

COVID and Grief.

The last two years have been disorientating and distressing as COVID has changed our lives. There is a range of immediate emotional responses to it (anger, fear, etc) but in the longer term perhaps also grief.

It is worth remembering that negative emotions like grief aren't inherently bad. "God made us to respond to things as they actually are."¹ Those negative emotions, or feelings of grief are also a window into what we love... sometimes good things that have been lost.

Maybe you're grieving the loss of travelling without having to think of all the contingencies that might arise if the place you visit becomes a hotspot.

Maybe you're grieving over not seeing family interstate, or overseas for a much longer time than you've ever experienced before.

Perhaps you're grieving the loss of a job and income which COVID has taken away.

Or it's the loss of a sense of just being able to go out the door without having to think about checking in anywhere, sanitising hands, social distancing... you're grieving the old normal; the way you could go to church, the pub, or the football without a care or any inconvenience.

The thing to do as we recognise grief, is to engage with it and pray about. Thankfully the Scriptures give us the words to express our grief to God. Take Psalm 31 as an example. David prays:

Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and body with grief.
My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.

(Psalm 31:9-10)

And remember Jesus. He is certainly not disappointed by your grief. After all, he was the "man of sorrows," who was "acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53); acquainted with grief in a way that transforms it. As Paul reminds the Thessalonians, Christ has been raised from the grave and conquered death which gives us hope, not only that we'll be raised like him; but all the losses that have brought grief will be healed and restored somehow and so we no longer "grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13).

Here's a prayer that might help you take your grief to God.

Almighty God, Loving Father.

After what feels like such a long time living with COVID, we are sad; grieving the losses it has brought into our lives.

Missed opportunities, restrictions, the loss of connection. The inconveniences which over time make everyday activity hard and wearisome.

¹ J. Alasdair Groves and Winston T. Smith, *Untangling Emotions*. (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2019) p.25

We've lost time with loved ones far away. We've missed significant moments – saying goodbye to a dying loved one, celebrating marriages, seeing new family members who've been born.

Some of us have lost work and wonder if we'll ever get back on our feet.

Some of us have felt our health both physical and mental deteriorate. We're grieving a loss of vitality and strength.

When we think of the way COVID affects us we have that sense that life will never quite be like it was.

Almighty God as we think about these things we acknowledge that our grief flows from the loss of good things. We also confess that we love those things more than you. We look to them to make our lives whole and good.

Father we take up the words of David
Be merciful to us O LORD for we are in distress;
our eyes grow weak with sorrow,
our souls and bodies with grief.

Father we thank you that you hear us. And we thank you for your Son Jesus, like David a man who understood grief, who was acquainted with sorrow and loss. We thank you that at the cross his grief won full forgiveness for our sin – the heart that loves good things more than you.

Lord Jesus we thank you that you don't look at our sadness and grief over what we've lost and have no compassion. We thank you that our tears aren't trivial to you.

We thank you that you have transformed our grief, whether we're grieving the small losses or grieving in the face of death.

Yes, we believe that you died and rose again.
We believe that you've conquered our sin. We believe that you've conquered death.
We believe that you have conquered all our losses and will ultimately heal and restore all things.

Yes we grieve, but not like the rest of mankind who have no hope. We pray Lord, that this hope would transform us. We ask that your Spirit would produce in our hearts fruit in keeping with quiet, humble trust in your promises and the hope you've given us in Christ.

Father we pray this in His strong name. Amen.