

Dealing With the Death of a Loved One

I. Saying goodbye is hard.

1. The disciples were sad when Jesus told them that He would be leaving them (**Joh 16:5-6**).
2. The brethren wept when Paul left and would see them no more (**Act 20:36-38**).
3. Mary and Martha were filled with grief when their brother Lazarus died (**Joh 11:32-33**).
 - A. They were deeply saddened even though they knew that he was in heaven and that they would see him again (**Joh 11:23-27**).
 - B. Jesus Himself wept when Lazarus died (**Joh 11:33-35**).
4. When you love someone, it's painful to let them go (**Joh 11:35-36**).
5. Paul loved the brethren and desired to remain with them, while at the same time desiring to depart and be with Christ (**Php 1:23-26**).

II. There is a time to weep and mourn (**Ecc 3:4**).

1. Mourning is good, necessary, and helpful (**Ecc 7:2-4**).
2. Jacob mourned the loss of his son Joseph many days (**Gen 37:34**).
3. The Egyptians mourned Jacob's death for 70 days (**Gen 50:3**).
4. Israel mourned the loss of Aaron for 30 days (**Num 20:29**).
5. They did likewise for Moses (**Deu 34:8**).
6. The disciples made great lamentation when Stephen was killed (**Act 8:2**).
7. Mourning the death of a loved one often goes through five stages.
 - A. Denial
 - i. People who learn of a terminal illness or the loss of a loved one, especially if it happens suddenly, will use the defense mechanism of denial to numb their emotions.
 - ii. They will tell themselves "This isn't happening" or "This can't be happening."
 - iii. They hide from the facts to avoid the pain.
 - iv. This is the first stage of the grieving process.
 - B. Anger
 - i. After denial has subsided and reality begins to set in, the next stage of grief is often anger.
 - ii. People will often be angry at God for allowing their loved one to die (**Joh 11:21; Joh 11:37**).
 - iii. They might be angry with the doctors, family, friends, or even the lost loved one himself for leaving them.
 - iv. These feelings are often irrational and cause the grieving person to feel guilty, causing them to be more angry.
 - C. Bargaining
 - i. Another stage of grief is bargaining by making statements such as the following:
 - a. "If only I had sought medical attention sooner..."
 - b. "If only I had gotten a second opinion..."
 - c. "If only I had spent more time with him..."
 - d. "If only I had been nicer to him..."

- ii. This causes guilt as mourners begin to believe that there is something they could have done differently to save the loved one.
 - D. Depression
 - i. This usually happens after the funeral is over and reality sets in.
 - ii. Reminders of the loved ones during quiet times alone bring sorrow to the heart as we remember times we had with them and how much we miss them.
 - iii. This stage requires time to heal.
 - E. Acceptance
 - i. By allowing yourself to feel the grief as it comes over you, you will begin to accept the loss and move on.
 - ii. Resisting grieving and acceptance will only prolong the pain and will impede the natural healing process.
- 8. Tips on mourning
 - A. Don't avoid it; this will only prolong the pain (**Pro 14:13**).
 - B. When commenting on times to weep and mourn, Charles Bridges in his commentary on Ecclesiastes said, "These are God's times. Beware of changing them."
 - C. Don't bottle it up inside - cry it out.
 - i. Take time to think of the loved one you lost, and weep over them.
 - ii. Get out pictures of them, remember them, and mourn their loss.
 - D. After you have done this, then begin the process of moving on with your life.
- 9. During a time of mourning, often times the best thing that we can say to console the mourner is *nothing* (**Ecc 3:7; Job 2:13; Gen 37:35**).
 - A. Often at these times, hugs, listening, or giving space are far more helpful than words.
 - B. At those times we should just weep with them that weep (**Rom 12:15**).
 - C. "A time of sorrow also must be mentioned as a time of restraint. Precious words are often wasted at this season. The time of silence is more soothing. We had better restrain our words, till the waters have somewhat assuaged. A voluble comforter adds to the trouble he professes to heal. He is rather a sore than a balm. Great wisdom is required to know when, as well as what, to speak." (Charles Bridges, *Ecclesiastes*, page 60-61)

III. There is also a time to laugh and dance (**Ecc 3:4**).

- 1. Once you have mourned sufficiently, it's time to move on with your life.
 - A. It's not wrong to feel happy again after a loved one has died (**Ecc 3:4**).
 - B. Don't allow yourself to feel guilty for being happy (**Php 4:4; 1Th 5:16**).
 - C. Being happy after the death of a loved one doesn't mean that you don't love and miss them.
- 2. David mourned and begged God to spare the life of his baby while the baby lived (**2Sa 12:15-17**).
 - A. But once the baby died, David stopped mourning, went to church, and moved on (**2Sa 12:18-23**).
 - B. David then comforted his wife afterward (**2Sa 12:24**).

IV. Don't mourn as those that have no hope (**1Th 4:13**).

- 1. The loss of a loved one must never cause us to despair and lose our faith.

2. We have hope that we will see our loved ones again because Jesus Christ has conquered death (**2Ti 1:10; 1Co 15:51-57**).
3. Jesus is coming back to raise His people from the dead (**1Th 4:14-18**).
4. We will see our loved ones in Christ again.

V. The Lord knows what you're going through.

1. Jesus was a man of sorrows (**Isa 53:3**).
2. Jesus suffered all of the sadness, mourning, and pain that we do (**Heb 4:15-16**).
3. Cast your cares upon Him for he careth for you (**1Pe 5:7**).
4. Take your cares to Him in prayer, and He will give you peace which passeth understanding (**Php 4:6-7**).
5. The Lord is nigh unto those who are of a broken spirit (**Psa 34:17-19**).
6. Weeping will endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (**Psa 126:5-6; Psa 30:5**).