



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

Counseling and Family Services

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GRIEF/LOSS, PART 1

“When a Christian dies, precious is the prize.” Hymns of Zion, #248.

We are grateful to our Heavenly Father when a soul passes from this life into the realms of heaven. Yet, for those of us on this side of the grave, the passing of a loved one brings a time of change in our life, an adjustment. We now need to learn to live without the physical presence of our loved one.

We typically pass through various stages in learning to adapt to this change. These stages are possibilities, and everyone may not go through all the stages. Also, the stages may not always be in the same order for everyone. Whether death was expected following a medical prognosis or whether it was a sudden tragic event, most individuals react to the death by going into some type or state of shock or denial. “Oh, no! This can’t be happening!” or similar comments are often heard (or thought). However, a few people are so resigned to God’s will for their lives that they can utter in the calmness of Job, “...*the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*” *Job 1:2.* (Besides all his earthly possessions, Job lost seven sons and three daughters—all his children.) Either reaction, denial or acceptance, is ok.

When Lazarus passed away, Mary and Martha were sad. *“Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave.”* *St. John 11:32-38.* Our Lord and Saviour “groaned within himself.” He wept. It is ok to weep. It is ok to not weep. Some people may cry at the “drop of a hat.” Some may never shed a tear.

Grief takes on a variety of feelings. Another stage includes the feeling of anger. No two people react alike. It is ok to be angry with God—or just angry, period. It is ok to not be angry. It is ok to feel that your loss is unfair. You may be angry with yourself and others for not preventing the loss. Adolescents often have a difficult time talking about the death of a loved one and may develop irritable and explosive moments. It is wise to help them understand the intensity of their feelings and encourage them to find appropriate ways to express their angry feelings as well as working through your own anger.

You may experience guilt. It is not unusual to blame yourself for something you did or didn’t do prior to your loss. There are situations you cannot control or change. You will learn to accept them.

Many times people sink into depression. It is difficult to think or plan. You feel drained and unable to perform routine tasks. You may feel like giving up. “Will the sun ever shine in my life again?” Yes, but your life will not be the same as before your loved one died. You will continue thinking of your loved one, especially on birthdays or special memories from the past, but, in time, you will also begin to reach out to others again. You will find a joy in “doing for others.” During your “lows,” continue taking care of your body. Exercise regularly, eat healthy foods, and try to sleep well.

You may also experience deep feelings of loneliness. Your responsibilities may increase, and you are fearful of how to handle them. This is the time to reach out to others. Mary and Martha were surrounded by comforters when Lazarus died. It is important also that we are surrounded by those who can comfort us—our support group, our church family. Do not try to “go it alone.” Allow others the blessing of doing things for you. Some day you will be in a situation in which it will be your turn to be a comforter to others. Until then, take your time—it may be months, don’t rush it. You will know when that hard lump has been removed from your heart, and you are thinking of others again. Some grieving people said that it took a year of memories before the deep hurt started to ease. For others, it went more quickly.

Feelings of hope will come again. Talk of your loved one. Your thoughts may become, “This is what my loved one would have wanted me to do.” You may become creative in ways to keep memories alive such as planting a tree, making a scrapbook, donating time or money to a worthy organization, or starting a good cause and keeping it going, etc. You will be in a position to comfort others. Everyone has a grief story—a fellow airline passenger, a cab driver, another parent at a school meeting. Learn to reach out to others and share your newly changed life—a life that entered the depths of grief and came out (or will come out), changed to be of service to your Jesus in a new way you could not have imagined before your loss.

Horatio Spafford penned these words to a familiar hymn after losing four daughters at sea:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.*

Refrain:

*It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

We do not know the length of our life span. Compared to eternity, God allows us a brief time to live in His beautiful creation. He knows us and all our emotions. He understands our “frame.” He loves us more than we can ever imagine. Trust Him as you walk through valleys. Hold His hand tightly. *“Be not dismayed whate’er betide, God will take care of you.”*

Thoughts were taken from the booklet, “About Grief,” (South Deerfield, MA, Channing L. Bete Co., Inc., 2000 Edition)

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