

THE REALITY OF GRIEF, CRISIS AND SORROW: COUNSELING FOR THE HURTING.

By

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ABSTRACT

One major problem of humanity is the failure to see the reality of grief, crisis and sorrow when they strike though the three are reality and part of human experience. Grief, Crisis and sorrow are reality in the life of every human being whether young or old, male or female, African Traditional Religionist, Muslim, or Christian. Based on the universality of this problem the researchers discovered various stages of development of grief, crisis and sorrow as experienced by the people and provide a biblical counseling for the hurting. The researchers observed that the awareness of these potential dangers to the life of Nigerians is worthy of researching. This will contribute to an overall effectiveness in assisting those going through similar psychological problems when the solutions provided are put into practice. Therefore this article discusses various ways by which counselors can help to educate, enlighten, comfort, heal and provide a guide for people in helping them cope with hard times as regards grief, crisis and sorrow.

Introduction

One thing that is present in the life of people all over the world is the inevitability of sorrow, crisis and grief. Some recent crises are the September 11, 2001 incident in the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in the United States of America and the plane crash in Lissa, a village in Ogun State, Nigeria where 117 Nigerians died and Sosoliso crash in Port-Harcourt where many people died in 2005. The incident resulted in grief, crisis and sorrow while the pain affected thousands of families in virtually all the nations in the world. One could see that crisis, sorrow and grief are developmental in nature. Everyone in the world faces one crisis, sorrow and grief or the other. The problem of grief, crisis and sorrow keeps cropping up despite various means used by people to explain it away. One could see that crisis, sorrow and grief know no man, has no timetable, and can happen to anyone at any time.

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Grief, Sorrow and Crisis are facts of life. They are part of human experience but sometimes crisis, sorrow and grief are turning points in the life of individuals or they prompt people in Grief, Crisis, Sorrow to search for meaning in order to get solution to such problems. It is also observed that crisis, sorrow and grief may not be an individual experience alone. There may be cases of crisis, sorrow and grief in the nation which rock the existence of the entire nation and the people in that nation would search for solutions to such problems. But up till today a lot of people are still having inadequate view of grief, crisis and sorrow.

If grief, crisis and sorrow are realities in the Nigerian society and in the life of an individual, then there is a need for educative counseling. But sometimes if grief, crisis and sorrow are mishandled this can wreak havoc in the life of those who are affected but if well handled using educative counseling, it can bring a turn-around in the life of the affected people. These writers' observation is that both the Bible and the Quran do not leave human beings in isolation; the reality of Grief, Crisis and Sorrow is clearly taught in the Christian and Islamic Scriptures and there is a provision of counseling principles as a means of advancing God's solution to Grief, Crisis and Sorrow in the lives of individuals.

The Need For This Study

The issue of Grief, Crisis and Sorrow is posing a lot of problems to contemporary people. A lot of people in the society are facing one of the above-mentioned problems in one way or the other, but the researchers' observation shows that there is very scanty information by the African writers or authors on getting out of this problem. Many of the materials gathered in the process of this work are by Western authors who may not even address the problem from the African perspective.

When confronted with facts most of the readers admit that grief, crisis and sorrow are on the increase and that a lot of people are going through hard times. As a result, there is a need for these researchers to objectively assess the problem, which is motivated primarily by counseling concern for the plight of those who are going through such problems in the Nigerian society, and provide solutions to their problems and to would-be readers, as well as challenge counselors in all the four walls of classrooms in tertiary institutions in Africa to meet the challenges of those who are in Grief, Crisis and Sorrow.

So, for a clearer understanding, these writers talk on the description of crisis, sorrow and grief, classification of crisis, different types of grief, and stages of grief, and provide educative counseling and care for those who are going through hard times as regards these problems.

Definition of Terms

Counseling is one major aspect that is very important in life. There are a lot of definitions for educational counseling. Olowonirejuaro (2003) defines

counseling as a process through which a trained counselor helps an individual to resolve an area of conflict so that the individual can make a better informed choice of decision. This is also buttressed by Adeoye, A.G.B. (2003) who cited English and English (1958), who saw counseling as "... A process in which the counselor assists the counselee to make interpretation of facts relating to a choice, plan or adjustment which he needs to make". From the above definitions counseling is a process by which a professionally trained person intervenes in the life of an individual or individuals for the improvement of lifestyle, health, happiness or maximum productivity. For this paper counseling is seen simply as a relationship in which one person (a counselor) is trying to help another (counselee) to understand and lead people to adjustment and probably provide solution through recommendation or advice. This is a means of providing educative guide to those who are going through the problems of grief, crisis and sorrow.

