

**Week One: *Grieve Your Losses***  
***Exodus 12:29-32***

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. What do you think about when you see a roadside memorial, those small—sometimes large—vignettes of weathered crosses, ribbons, flowers, or even stuffed animals that you see piled along the roadways? Do they stir up feelings, or have you become blind to them? What purpose do they seem to serve?
2. Read Exodus 12:14-28. What is being described in this section of scripture? What was this ritual supposed to be for the Israelites? (see vs. 17)
3. Some versions of the Bible use the word “celebrate,” others say “commemorate” or “observe.” Why is it important for us to celebrate or commemorate notable occasions?
4. It’s interesting to note that as participation in funerals has decreased over the last few decades, the rise of roadside memorials seems to have increased. Why is it necessary for humans to find some replacement for formal funerals? In other words, why is it especially important as humans to commemorate loss?
5. What sort of things keep you from marking and acknowledging loss?
6. Oftentimes our failure to recognize a loss is the primary reason we don’t take steps to fully grieve it. As you end your FIFTEEN today, ask God to give you the courage to name a loss as such whenever you feel it.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

7. What’s the biggest positive change you have ever made in your life? Maybe you moved to a new state, got a new job, or went away to school? What was the best part of that change? What was the hardest? In spite of all of the good things, what were the things you grieved?
8. Read Exodus 12:29-32. After years of hardship, it was a great tragedy, a tremendous and catastrophic loss, that would set Israel free and eventually result in them being made into a new, free nation. But loss was the initiator. Primarily for Egypt, but the losses were real for Israel as well. What types of losses might they have dealt with?
9. One thing the Israelites had to help them grieve was each other. God’s people were all together as they faced their new life. They had their families, their customs, and their faith. When you made your big move, did you have others with you or did you have to find a new circle of people to support you? How did that impact your move?
10. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10. How is it better to allow others into our grief?

11. Grief experts tell us that trying to grieve on your own slows down the process. How easy is it for you to allow others into your life when you're grieving?
  
12. Take a few minutes to list some of the people in your life that you could trust to share in your times of grief.
  
13. Sometimes it is best when dealing with a loss to spend time with others who are dealing with the same type of loss, just as God called the Israelites to revisit their Passover every year with others so that they could remember what they had experienced. If you have looked at your list and realized that you may need someone to share in your grief, use the rest of your FIFTEEN to talk to God about that. Then end in prayer by asking him to help you find someone to share in your times of grief and to give you the courage to do so.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

14. When bad things happen, are you the kind of person that likes to look back or are you the type that just wants to forget about it and move on as quickly as possible? What do you think are the benefits of trying to move on as quickly as possible?
  
15. Grief experts tell us that it's important not to ignore the past. Dismissing it or purposely downplaying it by only focusing on the bad simply extends the grief and keeps you from actually moving forward. Why might remembering the past fondly and celebrating it actually be healing?
  
16. Read Ezra 3, which takes place during a period of time when the Israelites were rebuilding the magnificent temple Solomon had built, and answer the following questions:
  - a. Why was the older generation grieving?
  - b. Why was it important for them to grieve?
  - c. What might happen if the younger generation acknowledged their grief?
  - d. How could celebrating what was lost be mutually beneficial for both generations?
  
17. Can you think of a modern-day example for this story? Who was grieving in your example?
  
18. Sometimes people stay stuck in the past because we are afraid that what was lost will be forgotten. Other times, we try to act like it never happened. God does not intend for us to do either. Read Genesis 1:31-2:2. What did God do when he completed his work of creation?
  
19. Whether we're mourning the loss of a person, a job, or even a way of life, it is so important to stop and see that it was good. Finish your FIFTEEN by praising God for giving you all of the things that you have been missing lately. It is okay if your celebration includes both laughter and tears.

#### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

20. Read Deuteronomy 34:7-8. When did the initial time of mourning for Moses come to an end?
  
21. Long before grief groups and therapists counseled people through loss, the Jewish culture had mastered the art of grieving. There were six phases of mourning and they all held a specific purpose. After the first phase called Aninut, (the funeral phase) is Shiva, which literally means sitting. It is a seven-day time of mourning and reflection which leads to the third phase, which concludes about 30 days from the time of death. Why is it so important make time for an acute expression of grief?
  
22. The fourth phase begins at the end of the first month and lasts until the first anniversary of the death. How is this phase of grieving very different from the first, more acute phase?
  
23. American culture is often uncomfortable with sadness. We go to extreme measures to avoid sadness in ourselves and others. But in the Jewish culture, it is not only accepted, it's expected. How would freedom to feel lingering sadness change how people grieve?
  
24. Read Ecclesiastes 3:3-5. What does this verse say about being sad?
  
25. If feelings of sadness never have the chance to be felt, they can take on a life of their own, simmering constantly under the surface indefinitely, occasionally bubbling out as rage. If we hold sacred our allotted periods of sadness, they can become just that, a season. Finish your FIFTEEN and ask God to help you see if there are feelings of sadness in your loss that you need to honor and allow them time to just be.

#### **Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

26. It is not unusual for a grieving widow to dream that their spouse has divorced them. Some counselors say this underlies a feeling a sense of abandonment by the deceased, even though his or her spouse could not control the circumstances of their death. How might forgiveness play a part in healing from this type of grief?
  
27. Forgiveness in loss is a very complicated matter. Unlike the widow who feels abandoned when there's no one truly at fault, sometimes there is someone to blame. How does knowing that someone is to blame (even if that someone is you) change how you grieve your loss?
  
28. One of the easiest ways I know how to forgive someone is to first focus on how you have been forgiven by Jesus. Read Colossians 3:12-14. Then make a list all of the ways that the Lord has forgiven you.
  
29. Now read Luke 23:33-34. Who did Jesus forgive?
  
30. Forgiveness is such an important part of healing, but sometimes it can be the hardest part. Jesus modeled for us the

ultimate forgiveness. Yet too often we cling to our hurts like battle wounds. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN before God in a posture of humility. Ask him to help you to forgive anyone that you need to forgive, even yourself.