

My Grief: An Overview

- Dad- abuse, absent, rejection: "never good enough"
 - You did not care enough to work on your own wounds.
 - My best was never good enough.
 - There was no room for mistakes and no grace when they happened.
 - You punished me in anger.
 - You did not stand up for me when bullied at church.
 - You beat me, rather than discipline me.
 - You knocked me out, threw me through a wall, bullied me without compassion.
 - You never showed proper affection (as far as I can remember). I have no memory of you ever hugging me or comforting me.
 - I can only remember one time you attended any of my sporting events.
- Mom- abandonment, defender on the surface only
 - You did not stand up for yourself with Dad.
 - You retreated into your housework and never sought the help you needed.
 - You let Dad beat us while you stood back and hid.
 - You left us for entire days and told us it was our fault.
 - You told us how you wanted to die and even asked Dad to shoot you because your pain was so severe in your back (and in your soul).
 - I do not remember you hugging or showing me affection.
- Abused- loss of innocence- Queens, Congers
 - Molested by that man in Queens at five years old.
 - Sexual experimentation with kids from the neighborhood.
 - Molested by my classmate in Congers at seven years old.
 - Introduced to pornography at 10 years old.
 - Introduced to alcohol at 12 years old.
 - Unhealthy sexual experimentation, hunger, and despair through my adolescent years.
 - Suicidal, self-hatred, and rage in high school
- Buzz cut- unloved and shamed at school and Sunday school
 - My big ears were a constant source of abuse at school (elementary & middle).
 - Over the summer my mother would encourage us to get a buzz cut (hair) to make us cooler in the summer, and one summer in middle school both the kids and teachers at Sunday school made fun of me.
- Best friends- betrayed & rejected me
 - Best friend in elementary school, Ralph, betrayed and rejected me for the bullies.
 - Best friend in middle school, Pat, betrayed and rejected me for the bullies.
- Grandparents dying on my birthday
 - Grandpa Reinmuth died on my 17th birthday.
 - Grandma Bloom died on my 26th birthday.
 - Just another piece of evidence that God is not for me.
- Sister rejection of wedding

- My middle sister saw my marriage as rejection of our family, so she sought to rob our joy at our wedding. In all of the pictures that include her in them, she is scowling.
- Dad's rejection of my church and calling.
 - After my conversion and his, Dad fell into a cult (Family Radio/Harold Camping), which led him to reject the church at the seat of the devil.
 - As a pastor, once again I was not good enough, wrong, not loved or honored.
 - Despite failing three times to predict the end of the world and the return of Christ, my father remains committed to his cult.
- My parents' rejection of my daughter.
 - When my eldest child was born, both sets of grandparents were less than thrilled with her arrival. My in-laws thought they were too young to be grandparents. My parents were too preoccupied with my sister's kids. As a result, my in-laws only briefly visited Eva in the hospital, and my own parents did not visit for several weeks.
 - Now it was my daughter who was "not good enough."
- Elder blow-ups- deception, rejection, abandonment
 - Four years into our church plant, an elder and a prominent family had a falling out with our worship director and turned their guns on me. 25% of the church left because of their lies and hatred. I was left feeling betrayed, abandoned, and afraid, not sure I was even a Christian, let alone a pastor.
 - Two years later, we had three more elder's implode (about one each year) because of double lives being lived and the mental breakdown that finally came with that pressure (affairs, prostitutes, lies, pornography, fits of rage), mental illness (bi-polar) and outright rebellion. I felt a continual state of betrayal, condemnation, and shame.
- All the friends and church members who have left over the years.
 - Every time it hurts.
- Daughter's abuse and rebellion
 - My daughter was sexually abused by two different friends at two different seasons of her life, both of which we had no idea about.
 - That abuse was kept secret and festered into a deep mistrust of God and of us as her parents.
 - As a parent, this left me again feeling rejected, ashamed, less than, and anxious.
 - Her high school years were full of angst and rebellion, and in her rebellion, she made some really bad decisions that ended up with her crumbling under the weight of shame and overdosing on Advil (a desperate cry for help).
 - Her time in the psychiatric ward of Nyack Hospital was its own trauma for her and for us, suffering further emotional and sexual abuse while there.
 - Nyack Hospital held my daughter hostage until she would agree to take medication that they admitted she did not need.
 - I felt completely helpless and overwhelmed with grief, shame, anger and sorrow.
- Fear of abandonment in death
 - I am entering into a season of aging and impending loss with my parents and several close members of my church showing clear signs of winding down.
- Grief over my bondage to lies
 - As I have been doing more and more work towards emotional health and spiritual freedom, I am seeing with increasing clarity just how costly the lies I have believed (because of the trauma in my life) have been.

