



Pastoral Helps
for
Grief & loss

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Introduction

Dear Reader,

I wanted to write a personal note to you to say if you are reading this pamphlet on grief and loss I hope you will be encouraged to know that this was written with you in mind.

I have personally experienced grief and loss a number of times and have counseled families who have gone through what you may be going through now.

I have put together these practical tips to help you through your healing process. My hope and prayer is that these helps will bring some encouragement as well as enlightenment to your own personal situation.

Remember that healing does take time so please allow yourself that time and also allow God to minister and comfort you with his love.

May the Lord abundantly bless you and comfort you during this difficult time.

God Bless You,

Filoian Wiedenhoff

Contents:

Page 2

Introduction

Page 3

Contents

Page 4

You are not alone

You are not abnormal

God sees you

God loves you

Page 5

You are *not* being punished

Allow yourself to grieve

The seven stages of grief

Page 6

Don't fight the process

Don't rush the process

Talk to someone

Talk to God through Prayer

Get time out

Page 7

Listen to worship music

Be accountable

Take one day at a time

Expect the unexpected

Create a memorial keepsake

Write your own Psalm

Page 8

It's difficult but okay to say goodbye

Why did God allow this to happen to us?

Keep moving forward

Page 9

Joy and restoration will return

Scriptures of encouragement

Pastoral Helps through Grief & Loss

Isaiah 41:10

Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' NKJV

When a person experiences a loss of a loved one especially someone from their immediate family or dear friend there is no description to express how difficult, deep and painful the loss can be. For those of you who are experiencing much grief and loss please know that our prayers and our thoughts are with you.

Here are some practical tips to encourage and comfort you through your loss:

You are not alone

In times of grief it is normal to feel very alone but take comfort in knowing that you are not alone in your grief. God is not only with you through it but He is also your comfort and He understands what you are going through. God Himself experienced the loss of His only begotten Son on the cross. God understands and can sympathize with us. Jesus was also known as a man of many sorrows and acquainted with grief. (Hebrews 4:15, Isaiah 53:3, Deuteronomy 31: Isaiah 41:10)

You are not abnormal

When a person is going through the grief process you can also feel that no one understands what you are going through or that your expression of grief is not normal. Be encouraged that what you are going through is not abnormal but very common. It is understandable that your behavior, feelings and emotions will be different, unpredictable and change from day to day. Be patient with yourself healing takes time.

God sees you

God is a compassionate God and sees us and also sees our sufferings so much so that He puts our tears in a bottle. He not only sees us but He knows us by name. (Psalm 56:8, Psalm 86:15)

God loves you

God loves you and desires for you to come to Him all who are weary and burdened for He cares for you. He loved you enough to send His only son to be a sacrifice for you and

how much more would He give to His children. (John 3:16, Matthew 6, Matthew 11:28, 1Peter 5:7)

You are not being punished

When experiencing a death of a loved one we don't understand why it is happening to us and our natural reaction sometimes is to wonder if we are being punished by God. Your loss is not a form of punishment. You can read the story of Job and see that He was a righteous man who experienced great loss but also experienced great restoration. Another good story is the story of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz in the book of Ruth. God will however allow the trials in our lives to refine us; strengthen us and draw us closer to Himself as we take comfort in Him. During this time I encourage you to allow God to comfort you, speak to you and turn to God for healing and restoration

Allow Yourself to grieve

Don't try to shut out the grief, but allow yourself permission to grieve and remember that it is not only okay but necessary for healing to take place. Shutting it off or out only hinders the process and can cause internal problems physically, mentally and spiritually if left not dealt with.

The 7 Stages of Grief

There are 7 stages that a person generally goes through when experiencing grief and loss but keep in mind this is a process.

