

BEGINNING A NEW CHAPTER

When someone we love dies, we often question our own mortality: Is there a heaven? Will I go there? Will I see my loved one again? Where do I stand with God? Grieving is often a time of wrestling with our own thoughts about what we really believe about God.

One thing you must know, God loves you! He sent his son, Jesus Christ to die for your sins, that through His great mercy you would have eternal life. Heaven is a real place. The most important decision you will ever make is to settle in your heart where you stand with God and what will you do with His free gift of salvation through His son Jesus Christ?

Do you believe that God sent His one and only son to die on the cross to take your sins away? Do you believe that on the third day he rose from the dead? If you do, please pray the prayer below in your heart.

Dear God, I thank you for sending you son Jesus to die for me. I now invite you Jesus to come into my heart and make me clean. I ask you to forgive me of all my sins. I receive you as my Lord and Savior. Thank you for loving me. Thank you that heaven is now a real home for me. Amen.

If you have prayed this prayer, please tell the person who gave you this grief packet or any of the pastors or staff at Maranatha Chapel. We want to help you get a good start in your new life with God. Welcome to the family!

STAGES OF GRIEF

At some point in our lives, each of us faces the loss of someone dear to us. The grief that follows such a loss can seem unbearable, but grief is actually a healing process. Grief is the emotional suffering we feel after a loss. Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross has named five stages of grief people go through following a serious loss. Sometimes people get stuck in one of the first four stages. Often any stage can reoccur. Our lives can and will be painful until we move into dwelling at least most of the time, in the fifth stage - acceptance.

Five Stages of Grief

1. **Denial and Isolation:**

At first, we tend to deny the loss has taken place, and may withdraw from our usual social contacts. This stage may be very brief, or it may take time to pass through.

2. **Anger:**

You may be angry at the person who inflicted the hurt (even if they are the one who passed away) or you may be angry at the world, for letting it happen. You may be angry with yourself for letting the event take place, even if realistically nothing could have stopped it.

3. **Bargaining:**

You may try bargaining with God, asking, "If I do this, will you take away the loss or the grief?"

4. **Depression:**

You may feel numb, although anger and sadness may remain underneath.

5. **Acceptance:**

This is when your anger, sadness and mourning have tapered off. The person simply accepts the reality of the loss.

You may go through all the stages of grief, skip around through them, get stuck in one stage or even repeat stages randomly. Remember, your family often goes through all the stages along with you.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF WHILE GRIEVING

Grief is a healthy human response to the death of loved one. Grieving is a process. It cannot be rushed. Grief will wait if it is not dealt with at the time. It is important to deal with the feelings and not deny them. Allow yourself the time and the right to grieve.

Tips for healthy grieving:

Emotionally:

- Express your feelings: holding feelings inside can create more problems. Find someone you can talk to.
- Ask for and accept help: Friends and family can help, but often don't know what to do. Help them help you.
- Avoid making any major decisions until you are on the road to recovery from your loss.
- Understanding your grief can help you face the reality; deal with the feelings of fear, loneliness, despair and helplessness.
- Understanding your grief can help you recover and grow to be a stronger person.

Physically:

- Get plenty of rest, eat right and exercise.
- Be aware that physical problems and illness can be brought on by grief.

Spiritually:

- Pray – seek a prayer partner of the same sex.
- Read the Bible daily. (a helpful list of scriptures is included in this packet)
- Continue to go to church regularly.
- Get Pastoral counseling early in the process.

Be aware of your emotions during this time, they will go up and down like a rollercoaster. You will have a wide range of emotions that will affect you emotionally and physically. It is important to remember that these feelings are a normal part of the grieving process. It is important to remember that these emotional and physical symptoms will fade and pass away, the key is in finding a "new normal" for yourself and in keeping balance in your life.

Emotionally, you may be experiencing the following: Sadness; depression; forgetfulness; fear; feelings of going crazy; feelings of guilt or anger towards others or towards God or the deceased; crying uncontrollably or unexpectedly; mood swings; feeling uncomfortable around other people (but afraid to be alone); you may feel empty or that you have been cheated; haunted by thoughts of "if only..."; doubts about the cause of death of your loved one or fear of your own death.

Physically, you may be experiencing the following: Headaches or stomach-aches; tightness in the throat or in the muscles; heaviness or pressure in the chest; insomnia or sleeping too much; lack of energy; unable to concentrate; lack of appetite or over eating; panic or nervousness; hallucinations of seeing or hearing the loved one you have lost.