with almost every other aspect of emotional healing work, guardian lies can block the release of truth-based grief /pain/sadness residue. “I have to keep this pain in order to honor the dead” is a common guardian lie carried by combat veterans. “If I stop hurting/let go of the pain, then I don’t love him any more” is another common guardian that hinders the release of truth based pain/grief/sadness.

As with any emotional healing target, guardian lies can be detected by asking “Are you sure you are ready to be free of this grief/pain/sadness?” and then investigating any sense of uncertainty or lack of internal unity. If the grief/pain/sadness is not gone after going through the prayer, you can also scan for guardian lies by going through the prayer again and having the person watch for any guardian lie type statements that come into her mind during the process.

---

<sup>5</sup> We would appreciate feedback from those doing a lot of work with grief and emotional healing ministry. Keep your eyes open regarding this question and tell us what you find.



3. Vows: Vows can block the release of truth-based grief/pain/sadness residue. Guardian lies often have associated vows. For example, if a combat veteran really believes “I have to keep this pain in order to honor my best friend who died in battle,” he might make the vow “I *will* keep this pain.” If a widow really believes “If I let go of this pain it means I don’t love my (late) husband any more,” she might make the vow “I *won’t* let go of this pain.”
4. Demonic interference: We are not sure about this one, but it may be possible for demonic spirits to hang on to the pain, even after all the lies have been removed<sup>6</sup>. If this is true, they would certainly try to block releasing the pain. As discussed in “Dealing with Demonic Interference/Opposition during the session...,” it is helpful to “focus the target” when dealing with demonic interference. If I were dealing with possible demonic interference hindering release of truth-based grief residue, I would address my commands to “spirits of grief, loss, sadness, and any other demonic spirits associated with this pain in any way.”
5. Internal parts that do not participate: As discussed above, it may be possible for different internal parts to carry separate pieces of truth-based grief residue from the same loss. For complete resolution of the truth-based grief residue associated with a given loss, all internal parts carrying truth-based grief residue from that particular loss must be present, stay connected, and participate in the prayer. See “General Introductory Comments Regarding Ministry Aids” for additional discussion.

It is ideal to identify and resolve these problems before going through the prayer. Ask the person if she is sure she is ready to release her grief/pain/sadness, and check for any sense of uncertainty or lack of internal unity. This usually picks up guardian lies, and often picks up internal parts that aren’t ready to participate. See “General Introductory Comments Regarding Ministry Aids” for additional comments.

**If it doesn’t work:** Our experience is that we still sometimes miss something, especially quiet vows and deeper traumatic memories that are carefully protected. It is easy to tell when you miss something because the pain will still be there when the person is done with the prayer. If the person receiving ministry does not experience relief from his pain, ask the Lord “what do you want \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of the person receiving ministry*) to know about this pain?” and then watch especially for the common problems discussed above. Return to the sample prayers and commands when the blocking problems have been addressed. The Lord will always release a person from truth-based grief/pain/sadness when the lies associated with the loss have been resolved and all blocking problems have been addressed.

**Reduce or expand the target words to facilitate connection:** One of the most important goals for our sample prayers is to help the person receiving ministry to connect experientially/emotionally with the core concepts, and to stay connected throughout the prayer – to stay emotionally connected to the meaning of the prayer as they go through it. Use fewer target words if a longer list is hindering emotional connection by becoming distracting or confusing (for example, just “grief”). Include additional target words if doing so seems to help make and maintain experiential/emotional connection (for example, “grief, pain,

---

<sup>6</sup> Again, we would appreciate feedback from those of you doing a lot of work with grief and emotional healing ministry.

sadness, and loss”). See “General Introductory Comments...” for additional comments.

**VII. Regarding our place in the Theophostic® community, and the place of our ministry aids in Theophostic® Ministry:** Dr. Ed Smith, developer of Theophostic® Ministry, reports an increasing number of people who seem to be confused about our place in the Theophostic® community. We ask that people carefully read and remember our “Home Page” disclaimer (see [www.kclehman.com](http://www.kclehman.com)) regarding our relationship with Alathia and Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith has specifically mentioned people who think that our ministry aids are a required/necessary part of Theophostic® Ministry. We want to be very clear about this: In the explanatory essay (above), we discuss the thoughts, personal experiences, other references, and principles behind the ministry aid at the end of the document. Please consider our discussion, consider for yourself how to interpret the experiences we describe, and then decide whether/how to use this ministry aid tool. Many have found our ministry aids to be helpful tools as a part of various forms of emotional healing ministry, but it is *not* necessary to use our ministry aids in order to do Theophostic® prayer ministry.

We also want to be clear that our emotional healing ministry is built around a core of Theophostic® principles and techniques, but that we also include “non-Theophostic®” material. For example, our material on medical psychiatry, our material on EMDR, our material on dealing with curses, our material on dealing with spiritual strongholds, our material on dealing with generational problems, our material on journaling, our material on spiritual disciplines, and our material on dealing with suicide-related phenomena are not a part of what we understand Dr. Smith to define as Theophostic® prayer ministry.

®Theophostic Ministry is a trademark of Dr. Ed Smith and Alathia Ministries, Inc., of Campbellsville, Kentucky.

### Sample Prayers, Truth Based Pain/Grief/Sadness

*This prayer is to be used AFTER all the lies have been removed from the trauma/loss memories. Ask “Are you sure you are ready to be free of this loss/sadness/grief?” and investigate any sense of uncertainty or lack of internal unity for possible guardian lies.*

*To the person receiving ministry: “Focus on whatever is still painful about the loss. Try to stir up the pain/grief/sadness.” If necessary, help them find painful details and stir up the painful emotions.*

*To the person receiving ministry: “Let the painful emotions settle in your body. If you can feel the pain in your body, focus on the physical pain and let it become intense.”*

“Lord Jesus, we ask you to please take this burden of pain and grief onto Yourself. We claim the truth that you have already done this on the cross, and ask that you would now release this truth into \_\_\_\_\_’s life.”

*To the person receiving ministry: “Look for Jesus, listen for His voice, try to sense His presence. Watch, follow, listen to whatever he does and/or says. As you are able, describe any thoughts, images, emotions, or physical sensations that are coming to you.”*

*When the Lord seems to be done with whatever He is doing, encourage the person to focus on the loss and try to find the pain/grief/sadness.*

*If the pain is gone, thank the Lord for His grace. If the person receiving ministry does not experience relief from her pain, ask the Lord “What do you want \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the person receiving ministry) to know about this pain?” and then watch especially for:*

- 1. Deeper/earlier wounds and lies that are being triggered by the target memory/loss*
- 2. Lies associated with the target memory/loss*
- 3. Guardian lies*
- 4. Vows*
- 5. Demonic spirits, especially spirits of grief, loss, and sadness*
- 6. Internal parts that did not participate.*