

A JOURNEY OF GRIEF[©]

An Old Negro Story -- Melody and Medley of Grief



A UNIVERSAL GUIDE FOR HEALTHY GRIEVING

Written and Published by
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A Journey of Grief
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Melody and Medley of Grief[®]

Cover Graphics by an unknown artist

From:
Study In Depth

University of Oklahoma
College of Continuing Education
Internet Guided Independent Study

Liberal Studies

by Myrna Roberts

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Prayer

Father, my prayer is that You will partner with me with A Journey Of Grief, so that millions, if not billions, can experience this work. Amen.

Thanks to:

Dr. Mary Jo Watson
Frank Rodriquez
Bob Dougherty

Special Honor to:

The millions of Africans who died in what some people call the North Atlantic Slave Trade. I call it holocaust.

THE MODEL

Chapter One

If you are reading this book, chances are good that you have or will experience personal losses. The purpose of this book is to demonstrate a healthy and joyful way to manage grief associated with those losses. Selected as a model for this example is a group of people who have demonstrated how to survive grief for prolonged time periods. The subjects are the Africans, and their descendants, who were enslaved in the United States during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. I'm specifically describing the people who were kidnapped, shackled and brought to North America. This group was personally stripped of their language, culture, inheritance and dignity, to disgracefully be called and treated as slaves. Hereafter, I will refer to

this collective as the “Old Negro” or simply the “Negros”.

I will not discuss the horrible conditions the Negroes were forced to endure except where specifically required. That subject would be better dealt with in another writing. I will attempt to discuss only the activities used to handle the 300 plus years of continuous holocaust. Please understand that this writing is an attempt to recreate the entertaining workshop bearing the same name.

Let's start A Journey of Grief by clarifying the spiritual attitude of the Negroes. To do this we will first establish a common language so we can express mannerisms and feelings that can only happen in a spiritual realm. In other words, you can't take this journey in the body, you must take A Journey of Grief in the spirit.

Smile. Pack your bags and get ready to go. This book is your ticket. We're going to have a ball!

ESTABLISH A COMMON LANGUAGE

Chapter Two

As with any trip, we have to prepare for the journey. From the point forward, you will need to refer to the workbook portion which begins on page 58 of this book. You should probably flip to that page now to familiarize yourself with the vocabulary and other exercises. The workbook is very similar to that provided to participants in the workshop. Be sure to write answers to questions in your own words. This will help facilitate healing and map out a clear direction of travel.

In order to deliver the intended understanding I will

go into detail about the following words and phrases:

Communication

Commune

Namaste

Community

Integrity

Standing in the Gap

Codes

Victory Dance

Grief

Moaning and Groaning

the Paraclete

Chanting

Sowing Seed

Related words and phrases that are not discussed here but which will be helpful are:

Drone

Humble/humility/meekness

Toning/tuning

Vision

While the language of this book is American English, the definitions given here will carry a deeper spiritual connotation that the Negroes expressed. It is not my contention that the Old Negro were conscience of these vocabulary words, but that their knowledge of the spirit of the words was natural and smooth and that they operated under the foundation of the meanings used here. Through written communication I will establish a common language so that there will be no confusion concerning the far reaching effects of this book.

Early in researching this presentation, it became obvious that people sometimes have different meanings for the same words. As I began to search for the boundaries of that predicament so that I could define it, I discovered that the very root of the problem was that many of us have different meanings for the word **communication**. Quite honestly, the problem was revealed when the Holy Spirit asked me, "What is communication"? The question prompted me to ask many people what they thought communication

meant. Basically, I found that most people believe that **communication** simply means *the exchange of information from person to person*. Webster defines the word as being *the act of transmitting ideas through writing or speech*. However evidence shows that the idea of communication shared by the Old Negro had a more complex meaning.

In my prayer walk it was revealed that the secret to finding the Old Negro's understanding of the word communication, one looks at the base part of the word. To the Negro, in order to communicate, you must first **COMMUNE** with the person or entity you are COMMUNicating with. The word **commune** implies a much more spiritual event. Accepted as a part of **COMMUNion** is an attitude of holy sacrament.

Taken to its extreme, to commune means to be of close relationship, offering sacred customs for the purpose of self-government. It speaks to the harmony and hidden government instituted by brethren and "sistren" of the Old Negro. Therefore, in this regard,

simple conversation between friends is a very spiritual act that Europeans and their descendants of the era did not comprehend. The European Americans eventually grew to fear the power of the Old Negro's art of communication. For example, it's a well-known fact that the Old Negro communicated using drums. European enslavers grew to realize that each time the drum was played, an African ran away. Thereafter, the Negroes' use of the drum was forbidden and their hands were severed if they used this form of communication.

Using this realm of insight, (all things considered), an interpretation of the Old Negro's definition for the word **communication** is: *a revelation and impartation of information from one entity to another* and not merely an exchange or transmission of information. Once we establish this understanding of communication, we began to comprehend that A Journey of Grief must happen entirely in the realm of spirituality rather than in the physical. Again, it is not my contention that the Old Negro had a physical and tangible understanding of these words. It is, however, my conten-

tion that they functioned using the ideas expressed with this vocabulary.

