

# Garvin Adams

Church Name

MESSAGE: "Rest In Peace"

DATE

**Bottom Line:** Grief paves the path to peace.

**Object Lesson:** None

**Key Idea:** When we experience loss, we often don't know how to respond. Unfortunately, there are only two choices, and what we choose determines what we experience. Not just in our present, but for the rest of our life. You don't choose what you lose, but you can choose how you respond.

## INTRODUCTION (CONNECTION & TENSION) - Making my internal vow.

- A. **PERSONAL LOSS EXPERIENCE...** When I was 15, I had a life experience that affected me for a long, long time. It happened on the basketball court. I need to back up a year or so to explain it all.
- 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Tryouts: The summer after 9<sup>th</sup> grade our family moved to a new school district. I went to 9<sup>th</sup> grade at a school pretty much known for basketball. My new school was more a golf and tennis type of school. I made the JV team in 9<sup>th</sup> grade at the big-time basketball school. So I was pretty confident I'd make the JV team at the new golf/tennis school. Especially as a 10<sup>th</sup> grader.
  - Last Night: Started off well. I was in pretty good shape, so I didn't vomit running all those suicides. I played pretty well, too. Had some good scrimmage games. I made the first cut. And the second cut. And the third cut. And the last cut. I was pretty excited. The coach decided we need one more cut, so we had one more night of tryouts scheduled. I played terrible. I'm not sure if it was the pressure of that one night. I don't know, but it didn't go well. I can still take you to the exact spot on that court where I dribbled the ball off my foot out of bounds on a fast break. It was the nail in my tryout coffin. The next morning I got to school early and went straight to the coach's office to see the posted list – I was cut. I was the only one cut. I didn't make the team.
  - Asked the Coach: I found the coach and asked him why. His answer didn't help: "You're new to the school, so I felt I needed to go with who I know." That didn't sit well with me.
  - Rec League: I went ahead and signed up for rec ball since I didn't make the school team. I played angry. I averaged close to 30 points a game. I received about 30 technicals. At the end of each game, the opposing coach would say, "Why aren't you playing for the school?" And I would answer the same way each time: "Great questions – you should ask the coach."
  - Next Year: The next year, the Varsity coach noticed my name wasn't on the tryout list and he asked me to come back out. I refused. I was still angry. And if I'm honest – afraid. I was scared to tryout again. I was scared of getting cut. I didn't want to face that rejection again. So I refused. **I refused to put myself in a position to lose.**

B. **COUNSELING:** Fast forward 25 years and my counselor called this an “internal vow.”

**Internal Vow:** A promise we make to ourselves.

At the age of 15, I decided that I would never allow that to happen to me again. And for the most part, it didn't, because I never intentionally put myself in a position where losing was likely.

*TRANSITION: For 25 years, I lived out of anger and determination. I got a lot accomplished... I created a pretty decent career. I got several degrees. Got married. Had kids. All while a bit angry and determined. Ironically, typical type A behavior can look a lot like determination stemming from hurt and pain.*

**TODAY:** Today, I want to talk about our past. **Do we have to?** Yes. Why? Because I have the mic this morning and because Ike asked me to... AND, because if your past is affecting your present, it isn't really in your past.

If your **past** is affecting your **present**,  
it isn't really in your **past**.

- Good news/bad news: We all have a past. And, most of us are allowing it to affect our present. That needs to be rectified.

*How do we best deal with our past? Jesus actually put a great solution on display for us.*

**FOUNDATION** - Jesus wept, therefore Jesus understands the power of loss.

A. **CONTEXT:** John wrote this story down for us. He was with Jesus when it happened. Jesus, John, and the other Disciples were away when one of their close friends, a guy named Lazarus, fell seriously ill. Lazarus had two sisters, Mary and Martha, and they sent word to Jesus that their brother was sick.

B. **TRUTH**

**John 11 (NIV)**

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.)

<sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the **one you love** is sick.”

<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will **not end in death**. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.”

- This is important... Jesus is sitting with his Disciples when they get this news, and his Disciples heard this pronouncement. We'll come back to this in a few minutes.

<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he...

- Did what any normal person would do when you hear a person you love is sick and you know you can solve the sickness, right?

<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was **two more days**, <sup>7</sup> and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

TELL: Jesus knows that Lazarus is already dead... He died during the two days that Jesus stayed away. They head back, and when they arrived, Lazarus has been in the grave for four days.

<sup>32</sup> When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been **here**, my brother would not have died.”

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her **weeping**, and the Jews who had come along with her also **weeping**, he was **deeply moved** in spirit and **troubled**. <sup>34</sup> “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.

<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

TELL: As the story goes, Jesus goes to the tomb and they roll away the stone... Jesus prays a great prayer: “Father, you know what you’re about to do, and I know what you’re about to do, but I’m going to pray about it so everyone else knows, too.” Jesus called into the tomb.

