the gift of GRIEFS

(or - how to be a healthy human)
This journal goes along with a series of videos that you can find at the site below, along with instructions on how to use them:

www.inprocesscollective.com/grief
Password: “the gift of grief”

Do this course at your own pace. Grief is shy. It takes time and space to enter into it.

Try find a time when you don’t have to be somewhere later, when you have no pressure to have it together. Or, if that’s not possible, or if it feels like too much, just pray for the time and space to face your loss.

We’ll use some key terms throughout this study that will be defined in the videos, but are also clarified below:

**wound**

These are the things that have happened that are not in line with God’s revealed will/His Eden-ish design. If something has happened to you that wouldn’t happen in Heaven, then it’s a wound.

**loss**

Every wound brings with it a million losses. If your wound is a breakup, the losses might include the loss of that person’s friendship, the loss of a part of yourself that they brought out, the loss of being heard and understood, the loss of community, the loss of your involvement in certain things they connected you to, etc...

**grief:**

Grief is the healthy, and often painful, process of healing your wounds by facing and processing the losses a particular wound brings with it. Grief is not something we need to be treated for or healed from, it is the treatment, it is the process of healing from a wound.
week 1
Identifying what to *grieve*, what is *grief* and recognizing how you feel about *grief*
EPISODE #7
WHAT IS GRIEF?
or
"Why do I have to deal with all these feelings?"
Greiving is the psychobiological process of healing wounds or injuries on our souls by working through the losses involved.
what is culture?

The processes that offer consistent explanations for our experiences.
What kind of losses did you feel were treated as significant or insignificant growing up? How has that impacted your grief process?

Messages around grief

Faith = unbelief

Hope = overcome grief

Love = defeats sadness
Jesus' culture of grief

Faith = the anchor that lets you go further into grief

Hope = the light that lets you feel less afraid of the dark

Love = reminds you you’re not alone in the pain.
on your own this week
In the space to the side, journal and process through some thoughts on grief.

Tell God the truth about how you feel about even doing this.

Do you want to be working on this? Working through this?

Try to avoid the temptation to “Gospel yourself” through any of the feelings you share here, and take note of any thoughts that jump into your head.

Practice creating space to just listen to your feelings and be honest.

If you want inspiration, read through some of the passages below and try to take note of how they make you feel:

1. Psalm 55
2. John 11
3. What other verses come to mind?
Facing your wounds.

Begin by identifying the wound you want to work through in this journal. Ask God to tell you what to focus on. If you don't know where to start, ask yourself:

1. What are the five biggest wounds I’ve experienced in my life?

2. What is the loss that feels most painful today? What is a thought you’ve had that’s been really painful recently?

3. What is a painful thing you keep thinking about or noticing is missing in your life?

Prayerfully journal through these things and try to identify which is the wound that God might want you to focus on right now.
What is your culture of grief?

You’ve experience a million different cultural influences that all offered unique meanings around loss and grief and emotions.

1. How do you interpret emotions? Don't think with your ‘brain’, think about the last time you saw someone crying about something: what were your instincts? Did you think they were foolish? The reaction was too much?

2. How do you interpret loss? What makes something worthy of grieving? Don't give the right answer, think about losses you have had or seen that felt valid, and think of those that felt invalid, what was the difference?

3. What is acceptable or normal grief? At what point has it lasted too long? What situations have you seen someone grieve that you’ve felt like it was healthy? Unhealthy? What was the difference?

4. Which cultural influences have helped shape your answers? What churches, experiences, relationships have helped influence and shape the way you interpret emotions and view grief?
What are the beliefs that are currently impacting your ability to grieve the wound you identified earlier?

What are those things that you know are wrong, but still impact how you are able to experience healthy grief? Some examples might be:

- It's my own fault
- Nothing really happened
- I'm a burden
- No one cares
- My grief is annoying
- I can't cope if I go into this any deeper
- Talking about it is inappropriate
- No one would understand
- Everyone is over it
- REAL loss is what that other person is going through
- I should just be thankful for what I had
- I should be over this by now
- I don't think I can survive this
- God doesn't care
- If I just had more faith I would be over this
- I'm just being a baby
week 2
This week is about experiencing, accepting and learning from your emotions.
Week Two

Episode #2

Skills for Grief

or

"Things you need to know to survive pain and sadness"
Before we start...

Think about an emotional experience you had this week.