Description of Crisis, Sorrow and Grief

Crises are reactions or situations that can affect an individual's emotional, physical and intellectual life to the point of turning one's value and sense of meaning up-side-down or could be defined as reactions to the serious frustrations produced by specific external events. Crisis is characterized by anxiety, self-blame, guilt and frequently a sense of personal failure that leads to accumulating problems.

This is a state of unhappiness or sadness. It is an occasion when a person is in a great anguish due to loss of something that has an outward manifestation of pain and grief. Sometimes it is an expression of grief over the death of a loved one or a relative that makes such a person involved to behave in a sorrowful manner.

Grief is simply described as a necessary emotional release of a person. Grief is also part of crisis because it is a reaction to loss in the life of an individual.

Different Types of Crisis and Grief

In this work effort is limited to crisis and grief. This is so because the other problem (sorrow) comes as a result of crisis and grief in the life of a person.

(a) Different Types of Crisis

There are three major types of crisis which these writers will discuss for a better understanding in this write up. They are as follows:

(i) Developmental Crises

These are common ventures of human life. According to Adeniran (2001), they are typical examples like "events of human birth, becoming 65 years of age, marriage, divorce, transfer, adolescence, birth of children, bereavement, and

death. The items listed above create tension and heightened emotions. Why? This is because there is a need for readjustment and an attempt to find meaning to what is happening. Now, the question is: why is readjustment necessary? Readjustment is necessary because the daily routines are disturbed, life continuity in the life of such a person is challenged, and he/she looks for new coping resources to cope with the present situation.

So, when there is a development crisis, such crisis situation can affect an individual's emotional, physical and intellectual life. It can also turn our values and sense of meaning upside down. Culturally, our belief system, worldview, and the culturally accepted ways and beliefs in commitment serve a psychological function, raise anxiety, and give a mystical meaning to crisis and decide which alternative to pursue.

ii. Situational Crises.

Situational crises are reactions to the serious frustrations produced by specific external events e.g. marriage disruption or divorce, business failure and some other related problems. Anxiety, self-blame and frequently a sense of personal failure and guilt characterize such crises, which lead to a constricted perspective on accumulating problems. The way people handle and assimilate these reactions determine the direction which they will go in life. This is so because there is a combination of tremendous emotional impact combined with a diminishing ability to see the problems clearly and deal with them.

iii. Accidental or Traumatic Crisis

This could be a time of unexpected life threatening psychological event. It is a beginning of a chronic sorrow because the shock is deep and the reality is not acceptable. This crisis is often characterized by panic or massive shock popularly known as Hysteria. Miller and Kaene (1972) defined Hysteria as "a disturbance of the Psychic, sensory functions". During the time, there is an exhibition of unmanageable fear, or emotional excess in the person. Such emotional excess and massive shock have effects on cardiovascular system, affect thinking, blood pressure, and the body temperature of the people concerned.

Accidental or traumatic crisis may be a time of the shaking of foundation of the belief system, a time of unexpected life threatening psychological event. It could also be a time of temptation to idolatry when a person runs from one place to the other for solution to his/her problems. It is a time of judgment when people, whether christian or muslim, question God. There are common slangs such as: "Why did this happen to me? Where is God in my suffering? Where is God when it hurts?" These are questions put before God during human crises. One observes that during such times of accidental or traumatic crises people are always in a chronic sorrow because the shock they experience is deep and the reality is not acceptable. So during this time, faith-interpretation is inevitable and, as a result, counseling and guidance are needed.

