

Care Giving For The Grieving

Whether it is the death of a loved one, miscarriage or a little stillborn child, care giving for the grieving is a must. My wife and I worked in the Life Saver Ministry and have had some experience in helping young ladies and their parents go through crisis pregnancy situations. Do you know that many of those babies of girls died?

Do you know that 11 and 12 year old girls aren't mature enough, and emotionally and physically stable enough to bear a child much less twins? There certainly were some traumatic times. Helping these girls with counseling, finding them a home, getting them medical attention, dealing with their parents, meeting their immediate needs, encouraging them to continue their educations, helping place their children up for adoption if they so chose.

All of this was a piece of cake compared to when my wife sat in the hospitals with them when their babies died prematurely, and dealing with the parents who often would blame themselves and then have to deal with the grieving process of this child.

Let's look at a traumatic experience in the Bible and see if we can learn from it how to care for the grieving.

Job 2:11-13 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. 12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. 13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

Job lost all ten of his children in one day! *Job 1:18-19 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

It says in our text that Job's friends had heard of all this evil that they came to him to mourn with him and to comfort him. We also find out that Job's grief was so much, that they were speechless for a period of seven days and seven nights! Think about that. It was such a devastating loss that all they could do was sit there in silence for seven days and seven nights!

We all have lost loved ones, and I thank God that He shows us some extremes in the Bible and how to deal with them.

How to help the grieving among us.

1. First of all, make an appointment to see your grieving friend.

Job 2:11 ...for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.

These three men although they really blow it in the end, at least started out right and with the right intentions.

Our American culture makes this easy today by normally having a viewing or at least visiting hours at the funeral home. Can I give you some good advice this evening? Make it a point to go to the funeral home! I want to encourage you to take your children to funeral homes. Help them to realize early in life what truth is, what reality really is.

Eccl 7:1-5 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

I know and you know people who say, I don't go to funerals or the funeral home. Listen, people need you at that time in their lives. I would encourage you to change your ways! Make it a point to go to see your grieving friend at the funeral home! It will do you good, and them good.

Even if you don't know what to say! I, I'm sure, like other pastors have felt like writing a book entitled 10 stupid things not to say at a funeral! I have heard some winners!

I want you to fight or resist saying to the grieving something like this... Standard cliché's "If I can do anything for you, let me know." "Call me now if you need anything," because they won't! They never do! Because those lines really are meaningless.

Instead, why not say to them as we see here in the scriptures. Make an appointment to see them, to do something nice for them. You might want to say, "Next week, Thursday, at noon you and I are getting together and going out for lunch. Or, No argument, we want you over for dinner next week. Or, I noticed your lawn needed mowing when we went by your house, I will have my boys take care of it for you the next few weeks, and I will stop in for tea.

We need to be the ones to reach out while the grieving person has a tendency to withdraw.

If you really care, you will find something that will be a blessing and a help to them and TELL them what you are planning on doing for them, instead of asking, "If I can do anything for you, let me know."

Offer yourself to them, to clean their house, do their laundry, make a meal in a crock-pot or something, because they will not call.

2. Comfort them.

We can do this just by your presence, with your prayers, and by your promises that you will be praying for them. Don't just say it, promise it and do it! Tell that that for the next seven days you will be first on the prayer list going before the throne of grace. That God would help them through these difficult days.

2 Cor 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

With the comfort that God has given us, we are equipped with the ability to comfort others in their time of need.

When you attend any funeral, ask the lord to give you the ability to comfort these people.

Talk about the deceased! Ask where and when they were born, where they went to school, what their hobbies were, what their favorite sport was, the type of music they most enjoyed, where they worked, their favorite vacation spot, how many children they had, when they were married and for how long. Be personable! Be interested!

Many times it gets the grieving individual laughing, finding out some of the funny things that have happened with the deceased! *Prov 17:22 A merry heart doeth good like a medicine:*

Don't focus on what the surviving spouse is going to do, because they don't know what they are going to do. They are exasperated, they are physically exhausted, and they can't answer those questions. So, focus on the deceased and you will be able to comfort that person.

Say, "Tell me about your husband, your daughter, etc. What were some of the greatest experiences that you have had?" "What is the funniest thing they had ever done?"

Isa 40:1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

3. Weep with them.

Job 2:12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept;

We cannot be cold, and heartless people! Who can tell me tonight what is the shortest verse in the Bible?
John 11:35 Jesus wept.

