

Issue 34 — The Work of Grief: Why It Feels So Hard to Move Forward

Messy Story of the Week

A few weeks after the death, life had mostly gone back to normal.

At least on the outside.

Meals were getting made again. Schedules were filling back up. Conversations had shifted back to everyday things—appointments, plans, what needed to get done.

And for a moment, it almost felt... okay.

Until something small broke through.

A song.

A memory.

A passing comment that shouldn't have felt heavy—but did.

And suddenly, the grief was right there again. Not gently. Not gradually. Just... there.

It didn't make sense.

"I thought I was doing better."

"Why is this hitting me again?"

"Shouldn't I be further along by now?"

There's a quiet expectation most of us carry—that grief should move in one direction. That time should steadily make things easier. That progress should look like less pain, fewer tears, more distance.

But grief doesn't follow that kind of path.

It circles.

It returns.

It softens and then sharpens again.

And what feels like going backward...
is often something else entirely.

Faithful God Then and Now

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” — Psalm 34:18

God’s nearness is not reserved for when we are “doing better.”

It is not dependent on progress, clarity, or emotional stability.

He is close to the brokenhearted—not the “healed,” not the “moving on,” not the ones who have figured it out.

The brokenhearted.

Which means that when grief resurfaces...
when it feels confusing...
when you wonder why it still hurts—

You are not drifting away from God in those moments.

You are standing in a place He has already promised to meet you.

Grief is not a sign that something is wrong.

It is often a sign that something important is still being worked out in your heart.

And God, in His kindness, does not rush that work.

What We Can Learn

- **Grief is not a straight path—it is meaningful, ongoing work.** What feels like “setbacks” are often part of how we process loss over time.
- **You are not going backward when grief resurfaces.** Each wave is an opportunity to acknowledge, feel, and integrate what is real.
- **Avoiding grief may feel easier, but it prolongs the process.** What we push away doesn’t resolve—it waits for our attention.
- **Healing doesn’t mean forgetting or “getting over it.”** It means learning how to live with both love and loss in the same story.
- **God is present in the middle of the process—not just at the end.** You don’t have to finish grieving to experience His nearness.

Behind the Curtain

In coaching, one of the most common struggles I see around grief is confusion.

Not just sadness—but disorientation.

People expect grief to follow a pattern. Even if they don't say it out loud, there's an internal measuring stick:

“I should be further along.”

“This shouldn't still affect me this much.”

“I thought I had already dealt with this.”

But grief isn't something you complete.

It's something your heart actively works through.

There are different kinds of work happening beneath the surface:

- Sometimes you're coming to terms with the reality of the loss.
- Sometimes you're feeling the weight of it more deeply.
- Sometimes you're trying to figure out how to live in a world that feels different now.
- And sometimes you're finding small ways to move forward while still carrying love for what was.

And you don't do these in order.

You move in and out of them.

That's why grief can feel so unpredictable—because different parts of your heart are doing different kinds of work at different times.

What complicates this is when people unknowingly interrupt that process.

They stay busy to avoid feeling.

They tell themselves they're fine when they're not.

They try to “be strong” instead of being honest.

But grief doesn't resolve through avoidance.

It resolves through gentle, ongoing engagement.

Not all at once.

Not in overwhelming ways.

But in moments where you allow yourself to acknowledge what is true—again and again, as many times as it takes.

And if you've felt like you're doing this wrong...

You're not.

You're doing the work of grief.

Faithful Family Tools

If this issue brings clarity to something that has felt confusing, you don't have to sort through it alone:

On Facebook:

Faithful Families | Christian Marriage and Parenting Help | Facebook

Work with me:

Start the application process

Faith Step for the Week

When grief surfaces this week, instead of pushing it away, gently ask:

“What part of this loss am I being invited to acknowledge right now?”

Stay with that one piece—without rushing past it.

Bible Passage

Psalm 34

2-Minute Practice

Take two minutes and reflect:

- What has surprised me about my grief lately?
- Where have I been trying to rush or avoid it?
- What feels unfinished or still tender?

Then say:

“Lord, help me stay present with what is real.”

Let that be enough.

Prayer

Lord,

You see the parts of grief that don't make sense to us.

The waves that come without warning.

The moments that feel heavier than they should.

The questions we don't have answers for.

Thank You that You are not waiting for us to figure this out before You come near.

Help us to stop measuring our grief against expectations that were never meant for us.

Give us courage to face what is real, even when it is uncomfortable.

Teach us how to engage this process gently—without rushing, without avoiding, and without fear that we are doing it wrong.

And remind us that You are present in every part of this journey.

Amen.

Coming Next

Next week, we're going to step into one of the hardest parts of grief for many families—how to help children navigate loss.

We'll talk about what kids actually need, how they process grief differently than adults, and how to guide them with honesty and confidence instead of fear.

Because children don't need to be shielded from grief...
they need to be shepherded through it.