B. Different Types of Grief and Stage

i. Different types of grief

These writers observe that not everyone expresses grief in the same way. As a result, during the grief, crisis and sorrow many people look for something to suppress their feeling like drug, alcohol etc. These writers follow the classification of Oates (1982) who gave five kinds of grief. It is based on his classification that these writers express ways by which people express grief.

ii. Anticipatory grief

This is a kind of grief that is a long time coming. Such grief is seen in many ways but a typical example is stated here. Someone lost a brother, sister or something of great value to him/her or a person whom someone loved died after a protracted illness; probably he/she was sick for a long time and the relatives were expecting that he/she would die some day. In such a case, one expects that such a grief would eventually occur; that is what is expected, though one may not be able to predict the exact time when such an incident would happen, in such a situation we refer to such grief as anticipatory.

iii. Sudden or traumatic grief

This is a grief that happens without a warning. The national disasters in the life of the nation (Nigeria) in year 2005 in which one hundred and seventeen people died in a Bell-view aircraft and more than one hundred people died in a Sosoliso aircraft and the sudden death of the first lady, Chief Mrs. Stella Obasanjo are classified as sudden or traumatic grief in nature. This is because they gave no time for any preparation and they strike like thunder and lightning.

Other typical happenings of sudden grief are a situation where a wife divorces her husband, and a loss of a particular function of one's body (it may be eyesight, hearing and the ability to walk), or a sudden loss of a treasured job through compulsory retirement from a work place (the type that happened in the Oro College of Education in year 2005). All sudden happenings stated above are griefs that happen to people without notice or warning for adequate preparation to cope with such grief.

iv. Pathological Grief

This kind of grief is a grief that chronically keeps a person from functioning, a disabling sense of distress that attacks both the mind and body which calls for medical attention e.g. Stroke or cardiovascular accident (C.V.A.). Sometimes that grief becomes part of the person's life; probably his wife or child died and from that day he doesn't remain the same again.

v. Near miss Grief

This is another way by which a grief in the life of an individual is expressed. This one comes as a result of facing the possibility of death or disaster and yet having narrowly escaped such a death.

vi. No-End Grief

This is a kind of grief that goes on and on. A sorrow that happens to one and he/she knows the beginning but he doesn't know the end. There was a case of a boy who swam in a big river; the parents knew the period he entered the river but they couldn't see him coming out of that river and could not find his body. The parents would be in a situation of no-end grief because they don't know whether he is alive or dead, whether he would be found again or not. This is a continuous sorrow that doesn't have a solution because the grief goes on and on.

2. The Seven Stages of grief

It is sure that crisis, sorrow and grief will come. The reality of these three cannot be denied because they are normal and part of human experience. A lot of Nigerians have been in grief, crisis and sorrow both in the past and now and they do not know how to manage them. One must be aware that whatever way that crisis, sorrow or grief comes, it has some stages. So, for a better understanding, the researchers provide the stages of grief stated below

1. Usually, the stage of shock is the first one during grief. This happens when you are in a crisis or you receive a bad news. Whenever you receive a bad news there is a massive shock.
2. The second stage is the stage of numbness, this is a stage where an individual who is grieved tries to absorb the shocking news that has been given to him/her. Shock as a result of the death of a loved one may create within us a temporary numbness or a stage of anesthesia for a certain period of time.
3. The third stage is the stage of mixed belief or disbelief. This is the period when people tend to ask questions like "could it be so?" William (1976) shares a dynamic experience in a hospital setting where a man loses his daughter. The doctor said, "We did all we could to save her. I'm sorry, but your daughter has died." The mother began to shake and scream with tears of agony pouring out from her eyes: "No, no, it can't be true. Not my little girl!" So, "I can't believe she is dead." Such are questions that come to the mind of christians, muslims and unbelievers when they are in a mood of grief, crisis and sorrow.
4. The fourth stage is a depression and Deep Meaning period. This is a period people refer to as a stage of anger. It is observed that during this stage anger

- is expressed to self, others and to God. The researchers observe that in such a period people who are in such grief may be angry with God or some other people around looking for a scapegoat. Others may accuse God by asking questions like: Is God Silent? Is God hidden or evil or Is God angry with our family (i.e., why would God allow such a calamity) and many other questions.
5. This is rightly followed by the fifth stage which is the stage of selective of memory. The researchers observed that grief, crisis and sorrow last longer than the people do in general. There are some events that may remind one of his/her grief like special pictures (e.g. wedding pictures), songs or sometimes a special occasion. For examples, a wedding held somewhere; if the person in grief attended the wedding, he/she quickly remembers the death of his/her first wife/husband and begins to weep.
 6. The sixth stage is the stage of acceptance. Usually what we hear at the beginning of a crisis, sorrow and grief is, "I don't believe it," but as time goes on people in grief move from "I don't believe it." This is a stage in grief, crisis and sorrow when the individual concerned accepts what has happened in his life as real.
 7. This is the final period, a stage of new beginning and a commitment. It is a stage when the individual concerned starts living again and rebuilding his/her life.