- **Shock or Disbelief – numb to the reality of your situation and loss.**
- **Denial – disbelief to the reality of your situation and loss.**
- **Bargaining – to make a deal with God for a different outcome of the reality of your situation and loss.**
- **Guilt – blaming your self for the loss or think the outcome could have been different had you have done something different.**
- **Anger – angry at God, someone or something for the loss.**
- **Depression – deep sorrow or sadness setting in of your loss.**
- **Acceptance and Hope – accepting the loss and hopeful for healing and restoration.**

I encourage you to go to the library or online and educate yourself about the different stages so you can understand the grief process better and have a healthier understanding for what you are going through. Most people may go through some and not all of these stages but it is still helpful to see where you are at in the process. There is one process I

would like to address which is guilt. You rarely hear about this stage but I think it is more common in people who are grieving than we know. If you are experiencing guilt please know you are not alone but remember that **it is not your fault** and please keep in mind that it is part of the grief process.

Don't fight the process

Fighting it, numbing one self or trying to "make" yourself okay doesn't help you but hurts you in the end and can also prolong the healing. Your body goes through this process for a reason and you need to work through it.

Don't rush the process

Trying to rush the grieving process doesn't work so don't rush yourself or give yourself a day and time for it to be over. It takes time to heal so allow your self that time. Also the other extreme is not healthy either when you take too long and can't let go. If you think you are taking too long or trying to rush it, seek counsel about where you are and get professional counsel on your progress. Remember that healing takes time.

Talk to someone

Talking it out is sometimes the best medicine. It helps you to get out what you are feeling inside, helps your mind to process what happened or what you are feeling and it is also a form of release for your feelings and emotions. Talking about your situation or your feelings will help you to heal faster and healthy.

Talk to God through Prayer

There is power in prayer. I can't tell you how important prayer can be toward your healing. Prayer is communication with God by faith. You can talk to Him any place any where and He hears you. You can cry out to Him and ask daily for His strength and power to get you through each day and moment by moment. You can share your heart honestly before God and believe that He hears you. God is faithful. **Jeremiah 33:3 "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."** NKJV **Philippians 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."** NKJV

Get time out

Get out of the house when you can and visit a friend or family member, take a night out and walk, go for a drive and don't isolate yourself. Getting out with people can also take your mind off of your situation for a time and give you a break it also can help prevent isolation and deep depression.

Listen to worship music

Music is unique because it one of the few sources of communication that human beings can receive on both sides of the brain simultaneously. It can have a calming and uplifting affect on a person when they are listening to uplifting music that minister to the soul and the spirit. Praise and worship music can change your mood from down to up in a matter of minutes. It will also encourage you as they sing encouraging words to the soul. Try it and see how it can lift your spirits.

Be accountable

Ask a friend or family member to be accountable with you to check on you as you are going through the grief process. Have them call you every so often just to see how you are doing and call them whenever you really need someone to talk to or are going through a rough day or evening.

Take one day at a time

Take each day as it comes, every day is a new day and each day has its own adventure. Try not to think too far ahead, it can easily lead into anxiety or like me have jumbled thoughts. Focus on the task at hand and don't worry about tomorrow.

Expect the Unexpected

Keep in mind that you will have good days and bad days and feelings and emotions can change from one day to the next so don't be surprised if one day you feel great and the next day you feel as though it happened yesterday. It's just one of those things that happen and I can't explain why but it does.

Create a memorial keepsake- Think of the blessings

Remind your self of all the good times you shared with this person and how they have blessed you and made a positive impact in your life. Remembering the good times will help get your mind on the blessings you have been given through them and how they have made your life better. One positive activity is to create a memory book of their life. Memorials can be done in different ways; a video, a scrapbook or a memorial book. Creating memorial keepsakes are not only a blessing to share with others but helpful to your own healing process.

