

WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. It's a very natural thing for us to want to celebrate and rejoice with others when things are going well:**
1. We love to have a good excuse to throw a party, in fact, we don't even need an excuse do we!
 - a. Women have a blast throwing showers and teas for a person who is having a baby or one who is getting married. Guys are less formal but we still have our things... golf scrambles, paintball matches, a sports game, etc. Takes work, but it's no chore is it?
 - b. We have potlucks for just about any reason, Fourth of July parties, New Year parties, Halloween parties, Christmas parties, Labor Day and Memorial Day parties etc...
 - c. Maybe it's a person graduating from school, getting a job promotion, purchasing their first house, becoming an eagle scout, retiring, or attaining some other achievement
 2. For the most part, we don't need a "how to" book to teach us how to throw a party, we don't wonder how to celebrate with someone when something good happens, why? It's natural!
- B. While rejoicing with those who rejoice is almost second nature to us, we find it much more difficult to weep with those who weep. Yet this too is a responsibility we have toward one another (Rom 12:15)**
1. What do you say to someone who has just found out they have cancer? Who is standing at the grave of their own child? Who has just lost their job in a terrible job market? Etc...
 2. There are people who naturally are great at encouraging others and have this uncanny ability to truly weep with those who weep... For the rest of us this can be a great struggle. Often the problem is not a matter of desire but a matter of knowing how best to express that desire
 3. We know "rejoicing with those" means more than just feeling happy for them... It means doing something to celebrate with them. So "weeping with those who weep" means more than just feeling sorry for them... It means doing something to help them deal with their sorrow

LEARNING TO WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP

- A. The greatest way to learn how to weep with those who weep is by watching and learning from Jesus:**
1. Perhaps the most famous occasion when Jesus wept with those who wept was when Lazarus died... Known for being the shortest verse in the Bible... it's packed with meaning (**John 11:35**)
 - a. Mary & Martha's brother had died. They had sent for Jesus to come and heal but Jesus had delayed getting there... By the time Jesus arrives he had been dead four days
 - b. See verse 32 – It's hard to feel the tone of Mary's words but there is despair, hopelessness, and she may even be blaming Jesus for his death. I don't think we fully appreciate how intense this scene really is. Mary and Martha have been overcome by sorrow!
 - c. So what does Jesus do? He weeps. He knows He's about to raise Lazarus, but He still feels the sorrow over the death of his friend. Is it not possible that some of these tears are for Mary and Martha, especially in light of their words to him "If only you had..."
 - d. When we have the opportunity to give comfort to those who are weeping, our ability to weep with them goes a long way. Certainly this doesn't mean we have to actually shed tears every time, but people can tell by the look in our eyes if we feel their pain
 2. Another time His compassion shines was when He healed a man who had leprosy (**Matt 8:1-4**)
 - a. Now there were many times in which Jesus healed the sick, made the lame walk, the blind to see, or even raised the dead... But there's an added personal touch to this healing

- b. There are two things that Jesus did here – He reached out and touched the man and he spoke words by which the leper was cleansed. In many cases when Jesus touched people it was to heal them; however, it seems to be his words that healed this man
- c. Why then did Jesus touch him? He was a leper, you weren't supposed to touch a leper. How many people shunned his very presence? How long had it been since he had been touched? He knew the pain of rejection, loneliness, & heartache all too well!
- d. Jesus He used His touch to comfort the weeping so often and His touch made a difference!
- e. Today if we are going to be people who “weep with those who weep” we need to see the value of a hug, a pat on the back, a hand on the shoulder, or holding hands to pray
- 3. The great invitation of Jesus shows His awareness of people's difficult circumstances and His great ability to provide an answer for their needs! **(Matthew 11:28-30)**
- 4. Throughout His life we see Jesus reaching out with compassion and care for those who were hurting, not only physically but also spiritually **(Matthew 9:35-36)**
 - a. If you just think about his coming to this earth and living as a man, that showed his ability to weep with those who weep. He went the ultimate distance in order to understand what we go through and to give us hope and victory over greatest our struggles!
 - b. Over and over phrases like, “He had compassion on them” would appear and it would be followed by some action or words from Jesus to help fix the crises people were in
 - c. The heart of Jesus' ability to “weep with those who weep” was His heart!
 - 1) He genuinely cared about people which served as the motivation for His response
 - 2) His compassion caused Him to be aware of the needs and circumstances of people
 - 3) Though busy, His deep love meant He always had time for those who were hurting
 - d. If we are going to weep with those who weep we have to start with a deep and genuine love for people in general. The more we love, the more we'll see their need, the more we'll be willing to take risks to help them, the easier it will be to feel their pain