Skills for grieving
toolbox #1

Overregulating emotions: --> able to consciously or unconsciously repress emotions so that you either don’t feel them or don’t express them

Underregulating emotions --> unable to control emotions so they feel like they are out of control

1. Allowing/Accepting

2. Experiencing

3. Tolerating
**toolbox #2**

1. **IDENTIFY THE CATEGORY**
   - **Primary**
   - **Secondary**
   - **Instrumental**

2. **NAME/LABEL THE EMOTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRIGGER</th>
<th>EMOTION</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>feeling violated</td>
<td>anger</td>
<td>empower you to step in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense danger</td>
<td>fear/anxiety</td>
<td>flight/fight/freeze</td>
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<tr>
<td>experience loss</td>
<td>sadness</td>
<td>reach out for comfort/identify what you value</td>
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<tr>
<td>behavior outside your moral code</td>
<td>shame</td>
<td>ask for help to restore you</td>
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<tr>
<td>deep/complex injury</td>
<td>pain</td>
<td>build a sense of endurance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
All emotions give you helpful information.

Adaptive emotions give you information about the direct situation.

Maladaptive emotions give you information about the way you interpret the situation.

**practice:**

(1) Someone throws a snake at me and I feel fear

Maladaptive or Adaptive? (Is the fear a result of having a snake thrown at me, or about the way I interpret snakes being thrown at me?)

(2) Someone throws a ribbon at me and I feel fear

Maladaptive or Adaptive? (Is this fear a result of having a ribbon thrown at me or about the way I interprete that ribbon being thrown at me?)

**answer!**

(1) ADAPTIVE - this emotion is an emotion that (a) anyone would feel with a snake being thrown at them (b) would keep you alive and safe if you acted on it.

(2) MALADAPTIVE - being afraid of ribbons happens, not because ribbons are dangerous, but because of the way we interpreted the ribbon. We thought it was a snake! Or we didn’t know what it was, but that’s about our interpretation not the actual ribbon.
If it’s an adaptive emotion - determine if you want to act on the emotion to address or change the situation.

If it’s an maladaptive emotion - work on validating by understanding where the emotion came from and then transforming the narrative that is leading you to interpret the situation this way.

e.g.: (1) Someone throws a snake at me and I feel fear.

We want to act on this and let our fear drive us to move away rapidly from the snake!

(2) Someone throws a ribbon at me and I feel fear

We want to validate and understand: it makes sense you were scared! You probably thought it was a snake because you didn't see it clearly. AND - we can also remind ourselves that it isn't a threat until our bodies catch up with our transformed narrative (“ribbon not snake”) and our fear subsides.

process

Think about an emotional experience you had this week.

1. Was it a secondary/primary emotion?
2. Can you describe or name the feeling?
3. Was it adaptive (a reaction to the specific situation happening) or maladaptive (a reaction to your specific interpretation of the situation happening).
on your own this week
Listening to Emotions.

Step one of emotional regulation is just learning to feel.

This week, use the log on the next page to track the emotions you’re feeling throughout the day. There is no right or wrong answer!
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMOTION</th>
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Listening to Emotions.

Take some time to consider any patterns you’re noticing in your emotions.

Which ones are easier to feel?

Which ones are more challenging?

Are there any cultural narratives around any of them that might shed light on those patterns?
Handling intense emotions.

If you have a moment of intense emotion this week, practice doing the following:

- What does it feel like physically?
- What triggered it?
- What thoughts accompany it?
- What does it want you to do? What does it want?
- Can you name it or capture it with symbols or words? Eg. I feel like my heart has turned to stone...

Evaluate the emotion: Does it feel vague or vivid? Do you think this is a primary or secondary emotion? Do you think it’s a direct response to the situation (adaptive - like jumping out of the way of a car) or more about how you interpret the situation, (maladaptive - it’s influenced by past situations or interpretations rather than just the present; it lingers and sometime feels vague).
Think about your wound & losses.

Set an alarm for at least 15 minutes.

Take a few minutes to get alone and think about your loss.

Allow yourself to visualize the situation again. Don’t forget to create a working distance if the feelings are too intense. If the feelings don’t come - that’s okay! Tell your body so. Just feel what you feel - even if it’s numb or nothing. Notice any thoughts that arise to judge your experience. Jot them down.

Notice any interruption tactics your body might have.
week 3
This week is about complications in grief; *infections* in our wounds that make it harder to heal through grieving.
EPISODE #3

COMPLICATED GRIEF

or

"the lies we believe about ourselves or our losses that make it hard to heal"
the grief process:

complicated grief process:
what can cause complicated grief?

