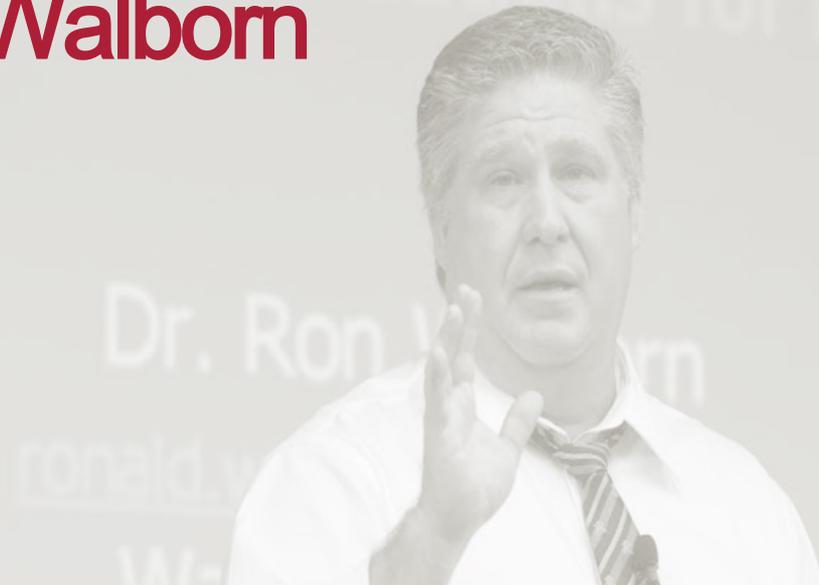




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Grieving the Seasons of our Lives



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- **Starting Premise**: “We must grieve the painful losses of the past seasons of our life before we can effectively embrace the present and the future.”
- **To Grieve or to Mourn** = “To Express Sorrow”

“Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.”

Matthew 5:4

Five Important Questions About Grief



- I. What brings about the need for grief?

“LOSS”

If there is any word that summarizes well our pain, it is the word “loss.” We have lost so much! Sometimes it seems as if life is just one long series of losses. When we were born we lost the safety of the womb, when we went to school we lost the security of our family life, when we got our first job we lost the freedom of our youth, when we got married or ordained we lost the joy of many options, and when we grew old we lost our good looks, our old friends, or our fame.

When we became weak or ill, we lost our physical independence, and when we die we lose it all! And these losses are part of the ordinary life! But whose life is ordinary? The losses that settle themselves deeply in our hearts and minds are the loss of intimacy through separations, the loss of safety through violence, the loss of innocence through abuse, the loss of friends through betrayal, the loss of love through abandonment, the loss of home through war, the loss of well-being through hunger, heat and cold, the loss of children through illness or accidents, the loss of country through political upheaval, and the loss of life through earthquakes, floods, plane crashes, bombings and diseases.

Perhaps many of these dark losses are far away from most of us; maybe they belong to the world of newspapers and television screens, but nobody can escape the agonizing losses that are part of our everyday existence—the loss of our dreams.

Henri Nouwen, in *With Burning Hearts*, pp.24,25

Bottom Line—Nobody gets out of life without loss!

Five Important Questions About Grief



1. What brings about the need for grief?
2. Why is grieving necessary? What happens if we do not grieve?
 - a. We Deaden Our Hearts
 - b. We Compartmentalize Our Lives

Instead of dealing with the Arrows, we silence the longing. That seems to be our only hope. And so we lose heart...How many losses can a heart take? If we deny the wounds or try to minimize them, we deny a part of our heart and end up living with a shallow optimism that frequently becomes a demand that the world be better than it is. On the other hand, if we embrace the Arrows as the final word on life, we despair, which is another way to lose heart. To lose hope has the same effect on our heart as it would be to stop breathing.

