

## TRANSCRIPTION | Sunday, May 26, 2024 | God Doesn't Care About Me

Last Sunday we began a new message series entitled Live Not by Lies.

What we've been examining is the reality that there are many people who have made lives livable. That's happened in the world, society, and culture. It even happened in the church. And the reason, it transpires, is because we have an enemy, and that enemy is the devil. And the Bible says that the devil is the father of lies, and he's in the business of deceiving people.

And sometimes the enemy's most cunning tactic is to get us to believe a false truth, to the point that we would live it out in our lives by the decisions that we make and the actions that we take and the relationships that we nurture and that we build. And so in thinking through that this morning, I want to address another livable lie.

And it's simply that God doesn't care about me. God doesn't care about me. You might be surprised if you could really get folks to be honest, how many there are that actually feel deep inside of them that God doesn't care anything about their personal life? They're personal situations, the things they're battling, the things they're going with. And some, even as I say, that you become resistant.

Oh, I know God cares about me. I guess this message isn't for me. I know God loves me. I know God cares about me. But I bet even many of you, if we could examine it further, you might be willing to hyphenate, if you will, and say, well, I know God cares about me, but maybe not as much as he cares about that other person, or that other family or that other relationship.

And so I've noticed that a lot of times, the reason people feel such emotions is related to things that they've lost. And there seems to sometimes be this ideology that if God really cared about me, I would not have lost the things that I've lost. I wouldn't have lost the people that I've lost. I wouldn't have experienced loss at the level that I've experienced it.

And so a day like Memorial Day, a weekend like Memorial Day weekend when we are honoring those who have passed on, can sometimes cause emotions like that to kind of bubble up to the surface and, and really to start to deal with grief and to process grief in a way that might even at other times be somewhat suppressed.

And if we could just for a moment kind of take a look at that, what is grief? The simplest definition I could find is this grief is a deep sorrow, often caused by loss or someone's death. Grief is a deep sorrow, often caused by loss or someone's death. It's possible that if you've lost someone, you may have lost a loved one.

Maybe you experienced a miscarriage, maybe there was an untimely death and the moment that we place things like that into the atmosphere, if it is something that we are dealing with or

that we have dealt with, we want to get up and just take off running because it's like, I don't want to talk about this. I don't want to deal with this.

I don't want to address this, which probably signifies that there's still some significant grief that's taking place on the inside of your soul, because grief is real and grief is painful. And the reality is that grief does not just come from death alone. There's also a grief that can be associated with having simply lost things in general. Maybe it was a marriage that you lost and now you grieve.

Maybe it was an ability that you used to have and you gained value from it, and you've lost it. And now you grieve. Maybe it was a career path or a job or a position and you've lost it. And now, if you're true and you admit it, there's some grief associated with it. Maybe there was something like, really meaningful.

It really meant something to you, and now you no longer possess it or have access to it. And you grieve as a result of that. What it means is that the Bible has a lot to say about grief. In fact, over and over again in the Scripture, the subject is addressed, in the Old Testament, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations all deal with the subject.

In the New Testament, Paul deals with it repetitively. You know, I'd like to just kind of lead you through some of the things that the Bible has to say about grief. You start out with Solomon in the book of Proverbs. He says this rejoicing may end in grief immediately. We are warned that grief is never far away, that you can be in a moment of celebration.

You cannot be in a moment like everything is just going great. And then there can be a phone call, there can be a text message, there can be a notification. And the next thing you know, you're in a situation that causes you to have a head on collision with grief. Solomon continues in the book of Ecclesiastes is considered to be perhaps the wisest author in all of the Old Testament, and he tells us that no matter what kind of wisdom and what kind of knowledge you have, you will not be able to escape the grease trap.

At some point you'll experience it. Ecclesiastes 184 with much wisdom comes much sorrow. The more knowledge you have, the more grief. In the New Testament, Paul tells us that even money cannot keep you from avoiding grief. First Timothy 610 for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money have wandered from the faith and have pierced themselves with many griefs.

He seems to imply that even with greater assets comes greater grief. Jobe certainly experienced that in the middle of your Bible there's a fairly thick book. It's entitled Jobe. It's a biographical sketch of a wealthy man's life, a man who had served God and followed God. And then he began to experience loss. He lost things and he lost people.

And on the other side of that, he began to grieve. He describes his grief in chapter 17 of his book. My eyes have grown dim with grief. My whole frame is but a shadow. This is a man that,

by historical valuation, would have been considered to be one of the wealthiest men on the planet at the time. And yet, he says, my whole body has become a shadow of itself because of what grief is doing to me from the inside out.

However, when you get to the end of his story, you realize that he does find a pathway through it. It's in verse four and chapter 42, verse five. He said, I have heard of you by the hearing of ear, but now my eyes have seen you. What Job talks about is that, yes, I lost things, and yes, I grieved as a result of losing people in my life even.