B. Some specific principles for weeping with those who weep:

- 1. The friends of Job who came to comfort him leave us a classic example: They demonstrate both helpful and hurtful ways to weep with those who weep **(Job 2:11-13; Job 16:1ff)**
 - a. Talk about a person who was in the middle of a crises and was weeping – Job had almost everything that could go wrong go wrong all at once. Listen to his words **(Job 3:25)**
 - b. His friends come and start out very well – Their motivation is great... they want to show Job sympathy & comfort. When they arrive they weep with him & sit there with him
 - c. Where'd they go wrong? They opened their mouths too much! While their intentions were good, their words of comfort & advice were bad. They just added to his pain!
 - d. Sometimes saying little or even nothing at all is better than increasing in words. When we open our mouths in tough situations, like when people are really hurting, really weird things tend to come out and things come across in ways we don't mean for them to
- 2. David spoke of how he placed himself in the position of those who were hurting **(Psalm 35:13-14)**
 - a. David's attitude here is amazing – If you look at the context these people he speaks of are people who rejoice in his suffering. He rises above their disdain & responds with love
 - b. David sits where they sit, walks in their shoes! If you were to look at David you would think he was the one hurting, why, because he was! He felt their pain and showed it!
 - c. See the difference between sympathy & empathy – Sympathy is feeling for another person while Empathy is feeling with another person. David exhibits empathy very well!

- d. Especially within the body of Christ, but with all people, the more we develop empathy the better we can help those who are hurting. Imagine what it'd be like to be in their situation, remember times when you were where they are, try to clothe yourself in the mantle of the other person's emotions as much as possible (**1 Cor 12:26-27**)
3. Paul makes the point that he sufferings and the comfort of God which he experienced allowed him to better encourage and comfort those who were hurting (**2 Cor 1:3-7**)
- Here's one way Paul turned trials into triumph... His attitude is amazing when you consider all he went through. If he didn't see some purpose behind it, he might despair!
 - The purpose he describes here is that God would use the comfort God had given Him to comfort others who faced similar afflictions. How? Paul could relate and offer help!
 - Paul saw so close of a connection that he speaks of his affliction being FOR their comfort.
 - So as we seek to better weep with those who weep we need to use our past experiences to offer comfort and support to those who are facing similar struggles:
 - Who is best equipped to help a person who has lost a spouse? Who is about to bury a child? Who has a miscarriage? Who's going through a divorce?
 - Simply by sharing your experience can help, advice and support comes with more authority because you've been there, you can truly empathize, etc.
 - Sometimes this may take great amount of strength on your part – It may reopen wounds that have closed and bring back painful memories, but if you can bring your past experiences back up, it can be an invaluable help to others!
4. We can also weep with those who weep by sharing our faith through God's word (**1 Thess 4:18**)
- This passage was written by Paul expressly for the purpose of giving them something by which they could comfort one another. He intended it to be read & repeated often!
 - This is a very practical way in which we can share our faith, hope, and love with one another... It provides us access into the immeasurable peace God has given to us!
 - If a person's faith really matters to them, the scriptures will likely be more comforting to them than anything else... It allows comfort to flow through our great fellowship!
 - What are some practical ways we can do this? Go visit in their home and read the Bible together, call and share a scripture, write a letter or card with some scripture in it, or even get a decoration for their home with a helpful passage on it – Limitless options!
5. One of the most helpful ways we can weep with those who weep is by listening (**Proverbs 18:13**)
- When one comes to us with a problem we need to know they aren't necessarily wanting a ton of advice, even if they may say they do, often they just want someone to listen!
 - What does it mean to listen? It means when the other person is talking you aren't thinking about what you're going to say when they quit talking! Many of have no idea what a person meant when they get done talking! We certainly miss the "hidden things"
 - Be aware of your non-verbal communication – Facial expressions, eye movement, hand movement, untimely laughter or yawns, etc. – These can give the wrong message!
6. When decide to speak words of comfort to those who are weeping, we need to be careful to choose our words very carefully (**Proverbs 12:18; 15:23; 16:24; 18:4; 25:11, 20**)
- With the exact same genuinely loving intentions two people may do two different things with their words of comfort. The first person may provide comfort and support while the second person may add more pain, sorrow, and loneliness to their heart!
 - There are some things people say, with great intentions, but maybe without thinking:
 - At a job less: "Stop worrying about it... you'll get another job"

- 2) At the loss of a friend: "I'm sorry, but at least it wasn't your spouse or your child"
 - 3) At the loss of a loved one: "I know what you're going through" – When you have never lost a loved in that situation (like a parent having to bury a child)
 - 4) Someone has a miscarriage: "Oh you're young, you'll have another baby"
 - 5) Illustration: Steven telling me after a break up: "Here's a quarter..." – Didn't help!
- c. Counselor Norman Wright lists several comforting responses: I'm praying for you, God did not intend us to handle crises by ourselves, God cares and I care, God can give you peace, don't give up, God loves us, a scripture, the pain will never completely go away but with God's help we can learn from times like these – There's a lot others
7. Finally, as we weep with those who weep we need to be cognizant of their needs and respond with any appropriate action (**I John 3:17-18**) – We have to take some initiative in this matter

CONCLUSION: Weeping with those who weep is never easy to do; but, it's something we will do if we genuinely love others and have a deep concern for them. The closer we draw to one another, the easier it will become!