Building on this thought, the next important vocabulary word is the salutation “**Namaste**”. Whenever discussing this word with Christian audiences I always ask, as I will ask you, to keep an opened mind here because **Namaste** is a foreign word known mostly for use during yoga. **Namaste** is a two-pronged Hindu word with an intense meaning. It’s initial meaning is “the divinity in me salutes the divinity in you”. This greeting is filled with respect, reverence and love. Customarily **Namaste** is said while bringing both palms of the hands together before the heart in an attitude of prayer, while lightly bowing the head and shoulders. **Namaste** is offered by surrendering all ego, showing that your hands are unarmed, and that you come in peace. The hands folded in prayer represent celebration and honor. The left and right hand brought together depict harmony and centeredness. In **Namaste** one pays reverence when the giver becomes silent and motionless for a moment. Try it. Dwell there for a moment. Pause

for the full effect of what is meant here: “that part of me which is the essence of the universe salutes that part of you that is the essence of the universe.” “The Jesus in me salutes the Jesus in you.”

Once that idea is firmly planted in your heart, only then can you advance to the second part of the statement: “the divinity in me salutes the divinity in you -- **AND WHEN I AM IN MY RIGHTFUL PLACE AND YOU ARE IN YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE, WE ARE ONE.** While meeting the other person on the level of the heart and soul, the separation between each person disintegrates; no longer is there another one – there is only One. Because of popular African American behavior today, I believe that the Old Negro’s particular form of Namaste would have been a heart to heart, welcoming bear hug.

Essentially, this is the same Biblical idea portrayed by the Apostle Paul as he spoke about the body of Christ, the true church of God:

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”

1 Corinthians 12:12, (*Third Millennium Bible*).

If we take this purely spiritual concept and try to measure it in a tangible equation, the question and answer that I developed looks like this:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{COMMUNication} \\ + & \text{COMMUNE} \\ + & \text{Namaste} \\ \hline = & \text{COMMUNity} \end{aligned}$$

One look at the above equation and you'll notice the idea of commonness or ONENESS. It also suggests that the sum of the equation involves a collective body that is probably not noticeable in today's society. To get a thorough idea of what is meant here look at the wagon wheel depicted in Figure 1 as a image of the Old Negro's communal and spiritual

state of mind. I use a wheel because it's a simple structure with numerous parts. I could just as easily use a cell with chromosomes or any other simple structure.

Using a wheel as THE ONE, and keeping in mind that all parts or “members” have a “rightful place” ... every person in the COMMUNITY has their own unique position and no person can take the place of another person. In this instance, the hub inside the wheel symbolizes the activity that brings the mem-

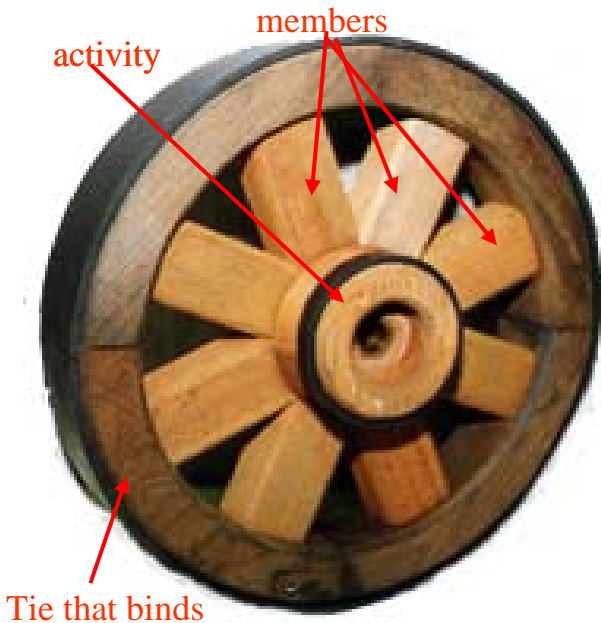


Figure One

bers together. Each spoke in the wheel represents a member in the COMMUNity and the outer wheel is the tie that binds everyone together. The binding apparatus in the Old Negro's COMMUNity was love. Love for one another and the love for the community as a whole. If a person leaves the COMMUNity for any reason, that person's spirit will be deeply missed.

Ultimately, the reason it is necessary to establish a COMMUNity is because in order to experience a healthy grieving process using this model, you must have a grief community. In this model, it is impossible to grieve effectively or resolve your grieving process alone. A few substitutions for the grief community that have proven ineffective in today's society are drug abuse, alcoholism and shop holism. It is my contention that these "isms" exist because people, and ultimately communities, have a lack of **integrity** or voids associated with a failure to complete healthy grieving processes. We use artificial stimuli to fill the spiritual grieving voids that can only be filled with spiritual stimuli.

The word **integrity** is one used on a daily basis in the United States. However, when prompted for the true meaning of the word, few people realize its depth and breadth. Generally we think integrity means trustworthy, loyal, honesty and/or character. Webster defines integrity as: *The quality or state of being complete; unbroken condition; wholeness; entire. Unimpaired; perfect condition; soundness. Morally sound.*

As with communication, the aim here is to probe deeper for a more complete understanding of the word. In order to demonstrate exactly what **integrity** means, I will use the image of a simple vase as shown in Figure 2. The exercise in use here is to start with a thumb size photo of a vase, stretch the image 5 or 6 times the original size. When you examine the blown up image shown in Figure 3, you'll notice that the image is blurred. A graphic designer would say that the larger vase in Figure 3 has "lost its **integrity**".