But he said up to that point, I just heard people talk about how real God could be and what God could do in your life. But now, because I have navigated grief, I can tell you that I have seen what God can do on a personal level. There's something about struggle. There's something about challenges. There's something about pain.

There's something about grief that if you really learn how to navigate it alongside the Lord, you can have quite an enlightening experience in regards to how you come to know the Lord. And so there's an author, his name is C.S. Lewis. he's considered to be in his time frame, a great theologian, a great Christian philosopher. He's written a number of works.

Some of them stand as Christian classics. At one point in his writing career, he wrote a book called *The Problem of Pain*. The Problem of Pain. And what he did is he began to theorize why it is that humanity, and especially Christians, experience pain, and he tried to biblically make sense of pain. And then his wife died. And after he's written this book, *The Problem of Pain*, he loses his wife.

And now he's not just talking about something in theory, not now. He's trying to live it out. Now he's trying to experience it. And he starts keeping a journal. He filled four journals with what would become known as a collective work, *A Grief Observed*. At first, it was actually published under a fake name because it was so raw, and it was so real that he thought his publishers even thought that people couldn't believe that it would have come from this great theologian.

Later on, there was a reevaluation of that, and we came to realize that it was actually Lewis's own words. And what Lewis found troubling as he tried to navigate the problem with pain. He makes this statement. He says, you never know how much you really believe anything until it's truth or it's falsehood becomes a matter of life and death.

It's easy to say you believe a rope to be strong, as long as you're merely using it to court a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice, wouldn't you? Then first discover how much you really trusted it and and what happens with C.S. Lewis is he navigates through these emotions of grief, and he eventually gets to the other side where that is.

It's stated that he has a redefinition of understanding that he must look at all things that he has lost with an attitude of gratitude and thanking God that he even had the chance to experience his wife's touch, his wife's love, and to have a relationship with her. He came through it. He

came through it first, having heard about God, but then he came through it, having seen what God was up to all along.

There's people that have looked at that, that grief observed in Lewis, and even the biographical sketches of those who have struggled with grief in the Bible, and they've noticed that there seems to be stages of grief, maybe even you yourself. You've dealt with grief, and you've sought someone trying to help you walk through it. And maybe they've communicated to you that there seems to be stages associated with grief.

Some would say that those stages can be either five fold or even sevenfold. If we were to look at it from a seven fold standpoint, you could say that grief has a stage of shock and disbelief that when you find out you've lost something of value, you've lost someone. That means so much to you initially that there's shock, there's disbelief.

You're absolutely numb. It feels like it's surreal. You must be having a nightmare. Nightmare. There is no way that this is really happening. Jobe went through that in chapter two, verse 13. It says. So they sat down with Jobe on the other side of the news, that he has experienced the loss of family members. He's on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one even speaks a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

If you've ever been beside somebody that's really in the shock and disbelief of what they've just lost, sometimes you realize the best thing you can do is just sit there, be present and remain silent as they experience, on a personal level, what it is that God's trying to walk them through. The second stage of grief is denial. It's where you realize you're starting to have this head on collision with this.

This is happening, but I don't want this to happen. I don't want this to happen to me. I don't want this to happen to my family. Why would this have to happen? And, you know, the Bible talks about that. The disciples. Jesus actually uses the term to describe that. The disciples grieved over what he told him about his cross and his upcoming crucifixion.

And it reaches this moment where Simon Peter and he confronts Jesus. Matthew 16 But Peter took Jesus aside, and he began to reprimand him for saying such things like that he would be crucified. Heaven forbid, Lord, this will never happen to you. Denial and denial is a natural response. But Jesus corrected Peter and he explained to him, this is something that is happening after denial.

They say that there's pain and guilt. Woulda, coulda, should have. David, great king, great warrior, made a mistake. There was a loss as a result of that. Grief overtakes him to the point in Psalm 38 verse four, he says, my guilt overwhelms me. It literally becomes like a burden too heavy to bear. And so some of you may be saying right now, well, why are we talking about all of these different characters skipping all over the Bible?

One of the reasons we're doing it this way is because some of you feel like God doesn't care about you, and at the very least, you know someone who doesn't feel like that. God cares about them. And you need to be informed with the truth of God's Word that even the greatest patriarchs in all of Scripture battled grief to the point that a man like David, the greatest king in the history of Israel, would say, I am battling grief to the point that my guilt is overwhelming me.

I feel like this burden is crushing me. They say a fourth stage of grief is anger and bargaining. We see it in the story of Moses. Moses got angry over burdens that have been placed upon him, and there's an element of grief that's happening in the people of the Hebrew culture because of what they feel like, that they've lost.