Where did that happen? At the funeral of Lazarus. I want to encourage you to weep with those that weep!
Rom 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. This is a clear dictate from the Word of God. Don't swallow the idea that strong men don't cry. Jesus wept and He was a man! There was never anyone like Him, and he wept at the funeral of his friend Lazarus. People will not forget your tears. They will forget just about everything you say, but they won't forget those tears. Go ahead and cry together!

Tears are a language that God understands! The Bible says that God has put all our tears into a bottle and all our hardships into His book (Psalm 56:8). All of them booked and bottled by our Lord!

We are the only mammals if that is what you want to call us with lachrymal glands, tear ducts, to have the ability to shed tears. Animals do not have lachrymal glands. The only animals, dogs and cats that you see crying are in Walt Disney movies. God created us with lachrymal glands so we could weep, so we could cry, so we could be affected by our spirit and weep for other people.

4. Be silent

Job 2:13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

During the funeral, the viewing, the memorial service and the days following, I want to encourage you to make your conversations light and not be theological. If theological discussions come up, keep it only to the promises of God. Some people want to tell others why they believed this happened in their life.

(Ex. Family in this church lost their son to a stomach aneurysm. That Sunday the family was in church and someone said unto them, "If your family ate right, "healthy, according to the Levitical Laws" their son would be alive today." That is thoughtless and cruel!

It is not wrong for the grieving to question God, Why? Jesus himself question God. When Jesus hung on the cross, Jesus cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matt 27:46*

It is not wrong for the grieving or the dying to question God. He is not offended by that. What is wrong is when little human beings like Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and you and I think we have the answer. Let me tell you why, and this is where that this story in Job goes astray.

Up until this point Job's friends have done everything perfect. But now Eliphaz in Chapter 4; Bildad in chapter 8; and Zophar in chapter 11; begin to speak, after Job begins to pour out his complaint. I want to encourage you to let the grieving express their feelings and even express their protests without lambasting thing or telling them how "off the wall" they are.

It is a time to bite your tongue! *1 Thess 4:11 And that ye study to be quiet* It is a time to be quiet! Jesus let both Martha and Mary question him why their brother Lazarus had died. Just let them talk! Martha was quite bitter, she said, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. John 11:21*

Mary asked the same question, but with tears in her eyes and with the right spirit. *John 11:32-33 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. 33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,*

Their tears moved Him! The Lord was moved by the person who asked with the right spirit. You can ask with the wrong spirit and you can ask with the right spirit. I try to gently admonish if need be to ask the Lord with the right spirit, but it is very difficult sometimes.

Let them express their feelings and their protests even if it hurts. I have things said about my God at funerals that was not true, but it is not a time to get into some theological debate.

I heard people say that God is unfair; that He is mean; that He shouldn't have done this, How could God do this to me! He hates me!

The Book of Job is like a boxing match! These men went three rounds with Job.

In round one: Eliphaz, speaks then Bildad speaks, and Zophar speaks, and then Job responded.

In round two: Eliphaz spoke, Bildad spoke, Zophar spoke and then Job responded.

Then they went into round three: Eliphaz spoke, Bildad spoke, Zophar never got a chance the third round, for some young whippersnapper, some “know it all” jumps in, named Elihu, and he went on for the next five chapters!

They had a perfect Care Ministry started right up until they began to speak what they thought was on the behalf of God himself. Job replies, *Job 16:1-2 Then Job answered and said, 2I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all.*

They came to weep with him, to mourn with him and to comfort him, but you see they got into an area that you and I have no business getting into, and that is the judgment of God and the ways of God.

Isa 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Rom 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

They accused Job of hurting the orphans, breaking their arms. They said, “nobody saw you do it, but now God is dealing with you.

Did you ever read Job? It gets pretty bad doesn't it? The accusations start flying trying to guess at what great sin he had committed for this all to happen in his life. “You must have sinned!” Is that what an individual needs to hear after he just lost 10 of his children and the caskets are lined up for seventy feet down the funeral home corridor?

*Job 38:1 Then the LORD **answered** Job out of the whirlwind,* There will come a time when God himself will answer your questions! Until then, all we can say is, “I don't know why this happened. But I will be there for you.”

A year ago, my dad passed away. Some of my family have turned to alcohol and gambling to deal with the situation. Others have turned to religion for the answer. Alcohol doesn't work, gambling just takes your mind off of things for a while, still losing, and religion doesn't work, so some of them, at least 20 of them, turned to Christ for the answer!