Figure Two

To find out exactly why the bigger picture is blurry or



Figure Three

fuzzy, simply place the image under a magnifying glass and will find that the glass is fuzzy because the lines of the image are broken and are no longer touching. In other words, the image is not whole but fractured into pieces. This is a symbolic diagram for what I'm alluding to on a spiritual realm. A physicist

would tell you that the same kinds of bonding happens on a molecular level to create structural integrity for all solid material like a wheel, an air plane, a person or a real vase. The physicist would say that if the vase in Figure 3 were an actual vase, it could not hold water because its boundaries have been splintered.

So, using the line of thinking, the word **integrity** has a two-part definition. The first part must be in place before the second part can be implemented. The Old Negro would say that a vessel must first be whole. Only after the vessel achieves wholeness can it then be tangible enough to hold the fluids of trustworthiness, loyalty, honesty or character. Each community defines its own ingredients of part two, but the individual members as well as communities must first have whole, solid boundaries or the ingredients will fall through the cracks of the “broken vessel.”

The practical application I use for this spiritual demonstration is this:

Once I owned a thriving copy center business. This business had three chief components: 1) copy center; 2) computer-aided graphic design; 3) meeting rooms and computer time rental. At the height of the business' existence I needed at least seven employees to keep the business functioning correctly. There were inconsistencies in my life that resembled this dichotomy:

The business employees feared me enough to change their behavior patterns when they heard me coming. They would get off the phone and pretend to work diligently or begin to clean the counter tops and sweep the floors so that when I entered the room I'd never know they were loafing. However, my own child cared little about my presence so getting her to perform the most remedial task would prove quite a problem.

When we worked overtime I would make sure everyone of the employees was fed a nutritious meal and yet at the same time I couldn't seem to get dinner on the table at home. Therefore my own family either

went without eating, cooked for themselves or received substandard food from “mom”. My house was usually a mess but the business was always spotless.

Each month the business spent more than a thousand dollars in utilities and I’d make sure all the utilities were current. On the other hand, there were nights when I went home to find my phone had been disconnected or that my electricity was turned off.

The point is that my life was spread so thin that it was obvious that I was having issues of integrity. To be quite blunt, my life was broken because my pride was too puffed-up to manage. Therefore my entire community structure was in pitiful distress. Important things were falling between the cracks — my boundaries were shattered. My family, friends and employees apparently suffered because of my personal integrity issues. Because I wanted to be more effective and maximize my potential, I sought to find a remedy to my lack of integrity. I found only two ways, each method was rather effective alone but together, the two worked exceptionally well.

The first remedy for my lack of integrity was that I needed to humble myself and shrink my activities to a manageable size. In that respect, I downsized the company, bought a bigger house and put my business in a room in the house. Any projects that my daughter and I could not handle were refused. That way all the money made by the business goes directly back into my house; along with the added tax incentives that go along with having a home business. My daughter and I were bound together by not only our love for each other but by our common activity. It then became possible for me to make money at home, clean the house, cook dinner, care for my child as well as the neighborhood children. Any suspicious looking characters in our neighborhood have to worry about me before having their way with our children. The benefit was that I was more of a whole person because I wasn't spread so thin. Because I, the individual, was more complete, my community benefits and becomes more complete.

As for the employees, I could do them a greater service. The business had already given them market-

able skills and I was personally able to help direct them into career choices and not just remedial tasks. I provided business and personal references, helping to compile resumes and other references.

Because I was now down to a manageable size and had regained a semblance of a whole person, my vessel could hold some of the ingredients of trustworthiness, loyalty and character. In shrinking, it may not be reasonable to reduce to the original size. Once you shrink at least half way, you may be in a position where the second remedy for integrity issues is highly practical.

The second remedy, as shown in Figure 4, is to redraw the missing boundaries to the vessel. This remedy is what the Old Negro called "**Standing in the**



Figure Four

Gap”. The phrase “**standing in the gap**” means to bridge the gap or fill in for someone when their integrity has been compromised. Surprisingly, the phrase is Biblical. A search of the scriptures turns up an exact match at Ezekiel 22:30. That passage reads:

"I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one."

(New Living Translation Bible).

An explanation of this passage may be that God looked for a righteous man to pray for the collective or community. According to the *Life Application Bible*, the wall in this passage is not made of stone, but of faithful people united in their efforts to resist evil. The “wall of righteousness” was in disrepair because sin creates gaps in the protective shield that God places around people. The ineffective attempts

to repair the wall — through religious rituals rather than living honorably only disguised the integrity problems. A remedy here would be to use humility and reduce egos and pride to restructure the community. According to scripture, once an individual's integrity is compromised, there is a way others can **stand in the gap** through intercessory prayer for the broken person or community. Moses stood in the gap when he made intercession for Israel in Psalm 106:23.

