

BIBLICAL GUIDANCE SERIES

WHEN DEATH TAKES SOMEONE YOU LOVE



**BILLY
GRAHAM**
Evangelistic Association
Always Good News.

Bereavement is the intense emotional suffering that follows the death of a loved one. It involves deep sadness and emotional pain, which can include an anguish that reaches deep into the heart and soul.

If you are walking through a time of grief, you know the agony of what it's like to have a broken heart and to feel waves of despair wash over you. Grieving the loss of a loved one is a journey that each person must walk through individually, but God has promised to walk with you one step at a time.

Billy Graham has said, "In man's instinct, something down inside says there must be a future life, there must be something beyond this life. There is only one person who can speak on this subject because He came from the grave; He rose and His name was Jesus Christ."

CYCLE OF HEALING

Grief and bereavement often come in waves of sorrow that recede only as the cycles of healing are allowed to occur. Recognizing that process and allowing it to happen is important in order to endure and even grow richer through this universal experience. This cycle does not always happen in the order listed below, and certain points may occur more than once, but the following are all natural elements of the grieving and healing process.

- Initial shock of death: An intense emotional impact that sometimes leaves a feeling of emotional paralysis.

- Emotional release: a time often characterized by weeping.
- Loneliness and depression: a sense of loss, often related to the degree of dependence on the person who died.
- Guilt: a feeling characterized by second guessing—"I could have done more" or "I should have done something differently."
- Anger, hostility: asking, "Why did God let him die?" "Why didn't God answer my prayer?" or even, "Why didn't she choose to live?"
- Depression: an overwhelming sense of apathy and a reluctance to pursue life's activities. "I can't get on with life," or, "I don't want to."
- Discovering and processing the loss: realizing the many roles the person had in your life that may only become evident over time.
- Thankfulness: appreciating the good memories, the good gift that his or her life was.
- Gradual return to hope: a sense that life will go on. "I will be able to cope." "God is helping me." "I am not alone." "She is better off now."
- Return to normalcy: choosing to live the next chapter of life. This is not forgetting, but accepting.

A UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE

It is healthy to mourn and grieve. This is a universal human experience we must all pass through.

God wants to bear our heartaches and losses with us. He does this through giving us His comfort, His hope, and His encouragement. Life may lose much of its meaning temporarily. God, however, is permanent. Jesus Christ is the solid rock, the foundation to build your life upon.

Billy Graham has said, “Death is the Christian’s coronation, the end of conflict and the beginning of glory in Heaven and triumph.”

Indeed, the hope that each of us has for peace and healing lies in Jesus. If you know Jesus Christ and are trusting Him with your life, you can know that He will carry you through your grief. Trusting in Him means:

- We will live eternally though we die physically (John 11:25-26).
- We have everlasting life (John 3:16).
- We have a place assured in Heaven (John 14:1-6).
- We will take part in the bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). And there will be a glorious reunion someday between us and other believers whom we hold dear.

“We believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus”
(1 Thessalonians 4:14).

MOVING FORWARD

FOR ONE WHO IS GRIEVING

- 1.** Read the “Steps to Peace With God” section. If you have never explored what it means to find the deep satisfaction and purpose in a relationship with Jesus, do so now. If you have already turned your life over to Jesus Christ make your relationship with Him primary in your life (see Matthew 6:33).
- 2.** Allow yourself to experience the grief and the cycle of healing. It is normal.
- 3.** Recognize Christ as your constant companion. Enjoy His presence each day. Look to Him for true comfort and peace in your life.

4. Be honest about how you feel. You may express feelings of guilt, anger, confusion, or despair. These feelings are often a part of the process. Don't cling to them, but permit yourself the time to process them. Acceptance and healing will come, though perhaps slowly.
5. Have a thankful heart for the years of love shared during the life of your loved one. Believe in the promise of eternal life to come.
6. Reach out to help others who are hurting. This can be great therapy and will help you learn to live fully again.

SCRIPTURE FOR MEDITATION

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”

—John 11:25-26

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

—John 14:1-3

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ... I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

—Philippians 1:21, 23

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

—Psalm 116:15

“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

—Revelation 21:4

HELPING GRIEVING PEOPLE

One of the best things we can do for a grieving person is simply to be a loving presence, listening and praying with him or her. Many times well-meaning Christians feel the need to be a “cheerleader” to a grieving person or to say something spiritually profound. But this can end up backfiring and sound trite or insensitive. It is not always wise to try to explain on behalf of God. Instead of needing to have an answer for everything, we need to admit that we do not fully understand God and His ways.

Helping grieving people calls for authenticity, sensitivity, tenderness, and empathy. Depending on the Holy Spirit for guidance is crucial, especially because there are no easy answers. Our words must be sincere and meaningful, “tailor-made” for the situation. Real comfort for those who have suffered loss depends on where they are in the grieving process.

If the person grieving seems overwhelmed with loss, help him or her develop a support system. One’s energy levels and ability to plan ahead will often be sporadic. Reestablishing old contacts or hobbies, involvement in a church that lifts up Jesus and His Word, and participation in nonthreatening community events or a grief support group can do a great deal to fill the empty places in a person’s life. These activities can also allow the person to begin experiencing life in a positive fashion. In addition, encourage the grieving person to read the Bible daily.

If grieving people express guilt over some aspect of the loss, encourage them not to second-guess their situation. The loss, and all that may have preceded

it, happened in the past. They need to take their regrets to the Lord. Remind them of God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). They should confess anything they feel necessary to confess to God, and then let it go.

MOVING FORWARD

TO HELP SOMEONE GRIEVING

- 1.** Pray for him or her. Ask to do this when you are together. Do it privately as well.
- 2.** Encourage the grieving person to seek God. If this is a new concept for him or her, begin a routine together through Bible study and prayer. Be respectful of his or her vulnerability. Don't press.
- 3.** Encourage the person to maintain or develop a support system in a Christian community.
- 4.** Listen and be present in the person's daily life.
- 5.** Do not avoid saying the name of the person who died, do not avoid bringing up memories, and do not be afraid of tears. All of these help the healing process.
- 6.** If there are practical things that need to be done, such as writing a résumé or selling a home, help him or her to get started working toward that goal.
- 7.** Note the date of death. For the next several months, on that day of the month, let the person know you remember.
- 8.** Prepare a list of Scriptures that pertain to the person's situation. (Consider Psalms 23, 25, 27, 71, and 91.)

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STEPS TO PEACE WITH GOD

Step 1: God's Purpose—Peace & Life

God loves you and wants you to experience peace and life—abundant and eternal. The Bible says, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

Step 2: The Problem—Sin Separates Us

People choose to disobey God and go their own way. This results in separation from God. The Bible says, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

Step 3: God's Remedy—The Cross

God sent His Son to bridge the gap. Christ did this by paying the penalty of our sins when He died on the cross and rose from the grave. The Bible says, *“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8, ESV).

Step 4: Our Response—Receive Christ

You cross the bridge into God's family when you ask Christ to come into your life. The Bible says, *“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”* (John 1:12, ESV).

The invitation is to: REPENT (turn from your sins), ASK for God's forgiveness, and by faith RECEIVE Jesus Christ into your heart and life and follow Him in obedience as your Lord and Savior.

Prayer Commitment: “Dear God, I know that I am a sinner. I want to turn from my sins, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe He died for my sins and that You raised Him to life. I want Him to come into my heart and to take control of my life. I want to trust Jesus as my Savior and follow Him as my Lord from this day forward. In Jesus' Name, amen.”

If you have any questions, please visit Peace-WithGod.net or call the Billy Graham 24/7 Prayer Line at 855-255-7729.

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