Brent Curtis in The Sacred Romance, p.33

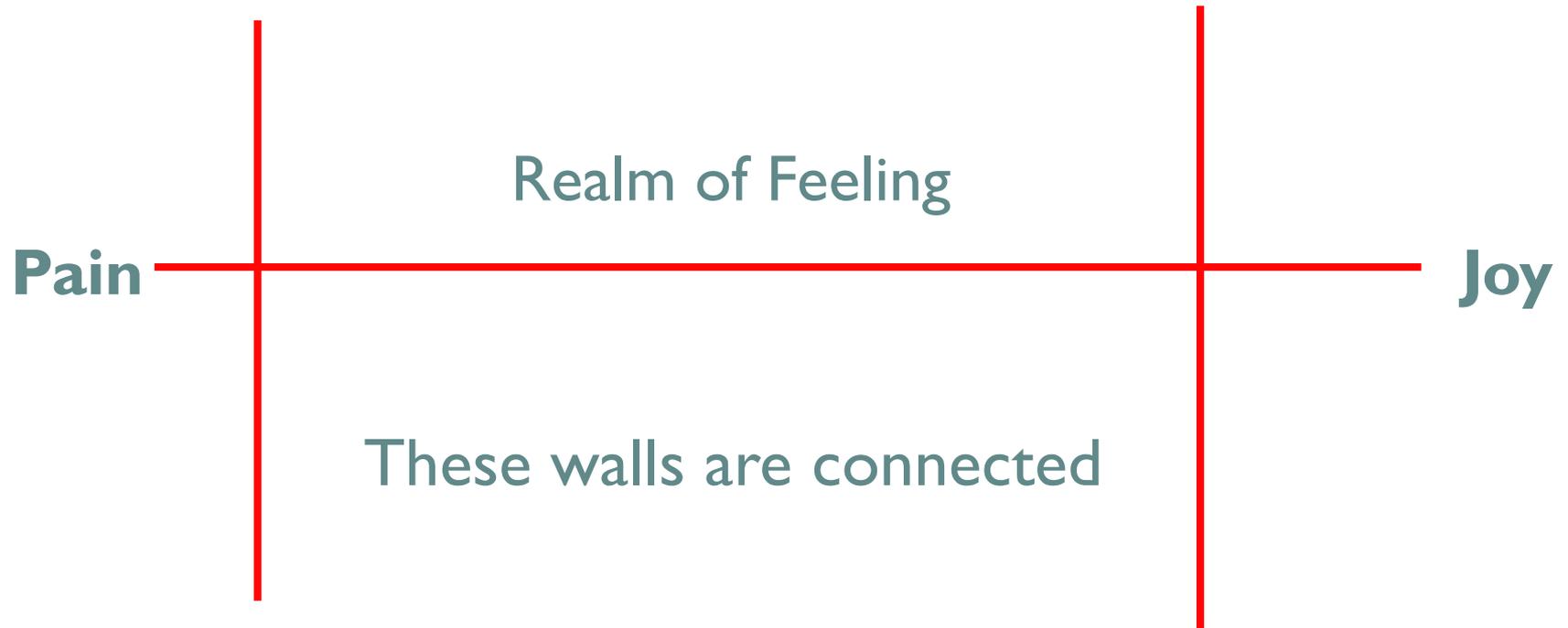
Five Important Questions About Grief



1. What brings about the need for grief?
2. Why is grieving necessary? What happens if we do not grieve?
3. Why do we avoid the grieving process?

We do not like PAIN!

The Pain – Joy Continuum:



Five Important Questions About Grief



1. What brings about the need for grief?
2. Why is grieving necessary? What happens if we do not grieve?
3. Why do we avoid the grieving process?
4. With what options does our past pain leave us?
 - a. Hiding or Denial
 - b. Rationalization
 - c. Anger & Bitterness
 - d. Addictions
 - e. Biblical Grief & Mourning

Yes, we must mourn our losses. We cannot talk or act them away, but we can shed tears over them and allow ourselves to grieve deeply. To grieve is to allow our losses to tear apart feelings of security and safety and lead us to the painful truth of our brokenness...But in the midst of all this pain, there is a strange, yet very surprising voice of the one who says:

“Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted.” That’s the unexpected news: there is a blessing hidden in our grief. Not those who comfort are blessed, but those who mourn! Somehow, in the midst of our tears, a gift is hidden. Somehow, in the midst of our mourning, the first steps of the dance take place. Somehow, the cries that well up from our losses belong to our songs of gratitude.

Henri Nouwen, in With Burning Hearts, pp.27,28

Five Important Questions About Grief



5. What are the benefits of Biblical grieving?
 - a. It helps us to live proactively instead of reactively.
 - b. It increases your emotional capacity to handle life and people more fully.
 - c. It gives you freedom and permission to risk again and set big goals.
 - d. It keeps your heart soft and gives you empathy for other's losses.
 - e. It restores your capacity to trust God and people again.

Conclusion



- In order to grieve your past, you must get in touch with your heart and your pain.
- A story of revealed pain →

Grieving Exercise



- This is best done as a regular spiritual discipline
- Begin a bullet list of your losses
- Either start chronologically or wherever the most pain arises
- Don't stop when it starts to get uncomfortable or painful. That is a sign there is "infection under the scab."
- Find a safe person to help you "process."
 - ❖ *Listen*
 - ❖ *Do NOT FIX PEOPLE*
 - ❖ *Weep with those who weep*