Write your own Psalm

King David was known for writing the psalms when he was in deep distress, despair and in the darkest caves of his life. He would write poems and written prayers to the Lord as His way of crying out to Him, acknowledging God's presence in his life and also comforting Himself with the knowledge that God was with him in the cave and heard his

cries. If you cannot express yourself through words, try writing your own psalm to God and at the same time read the psalms of David. Start a notebook journal and write when you need to express yourself. You will be encouraged. (Psalms 3, 4, 18, 22, 27, 34, 77, 91, 116)

It's difficult but okay to say goodbye

I am adding this because I personally went through this recently and I hope to encourage anyone else that might be experiencing this also. One of the hardest experiences we can go through in losing a loved one is not having the chance or opportunity to say good bye. You may feel that when they died part of you died with them - this is perfectly normal BUT you have to keep in mind that you still have a life to live. **Your loved ones would not want you to die with them when you still have precious life in you to live.** If you are going through this please know it is perfectly normal to feel this way but it is important for you to not stay in this feeling too long. You must keep living your life for you, your family and for God. God still has plans for your life and He will get you through this. If you find that you are like I was, and need to say good bye consider doing this one exercise that helped me. Try writing them a letter or saying a prayer and speaking to them in your heart to let them know how much you love them and will miss them but also that you are making peace with yourself to move forward. This part I believe comes in the last stage of the grief process which is "Acceptance". You will know when it's time.

Why did God allow this to happen?

Reading this you may be asking this very question, "If God is love why would he allow this to happen to us?" The only comfort I can offer is that I understand how you feel and why you are asking this. This is a mystery that God may answer when we get to heaven. I don't believe there is a solid answer any person can give for why things happen the way they do except to say that He does love you and desires to be your comfort during this difficult time. I'm going to reiterate what I mentioned earlier... God will however allow the trials in our lives to refine us; strengthen us and draw us closer to Himself as we take comfort in Him. During this time I encourage you to allow God to comfort you, speak to you and turn to God for healing and restoration. Please don't allow bitterness to seep in and cause your heart to be hardened. God has a plan for your life and desires to live his life through you by Christ living in you. Ask Jesus into your heart and he promises to send the "Comforter and Counselor" the Holy Spirit to live in your heart by faith. This is my favorite quote by Bob George, "He gave His Life for us, so He could give His Life to us, so He could Live His Life through us. (Bob George, People to People Ministries)

Keep moving forward

It is important that you take time out to grieve, allow yourself permission to grieve and at the same time it is also important to keep moving forward in your life. One of the main reasons doctors have their patients start walking immediately after a traumatic surgery is not only to get the blood flowing but also to help get the mind and spirit going as well.

When someone is inactive and bedridden too long they can die from a blood clot or go into deep depression because of the trauma. The body get's used to being shut down and begins to shut down in other areas. There is a tendency in our grief to want to shut down or want to quit everything but the reality is, it will only hurt you more in the end if all you do is isolate yourself and shut down mentally and physically. I will say this again... remember that you still have loved ones in your life that need you and that your life is still worth living not just for yourself and your family but also for God. Jeremiah 29:11 Says, I know the plans that I have for you."

Joy and restoration will return

I know it's hard to imagine feeling joy and being restored at this time but it will happen some day in due time. In life we all go through different seasons. We all at one time or another experience seasons of joy and also seasons of sadness and right now as you go through your season of mourning please know that God will get you through this and is faithful to bring you to the other side in His time. It rarely happens over night but your joy will return some day. Hold on to His promises and be comforted by them. God is with you and will never leave you nor forsake you.

Psalm 30:5, "Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning." NKJV

Scriptures of encouragement

Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." NKJV

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation. " NKJV

Psalm 40:1-3 "I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. "NKJV

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for my burden is light and my yoke is easy." NKJV

Psalm 27:13-14 "I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!" NKJV

1 Peter 5:7 "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. NKJV

Isaiah 40:31 “But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. “NKJV

Psalm 55:22 “Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved. NKJV

Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” NKJV

Isaiah 61:3-4 “To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, And they shall repair the ruined cities, NKJV

As you are going through the grieving process remember that you are not alone, that God is right there with you comforting you and interceding for you on your behalf. The bible says that as you draw near to God He will draw near to you. You also have family and friends that care about you and want to be there for you so allow them to minister, comfort and encourage you during this time.

I hope these tips will help give you some insight into the process of grief and loss and encourage you to know that it's okay to grieve and in fact necessary to bring healing and restoration. The bible says when we are weak than we are strong because the power of God rests upon us during those times. Allow God to be your strength. May God bless you!

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