

Practical Reminders for Helping Those Who Grieve

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1. Just as every relationship is unique to those who share it, so grief is unique for each individual.
2. Grief has rightly been called “a journey from mourning to joy.” (*GriefShare*)
3. This journey often is more difficult than expected (if expected at all).
 - a. It likely will feel intense and chaotic;
 - b. It may trigger feelings of isolation and withdrawal;
 - c. Common reactions span a continuum ranging from denial to suppression to anger to avoidance via busyness – the emotional roller coaster list goes on and on;
4. In helping others navigate through their grief:
 - a. Listen, and listen again; one thing (and maybe the only thing) Job’s friends did right when they first came to him was to sit in silence with him for 7 days before they spoke;
 - b. Assure them they are not alone – you are available to them for the long haul. God the Holy Spirit is within them and His comfort will become known to them as they continue to grieve. Yet He uses the ministry of your presence to help comfort them in their need;
 - c. While time cannot heal all wounds, with time and by taking healthy measures to process through grief, it will become less oppressing;
 - d. Gently encourage the grieving with ‘words fitly spoken’ – this requires discernment and a humility in us to admit what we see and feel about their grief is quite different from what they are experiencing;
 - e. We really don’t have the answers they need, yet we offer the hope they need as we tenderly redirect them to the truths of God’s Word;
 - f. A grieving person has entered into a new dynamic – according to God’s perfect plan, nothing now is what it used to be. They are learning to do everything on their own, carrying a hole in their spirit where it had been full before, experiencing relationships in a new context, and finding it nearly impossible to engage in regular routines;
 - g. Guilt, regrets, and self-blame need gently realigned with God’s purposes and plans in their situation – where sins of the past need addressed, help them do so with the promises of the Gospel;
 - h. Knowing that solitude and isolation are different from each other, encourage those on this journey to reengage gradually, according to their own timeframe; gently persist in being there with and for them, while understanding this is their journey in which you are an observer, coach, and friend;
5. Helpful Scriptures and resources:
 - a. “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.” (1 Thess. 4:13-18)
 - b. “We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5:8)
 - c. “The God of all comfort comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2 Cor. 1:4 ESV)
 - d. Seasons of Sorrow, by Tim Challies;
 - e. Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy, by Mark Vroegop
 - f. A Sacred Sorrow, by Michael Card; The Empty Chair, by Dr. Robert DeVries;
 - g. Grief: Learning to Live with Loss, by Dr. Howard A. Eyrich