My uncle David has since passed away and is in heaven tonight because he was one of those who trusted Christ as his Savior at my fathers' funeral. My Aunt Phyllis, as we speak, is on a mission's trip to Senegal, Africa using her medical expertise for the Lord Jesus Christ, because she was encouraged greatly by the preaching of God's Word at my fathers' funeral.

I have done dozens of funerals over the years and I have been by the bedside of those passing away in hospitals and in homes dying of cancer where to some extent I could feel what they were feeling.

It may take years some times to realize and understand why God does what He does. How could we feel for others if we have not gone through some sufferings ourselves. I believe that some of the things that God allows to take place in our lives are preparatory for things to come.

1 Cor 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;

When you have gone through your suffering you will find someone else who is going to need your help. And you will be able to go to people as I have been able to go to people and tell them that there is hope in Christ in this life and that there is hope in Christ for the next life!

5. Grief relief.

What could I do as the pastor and what should the church do to help those who are suffering?

1. Be at the hospital or home when the individual is passing away.
2. Go to the home and minister in whatever way you can. Cook a meal, clean dishes, mow the lawn, Have the children sing!
3. Help with the funeral arrangements, picking out the casket, deal with the times and schedules of viewing, wake and the funeral.
4. Thoughtful cards, phone calls, food, gifts of money, flowers, prayers, and fellowship.
5. More socialization is needed after. Fellowship for the long term. Don't let them keep to themselves. The individual needs much attention and care.

According to Dr. Norman Wright, who is acclaimed to be America's Foremost Christian Counselor, writes... That the average times of grief:

1. Death through natural causes... Two years.
2. Accidental death... Three years
3. Suicide... Four years
4. Homicide... Five years
5. Death of a child... No closure

The difference between grieving and mourning.

Num 20:29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

Deut 34:8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

Gen 50:2-3 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days.

Mourning is defined as: "Public Sorrow"

Grief is defined as: "Intense emotional suffering caused by loss"

Mourning is where we all join in. In the Bible it was for 30 days, thirty days, forty days and 70 days. These are the only references to it in the Bible. In our American culture, we mourn for about three days. Maybe God doesn't think that is enough?

Grief is intense emotional suffering caused by loss. It literally takes years to get over it or through it, with the exception of death of a child. Dr Norman Wright says, we never get over that loss. There is never closure especially for the mother he rights.

How can a mother get over that? I don't know! But, nothing is impossible with God!

Matt 2:18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

She would not be comforted because her children had been killed.

David gets over the loss of his child almost immediately.

2 Sam 12:16-24 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. 17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? 19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20 Then David

arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 24 And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife,

Here we see David got over it almost immediately. But after that it says in verse 24, that he went and comforted Bathsheba his wife.

There is this bond between a mother and her children that us men know nothing about. We are clueless! I love my kids, and I hope to go to heaven before them. I hope God gives them a full long life.

There is often a ground swell of activity to help the surviving members for the first week or two, and then it all fades away, and the person is left alone. Because we think the days of mourning are ended. But the days of mourning and the days of grief are different. What about week three and four and five etc.?

We expect them to get over it and to get on with their lives because the mourning period is over, but that doesn't mean that the grief process is over. That is why you need to get your calendars out and write in them, one month later have so-n-so over for dinner; three months later, take so-n-so out to lunch and a walk through the park, etc. Six months later and a year later we will have these notes on our calendars to remind us to continue to minister to them.

We should keep that ministry of Care Giving going for at least a year or two! Wouldn't that be something? Really making a difference in someone else's life like that?

6. Observe their grief

At the end of, *Job 2:13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.*

Remember, to separate mourning from grief. His grief was great. They saw his grief.

Don't ignore them over time. Invite them over let them know that you know it is the anniversary of that death. Let them know that you have been specifically praying for them that God would supply His grace for their lives. Ask them how they are feeling and keep showing them the love of the Lord Jesus.

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

I must confess to you that I have failed many of you with this post-traumatic care while you were grieving, because I didn't know what to do. I want you to know that I am trying to be a good care provider to help you become good care givers, especially in this great area of need.

Invitation:

Is there something on your heart today that you need to come and pray about?

God loves and cares about your need.

Song: Pg. #306 Have Thine Own Way, Lord!