Grief, Crisis and Sorrow: Counseling Intervention and Succour for the Hurting

The discovery so far reveals that people of all ages and religions go through grief, crisis and sorrow. But lack of knowledge on these three things is a major cause of problem in the life of many Nigerians. Counseling remains the key to helping many Nigerians suffering from grief, crisis and sorrow. Here, the researchers are using the knowledge of counseling to confront the emotional and psychological problems of the people in the society in order to meet the present challenges. Professional counselors need a reality of providing counseling during the time of grief, crisis and sorrow by recognizing that the person is in crisis and by providing succour. As a result we arrived at these guidelines for helping clients who are in a state of hopelessness and helplessness as a result of grief, crisis and sorrow adjust to their problems and be assisted to find satisfaction in life.

Guidelines for Helping Client to Adjust

On the Part of the Professional Counselor

1. A professional or trained counselor should study the individual or family in crisis, sorrow and grief and note that each person is different emotionally. He must realize that every counseling problem cannot be handled in the same manner or way.
 2. The professional or trained counselor must recognize that such a person is in grief and crisis and needs just assistance in making a decision.
 3. The professional or trained counselor must allow the grief people weep. Do not repress their grief. It is good and far healthier to release their grief especially talking and weeping. The counselor should allow the counselee to talk about his/her feelings to a true companion who would listen attentively or patiently because talking to people can bring a measure of relief.
- (viii) A professional or trained counselor must listen more than talking. This is a very important advice to the counselors. They must listen to explanations rather than talking. This will help them at the time of counseling people in the period of their trials, crisis, grief and sorrow.
- (ix) Re-activating the person's identity by finding his/her present level of knowledge of God (find out whether God is a friend or enemy to that fellow). Whether muslim or Christian, an understanding about the present level of knowledge of God will help counselor to be able to present a faith interpretation of his/her clients crisis and re-activate the person's faith.

On the part of the Counselee

1. The Counselee must know and realize that grief, sorrow and crisis are part of human experience.
2. Acceptance of reality:- The Society must accept reality. For example, the populace should learn and realize that grief, crisis and sorrow are part of human experience.
3. The counselee should also bear it in mind that in time of grief, crisis and sorrow, they must not cut themselves off from the professional or trained counselors in order to help them arrive at a solution that would enable them return to active community life.
4. Counselee should not repress grief by the use of drug because any relief offered by drugs or alcohol is at best temporary. Medication should be taken only under a doctor's supervision. One should beware of using medication or alcohol to cope with his/her grief.

Conclusion

In line with the findings and discussions in this paper the researchers' study has made a huge contribution on showing the readers the reality of grief, crisis and sorrow, and that the three are part of human experience. The discussion of the stages also provides a means by which a victim could know how to begin afresh. According to Oyebanji (2005) counseling is a kind of helping relationship and has been a sure way of educating the Nigerian populace. Odediran (2005) also said, "Counselor is...an expert in helping people with their troubles...and he is skilled in the use of appropriate techniques that would produce solutions which may alleviate the problems encountered by the client".

Therefore, the researchers believe that counseling is an important supportive effort to providing succour to those who are going through Grief, Crisis and Sorrow. The Counselors are in a unique way in supporting clients and assisting them to make interpretation of facts relating to the last two stages of grief discussed in this paper which are acceptance and adjustment. The counselor should be able to lead those going through grief, crisis and sorrow through the last two stages. This will help them to accept the reality and begin anew. Therefore, the study concluded that professional or trained counselors have a lot to do in order to help people going through similar problems in the Nigerian society to adjust. If effective counseling is provided for the populace it will help in avoiding untimely death.

Recommendation and Implications for Counseling

The professional or trained counselors are in the best position to be of help to people going through crisis, grief and sorrow. This is because the period of grief, crisis and sorrow is an occasion that calls for urgent counseling in helping the people. The professional or trained counselors should be see that they encourage the clients to accept the reality and help them find a way by which they can begin again.

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