

Formative Practice Guide: Grieve

Read Lamentations 2:18-19

As human beings, we've all experienced or will experience loss. There are many different ways we experience loss, but all of them have a potential to begin a process of grieving. After losing his wife, C.S. Lewis wrote one of the most famous explorations of the difficulties of grieving, *A Grief Observed*: "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." Although painful, grieving is an essential capacity to form as we grow in maturity, faith, and honesty as believers.

Spiritual Exercises:

Plan time in your upcoming schedule to include the following exercises in your routine.

For you personally, think ahead about how you may respond to grief. Work on developing enough vulnerability to be able to express the emotions involved with grief. As practice, try sharing your current emotional experience with a trusted friend or community. For help finding an emotional vocabulary, do an image search for "emotion wheel".

Christian formation can be greatly strengthened by sharing grief with one another. Share your own experience of loss with a trusted friend or invite someone else to share their experience with you. Practice the healing process of allowing the emotions to exist without trying to "fix them." Christians can grieve confidently knowing that we have a savior who knows our pain and our future.

We also can grieve as a group (often called a corporate lament). Be honest about the losses in your community, culture, and the world. Cry out with others (over a safe medium or gathering) about a global or national tragedy, about evil or injustice, or about a lack of something good that you wish to see in the world around you. For Biblical language, consider reading Psalm 60 aloud.

Guided Reflection:

Reflect on these concepts throughout your day. Feel free to also set aside some distraction-free time for more intentional reflection.

What messages did you receive as a child or from the culture about grief? What are your expectations for your own process with grieving? And are you willing to lay some of those down? Do you have time in your life to grieve when needed? Who can you lament with, cry in front of, or open up to?

Connecting the Practices

The practices of silence and meditation may be necessary to even realize the need for grieving. When other practices direct you toward sorrow instead of something else you may have been hoping for, allow the Lord to grieve with you.