Past wounds that haven’t been processed
Invalidated loss
Certain emotions are off limits for you
Delayed grieving
Ambiguous or hidden loss
Comparing loss
Compounded loss
The nature of the injury
Lingering or ongoing wound

range of complications:
- complication --> trauma --> PTSD
- Ruptured narrative
- Paradox
- Disconstruction of identity
process

1. In what ways do you connect to the symptoms or sources of complicated grief?

2. Do you tend towards blinding or judgment?

dealing with the infections

Step 1: Enter the room without judgment or avoidance

Step 2: Identify/tag various emotions

Step 3: Transform infected narrative

Past wounds that haven't been processed

Invalidated loss

Certain emotions are off limits for you

Delayed grieving

Ambiguous or hidden loss

Comparing loss

Compounded loss

The nature of the injury

Range of complications: complication --> trauma --> PTSD
Your explanation of experience must:
1. make sense of your experience
2. leave space for a new explanation

### Three types of explanations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Does it make sense of your experience?</th>
<th>Does it leave space for a new explanation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>self pity</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self condemnation</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self compassion</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
process

3. Consider an infected narrative (e.g., “I’m worthless,” “This is hopeless,” “I’m a baby”). What might an explanation of self-pity look like? Of self-condemnation? Of self-compassion?
on your own this week
Complicated Grief

Out of the list of things that compound complicated grief, which do you identify most with? Journal through these feelings and explore the factors that might have contributed to feeling them. Pay special attention to any statements or examples in your head that seem to support their reasonableness.

- Unresolved past grief or trauma
- Loss you feel responsible for
- Invalidated loss
  - Grief you perceive as disproportionate
  - Comparing loss & belittling wounds
- Blocked loss - certain emotions are off limits
- Delayed grief
- Ambiguous or hidden loss
- Cannibalized loss
- Compounded loss
- Sudden or lingering loss
- Traumatic loss
Processing your grief.

What narratives or complications make it difficult to enter the room of certain losses?

Do those narratives make it harder for all losses or just some specifically?
Think about your wounds & losses.

Set an alarm for at least 15 minutes.

Take a few minutes to get alone and think about your loss. Allow yourself to visualize the situation again. Don’t forget to create a working distance if the feelings are too intense. If the feelings don’t come - that’s okay! Tell your body so.

Just feel what you feel - even if it’s numb or nothing.

Notice any thoughts that arise to judge your experience. Jot them down.

Notice any interruption tactics your body might have. See if you can begin to distinguish between feelings or narratives that might be part of the infection vs. the wound.
Practicing.

Get alone and practice trying to enter the room of a specific loss associated with your wound where you sense complicated grief might be lurking.

How does it feel to enter the room? Healthy or scary? Dark or light? Describe the feelings or adjectives around this room.

Can you tell if the infection is sourced in this specific situation, or another, perhaps older wound - even if it’s not identifiable?

Observe the room. Notice any judgements or interruptions and just acknowledge those and let them go. Try to observe what emotions/feelings or things you can notice in the room.

Try to capture specific emotions you see floating around the room in words or symbols? See if you can attach those to a specific situation. Are they related to other emotions? To aspects of the wound? To aspects of a past wound? To a narrative about the past or the future?

Notice how you are viewing yourself. Is there a tendency towards self-pity, self-compassion or self-judgement? How can you distinguish each one. How do they speak and how do they feel different/

See if you can begin to distinguish between feelings or narratives that might be part of the infection vs. the wound,
week 4
This week is about navigating grief when we get stuck! Which can happen when we have inadequate companionship, ineffective emotional regulation or trauma.
EPISODE #4

DISRUPTED NARRATIVES

OR

"LOSSES THAT ARE SUPER HARD TO PROCESS"
what gets us stuck in grief?

NOTES:
1. Inadequate companionship

Do you have safe people?

No: Consider if your expectations are keeping you from this. Can you ask God to bring more people?

Not sure: What would it look like to move towards people? Take one step!

I think so: What would it look like to give your community the freedom to fail?
#1: skills

Emotional Regulation skills take practice!

#2: cultural narratives

What are the narratives you have around emotions that keep you from growing in this? What does it look like to re-evaluate these?

#3: infections

What are the thoughts you might have around the loss or yourself that keep you from processing grief emotions. How does it look like to identify these?
TRAUMATIC GRIEF
on your own this week
Inadequate Companionship

First, are there safe people that you could talk to about your suffering?

Second, have you reached out to these people? Listen to how you feel about doing that. What are the emotional or intellectual obstacles to asking people into your grief with you?

Think about times you have grieved with people? What was that like? How was that initiated? Describe your experiences around this.
Traumatic grief.

