

## Worthy of Grieving

10/22/17

I can remember how I felt the day I graduated from high school...so much excitement and joy! I was thrilled to be finished with that season in life because, honestly, it wasn't one of my favorites. But I do remember feeling invincible that day...like nothing could go wrong and no one could hurt me.

We had lots of family in town to help celebrate the occasion. It was a beautiful day...a beautiful time with family and friends—laughing and feasting. I imagine David felt a similar way when he learned he'd be the next king of Israel—excitement, joy, power, and hope.

We often feel so elated during these moments that we don't think about what we are giving up in order to make these new dreams and transitions happen. It wasn't until a few weeks later that I began to worry about what was to come...college. While college was one of my favorite seasons thus far, the transition into it was not so fun.

I was scared out of my mind to enter into “adulthood” and felt highly unqualified. Even now I often feel like a kid in adult clothes most days. While I put on a brave face for my family (and myself), deep down I was terrified...terrified about being away from home...terrified to be in a new city and state...terrified to not know

anyone and have to make friends all over again...and terrified about whether or not I could handle college level coursework.

Looking back almost 10 years later, I can see now that I was in the throes of grief. There were so many things changing all at once that it was hard for me to recognize what was happening.

I'm sure this was a similar theme for David as well. One day he's just being a teenager out tending to his sheep and the next he's the king of Israel (while still a teenager)! I cannot fathom how that must have felt for him. Imagine that...you're in high school doing your thing, working your minimum wage job, just trying get by without disappointing the parents. You come home one night and your mom tells you you're going to be the next president of the United States...starting right now. That's nuts!

I mean on the one hand you get a nice house, your own airplane, great food. But on the other hand, you're now responsible for a whole country full of people and your country's relationship with all the other nations in the world...no pressure! That would be quite an undertaking that I'm sure David wasn't completely ready for.

There are lots of things to grieve when our lives are changing so much. I used to think that people only grieved when a loved one died. While that is still very important, I know now that there are so many other things worth grieving as well...like the loss of home, the loss of community, the loss of familiarity, the loss of your sense of identity...these, and more, are all worthy of naming and expressing emotions over... not pushing them aside because we think

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other people's troubles are more important than our own or that we have to be strong for certain people.

In many ways, not allowing myself space to grieve this transition in my life made it even more difficult. I bottled up my emotions, showing only sprinklings of them here and there to certain people so that I could keep moving forward. I thought it was more important to be happy and have it all together than to shed tears. I didn't think my troubles and sufferings were worth crying over. I didn't think I was worth crying over.

This experience and others led me down a path of struggle even expressing certain emotions like sadness or grief at all. I began to skip over those emotions all together, thinking that other people's pain and sufferings were more important.

I was also afraid of feeling sad...afraid that if I allowed myself to grieve, that I might never stop grieving. And I thought that was a bad thing...that constantly grieving or lamenting could somehow make me unwanted by others or worse, unwanted by God. I understood grief and sadness to be something that people could only tolerate for so long. Look at Job, for example, his friends got tired of him real quick.

Of course we want to be happy and joyful more often than not, but it seems as though we do ourselves a disservice when we skip over vital parts of others or ourselves that make us human in order to be happy. And when we skip those harder parts are we even truly happy? Or do we just tell ourselves that?

It seems insincere not to recognize that some things are harder to work through than others. I would never equate my transition into college with someone who is dealing with an incurable disease, for example. But just because there are people dealing with things that we judge to be more difficult than what we are going through, is no excuse to minimize our own suffering.

My transition into college is just as worthy of grieving as anyone else's struggles. It seems to me that whenever things in life are changing, there is always something to grieve. Whether it's big or small, it affects us.

The movie *Inside Out* offers a great illustration of this. The 11 year old daughter, Riley, has recently moved from Minnesota to San Francisco with her parents and is facing a lot of changes. Inside of Riley there are five key emotions that are given characters in this movie—joy, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust. Joy thinks all of these other characters are there only to make Riley happy.

Joy understands that Fear helps keep Riley safe. Disgust keeps Riley from being poisoned, physically and socially. Anger helps Riley see when things are unfair. Joy doesn't initially understand the purpose of Sadness. She thinks that sadness is always the opposite of joy.

As the movie progresses, Joy and Sadness are accidentally thrown out of "headquarters" or Riley's brain and so Fear, Anger, and Disgust are left to guide Riley through this uncertain time

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of moving, starting a new school, and making new friends. Joy and sadness do everything they can to make it back to “headquarters” so that Riley can feel joy again.

Joy ends up learning that it is actually up to Sadness to be in charge for a while in order to help Riley make space for her grief and all the loss she has endured from the move. Without Sadness, Riley is not her whole self. Really, without a healthy balance of all of these emotions, she is not her whole self.

Over the years I’ve come to believe that God is continually calling us...calling us to certain roles or positions in life—teachers, nurses, fathers, engineers, mothers, ministers, or even the king of Israel (like David)...but more than that, I believe God is always calling us to be our truest selves.

If I’m honest, my truest self 10 years ago and now involves a wide variety of emotions, and if I am to have integrity for myself than I am to invite those emotions into my world knowing that I may not like what I find, and having faith that God is in the throes of those emotions with me.

We all go through changes on a daily basis and during certain seasons of life. Some are more exciting than others. What does it look like for you to have emotional integrity for yourself, inviting in the gamut of emotions you may be feeling? Are there things you have thought weren’t worth grieving?

Maybe you’ve thought, “I have to be strong for my spouse” or “It’s okay, we’ll get through it like we always do.” While this kind of self-talk may be helpful at times, there are times when we need to sit in our tears...sit in our uncertainty...sit in our inadequacy.

There are times when we need to invite those emotions into our view so that we can be honest with ourselves. God created us to be very deep and complex creatures. In denying ourselves to feel the variety of our emotions, we are not being true to ourselves and the image in which God created.

We are worth caring for, worthy to be grieved over, and worthy of making space for our own grief no matter how big or small it may seem at the time. We are God’s children. You are God’s child. And God wants nothing more than to see you be true to the image in which you were created—feeling sadness, joy, anger, pride, fear, and peace. You are worth crying over and worthy of feeling all of these emotions. Amen.