So He [God] declared He would destroy them. But Moses, His chosen one stepped between the LORD and the people. He begged Him to turn from His anger and not destroy them.

The implication here is that God accepts the intercession of others who stand in the gap. A further search for similar words and phrases reveals that at Isaiah 59:16:

He was amazed to see that no one intervened

to help the oppressed. So he himself stepped in to save them with his mighty power and justice.

The point is that the Old Negro enjoyed the benefit of spiritually establishing integrity for one another at a time when they probably did not know there was Bible precedence for the predicament. A tangible means for understanding this very spiritual euphemism is: when your parents pay your utility bills, keeping your electricity from being turned off, that too, is standing in the gap.

Proponents of today's society would probably draw a distinction between a collective community grief such as what happened at the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, and individual grief, such as the loss of a sibling. Someone else may say that they prefer to handle personal tragedy in their own way, whether that means barricading one's self in seclusion or going to parties or shopping. To those people I would say that while there is a difference between personal tragedy and widespread catastro-

phic disasters, you are missing the point of this model. According to the Old Negro's grief strategies, whether it be catastrophic or personal, grief work is an issue to be shared by an entire network of people. Sure, it's a matter of preference how you handle grief to a degree; however, your grief community's support isn't entirely unselfish. As long as you are crippled with grief your community is also crippled. They share your burden, offering spiritual, emotion and physical stability whether you ask it from them or not because they need you to get well.

Simply stated, according to this model, to complete a successful grieving period you must 1) be sober minded or addiction free; and 2) have an encouraging grief community in place. What's really hard is having to put your grief on hold while you establish sobriety or build a new collective; however it may be necessary. Here's a good example:

When my sister died, I lived in a frivolous atmosphere where life was centered around having fun. Two weeks after her death I saw a couple of friends at

a neighborhood corner store. When they saw me they excitedly declared, “Hey, where have you been? We’ve been looking for you.” I then replied, “My sister died in a car wreck and I was with her when it happened.” To which the one said, “Well, there’s a party at Dillard University tonight, can we catch a ride with you?”

At this point I think its safe to say that while these two gentlemen might have been part of my community of associates, they were not equipped to be members of my grief community. As I began to examine my circumstances, it became obvious that my life was not configured in such a way that I could enjoy a healthy grieving process, so I had to start a collective building process that took approximately ten years. It’s safe to say that I was an emotional cripple during the entire time. But eventually I completely surrounded myself with people that were better able to stand in the gap to help make me whole. People who could communicate with me even when I was verbally paralyzed. People who hovered nearby even when I screamed for them to “leave me alone”.

Ironically, in order to attract the kinds to people necessary to have a healthy grief community I had to mirror the kind of behavior that I needed. In other words I had to teach people how to act the way I needed them to act. I did this by staying near people during their times of crises, loving them regardless of what they said and by bringing cheerful music, dancing and singing in their presence and, telling funny jokes; or maybe I'd just sit silently to hold their hand or bring food when they were too crippled to cook. Sometimes I would cut their lawn or plant flowers in their yard. Little things to help but not putting too much pressure on them. I owed it to them to feel their pain and share their burden. To provide continuous support for the grieving person, standing in the gap is the key element, careful not to intrude but nonetheless, providing stability through the "trying time."

I've said all this to make the point that it's much better to have a grief community already in place when trauma strikes; however, it's not mandatory. At any rate, once you're addiction free and your grief community is in place, you're ready for The Journey.

THE JOURNEY

Chapter Three

Now that some of the ground rules are set in place, we can now focus attention on the actual journey. You can start smiling now because we are venturing out of sorrow and into the Land of Joy. The journey may be hard at first but I encourage you to put reluctance aside for a short while. What makes this journey unsettling is that we discuss spiritual matters to a great extent. These spiritual matters are like the wind: just because we can't see it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. I'm aware that people want solid objects to hold on to but hopefully I've given the skeptic enough information to avoid anxiety for awhile. Optimistically, since this journey offers lots of fun, the

laughter might cure whatever ails you. I'd like to add that you don't need to believe in this remedy but you do need to go through the motions for it to work. We'll play a game, sing songs, dance and giggle together. A Journey of Grief is a painless example of how the Old Negro used their "way of life" to make a horrible existence bearable. The previous chapters are an introduction to the work required to manage the pain associated with grief. Chapters Four through Eleven require action. The remaining segments are expressive and you'll find out why we call A Journey of Grief, a workshop. It's because we will work through our grief by exertion of energy. It helps if you perform the exercises as opposed to just reading. Normally the workshop and thus the fun is performed in the presence of an audience as "the collective," representing the formation of a new grief community. Participants see, before their very eyes, how individuals become a unified community when invoking these few simple spiritual techniques. While reading the text, imagination is fundamental.