What thought patterns might you have adopted from this wound or past wounds that might be impacting your every day interpretations of the world? (e.g. God doesn't answer prayers/ I am alone and no one cares about me).

Look for counter evidence to these. If you were trying to prove them wrong, what examples might you have from your experience that would falsify these claims?
Cultural scripts

What moments in your life became turning points because of how painful they were?

Did this specific wound violate a cultural script of what you expected to happen in life? How was this specific wound perhaps a break in a cultural script of what you anticipated your life was going to be?

Examine God’s cultural script. Think about your wounds in light of God’s cultural script - His explanation of what you should expect from life.
Cultural identity.

How did this wound, or the associated losses, disrupt your personal identity? Think through your role culturally, your value in certain cultures - family, church, society, work.

How is this wound viewed by God? How has it influenced your identity in the family of God?
week 5
This week explores the tasks associated with healthy grieving.
Episode #5

Tasks of Healthy Grieving

or

“What am I supposed to do to heal?”
4 tasks of healthy grieving

- Accepting the loss
- Reconstructing the narrative
- Finding meaning (specific and general)
- Working through the emotional pain of loss
#1 - working through the emotions of grief

Your brain trying to determine who or what violated you.

Your brain trying to help you get through whatever you have to do next.

Your brain trying to regain a sense of control.

Your brain trying to equip you for danger in a world that now seems unsafe.

Your brain letting you know what you value.

**FEELINGS**

- **ANGER**
- **DENIAL**
- **BARGAINING**
- **FEAR/ANXIETY**
- **SADNESS**

**Process**

1. Which emotions do you experience most frequently around your wound? Which less often?
Process

#2 - accepting the loss

#3 - reconstructing the narrative

① KETELLOUE EXPERIENCE
② ACTIVATE EMOTIONS
③ SUMMARIZE OUR EXPERIENCE
#4 - finding meaning in the loss

"everything can be taken from a man but one thing - the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances."

- Victor Frankel

"he who has a why to live for can bear almost any how"

- Victor Frankel

Process

1. Have you ever had an experience of finding meaning in a loss? What has that felt like?
Eight tips for being a good grief buddy:

#1: Let go of time expectations.

#2: Understanding and accepting the emotions of grief.

#3: Grief is different and subjective.

#4: Be careful of implying that lack of emotions are strength and sorrow is weak.

#5: Offer to participate in rituals.

#6: Consider what your friend needs (and be willing to offer support in the way they need it, regardless of how you would prefer to display it.)

#7: Remember. Be there for the long term.

#8: Normalize getting professional help.
on your own this week
Carving out time.

Scheduled out two to three blocks of time this week where you can practice working through the motions of grief and reconstructing your narratives.

Working through emotions.

Spend some time this week journaling through the following questions:
What are you feeling today about the wound?
Is there a specific loss you are noticing more?
What emotions do you notice?
Pick one of these emotions. Listen to the narratives around it. Let yourself feel it and experience the pain of it without judgement.
Reconstructing the narrative.

Tell the story: to yourself or someone else who is safe to just listen. Let it come out unfiltered. The narrative you are experiencing or have experienced - which doesn't have to be the narrative you cognitively believe are the 'facts'. This is about finding a way to tell the story you are reacting to.
week 6
This week is about the grieving with God. The greatest gift of grief is the way it will give you more of God.
EPISODE #6
GRIEVING WITH GOD
or
"the real reason this is all
worth it"

disappointment & Loss: week one
4 ways grief gives you God:

1. Experience God's Heart
2. Experience God's View / Agreement
3. Experience God's Empowerment
4. Experience God's Pain
Experiencing God's heart.

1. No other way
2. Care
3. Doesn’t judge
4. He hates our hurting

Process

1. What is one thing you hope to experience about God’s heart more fully in your grief?
Experiencing agreement with God.

Agree with God about what is bad. How does grief reveal a brokenness that is a result of the Fall?

Agree with God about what is good: How does this grief.

Experiencing God’s empowerment

Process

2. Consider God’s empowerment. What agreement is offered in grief that is one thing that struck you?
Experiencing God through understanding His suffering
Process
1. Identify one loss in your wound that feels painful

2. Process how Jesus might have experienced that same kind of loss

3. Spend some time listening as He tells you His story.
For the next six weeks - if you’re up for it - it’s time to keep working through the four key tasks of grieving. You’ll find some activities listed for each week!

Healthy grieving doesn’t happen in one week, so what we’ve done with this guide is provide activities for each of the four key tasks of grieving, and then some possible suggestions for a pace to work through these activities so you can grow in practicing these key tasks.

