

## **Taming the Storms of Life Grief**

**Intro: There is no greater storm to face in life than the death of a loved one. And though as Christians we are encouraged to "sorrow not as the rest who have no hope," this does not exempt us from the pain of grief. The process of dealing with grief is difficult and persistent. One thing that will help very much is to understand the panorama of emotions we will feel when someone close to us passes away. Another thing will be to find help from those who love us. With that in mind I want to talking about how to cope with the storm of grief and how to help others do so.**

**Grief is natural. It is the spirit's way of dealing with the trauma of a great loss. Stories of grief and mourning are interwoven into the fabric of Scripture.**

*So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. (Gen. 37:34)*

*Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. (2 Sam. 11:26)*

**It will help to understand the grief process itself and how we may help others through it.**

### **The first stage of grief is shock.**

Someone once described shock as "nature's injection of anesthesia". It is, as if God has equipped us with a natural psychological defense mechanism to enable us to deal with sudden pain.

During this period our actions may be somewhat mechanical or reactions to what others as saying or doing.

We may feel as if we are living in a dream world rather than reality; and that we are going to wake up and find that what we have experienced is not real.

This stage of grief exists for a few hours to perhaps a few days and cushions us from the immediate and full force of grief's pain.

During this period we may best help the grieving person by just being there to help with whatever needs to be done to take care of the urgent needs connected with a funeral.

### **The second stage of grief is suffering.**

In this stage of grief the full reality of the loss of a loved one hits home and with it is acute suffering. The challenge of this period is simply to bear up under the burden of sorrow and begin to make small steps toward recovery. This is a period of overwhelming emotion. I have often thought of them as waves of emotion. There are many possible ways for this emotion to work out and it is not always rational. The grieving person may express:

**Fear**--There may be concern about losing other people in one's life. There may be personal fear of future sickness and death.

**Anger**--As we begin to face the numerous difficulties of coping with one's loss, we may become frustrated. We may feel anger toward those who have had a role in the loss (doctors, nurses, relatives, preachers, even the person who has departed).

**Guilt**--Often the grieving will think about what might have been done to avoid the loss. "If only..." We may regret our decisions; we may regret things we think we should have said or done.

**Depression**--Feelings of futility and the vanity of it all. Life is not worth living. Loneliness. I can't go on...

**Self-pity**--Acquiescence to grief that destroys initiative.

**Numbness**--There may be times when the person feels nothing. It may be the mind's way of relieving the intensity of pain.

The grieving person may best help himself in this period by riding the waves of emotion, realizing that they may or may not always be reasonable. Here are things you can do:

**Allow yourself to grieve.**

Sometimes we may think that showing sorrow may reflect a lack of faith in God's words and His promises about the faithful; yet consider the Lord.

*Jesus wept. (Jn. 11:35)*

**Talk about your feelings with others.**

What we need most is someone to hear us.

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. (Rom. 12:15)*

**Avoid unhealthy dependence.**

We cannot keep our loved one alive by transferring their identity to someone else who will be the new object of our love or the supplier of our needs. It is spiritually unhealthy to seek a new relationship in order to avoid the pain of the loss of the old one. Often people marry "on the rebound".

**Pray for strength to endure.**

If there was ever a time when we need the comfort and strength of God, this is it. Use this time of grief to reach out to God and His people and depend upon them for support and comfort.

*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 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. 1:3-4)*

**Find consolation in your faith.**

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. (1 Thes. 4:13)*

*Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. 8:10)*

It is a different context; but it reminds us that we can find consolation and strength in the joy of our Lord.

**Determine to live again.**

Does the death of loved one mean that life also has to end for you? Determine to live without the dead rather than living for the dead. You must decide whether you will live in a house or a museum. Life is dynamic and changing; death is static and unchangable.

Take positive steps to live again.

Take care of yourself physically during the time of suffering.

Postpone important decision until you have the clarity to make wise ones.

Get back into the business of living.

During this stage, we may best help the grieving by being available, patient and understanding. What the suffering person needs more than anything is a good friend. He needs someone to listen. He needs someone to express love and affection. Some things to remember:

**Keep in touch.**

With all losses, we intensify our efforts at the moment of loss; but we are often needed later just as much or even more. Sure, life must go on and the grieving person must understand this; but do make yourself available. Don't say, "If there's anything I can do..." Do something!

**Listen sympathetically and give advice sparingly.**

Grief wants to be heard, needs to be heard. Let the grieving person set the agenda. Guide his thinking toward faithful thoughts and solutions. Comfort him with your love and God's love.

Avoid platitudes. As people express their grief, it is easy to fall into the temptation of explaining everything and repeating what are in many ways unhelpful platitudes such as:

"It was their time to go." Do we really know that God has put a date on the calendar for every person?

"It was God's will." Was it? Could grieving then be interpreted as resisting the will of God?

"They are better off." That may be true; but is the grieving person better off? Is he/she necessarily consoled by knowing that his pain is another's relief? Maybe or maybe not.

**Be patient.**

Expect the unexpected. Each day is different. You may meet a grieving person one day and he/she will be calm and serene, the next, full of sorrow. Know that the waves will come.

**Be helpful, but don't take control.**

The grieving person needs to take charge of his life, learn to manage on his own, compensate for the loss, and heal.

**The third stage of grief is recovery.**

The process of suffering and recovery are working together. Here are the objectives for which the grieving person should be striving. Here's is when you know you are recovering.

**Acceptance**

You can acknowledge the loss of the person you love as reality. You are not merely resigned to it; you accept it. You can be grateful for that part of your life; but you are also ready to enter new relationships.

**Communication**

You can talk about your loved one to others without being overwhelmed by grief.

**Embracing and valuing memories**

Learning to live with memories of someone we love. There will be times when the waves of emotion will return. This is normal. We need to work to let these memories comfort us rather than give us more anguish.

**Participation in life.**

There is a strong tendency to do nothing in grief. You know you are recovering when you begin to make those baby steps back into life. Accepting responsibility for those things you once did and adjusting to provide what another has provided. This would be getting back to work, (in marriage) seeing to the tasks of home life.

**Conclusion: With God's help we can make it through the grief process and come out of it a better person. We will be better able to help others around us; and we'll certainly feel a closer tie with heaven and a longing to go there. In Scripture the attraction of God's new Jerusalem is put in these words:**

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (Rev. 21:3-4)*

**The hope of the resurrection is stated by Paul:**

*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thes. 4:17)*

**It is sometimes said, "Time heals all wounds." That's not necessarily true; an untreated wound will not get better with time. We have to use our faith in the time of storm and we have to trust in the one who calmed the storm on Galilee.**

**When the storm of grief enters your life, keep remembering this truth: He still calms storms.**