THE CODES

Chapter Four

In all fairness, I must admit that the workshop was designed for a women's convention in an African-American Baptist church. While you don't need to be female, African, American, Baptist or in church to enjoy the fun, it's important that you realize that some of the **codes** in this piece are some of the old **codes** used to conceal behavior, signals or language of the Old Negro society. Some of those old codes linger today, codes which many members of the African American community can still read and understand. This is not a problem, it helps our demonstration because, according to this particular model, all grief communities have unique codes that only the

members of that community understand. The codes of the grief community are akin to the rudder of an airplane or boat. Webster describes a rudder as *a broad flat object underneath a vessel by which the vehicle is steered*. It is attached to the stern and is a driving force behind the entire steering mechanism. So too are the hidden codes of the grief community. Part of my style of leadership is to observe societal codes, tap into the code system and learn to control the codes. In other words, if you want to control the destination of the collective body, control the codes. The codes steer the community through the turbulence to effectively guide the members to the final destination of the spiritual journey. The codes call upon unseen forces and powers that change the direction of the vehicle. The codes act as a catalyst into the collective or community faith.

One example of an Old Negro code, unknown to most European Americans today yet prolific in African American society is: The blacker the berry. Test this code in your own life. Pose this question to any person of European descent, “The blacker the berry?”

Unless that person has enjoyed intimate contact with African Americans, they won't have the slightest idea of what you're talking about. Then pose the same question to a person of African descent in America. Any one of them would know the answer is, "The sweeter the juice". The full cliché is, "the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice." African American society is full of such codes. This particular code means, the darker you are the better you are. It's like giving a person permission to feel okay about how they look and who they are in a society where dark people were treated as chattel.

Since I'm using you, the audience, to begin a new grief community, at this point it's a good idea to interject a new code strictly for the sake of collective cohesiveness. The first part of the new code is, "Let the church be the church" and the second part is, "amen". So every time you hear or see the phrase, "let the church be the church," you let out an enthusiastic and hardy, "Amen". Your amen will be most effective if you make grandiose gestures with your hands clapping and waiving. Laugh when you say it the way the Old Negro would.

The reason I chose this code is because whenever you use spiritual or religious tools around people that don't prescribe to that particular faith or custom, its common courtesy to ask for their permission. So when I say, "let the church be the church" I'm waiting for the participants' "amen" to move forward. Your lack of assent means you are giving up the journey, you can't go any further. Because I'm exposing secrets of my forefathers I feel somewhat uncomfortable and because you're receiving ritualistic secrets you may not believe in, you'll feel uncomfortable. In this phrase, "the church" means the collective grief community. When this phrase is used herein it really means, "please, lets not fake about the situation at hand and let's be truthful with one another. Let's act like the Bible tells us to act by being respectful, righteous and not judgmental". When you agree to "let the church be the church", you surrender yourself and your will to righteousness by clapping and waiving your hands jovially (stirring the atmosphere) when you say "amen".

So, "Let the church be the church"!

THE MEDLEY AND MELODY OF GRIEF

Chapter Five

At this point it's important to reveal that I got this next bit of information in a prophetic vision or dream. Originally I was ashamed to say vision because I'd have to admit that I had no tangible source to cite. I wanted to tell you what the mental health industry would say about the 7 stages of grief, but you wouldn't need me for that! I wanted to talk about what Noah Webster would say or give the Biblical remedies of Job, Ruth and Lamentations regarding grief, but you wouldn't need me for that either! So I am bound to give new information that I received when I prayed on my face all night. So! During this journey

WE are going to perform The Melody and Medley of Grief. This is a full-participation performance and you must partake. That means you have to COMMUNicate, COMMUNE and be a part of the ONENESS of this grief COMMUNITY. The workshop works well with two or two hundred participants. But since we have only the writer (me) and the reader (you) there will be only the three of us: me, you, and the essence that created the universe (God). So, put a smile on your face, settle yourself down and tell yourself out loud, “I’m working through my grief”.

We’re going to sing and dance. We’re going to play a game and the winner will win a special prize. The name of the game is “SING THAT TUNE.” Since there is only me, you and the essence that created the universe, if you finish the course, then you’re the automatic winner. Since this is conveyed through the written word rather than workshop style, I need to amend the rules. This is how you play Sing That Tune:

1. Normally, I’d start to sing the beginning of a

song but here I'll just write the first few words to the song in red.

2. Then you leap to your feet.
3. Waive your hands in the air. If you can't leap, just waive your hands in the air.
4. Finish the tune. The words and melody are provided in your workbook so you don't have any excuse for not singing along out loud.
5. If you get the tune right, you have to do your **victory dance**.

I'm sure that by now you've guessed that each one of these motions has physical, emotional and spiritual benefits. Each successful motion releases a chemical reaction in your brain. While it can't be fully explained, there is the connotation of a holistic healing process at work here that medical practitioners world-

wide subscribe to.

Before I repeat the rules I just want to say: “let the church be the church”. (Giggle).

Part of being a collective grief community is to realize that combating loss associated with grief IS warfare on a spirit realm. The steps to this game, while delightfully funny, ARE the steps involved in fighting a spiritual war according not only to the Holy Bible but religious text around the world.

Again, the rules are:

1. Throughout this writing you see the words to a song written in red. The corresponding melody and lyrics associated with that song have been provided in the workbook. It is no secret that music and singing are medicine to the soul. The rhythm, melody and lyrics of the medicinal music are very important because beat and melody act as the catalyst that deliv-

ers the lyrical expression directly to the center of your being (your soul). In other words, you reap what you sow and, according to Jesus, the words are the seed sown (Luke 8). If you sow or sing about depressing issues then don't be surprised when you get depressed. Consequently, when you sing about adoration and high praise, don't be surprised when your spirit soars as on the wings of eagles. The latter is the objective we hope to achieve so I chose songs of love and adoration. When forming your own grief community, you'll choose your own songs to achieve the sought after purpose.