Do this at your own pace and as you have time! Just fight the urge to rush or delay grieving.

**week one:**
(1) Working through Emotions - activity one
(2) Reconstructing Narratives - activity one
(3) Finding Meaning - activity one

**week two:**
(1) Working through Emotions - activity one
(2) Reconstructing Narratives - activity two
(3) Finding Meaning - activity two

**week three:**
(1) Working through Emotions - activity one
(2) Reconstructing Narratives - activity three
(3) Finding Meaning - activity three

**week four:**
(1) Working through Emotions - activity one
(2) Accepting Loss - activity one
(2) Reconstructing Narratives - activity four
(3) Finding Meaning - activity four (a)

**week five:**
(1) Working through Emotions - activity two
(2) Accepting Loss - activity two
(2) Reconstructing Narratives - activity four
(3) Finding Meaning - activity four (b)

**week six:**
(1) Working through Emotions - activity two
(2) Accepting Loss - activity three
(2) Reconstructing Narratives - activity four
(3) Finding Meaning - activity four (c)
Activity one.

Spend some time journaling through the following questions:
What are you feeling today about the wound?
Is there a specific loss you are noticing more?
What emotions do you notice?
Pick one of these emotions. Listen to the narratives around it. Let yourself feel it and experience the pain of it without judgement.

Activity two.

Spend some time journaling through the following:
Begin to consider how your emotions have changed around grief.
The sadness may not be less, but start examining if it has gratitude in it too. Explore if the anger has forgiveness in it too.
Activity one.

Spend some time reflecting.
Where do you feel you are on accepting the loss? How integrated does it feel with your life? What are the feelings or thoughts that come to mind when you think about accepting the loss.

Activity two.

Spend some time planning a memorial.
When you feel ready, start thinking through an activity that might help you memorialize what you have lost. This might not be the right time for it, but if you feel like it’s needed, think through what that might be? Who - if anyone - would you want to invite into that with you? Maybe it’s writing a letter, visiting a place, finding an object to let go of...

Activity three.

Spend some time journaling through the following:
What is something you can do today to help you move in and accept the loss? Write a letter to God or a relevant person about what you miss or what it feels like to let go of what you’ve lost.
NOTE: These may take a little more time and emotional space

Activity one.
Tell the story: to yourself or someone else who is safe to just listen. Let it come out unfiltered. The narrative you are experiencing or have experienced - which doesn't have to be the narrative you cognitively believe are the ‘facts’. This is about finding a way to tell the story you are reacting to.

Activity two.
Activate Emotions. It’s important to feel the emotions your body is trying to process in order to transform them. Imagine your child telling YOUR story from activity one as if it happened to them, and imagine reacting to them. Journal about what it felt like until you feel the emotions begin to surface.

Activity three.
Summarize your experiences. Explore different meanings for the chosen episode and to choose a metaphor/title unifier. For example, “If it was a movie or a book, what title would you give?”

Activity four.
Practice new narratives. Build and experiment with other possible explanations of your experiences around the wound and its losses. This isn’t about trying to get your feelings in line, this is about reframing, or reinterpreting the events with a narrative that helps you move towards the person you want to be. (e.g. singleness feels painful in part because it feels like no one wants me ---> maybe I am single because Someone wants me so so much. Maybe singleness feels like no one wants me because of the culture I am a part of, etc...)
Activity one.

Spend some time reflecting.
What are your instinctive feelings around suffering? Don't think through your beliefs, but rather try to listen to your emotions and the instinctive narratives you might have around suffering. List them out below and consider what might have helped shaped these.

Activity two.

Consider God’s narratives. In your own words, summarize how you think God would offer meaning in suffering. Think back through a few times you might have felt those narratives feel true. Try to access the emotional experiences of those times by meditating on them and what they felt like.

Activity three.

Spend some time reflecting on the purpose in others losses. Think through a few people you know who have been significantly shaped and helped shaped others through their losses. Spend five minutes praying for each one of them: thank God for how he has used their wounds, meditating on specifics and pray for them to see that too.

Activity four.

A. Think through other people who might be walking through the same wounds as you. Spend time praying for them. What would you hope for God to do in their lives? How do you want Him to encourage them or comfort them?
B. Continue thinking through other people who might be walking through the same wounds as you. Write them a letter today: what do you want to say to them? What do you wish they knew?
C. Look back at your journaling from 4a-b. Now begin to pray for God to use you to fulfill your desire for these other people. Continue to do this once a week until a vision begins to emerge.