

Because we know so little about grief, we become panicky when it strikes us.- Granger E. Westberg

SOME THINGS WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GRIEF

Everyone grieves differently, but everyone usually goes through the same grieving process. There are five stages to this process.

1. The first stage is **shock or numbness**, God's own Novocain that we will not be overwhelmed.
2. The second stage is **denial**. The numbness has worn off and we cannot believe it is happening.
3. The third stage is **anger**. Sometimes we are angry with God, with the person who has died or with the doctor. This anger may not seem to make sense but we should talk to others about it and not pretend it does not exist.
4. The fourth stage is **guilt**. We think that it is somehow our fault and if we had only done something different, the death would have been prevented.
5. The final stage is **acceptance** and the willingness to keep going. It does not mean that all the pain is gone but that it is lessening.

It is a good idea to remember the different stages of grief so that you can help to minister to someone who is grieving or understand yourself when you go through this process.

The tears . . .streamed down. . . making . . .a pillow for my heart.
St. Augustine

DEATH AND GRIEF

Jesus can help us deal with death and grief.

In American society many ignore death and pretend it doesn't exist. As we speak of death, we cannot say "if" in regards to death but "when." As Christians we never need to fear death or grieve alone.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 But let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery I'll probably never fully understand,. We're not all going to die--but we are all going to be changed. You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and in the time that you look up and blink our eyes--it's over. On signal from that trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again. At the same moment and in the same way, we'll all be changed. In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen: everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal. Then the saying will come true: "Death swallowed by triumphant Life! Who got the last word, oh, Death? Oh, Death, who's afraid of you now?" It was sin that made death so frightening and law-code guilt that gave sin its leverage, its destructive power. But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three--sin, guilt, death--are gone, the gift of our Master, Jesus Christ. Thank God!

Romans 5:21 Sin once used death to rule us, but God gave people more of His grace so that grace could rule by making people right with Him.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, He brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.

A scientific study has revealed that the chemical content in tears of grief differs from the content in tears of joy. Toxins are released from the body through tears of anguish. What a loving Creator who has given us a physical release of emotional pain.

John 11:32-44: When Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw Him, she dropped down at His feet, saying to Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her sobbing, and the Jews who came with [also] sobbing, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. [He chafed in spirit and sighed and was disturbed.] And He said, Where have you laid him? They said to Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. The Jews said, See how [tenderly] He loved him! But some of them said, Could not He Who opened a blind man's eyes have prevented this man from dying? Now Jesus, again sighing repeatedly and deeply disquieted, approached the tomb. It was a cave (a hole in the rock) and a boulder lay against [the entrance to close] it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, exclaimed, But Lord, by this time he [is decaying and] throws off an offensive odor, for he has been dead four days! Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you and promise you that if you would believe and rely on Me, you would see the glory of God? So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. Yes, I know You always hear and listen to Me, but I have said this on account of and for the benefit of the people standing around, so that they may believe that You did send Me [that You have made Me Your Messenger]. When He had said this, He shouted with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out! And out walked the man who had been dead, his hands and feet wrapped in burial cloths (linen strips), and with a [burial] napkin bound around his face. Jesus said to them, Free him of the burial wrappings and let him go.

There are three occasions recorded in the Bible where Jesus grieved: at Lazarus' tomb, over the city of Jerusalem and in the Garden of Gethsemane. In Isaiah 53:3 He is called the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Jesus is our model showing us that it is alright to grieve and also to "weep with those who weep."

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 And regarding the question, friends, that has come up about what happens to those already dead and buried, we don't want you in the dark any longer. First off, you must not carry on over them like people who have nothing to look forward to, as if the grave were the last word. Since Jesus died and broke loose from the grave, God will most certainly bring back

to life those who died in Jesus. And then this: We can tell you with complete confidence--we have the Master's word on it--that when the Master comes again to get us, those of us who are still alive will not get a jump on the dead and leave them behind. In actual fact, they'll be ahead of us. The Master Himself will give the command. Archangel thunder! God's trumpet blast! He'll come down from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise--they'll go first. Then the rest of us who are still alive at the time will be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Master. Oh, we'll be walking on air! And then there will be one huge family reunion with the Master. So reassure one another with these words

Psalm 116:15 The death of one that belongs to the Lord is precious in His sight.

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and He saves those whose spirits have been crushed.

Isaiah 57:1-2: Those who are right with God may die, but no one pays attention. Good people are taken away, but no one understands. Those who do right are being taken away from evil and are given peace. Those who live as God wants find rest in death.

It was not God's intention that we should experience death, but the fall of Adam and Eve brought that consequence upon the entire human race. Thank God that He had already provided the Lamb who took upon Himself our sins and whose death on the Cross broke the power of sin and death. Though our bodies will eventually die, but as Christians our spirits have been born from on high and will live forever.

Genesis 2:16-17 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."