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Grief Journal:

Consider the following as you write your grief journal:

a. Highlight the significant wounds and losses of your life; remember loss can be a death, but it can also be loss of a position, a season of life, a relationship, an opportunity, etc.

Wounds and Losses:

At the age of twelve, my father brought me and my three siblings to live with our mother and three older siblings who were already residing there. Shortly after, my father left us and returned to Haiti, and I did not establish a relationship with him until his passing from Covid-19 at the age of 90.

In 1985, I immigrated to the United States from Haiti and enrolled in sixth grade. Unfortunately, during the school year, a group of girls attacked me on the playground, causing a broken arm.

The following year, during seventh grade, I was again jumped on the school playground and given a black eye by a gang from the school. My brother, Hans, went with some friends to confront the gang who attacked me. That moment marked his initiation into the gang life. I was transferred to another junior high school located a mile away from my previous school to complete my seventh-grade year.

However, a few months later, the older brothers and friends of the gang who attacked me previously violently assaulted me, resulting in a traumatic brain injury. This assault caused me to bleed through my mouth and nostrils, and I had a concussion that lasted for approximately three days. As a result, I was transferred to another junior high school located in the lower east side of Manhattan, about an hour away. This relocation caused me to lose my established social circle, and I was compelled to interact with unfamiliar faces, namely Dominican and Puerto Rican students who viewed me with disdain and subjected me to ridicule due to my racial identity.

In the eleventh grade, I started a relationship with my high school sweetheart, whose parents were pastors and Haitians like me. Unfortunately, her parents did not approve of our relationship due to my family's financial status, and after seven years, I gave up the relationship.

In 1998, I left New York and attended a Bible Institute, where I could not afford to pay for college and had to live off-campus to work and pay my tuition. During this time, I fell into sin with a girlfriend I met on campus. We would become my wife, and we conceived my first child. I was out of the ministry for a year but was eventually restored.

Her parents, who disapproved of our interracial relationship, agreed to marry us because of the pregnancy. However, my mother did not attend the wedding, as she believed it was against God's will for me. My marriage was tumultuous from the start, with demonic oppressions, sickness, and constant unemployment causing a lot of financial stress, instability, discord and verbal fights. By the sixth or

seventh year, we completely separated, and my oldest child was 17 at that time. Eventually, my wife filed for divorce.

During this time, my brother who was deported to Haiti died of cancer, and it was a major loss for me as he was the sibling who understood and fought for me. My father also passed away during the pandemic. I did not get to visit him.

Despite the chaos at home, I continued my studies and pursued ministry and pastoring. Nonetheless, the chaos in my personal life significantly and negatively affected the ministry, causing it to split as the church became aware of the discord in my home.

After the divorce, my daughter was sexually assaulted at a drug house while under the influence of marijuana. My middle child also started smoking marijuana, and I found out when he called me in the middle of the night, slurring his words and throwing up. As a result, I decided to uproot my family from Florida and relocated to New York to give my children a better environment.

Finally, I merged my ministry with another and decided to step down from my role as a pastor.

b. Describe two or three of the most significant, life-defining relationships or experiences in your life. Again, "significant" and "life-defining" may or may not be considered good, but these are relationships that clearly impacted the person you are today.

Life defining relationships and experiences.

In 1990, I had the privilege of meeting a remarkable missionary named St. Therese. She was an old friend of my mother's and a devoted prayer warrior who provided me with unwavering support and intercession during my darkest days.

During my time in Bible college, my girlfriend and I fell into sin, and she became pregnant. However, right after my marriage, I repented of my sin and fasted for a week in pursuit of forgiveness.

From 2007 to 2009, I was plagued by an unidentified illness that began as a viral infection in my throat. The illness caused me to lose approximately 80 pounds. During that time, I experienced shooting pains throughout my body, and suffered from cold intolerance, headaches, and blurry vision. Certain foods, particularly those that were starchy, sweet, or spicy, became intolerable, and I eventually became too weak to walk. Seeking God's forgiveness and healing, I received messages through dreams and visions, and I was eventually healed by His miraculous intervention.

Although the end of my marriage marked the end of a chaotic chapter in my personal life, even contemplating those difficult times requires great emotional energy.

The ultimate transformative event was the decision to depart from my congregation, after dedicating almost a decade to their service, which included the renovation of our facilities.

My pastorate: A special chapter and experience:

1. I assumed leadership of a ministry that had been previously operated by family members.
2. The entire leadership team, consisting of relatives of the pastor, resigned within a year of my appointment.
3. I successfully navigated through the challenges of two hurricanes.
4. My marriage dissolved in divorce.
5. I faced instances of racism from some members of the predominantly white congregation.
6. I suffered from stomach ulcers and gastrointestinal bleeding.
7. I endured panic attacks chest pains, high blood pressure, and irregular heartbeats which required a short hospitalization for a stress test.
8. I led the congregation through a pandemic at the time, preaching to empty pews.
9. The congregation underwent two church splits.
10. My car was repossessed as a result of underemployment while supporting a family of five.
11. One of my children was drugged and sexually assaulted.
12. One child demonstrated persistent psychological distress due to the divorce.
13. I suffered a torn meniscus and underwent knee surgery while balancing bi-vocational to support the ministry.
14. Financial difficulties arose, and the church was unable to meet salary obligations to me. I have been working without a salary since the pandemic.
15. I labored through constant facility repairs - including plumbing issues, leaking roof, rusty water, and even no air conditioner for a little over a year. We did not have the money to purchase replacement commercial AC units.
16. I began to lose control of my kids; they began to make friends and rebel against me.
17. I contracted COVID-19 twice while caring for my three teenagers as a single parent.
18. I never had the opportunity to take a vacation during my time in the ministry, as I was the pastor, one of my sons was the keyboard player, and the other ran the sound booth.
19. In an effort to sustain the ministry and keep the doors open to the community, a decision was made to merge with another local congregation.
20. Ultimately, I made the difficult decision to walk away from that congregation after nearly a decade of service.