2. When you see the song, leap to your feet. Taking a standing position is a first rule to warfare on any realm. Challenges of significant import need to be met with a soldiers' stance, which is **ON YOUR FEET**. It is self evident that you are most lethal on your feet, because you think faster, have better leverage and better access to your fighting tools (hands and feet). Anyone who can not take a stand during battle is at a

disadvantage to their opponent. (Ephesians 6). If you can't leap – just waive your hands in the air.

3. Waive your hands in the air. Lift your hands in total surrender, adoration and praise to God. The Old Negro definition for praise means approval or enjoyment by applause, clapping, cheering, or stamping the feet, among other things. According to the Biblical reference of Psalms 63:4 and 141:2, praise with hands lifted is a high gesture of prayer, the place above your head being the prophetic place of speaking where God answers His people.
4. Finish singing the words to the tune as provided by the music is the same as answering a code. It will signify COMMUNication of a high level between me, you and the Lord. You show that not only do you understand, but that you agree and we are on one accord as a collective and cohesive spirit of integrity. In biblical days when the Israelites went to war they

sent the praise singers into the battle first. (2 Chronicles 20:21-24) This prepared the way for the Holy Spirit to enter and take charge of the battle. In doing so you are inviting supernatural intervention into your warfare. You are just the “vessel” by which the spirit does the work. Now! Let the church be the church.

5. Once you finish the tune, do your **Victory Dance**. A **Victory Dance** is simply joyous motions, using the hands and feet to signal victory. A Victory Dance is most effective when you move outside your usual character. The Old Negro used the ritual of dance to go from victory, to victory, to victory, to victory. This is the vehicle that carried them through great turmoil. They only counted the peaks, not the valleys. In order for your ritual to qualify as a real Victory Dance, your hands and arms must move simultaneously with your feet. You must either have a smile or a clever smirk on your face; and must be slightly out of character when you do the dance. Sometimes

the Victory Dance may be perceived as teasing your opponent. Your Victory Dance is unique to you. You decide what it looks like. If you're not afraid to step outside your character for just a second, this method of therapy will restore the integration of body, mind and spirit and help you regain a sense of identity. Even though I have spiritual reasons for suggesting the Victory Dance, The American Cancer Society promotes dance therapy, based on the belief that the mind and body work together and that through dance, people can identify and express their innermost emotions, by bringing innermost feelings to the surface. This can create a sense of renewal, unity, and completeness; rejuvenating the loss of personal integrity.

Now for our first practice tune we will start with a child's simple melody, one that a lot of people know because it's easy to sing. Since you're alone you'll have to use your "Royal We" as your grief community. When you do this with your real grief commu-

nity if the leader doesn't hold the tune correctly, don't be mean — forgive them, laugh out loud and then finish the process. Laughing out loud is part of the therapy. Laughing and singing out loud are expressions to the universe. This is a good exercise because it requires you to get your words, mind, body and spirit on one accord. Don't leave any one of them behind when you do this one: **Jesus Loves Me This I Know.**

How did you do? Were all of you on one accord? Did you leap to the soldiers stance, surrender yourself to the master of the universe by lifting your hands to the heavens and sing melodious praises to the most high? After you did that, did you do your victory dance, knowing by faith that you'd already won your battle? When you danced, did you know that you were signifying to your adversary (depression) that you had already won?

Usually you'll need to do this a couple of times to get all entities moving in harmony. Moving in harmony brings a spiritual integrity to the collective. It's really

fun and here is where the laughter really starts.
Laugh at anything vaguely humorous.

Let's try this one again. **Jesus Loves Me This I
Know.**

WHAT IS GRIEF REALLY?

Chapter Six

According to Webster, to grieve means to *bear a heavy burden*. On the other hand, my interpretation of the Old Negro beliefs suggests that Webster is describing “the loss” you feel when you experience a death, divorce, or lost job. What Webster is describing IS the “burden” but grief is much more of a tool at your disposal. The Old Negro believed that the process of healthy grief work is a precious gift from God. Grief is not the burden but the gift for managing the burden. Grief is the mechanism by which “the loss” can be overcome. Grief is the actual process – the melting away of the pain. Your tears have the divine purpose to wash away those unbearable feel-

ings in your life. Visualize grief as the working parts of a motorized instrument. The grief work is accomplished by the friction between the two gears. For example, the gears behind the face of a clock. While the hands on the surface move smoothly around the clock actually marking time, continuous labor in the background facilitates the even strokes that symbolize the passing of time. Those gears work like grief works.

I ask you to consider that grief looks, smells, taste, feels, and sounds like depression. But grief is the opposite of depression. They are on two different ends of a continuum. The perversion to grief is depression. Grief lifts you up while depression drives you down. Grief is a womb for new life while depression is a tomb for the old life. Get ready for a new song. Don't forget the rules!