- Grief over my self-protection in my relationship with God- I have believed deep down, that He knew I was a monster.
- Grief over my self-loathing- just this past weekend God revealed to me that I was still trapped in the lie of self-hatred, and that was keeping me from truly laying down my shields of self-protection and control.

My Identity: Monster

Fear of abandonment and rejection are clear themes that run through my life because of the trauma I experienced and caused as a child and teenager. Hidden deeply within my soul was the lie that God and I knew the real truth about me...I was a monster. To be clear, I never acknowledged that reality with a conscious thought or audible affirmation, but simply created a false self to hide the real me. That false self resembled a cuttlefish. Cuttlefish are the chameleons of the the sea, able to change into twenty-four different colors and six different textures in about second. They are masters at avoiding conflict by blending into their environment, hiding in plain sight. Even when they are attacked, their first response is to try desperately to stay hidden by excreting ink to create a smokescreen. However, if that does not work, they bite with a venom powerful enough to kill a human. They swing from avoid-mode to destroy-mode in a moment's notice, and the result is carnage all around them. After a fight, they rush to the bottom of the ocean to bury themselves in the sand. Like a cuttlefish, my false self does everything in my power to fit in, stay hidden, and provide smokescreens to escape danger. And like that same fish, when I feel trapped, my false self can quickly transition into destroy-mode, creating broken relationships and then hiding in shame.

By God's grace, I have received much healing and learned much over the years with regard to my false self. However, the lie that has been underneath that false self (that

I am monster), was unearthed in my soul this year, and the resulting healing and freedom have been remarkably powerful. Abba does not think I am a monster, and He is not disgusted with me. In fact, He wants me to start being kinder to myself and to learn to actually love that little boy with His love, not the accusations and shame of the enemy.

My Redeemer: All Things New

Coming to the realization that I have believed a lie about God and about myself my entire life, the whole time believing it was the voice of God shaming and judging me, has given me a passion to help others who are also stuck in the lies of the enemy and do not know it. I have righteous anger against that Liar, and a sincere ache for those who are in his trap, and I am pursuing tools, experience, training, gifting and wisdom in both deliverance and inner healing as a result. I want to help set the captives free! And as I have taken the risk to step out by faith in forming a Healing & Deliverance Team at All Souls, we have seen God bring freedom, wholeness, and joy to many!

This same principle is also true in my heart when it comes to those who have suffered sexual abuse and father wounds. I can see that my own suffering and journey towards healing are not for me alone, but designed to be given away to others in need. This plays out in the guys that God regularly brings into my life, in much of the premarital counseling I am doing, and in my sermons.

As it pertains to my daughter, Eva's trauma, rebellion and suffering, I praise God for His amazingly powerful redemption! Much like the shepherd that needs to break the leg of the stubbornly wayward sheep in order to keep it from self-destruction and to teach it to receive his love, care, and direction, so it was with my Eva. I never would have written her story this way, but I can see now that God's plan was to use her pain in much the same

way that He has been using mine. He allowed Eva to walk far enough down the path of destruction to come to the end of herself, and there find Him. All of the lessons we tried to teach her, the ways we sought to model for her a real relationship with God, and the warnings we were zealous in giving about the traps of the Deceiver, all fell on deaf ears. It was not until Eva saw with her own eyes that she had been duped into believing abundant life was found apart from God, that she finally opened her heart to Him in the ways that we had been so desperately hoping that she would. Because she was so broken and then graciously put back together, Eva has developed a profound trust in God, a sweet intimacy with Him, and a courageous zeal to help others who have also been duped. Hallelujah!

Lastly, with regard to my grief over my ailing parents and beloved church members, I am not quite sure that I see everything that God is wanting to do in me here yet, but I can see some of the fruit. Specifically, as I choose to engage that grief, rather than ignore or deny it, I am growing in my emotional health. I am also making decisions to connect more regularly with my parents and loved ones to invest even more in those relationships, which is freeing me from fear and blessing me with love. I can already see how doing so will pull the rug out on shame when my loved ones do pass, and the enemy will seek to condemn me for not being a bigger part of their lives.

Grief was forever something that I chose to avoid, as it risked exposing the fraud that I believed I was, and hated. Learning instead, to engage my grief and grow through the traumas of my past, has equipped me step out of old lies and live into the truth that I am indeed a beloved son of the King. For that, I am eternally grateful.