In Numbers 11, it says, Moses heard the people of every family wailing, and he asked the Lord why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you? One thing that encourages me with is that God can handle our emotions, and that while we always go before God with reverence and we go before God with honor, that there is also the reality that God understands that we are emotions beings, and that he is a place and gives us a place and presents us with an opportunity to pour out our emotions before him.

He teaches us through a great example of Moses, that it's okay to inquire why. He may or may not give you the answer that you want, but you can ask. And when he speaks, you'll have to discover you won't get to lean to your own understanding, as it will likely never make sense to our natural minds. Another stage of grief is depression and loneliness.

Depression and deep sadness follows the anger. You've been mad about it. You've tried to make deals with God, or maybe even others as a result of it, nothing has been able to fix the loss. And now there's this overwhelming sense of, I cannot fix this. And the depression comes in and the void reveals itself, and there's loneliness and there's this guy named Elijah in Scripture, and he had given up a lot for God.

And at some point he actually starts to grieve what it is that he feels like that he has sacrificed. And in First Kings chapter 19, verse 14, Then Elijah went alone into the wilderness. He traveled all day, and he sat under a broom tree, and he just prayed that he could die. And he said, I've had enough, Lord, maybe you've been at moments like that in your own journey with the Lord, will you?

Just like I've had enough. Like I've had enough. I have gone from being mad about this and trying to make deals with this to the point that I'm. I'm God, I feel like I'm dying on the inside. There's darkness and depression. But you know what? God meets us in our darkest moments with his compassion. Because the Bible says, when I just started praying like that, an angel showed up to him.

And not only ministered unto him spiritually, but ministered unto him physically. I think about another story in the same vein. It's a woman by the name of Naomi. If you've ever read the Book

of Ruth, it's in the Old Testament. It details a part of her story. That book begins with Naomi losing her husband and losing her sons, and she is grieving in just a potent way.

And she doesn't even realize that God has given her Ruth to be a blessing in her life. But she's so overwhelmed with grief that she actually says this in chapter one. Don't call me Naomi anymore. Change my name tomorrow because the Almighty has made my life better. And that's what this new name will mean. I win a waifu, but the Lord has brought me back empty, so why call me Naomi?

The Lord has afflicted me. The Almighty has brought misfortune upon me. Do you notice what happened? She was living a lie. She started to think that God doesn't care about me. And when you read the rest of the book of Ruth, you realize God had her on his radar from the very beginning and had already positioned in her peripheral everything she was going to need to see.

The goodness of his grace and mercy manifest in her life. There's a sixth aspect of grief, another stage. It's what they call reconstruction. It's where things are starting to shift. And there's a recognition that the shock, the denial, the guilt, the anger, the depression, there's been some battles in all those realms, but now it's I gotta start.

I gotta start rebuilding some stuff. I gotta start putting some things back together. You know, the Bible talks about the nation of Israel collectively grieving. They had lost their homeland, and the homeland had been destroyed, and there was nothing but rubble left. And they became so depressed as a nation that the Bible actually records that they took their worship instruments, and they hung them in the weeping willows as a sign that they didn't even have any praise left in them.

And yet then God raises up a man by the name of Nehemiah, and he begins to speak into their life and says, this thing can be reconstructed, this thing can be put back together again. God still got blueprints for how something can come out of this. And what happens is, as he begins to cast a vision in chapter four, verse six of Nehemiah.

So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height. For the people had a mind to work. Do you realize what a miracle that is? They didn't even have a mind to worship, much less work. And now God brings them full circle as he encourages them and helps them to realize there's an opportunity to get the rubble out of the way and start reconstructing some stuff.

There's a woman in our congregation, and she experienced great loss. She lost a husband and a son. Painful grief. My wife and I were beside her in both of those instances. Tears, pain, grief.

Out of it God began to deal with her about some reconstruction. Today, she leads an orphanage that we as a church sponsor. Every month, there's 25 to 30 children in India that receive care

simply because of that woman's compassion. This is her statement. I lost one son, but God gave me 25.

The seventh stage of grief is acceptance. And it's that place where that faith finally kicks in. And it's not that you haven't been trusting God throughout the journey, but now you're at a place where you can really take hold of Romans chapter eight, verse 28. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

And the reality is that it may never make sense to you, and it may never add up on paper to you. But there's a faith that steps in and begins to realize God is still the author. God is still the finisher. He's still the Alpha. He's still the Omega. He has never been surprised by the enemy. And I know that my God has the capacity to go beyond my natural reasoning and make this thing work together to the good, according to his purpose.

For my life. In the situations that he's placed me in. And so acceptance does not mean that you forget about your loss. It means that you trust God's promises to be true and that he will bring beauty from the ashes. And so if you're dealing with grief, and if the enemy's been trying to get you to live a lie that God doesn't care about you or that God doesn't care about you the way he cares about others.