What a Fellowship What a Joy Devine. [Rise, waive, sing, giggle, giggle, victory dance.]

Grief is nothing new for people of African descent born in the United States. African Americans have lived in a constant state of perpetual grief for more than 300 years. The reason I mention this is because modern science teaches us that our cells contain DNA which is the "blueprint" for the complete design of your physical body. We receive this "blueprint" from both parents. The DNA contains not only physical but also mental, emotional, and spiritual data. The information contained in the DNA is passed from generation to generation. Hence the term "cellular memory" suggests that people remember on a cellular level events that happened to their fore parents. I mean that genetically African Americans remember, on a cellular level, the ship, the ocean, the captivity, and all the suffering of the Old Negro. African Americans remember on a cellular level events they are not cognizant of in their minds.

For example: one thing that European Americans do that African Americans hate is they refer to African Americans as, "you people". This is what I call a reverse code. I mean that when European Americans

say that phrase African Americans respond angrily in secret. Yes, each and every African American is ready to fight when Europeans call them, “you people”. I don’t expect you to trust that statement but accept it as a challenge. Use this example to prompt honest dialogue with African Americans. If they personally trust you, honest COMMUNICATION could facilitate healthy grief for the entire country. I hope you’ll take the challenge and ask around. No one knows the exact reason why African Americans hate “you people” but it is undeniable that the phrase raises the ire of African Americans yet other groups don’t seem to mind. My point is that in the same way that African Americans remember the pain and anguish of the Old Negro on a cellular level, African Americans remember on a cellular level the remedy for that pain and you are experiencing pieces of the remedy right now. So, let the church be the church. Giggle [amen].

Now we’re ready to progress to the next level of grief. **Amazing Grace How Sweet The Sound.**

MOANING AND GROANING

Chapter Seven

Moaning and groaning or “wailing” was the life blood of the Old Negro spiritual songs. They believed that wailing is a form of praying in the spirit. Audible, and sometimes unintelligible low-pitched utterances used to express grief. Many times these utterances are used when agony is so great that words can not express the pain.

The Old Negro knew a great deal about moaning and groaning and they didn't hesitate to use this powerful tool. To date, African American songs and speech pattern are laced with moans and groans. For example: when I was growing up, if I did something

wrong my mom would put one hand on her hip and the index finger of her other hand to her cheek and say, “um, um, um”. You could tell how bad my deed was by the number and lengths of the “ums”. If I was just a little stupid she would just say, “Um, um, um”. That’s just kind of a tisk, tisk, meaning ‘sweetheart, you need work’. But if I was really bad she might say, “uuuu-mmm, um, um, um, um, um, um”. That meant, ‘Lord please come and save me and this stupid child from the collective shame that she is bringing down on all Black People from the past, present, and future. I am ashamed of her.’

Well, in this respect the Old Negro and the African Americans of today use moaning and groaning in daily living because it soothes the wounds of agony, sorrow and pain. It is apparent in all our songs, whether Christian, blues, R&B or rap. It is a very real instrument in our crying and singing. Mayo Angelo wrote a book called, “I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings”. Here, we have tapped into what Angelo is referring to. The crooning sounds of moaning and groaning is a form of praying in the spirit.

The Bible teaches that the Holy Ghost, who is the Paraclete, (which means the one who walks along side of God's children) hears every moan and groan. Those moans and groans are taken to the very throne room of God where Jesus (the Advocator) sits on the right side of the God (the Father and Judge). The Advocator prays and intercedes (standing in the gap) for God's children. (John 14:16 & John 16:7-8). After every moan or groan is taken up to heaven, the Paraclete interprets the meaning and tells God. God thereafter sends the prescribed "comfort" to the wailer, with the Paraclete who has been transformed into the "comforter."

Examine the song, Amazing Grace. Examine the music (melody) and the lyrics (words) and then listen to the African American style of singing the song, you will notice that no two African Americans sing the song alike and that the song is laced with moans and groans. The wailing of moans and groans can not be written into the music nor the lyrics because each moan and groan reflects the individual pain felt by the singer. The moaning and groaning brings comfort

from on high! I submit that if your pain seems unbearable, do not hesitate to “wail awhile”.

CHANTING — CALL AND RESPONSE

Chapter Eight

Call and Response chanting is a form of rhythmic group singing that is easy to learn because usually the group simply repeats either the of words at the beginning of successive clauses or repeats the of words at the end of successive clauses. The group not only repeats the words but also the expressive **drone, toning and tuning** of the leader.

In African Call and Response the participants repeat and respond to a drum; however since drum playing was outlawed by American enslavers, the Negroes made up their own form of call and response. This

form of imaginative music captures the feelings of southern field hands, prison camps, railroad crews, and the calls used to sound the river depth on Mississippi river boats, including the traditional sounding call "mark twain". Call and Response is the mother of tap dancing, ham boning, Negro Spirituals, American Blues, R and B, Gospel, and hip hop forms of music, and was long thought to be the only original folk music of the United States. Elements that African music share with Negro spirituals include syncopation, polyrhythmic structure and repetition of words. Audience participation increased the improvisatory nature of the spirituals, with the result that tens and even hundreds of versions of a single text idea exist. Thus modern African American Church enjoys what is known as the "Old 100s".