**John 11:43b-44 (NIV)**

“Lazarus, **come out!**” <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

- C. **CHRISTIANS THIS STORY:** This is such a famous story, and we often focus on Lazarus... After all, he was dead for four days and now he’s alive. That’s worth some focus! But I want us to go back to one of the most overlooked moments in the life of Jesus.
- D. **VERSE 35:**

**John 11:35 (NIV)**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus **wept**.

This is so critical for us, yet we so easily read right past it. Maybe because it’s the shortest verse in the Bible. Maybe because we are so dumbfounded by the resurrection of Lazarus.

**TRANSITION:** *But these two words carry with it a solution that we all must learn to embrace.*

**APPLICATION** – If you don’t grieve your losses, they’ll create grief for the rest of your life.

- A. **JESUS GRIEVED:** What Jesus did was experience grief.

## Grief

He grieved the loss of his friend, Lazarus. Of course, he knew that this story wouldn't end in death, but **rather than moving past the loss, he allowed himself to sit in the loss.**

Jesus is way better than us! **We do everything we can to avoid the feelings of pain and sadness.**

But Jesus allowed himself to *feel the loss*. He felt the *pain and sadness* of loss.

Jesus allowed himself to feel the pain and sadness of **loss**.

The real question is why? **Why did Jesus allow himself to feel the pain and sadness of loss?** He knew he was going to raise Laz from the dead. He even told the Disciples in advance that this "sickness would not end in death." But even with everything he knew, Jesus still choose to pause and feel the loss.

Why? Jesus understood that grief paves the path to peace.

Grief paves the path to **peace**.

**Grief allows a death to rest.**

Grief is what allows us to process death, deal with death, and bury death in peace.

- B. **EVERY LOSS IS A DEATH:** But what we don't often understand is that grief is associated with **any loss, because...**

**Every** loss is a death.

Death is a version of loss, but it's only one of many, many versions.

Every loss is a death, and like very death, it will be buried.

Every **loss** is a death, and every death gets **buried**.

- C. **GRIEVED AND UNGRIEVED BURIALS:** **But while every loss is buried, not every loss can rest in peace...** If we recognize our need to grieve the loss, we can bury it dead and it will rest in peace. But, any loss that we don't grieve is trouble. An ungrieved loss still gets buried, but it's buried alive.

Ungrieved losses are buried **alive**.

And if we've learned anything from horror movies, anything that comes back from being buried alive is way worse than we can imagine.

**Leaving it without any peace. Leaving us without any peace.**

**Worse, it doesn't stay in the grave. It comes back. It follows us.** It haunts our present.

- D. **ALL OUR LOSSES:** This is really critical to understand. Every single one of us has experienced loss. Probably dozens or maybe hundreds. In 2020, **we have all experienced more losses that we can probably even count.**

The Accumulation of Losses...

- Jobs
- Vacations
- Graduation ceremonies

- Summer camps
- 5th Grade school walks
- Birthday parties
- Friendships
- Dance recitals

E. **WE NEED TO GRIEVE:** I don't want our current losses to haunt our future. We have all lost so much in this season. Every single loss eventually is buried – don't bury them alive. Medicating a loss buries it alive. Minimizing a loss buries it alive.

Only losses that are **grieved** can rest in peace.

Grieve each of them. Take time and sit with them. Feel sad over them. Allow yourself to process the loss.

F. **BACK TO MY EXPERIENCE:** I wasn't told to do this when I was 15. That morning when I saw my name missing from the JV basketball team – that was a loss. I know, it's not really that big of a deal now, but when I was 15, it was everything. If it mattered then, it mattered. But I didn't grieve it. I reacted, but not with grief. I reacted with anger and determination – for the next 25 years! Listen, for 25 years I was overly competitive, refused to put myself in a position where losing was likely, I wouldn't try new things, I feared failure... all because of an ungrieved loss at the age of 15. That's what ungrieved losses tend to do.

G. **HESITATION:** I know the hesitation – we don't like to feel that stuff. We avoid emotion. But, this has to be done.

Two choices: Grieve these losses now, or allow them to grieve you later.

If you don't **grieve** a loss now, it will create **grief** for you later.

And when that happens, it's going to be much harder to pinpoint. It's going to be much harder to identify. It's going to affect you much more severely. And it's going to affect everyone around you.

All losses are deaths, and all deaths need to be grieved.

*TRANSITION: Your present can't become your past if it persists in your future.*

**INSPIRATION** - Finding freedom through grief.

A. **END OF MY STORY:** It took me a long time to learn this lesson. A really long time. I wish I would have known at 15 what I know now. It took some effort, but I finally was able to grieve being cut. And I went back and grieved every loss I could remember.

B. **FREEDOM:** If you want to be free from a loss, you have to grieve the loss. And if you want 2020 to stay in 2020, I encourage you to take some time to grieve these losses, too.

**PRAYER**