I want to give you a strategy for how to overcome grief. Psalm chapter 88, verse nine. My eyes are filled with grief.

David's saying, I've cried until I can't cry. Grief is flowing out of me like a bitter river. But I call to you, Lord, every day. And I spread out my hands to you. That's how you navigate grief. You call out to the Lord and you stretch out your hands in a receptive posture and you say, God, I trust you to bring me through this according to your plan and your will and your purpose.

I need you to understand that regardless of what the enemy may have lied to you about, or how he may have said it, or how he may have wished or whispered it, or how you may have tried to deceive you with his lying seductions. God cares about you. Lamentations chapter three. For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever.

Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion because of the greatness of his unfailing love, for he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them grief or sorrow as they play some music. I want you to think about that for a moment, that God is acknowledging that grief is a human reality. Sin has entered into the world, and with it it has brought all kinds of sorrow.

But our God loves us with such an unfailing love that even when we are experiencing grief, he takes no pleasure in that a way, with this ideology that views God is this angry being that just takes pleasure in hurting people and watching people be in pain that says, I take no joy in people experiencing grief or thinking that I don't care about them.

What he's saying is that if you're going to navigate it, you have to make a decision to call out to him, and you are the only one that can make that decision. You have to decide, I'm going to call out to you, Lord, and then you come with a posture of receptiveness that says, God, my hands are lifted up to receive your love being poured into my life, to heal the hurt and to heal the wound and to heal the pain.

God sees your grief. Psalm further says, but you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted. You consider the grief and you take it in hand. You consider the grief and you take it in hand.

He sees the grief, and as you call out to him and you lift up your hands, God says. I'm going to reach further down than you can reach up, and I'll take it in my hand. And if you want to know what that looks like, take your eyes to a cross called Calvary and understand that he spread his hands out and he took the nails so that he could take your grief into his hands.

And the way the prophet Isaiah painted the picture is, he said, surely he has borne our griefs, and he has carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we were healed.

He goes on to say that like sheep we've gone astray, and we've gone our own way. But the Lord has been willing to accept the iniquities of our failures and our shortcomings, so that he can reach out. I don't know what you're grieving, and I'll tell you this much. If you're not grieving yet, at some point you will.

You cannot navigate life without loss. There will be moments where something is taken away. I do believe with all of my heart that it is wretched as grief is it because of the promises that we've just read together from Scripture? There are aspects of its stages that can be expedited if we learn to call out to him and to lift our hands.

To take hold of what Heaven is offering to release. And so I recently talked with a man, and he's battling substance abuse, and he shared with me that he'll do really well and then he'll relapse. And he shared that one of the reasons that that's happening is because there's a date that comes up on the calendar. And there's loss associated with that date.

And he begins to grieve. And he starts to feel entitled to self-medicate because of the pain.

I've talked to children, some of them now teenagers, that when they were younger, their parents got a divorce. I get it, things happen. Relationships sometimes fall apart. But now the enemy has whispered lies of accusation into those kids' minds until they believe, wrongfully, that it's their fault. And now the grief of feeling as though they failed has led to decisions in life that had the effect of spiritual mutilation beating themselves up because they got it wrong.

They didn't do it right. We could go on and on, filling in storylines of how grief is affecting people. I think one of the greatest pains in the world today is the grief from absent fathers and young

people grieving the lack of masculine affirmation in their life, and the enemy turning things toxic again. We can go on and on with storylines and ways that grief is affecting people.

Even right now. Some of you are starting to see the way that grief has affected decisions and unresolved grief, as has fed ideologies that you've had an entitlement that you've brought to life. But what if you just made a decision today to stop living the lie and you just said, God, I'm going to call out to you and I'm going to lift my hands and I'm going to receive that.

You are willing to take my grief into your hand, father. We come before you right now in the name of Jesus, and we ask you, God, that you would do something to us, something that by coincidence would not be able to take the credit for God. You would go beyond what even our natural minds could comprehend in a healing process.

And Lord, we get it. There are people here today that need to be saved, and they need to ask you to forgive them of their sins, believe that you're willing to do that, and then confess to anybody and everybody. They're going to follow you for the rest of their life. But there are others, Lord, that they have a preexisting relationship with you, but they've been living some lies, and the enemy's been having his way in their soul, in their mind and in their heart.

And today, God, there's an awareness, a revelation that comes to our life that we don't have to settle for the enemy's lies any longer, because Jesus, you paid it all. You not only paid to take away our sin, but you paid God to even deal with the grief so that our life will experience as a result of moments of loss.

So by faith, God, let us be stirred today to reach toward heaven. And as heaven reaches down, may there be a kingdom connection that begins to shift and alter and change things from this moment forward. God, heal our souls today. Lord, let it be done in Jesus name. And this church said Amen.