

No Stranger to Grief . . .

Why are people so drawn to Jesus . . . especially when their hearts have lost all hope? Why do they assume He will sympathize with their sorrows? Why would He grieve over their griefs? The answer is simple: Jesus was no stranger to grief. He was slandered and scourged, belittled and beaten, criticized and crucified. Yet the Bible says,

*“When they hurled their insults at him,
he did not retaliate; when he suffered,
he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted
himself to him who judges justly.”*
(1 Peter 2:23)

When you see someone being insulted, when you hear someone being slandered, when you watch someone suffering, you know that person not only understands grief, but also feels grief. When Jesus lived on earth, His onlookers saw the unjust insults hurled at Him . . . heard the unjust slander spoken of Him . . . watched the unjust suffering imposed on Him. Therefore, they knew He was one who could both understand their grief and care about their grief.

If you feel, “No one cares about my pain”—Jesus cares!

If you think, “No one cares about my sorrow”—Jesus cares!

If you believe, “No one cares about my grief”—Jesus cares!

*“We do not have a high priest who is unable to
sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one
who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—
yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne
of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy
and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*
(Hebrews 4:15–16)

What is Healthy Grieving?

Anytime you lose anyone or anything deeply meaningful, you feel an abiding sense of sorrow that results in a normal period of grief. In order to process enduring pain—pain that never seems to end—many grieving people enter into “grief work”: a step-by-step process in order to reach a place of healing.

Healthy grief work involves . . .

- Accepting** that the past will always be the past
- Accepting** that the present offers stability
- Accepting** that the future holds promising hope

*“The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*
(Psalm 34:18–17)

Letting Go

- Talk about the history you have shared with that which is lost. Acknowledge that history as a permanent part of your past but no longer a part of your present.
- Express any unfinished business regarding the past and resolve any remaining issues or feelings (such as regrets, resentments, grievances, or guilt), emptying them out and bringing them to closure.
- Choose to forgive whatever offenses you may still be harboring and let go of any thoughts of revenge.
- Release the past to the past and commit to cease trying to make it a part of your present and your future. Trust these words . . .

*“You will surely forget your trouble,
recalling it only as waters gone by.”*
(Job 11:16)

Accept Your Present

The present offers stability and significance.

- **Choose** to live one day at a time. (Matthew 6:34)
- **Put** the Lord at the center of your life. (Matthew 16:24)
- **Go** to God with your specific questions. (James 1:5)
- **Thank** God for providing everything you need for life. (2 Peter 1:3)
- **Praise** God that though your situation has changed, He will never leave you. (Hebrews 13:5)
- **Focus** on the joy and satisfaction of helping others. (Galatians 6:2)

Emotional Guidelines

- Have a strong, sensitive support system.
“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)
- Have the freedom to cry.
“Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.” (Psalm 126:5)
- Have a plan for socializing regularly.
“Let us not give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another.” (Hebrews 10:25)
- Have a trustworthy, honest confidante.
“Two are better than one . . . If one falls down, his friend can help him up.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10)
- Have your resentment released.
“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

Spiritual Guidelines

- Develop a purposeful prayer life.
“I recounted my ways and you answered me; teach me your decrees.” (Psalm 119:26)
- Develop a yearning for eternity.
“We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18)
- Develop a positive, practical perspective.
“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable . . . think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8)
- Develop a sense of peace about the past.
“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Accept Your Future

The future affords new opportunities.

- **Hope** in the plans that God has for your future. (Jeremiah 29:11)
- **Know** that your sorrow and grief will not be wasted. (Psalm 119:71)
- **Put** all your hope in God. (Psalm 62:5)
- **Have** faith in God, whom you cannot see. (2 Corinthians 4:18)
- **Know** that God will fill the void in your life. (Isaiah 43:18–19)

Saying Goodbye

- Look back and reflect on the significance of the history you have shared with that which has been lost, exploring and expressing the depth and breadth of your feelings (such as love, appreciation, anger, and guilt).
- Acknowledge the impact your history has had on you as a person. Accept the fact that it will always be a part of who you are. But affirm also that it is time for you to move on with your life and become the person God is making of you now.
- State that you cannot live in the past and that you have present needs that God plans to meet in new ways. Acknowledge that you need to embrace all that God has for you.

- Say goodbye to the past and to the pain and to all that has been lost. Express any final sentiments that need to be said and say, “Goodbye.” Turn your focus to the present and to the future that God has already planned for you, embracing your life now and your life as it will be in the future. Realize that you are ever in process and, therefore, ever changing. Say hello to Jesus and hello to whatever He has for your life now.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

Finding Comfort

Our God is the God of the second chance. Whatever is in the past can be used for God’s glory. The storms of sorrow should never be wasted. By God’s design, grief will better your heart and life. . . . Grief will make you grow.

Come to the God of all comfort.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . the God of all comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:3)

Open your heart to the reality of pain.

“In our hearts we felt the sentence of death. . . . That we might not rely on ourselves but on God.” (2 Corinthians 1:9)

Maintain a clear conscience by confessing past sins and offenses.

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

Find the positive in your grief process.

“See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness . . . what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.” (2 Corinthians 7:11)

Obtain comfort from those whom God will send to you.

“God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us.” (2 Corinthians 7:6)

Reinforce your faith by giving comfort to others.

“We can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” (2 Corinthians 1:4)

Trust in the strength of Christ in you for the power to rebuild your life.

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13)

“Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart.” (Ecclesiastes 7:3)

Questions and Answers

“I have experienced a devastating death in my family, and nothing feels the same. When will everything get back to normal?”

When death takes someone dear to your heart, your life will not “get back to normal.” However, you will need to establish a “new normal.” When your life is forever changed by a life-altering loss, your “old normal” vanishes forever. Yet, as you settle into a new routine with a new mindset, you will develop a new normal—and over time, your comfort level will increase. During this process, remember that . . .

- God made you to be resilient by equipping you to adapt mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to new situations.
- Life itself consists of never-ending change from the moment of conception to the moment of death.
- We are forever changing and being given the opportunity to grow in maturity with each new change. Therefore, trust the Lord, who created you, and lean on Him as you find your “new normal.”

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”
(Proverbs 3:5–6)

“Someone close to me died, and now it is too late for me to ask forgiveness for what I did wrong. What can I do about my heavy guilt?”

You do not have to live with guilt even though the person you wronged is no longer available to you. Realize that God is available to you.

- Write down every wrong attitude and action and then confess your sin to Him.
- Ask God’s forgiveness, realizing that all sins (even against others) are sins against God because He has told us how we are to treat one another.
- Write a letter to the one you wronged, read it aloud, and ask God to forgive you on behalf of the other person. Then burn the letter like a sacrificed offering.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”
(Psalm 51:10, 17)

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