I. INTRO:
   A. Scottish pastor Andrew Bonar, “Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle.”
      1. It’s possible to win the battle but lose the victory, which is what happened to David after Joab defeated Absalom & his army.
      2. We are going to deal this morning with King Size Grief!

II. MAKING WOUNDS! (1-8)
   A. Grief To Deep To Bear! (1-4)
   B. Israel’s troops learned that David was grieving deeply over the death of his son, their pride in victory turned into shame. :
      1. After all, the troops had saved the lives of David & his family.
   C. The people stole back (lit. went by stealth) back to their homes, as if they had been humiliated by defeat.
      1. They had risked their lives for the king & country, & were now treated like criminals!
      2. The king turned a military victory into an emotional defeat.
         a) Remember Absalom was a liar, a murderer, a traitor, & a rebel against his dad.
   D. Faithful Are The Wounds Of A Friend! (5-8)
   E. Joab sternly rebukes David, claiming that he seems to love those who hate him and hate those who love him!
      1. He warns David that his troops will desert him unless he congratulates them for winning the battle.
   F. Joab delivered a very cutting speech that jolted the king back to reality. He had to hurt David to help him.
      1. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Prov.27:6
   G. David’s sorrow over his dead son almost cost him the kingdom.
      1. It is right to mourn, but not to the point that we loose touch with reality.
   H. David the father forgot that he was also David the king & that he still had his crown because his brave soldiers put the good of the nation ahead of their own personal interests.
      1. Which is exactly what David should have done.
2. **Note:** the 1 thing that's *missing* in the entire Absalom episode is David's seeking the mind of the Lord as he made decisions.

I. David’s problem wasn’t that he grieved over his son, for grief is a very human response & tears are a part of the healing.
   1. His problem *was* that he grieved *excessively* & wouldn’t permit himself to be comforted.
   2. His response was *abnormal*.
   3. He neglected himself & his responsibilities & had to be soundly rebuked by Joab before he would take steps to return to Jerusalem & save the kingdom.

J. The Lord can heal a broken heart, *if* we *give* all the pieces to Him & *obey* Him by faith.

K. It was time for the whole nation to affirm loyalty to God’s chosen king.
   1. David declared amnesty...except in some cases.

III. **HEALING WOUNDS!** *(9-15)*

A. The people argue over whether David should return! *(9-10)*

B. The king did right to await the nation’s recall.
   1. This was given by Israel, but his own tribe of Judah did not speak.
   2. So, David made a direct appeal to the men of Judah.

C. **David Speaks!** *(11-15)*

D. *(13)* Amasa - who was David’s original commander; who had went with Absalom; who is now back; who is now Joab’s designated replacement as chief commander.
   1. This also meant that David was *pardoning* all the officials who had followed Absalom.

E. Why replace Joab? - David learned that it was Joab who had slain Absalom in disobedience to the orders the king had given. *(1 Kings 2:5)*

F. *(14)* When David was assured of being accepted by both the Israelites & the Judahites, he led his group to cross the Jordan River & return to Jerusalem.

G. Why then are you last to being back the King?

IV. **THE GRIEF PROCESS!**¹ Taken from Wiersbe & Wiersbe “Comforting The Bereaved” pg.21-27

A. Just as it takes time for a broken bone to heal, *so* it takes time for a broken heart to heal.
   1. And the pain can be just as great, or greater!

¹ Taken from Wiersbe & Wiersbe, “Comforting The Bereaved”. Pg.21-27
B. Each year in the U.S. some **2 million people die**. Thus, a lot of people grieving every year.
   1. And the loss of that loved one is very much like the **loss of a limb**.
   2. It is an **emotional amputation**, & it affects you deeply.

C. **Time** by itself **does not heal** a broken heart. It all depends on what people do with **Time**.

D. **Our goal:** Is not to **shelter** people from the pains of bereavement, nor to help them **escape**. Rather, our task is to help them draw upon the **divine resources** that God provides, so that they accept their situation **maturely**, use it **creatively**, & finally emerge at the end of the valley **better people** than when they went into the valley. Warren Wiersbe
   1. Psychologists & counselors who have studied **grief reaction** tell us that there are **certain stages** to be expected in the experience of the bereaved person.
   2. **Note:** **We must not assume that every person will go through all of these 8 stages, or that the stages will necessarily be in this order!**

E. **GRIEF STAGES!**
   1. **SHOCK** - is an **emotional numbness** when we hear that a loved one has died.
      a) This is a normal response triggered by the **nervous system** of the body.
      b) It’s God’s way of **anesthetizing** the person so that he/she might be able to face the reality of death & handle the difficulties to come.
      c) Of course if this stage lasts **too long**, it is abnormal & will create problems (like wDavids case)
   2. **STRONG EMOTION** - God made us to weep, & tears are always in order when there is a broken heart.
      a) Jesus gave dignity to our grief & freedom to our emotions!
         (1) What a beautiful tribute that **tears** are to the deceased, telling them they were **loved & will be missed!**
         (2) Jesus, knows what it’s like to lose someone you love. He knows how we feel!
      b) The foolish counsel, **“Now don’t cry!”** is based on both **bad psychology** & **bad theology**.
         (1) **Jesus wept**, & so did **the saints of God** named in the Scriptures:
            (a) Gen.23:2 **So Sarah** died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.
            (b) Gen.50:1 **Then Joseph** fell on his father’s face (Jacob/Israel) and wept over him, and kissed him.
            (c) 2 Sam.18:33 Read (David)
            (d) Acts 8:2 **And devout men carried Stephen** to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.
c) *We are not told that it is wrong to sorrow. We are told that our sorrow should not be hopeless,* like the sorrow of the world.