Call and response is a dying art in the African American community but still creeps along in African American night clubs and protestant churches. By no stretch of the imagination did Africans, the Old Negro or African Americans have a copyright on chanting. Witch doctors chant to cast their spells. Buddhist

chant to balance and direct collective karma. Ancient Hawaiians chanted, formally and informally for all occasions. Jews, Muslims and Christians alike chant the scriptures of their respective texts. Chants are utterances repeated over and over administered during deep meditation. Chants are focused energy in a determined direction, either singularly or collectively. Collective chanting is thought to have more power than individual chanting.

Another name for the call and response chants in African American culture is the Old Negro Spirituals or “charging a song” which is the same as the Old 100s. In this form of music the leader evokes a charge and the audience follows. Charge is a military warring word which, like the call and response, provokes the followers to rush into an attack of warfare. Modern day military marching songs bear a strong resemblance to the Old Negro’s call and response chants. This form of singing puts everyone on one accord: everyone working diligently to achieve a common goal. It suggests not only a collective simultaneous chant pattern, but also the collective simultaneous

thought pattern. A collective doing and thinking the same thing at the same time, that is a miracle!

SOWING SEED

Chapter Nine

One of the most powerful tools that God gave man dominion over is the seed. Everything valuable and living originated from a seed. The challenge here is to think of one living thing or thing of value that did not come from a seed. The Old Negro belief dictates that seeds are the single most important things on the face of the earth. Seeds are the doorway to life.

In order for there to be life – something must die! Once I bought 3 envelopes containing bell pepper seeds. I planted one envelope immediately. The next year I planted the second envelope, and I still have the last envelope unplanted. The amazing thing about

those envelopes of pepper seeds is that as long as they stay in the envelope they are worth only .59¢ — 59 pennies.

It wasn't until I plant the seeds in the ground and the seeds died, germinated and grew did the miracle process take place. Then and only then did the seeds' value begin to grow exponentially. The prominent principle is, you don't plant a seed and get a seed. You don't plant a seed and get one pepper. You plant one seed and get lots of peppers. Each pepper has many seeds. All of the seeds from each pepper having the potential to produce many more peppers that possess many more seeds. The Old Negro believed that death exhibits the same components— death is merely a change in substantive matter and not “the end” but “the beginning”. The Negroes believed that people and their words are seeds. They believed that when we are planted in the ground our value tends to grow exponentially.

CONCLUSION

Chapter Ten

If you made it this far, you're a winner. The prize is this: if you could follow me through this maze on our journey of grief. From the language to the singing and dancing. From singing and dancing to moaning and groaning. From moaning and groaning to chanting and meditation. If you followed this far, it means that not only did you work through the grieving process; but you have charged your way through the adversarial trap called depression.

The Old Negro believed that the ultimate "attitude of praise" necessary for healthy grief process is the only cure for depression. Not pills, not alcohol, not a new

sex partner; but praise. Using this vehicle, the “captives” could attain more freedom than their “captors”.

The Old Negro believed that a few examples of elements that rob us of healthy grief are addiction, blame, guilt, bitterness, hard heartedness, secrets and denial. The final stage of healing is to write in your workbook the things that prevent you from a healthy grieving process. After you write those things down cut or tear that page out of the book and throw the paper into a burning fire. Burning the paper is symbolic of destroying the unhealthy problems forever. Once you put the paper in the fire, don't own the problem again -- leave it destroyed.

FINALLY, WE HAVE COMPLETED OUR JOURNEY OF GRIEF. I hope you have enjoyed the journey to the “Land of Joy.” I pray that you will use the above-methods to facilitate healthy and effective ways to manage grief issues in all phases of life.

God Bless You and Happy Grieving!

WORKBOOK

Chapter Eleven

Please write definitions in your own words.

Chant _____

Codes _____

Comforter/Consoler/Paraclete _____

Communication _____

Grief _____

Humble/Humility/Meekness _____

Integrity _____

On One Accord _____

Praise _____

Standing in the Gap _____

Victory Dance _____

Jesus Loves Me



1. Je-sus loves me! this I know, For the Bi-ble tells me so; Lit-tle



ones to Him be-long, They are weak, but He is strong. Yes, Je-sus loves me,

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms



1. What a fel-low-ship, what a joy di-vine, Lean-ing on the ev-er



last-ing arms; What a bless-ed-ness, what a peace is mine,

Amazing Grace

McINTOSH

American melody

From Carrell & Clayton's *Virginia Harmony*, 1831

Arr. by Norman Johnson

JOHN NEWTON



1. A - maz - ing grace-how sweet the sound- That saved a wretch like me!



I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see.

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Note From the Author

The ideas expressed herein can be helpful to people of all races, religions, cultures or ethnicities. However, please understand that the writer's frame of reference is Biblically based.

Everyone can get helpful hints concerning healthy grief, but these ideas work better when used in the Christian realm of experience.

A Journey of Grief

An Old Negro Story Melody and Medley of Grief®

Cover Graphics by an unknown artist

From
Study In Depth

University of Oklahoma
College of Continuing Education
Internet Guided Independent Study

Liberal Studies

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