Lifelinks: Leading from a renewed heart
Workshop Speaker: Karyn Pearson, Pastor

Leading Through Loss

10 Things Every Leader Should Know About Grief

1. A Theology of Grief

> **Core Principle**
> *"Grief is not a failure of faith. It is a faithful human response to loss."*

Faith Begins with Presence

- **PSALM 34:18:** *"God is close to the brokenhearted."*
- **ROMANS 12:15:** *"Weep with those who weep."*
- **JOHN 11:35:** *"Jesus wept."*
- **PSALM 147:3:** *"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."*

2. Every Loss Must Be Grieved

Seven Reasons We Need to Grieve

1. Loss changes our lives.
2. What we don't acknowledge can remain unresolved.
3. Grief helps us let go of what was and make room for what is.
4. We need to make meaning of what happened.
5. Grief is an expression of love.
6. Grieving allows us to receive comfort.
7. Grief can eventually lead toward resilience.

3. The Deeper The Love The Harder The Grief

> **3. The Deeper The Love**
> *The deeper the love, the harder the grief. The brain and body must gradually learn a reality they did not expect.*

How Grief Impacts the Whole Person:

- **Emotional:** Sadness, anger, longing, fear
- **Physical:** Fatigue, sleep or appetite changes

- **Cognitive:** Concentration and decisions become harder
- **Spiritual:** Questions of meaning, hope, and God

> **Key Takeaway**
> *"We do not grieve because we are weak. We grieve because we were attached."*

4. Everyone Grieves Differently

INTUITIVE GRIEVING (Heart-Led)	INSTRUMENTAL GRIEVING (Head/Hands-Led)
• Expresses feelings and tears • Focused on talking and sharing • Needs connection and expression	• Focused on thinking and organizing • Focused on problem-solving and doing • Needs activity and private reflection

5. Secondary Losses Can Be Life-Altering

A primary loss often creates ripple effects, leading to secondary losses such as:

• Identity • Security • Routine • Companionship • Social Connections • Role • Independence • Dreams & Future

6. What NOT To Say vs. What To Try Instead

AVOID PHRASES THAT EXPLAIN / RUSH	TRY INSTEAD (PRESENCE & CARE)
"Everything happens for a reason."	"I am so sorry for your loss."
"At least they lived a long life…"	"Tell me more about them if you'd like."
"I know exactly how you feel."	"What has been the hardest part lately?"
"Time heals all wounds / Be strong."	"Take all the time you need. I'm here."
"Let me know if you need anything."	Offer one specific, practical help (e.g. meal).

7. Building Resilience

> **Definition** *Resilience is not the absence of pain; it is learning to live and move forward in its presence.*

- **1. GRIEF:** Acknowledge the loss
- **2. ADAPTATION:** Learn the new reality
- **3. RESILIENCE:** Develop capacity to live with change
- **4. HOPE:** Move forward with God

8. Supporting the Bereaved: Companioning

01. BE PRESENT — Do not run from pain.

02. WALK ALONGSIDE — Do not set the pace.

03. LISTEN WITH HEART — Do not rush to answer.

04. STAY CURIOUS — Ask rather than assume.

9. Grief Needs Community

> **Community Message**
> *"Your loss matters. Your loved one is remembered. And you still belong here."*

- **NOW:** Visits, meals, prayer, quiet presence in the immediate aftermath.
- **SEASONS:** Blue Christmas, Mother's/Father's Day, holidays, special traditions.
- **ANNIVERSARIES:** Cards, phone calls, saying the loved one's name, remembrance.
- **ONGOING:** Memory walls, recommended books, candles, sharing stories over time.

10. Leader Self-Care

> **Leader Reminder**
> *"Compassion fatigue is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign that you have been exposed to suffering. Caring leaders need care too."*

1. Know your limits.

2. Have somewhere to be honest.

3. Do not carry everyone's grief as your own.

4. Make room for your own losses.

5. Practice faithful presence, not perfection.

Walk at Their PACE Framework:

P - PRESENCE	Be there without needing answers.
A - ATTENTIVE LISTENING	Listen without redirecting or fixing.
C - COMPASSION	Come alongside their pain.
E - EMPATHY	Let their grief be uniquely their own.