3. **DEPRESSION** - is sometimes accompanied by a smothering feeling of loneliness.
   a) The loss of a loved one forces a person to **reorganize** their whole life (esp if a mate or parent)
      (1) **Relationships** are broken, & feelings of security are often gone.
   b) The *dedicated Christian* must not think that he is above these normal expressions of grief. Sometimes there are even symptoms of **physical** problems.

4. **FEAR** - The bereaved person finds it **difficult to think**, to **concentrate**, & then becomes afraid & **panicky**.
   a) Life seems to be falling apart from both the outside & the inside.
   b) Sometimes well-meaning people *misunderstand* what the grief-stricken person is saying or doing, & this only leads to **more fear & disorientation**.

5. **GUILT** - A sorrowing person often has the tendency to **blame himself or herself** for the death of the loved one.
   a) This is especially true when its death by suicide.
   b) There is also the tendency to **idealize** the deceased person & see only the good points. *This is in turn, exaggerates* the bad points of the one grieving.
      (1) “If only we had gone to another doctor.” “If only I would have...” “If only”.
   c) Often heavy guilt leads the bereaved to spend a **great deal of money** on an **elaborate funeral or grave marker**, to “atone” for past sins against the deceased.
      (1) I praise God for funeral homes like *England Family Mortuary* in Temecula, who don’t take advantage of folks in this situation.

6. **ANGER** - Along with blaming themselves the sorrowing person will also **blame others**, including the deceased.
   a) “Why did he have to leave me & the children now?”
   b) They start to remember old resentments & negative experiences, & these become confusing part of their hurt feelings.
   c) Sometimes this leads to blaming God & even saying all kinds of **blasphemous things**.

7. **APATHY** - It seems strange that hostility can be replaced by **apathy**, but this is often the case.
   a) “Nobody understands how I feel, thus there’s no sense in saying or doing anything.” “Life is not worth living.”
b) The bereaved person finds it painful to relate to real life & wants to withdraw into his or her shell & be left alone.

(1) *Certainly* it is normal for a hurting person to want to be left alone; but if this withdrawal continues *too long*, it becomes dangerous. (again like David)

8. **ADJUSTMENT** - Slowly the person learns to accept the loss, rearrange his or her life, & come to grips with reality.

a) This does not mean the total absence of grief, loneliness, or bewilderment; but it does mean that the bereaved person recognizes what is happening & is able to cope with it.

b) People die, but relationships never die. And each must struggle to adjust to the new relationship with the one who has passed away.

c) Here are some signs this adjustment is taking place: The bereaved person can openly & easily talk about the dead loved one, and, in time, even laugh about things that happened in the past. The person no longer gives vent to hostility but, instead, seeks for ways to minister to others when they suffer loss.

F. We must not assume that every person will go through all of these 8 stages, or that the stages will necessarily be in this order! But in order for us to comfort others...

1. We must...learn to recognize these symptoms & accept them.

2. We must...realize that no amount of preaching will eliminate hostility & guilt.

3. We must...remember the sorrowing person must learn to face these feelings personally & deal with them in his or her own time.

4. We must...learn to listen with our heart & pay attention to feelings, not to words.

5. We must...not assume the posture of Job’s comforters & try to argue people into a right, relationship w/God & each other.

a) It’s unfortunate that Job’s 3 friends listened to Job’s words & not his feelings.

b) As Samuel Johnson said, “Grief has its time. While grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till grief be digested.”

(1) That’s why post-funeral ministry is so important. [They say, most people bottom out 6-8 weeks after the funeral]

G. Again, these stages are only guidelines; do not force them into every grief situation.

1. You are there to comfort, not to analyze & explain.

2. But hopefully these stages will help you understand & assess the situation better & not be too shocked at what you see or hear!

3. Emotions expressed become medicines that heal; Emotions repressed become poisons that kill.
4. **Blessed is** that congregation that who knows how to keep their mouth shut, ears open, heart soft, & mind sharp to the feelings expressed by the words spoken.

H. Here are some **Evidences** that the person is coming to grips with reality & drawing upon the resources available through Jesus Christ:

1. They are able to accept the fact of the death of the loved one.
2. The memories of the deceased gradually become **positive & creative** rather than negative & destructive.
3. Another good sign is the person’s ability to understand the past & plan for the future.
4. The ability to **laugh** is another good sign, for a sense of humor usually indicates a sense of perspective.
5. When the bereaved person **stops condemning** himself or herself.

I. One grieving father said, “You never get over it, but you do get through it.”

J. **Our task as Christians?** We are to be comforters to help people face grief honestly & courageously & help them to use their painful experience of sorrow as a means of growth.

1. Praise God, we are not left to our own **human resources**. We have **divine resources** to share with others, because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.
2. Can God heal the brokenhearted? If all the pieces are given to Him!

   a) In 1858 Scottish missionary **John G. Paton** and his wife sailed for Vanuatu. 3 months after arriving on the island of **Tanna**, his wife died. One week later his infant son also died. Paton was plunged into sorrow. Feeling terribly alone, and surrounded by savage people who showed him no sympathy, he wrote, “Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me. As for all other, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows….But for Jesus, and His fellowship, I would have gone mad and died.”