

journey of desire

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panied by sorrow and suffering. But like Much-Afraid, we desire to receive from our Good Shepherd what He has allowed, to let Him fulfill His purposes in and through our grief.

Of course, His ways are mysterious and often beyond our grasp. But we have a sense of eternity and hope we've never known before. We know this life is short and we will soon see Nathaniel again. Until then, we want to invest in that Kingdom with "firm foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). We long for God to weave our grief into the fabric of our lives, so our hearts would be tender toward brokenness, as His is, and we would learn to love others as He loves us. Having now a deeper acquaintance with grief, may we see the world more fully as Jesus does.

In his book *Journey of Desire*, John Eldredge says, "Grief is good. It is cleansing. It undoes my world—and that is the best part of it. I need to be undone; simply undone... the paradox of grief is that it is healing; it somehow restores our souls, when all the while we thought it would leave us in despair."

We agree. Yes, we miss our son more than we can say. And, yes, we have experienced greater pain than we ever could have imagined. Yet God is redeeming it for good. He is remaking us through it, as He will for any who walk hand-in-hand with Him through the shadowed and fear-filled valleys of this life. 

five "do's" and "don'ts" helping a loved one through loss

DO NOT convey a sense of pity or start by asking, "How are you?" *Pity = victim. Concern = survivor.*

INSTEAD, make statements. "It's good to see you." Or, "I heard what happened, and I'm so sorry." Statements invite your friend to say more. Questions put pressure on the survivor to respond.

DO NOT say, "Let me know if there's anything I can do to help." This puts the burden on people to add "project coordination" to their already over-stressed life. **INSTEAD**, make concrete suggestions and limit choices. "I have Tuesday evening and Saturday morning free. I'd love to watch your children for you one of those times. Would that be helpful?"

DO NOT tell grieving people, "I know exactly how you feel." No matter how similar their situation is to yours, you are not those people. You *do not* know how they feel.

INSTEAD, speculate a bit if you must, but *focus the conversation on your friend*: "I remember how I felt when I lost everything. I wonder what it feels like for you."

DO NOT ask about their future plans until at least a little time has passed after their loss.

INSTEAD, offer to help with the immediate needs, or just be there when it's time to take the next step.

DO NOT unleash a torrent of advice. Your friend probably wants to *talk*, not be talked to.

INSTEAD, remember that you have two ears and one mouth. Use them proportionally! 

Make concrete suggestions and limit choices. "I have Tuesday evening and Saturday morning free. I'd love to watch your children for you one of those times. Would that be helpful?"



good grief

by Steve Foley

Shepherds Network, People Resources Team



Steve Foley

I was full of unanswerable questions. I now see that being overwhelmed by questions like these was part of my grieving process.

"My friend is hurting, and I don't know what to do." The words poured through the phone line in an anxious rush. "His wife passed away a month ago, and he's still wandering around like a lost little puppy. He can't focus on doing anything, let alone completing it. He's not eating. He can't sleep. He can't make decisions about his own life or important things like finances, insurance, or cleaning out her closet. How can I help him?"

This call brought back intense memories for me. I'd experienced those same reactions when Margo, my wonderful wife of 32 years, passed away following her bouts with breast cancer. It was no easier when Sally, my second wonderful wife, died eight years later as a result of ALS. With two such women in my life, I've been a blessed man, but that kind of blessing brings intense pain with its loss. I could identify with the "lost little puppy" syndrome. Both times, I had complete confidence in my living, loving Lord, but I also had a lot of the "why" questions. The Lord had given us great ministry times, and I'd believed we would grow old together still serving Him.

Grief and grieving. It's about loss, which impacts each of us in different ways. Sometimes grief can be hard to recognize, because there was no death. The loss of a dream or job, a miscarriage, a broken relationship, some kind of transition—any of these can bring about a sense of loss that leads to grieving. Everyone will experience loss, but the process of grieving is unique to each person and situation.

With both Margo and Sally, afterwards I fell into a time of questioning. Should I have been better prepared for this? Did I think through the "what if's"? What if these chemo rounds don't work? What if she dies? What if I'm left behind?

My questions ranged from past to present and back again. What needs to be done? Who can help me? Do I want help? What kind of help do I need? Did I miss something as this was happening? Why did God do this? Why did He leave me this way—alone, and lonely? I was full of questions, even as I realized that most were unanswerable. I now see that being overwhelmed by questions like these was part of my grieving process. Is that normal? There *is* no normal. Each person grieves in their own way.

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the pain of loss

by Brad Hillman, People Resources Team Director

Eventually, loss affects everyone. That wasn't God's intention in creation, but now it's our reality.



We in The Navigators are blessed with many lifelong laborers, which means we experience loss when they move on to glory. Some, still in the prime of their life, are called home early. When we lose someone we love, our heart hurts deeply. Any kind of loss affects us, sometimes in ways we don't understand. Several Navigators have asked us to address this topic.

We've geared this *UpFront* to help you and others understand grief, and we hope these articles further equip you as you minister. There are many on the Shepherds Network trained and available to assist. Please contact PRT if you would like this help.

UPCOMING PRT EVENTS

Personal Contribution Assessment

October 7-9, 2013

January 27-29, 2014

April 21-23, 2014

July 7-9, 2014

Sabbatical Orientation Workshop

February 4-7, 2014

July 21-24, 2014

Listening and Emotional Healing Prayer

May 19-20, 2014

For more information call
(719) 594-2555.

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good grief

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This was key: friends came alongside me. From both of those times of loss, I have strong memories of friends of many years, friends of my spouse, friends who tried to give me all the answers or guide me in what I needed to do. Most were helpful, a few not so much. Fortunately, one friend was there who just knew how to be "present" with me, to help me think through my feelings, my grief, my stories, at the pace that I was willing to process and share. He knew when to talk and when to be quiet, when to ask questions, when to open the Scriptures together, and when to pray for and with me. Somehow he knew when I was ready to accept other outside resources to meet specific needs.



Recently, it became clear that a woman I knew was in her last days. A team of staff friends came alongside and ministered to both husband and wife. Some helped with their presence, some with planning for the burial and services, others with the administrative benefits of our organization. A number of people took care of physical needs at the couple's home. Several wonderful women came alongside the wife to care for and comfort her. The body of believers, the Navigator staff friends, were there and "present."

How *do* we come alongside a grieving friend? What do we say? How soon do we say it? Let me offer a couple of suggestions from my own experience, from books those in the Shepherds Network have been reading and discussing, and from those who've been used by God to help people as they move through the grieving experience.

Realize it takes time to grieve and heal. Give them time—time to mourn, to hurt, to ask the "why" questions. The pain, loss, and memories are so real you can almost feel them against your skin. It takes time to regain perspective and start to embrace the loss of a friend, partner, loved one. One person wrote, "Healthy grief means expressing our painful thoughts and feelings." Talking about the memories, both good and not-so-good, is part of healing. You can be there to listen.

Ask permission of the grieving person to ask questions or tell stories. Some days, they may be very open to talking. Other times, they may just want to weep by themselves. They may want to talk about what they're feeling or writing about in their journal, or about thoughts from a book on grief they're reading. Some people, like the friend who ministered so deeply to me, seem to have a God-given gift for knowing just what's needed. But if that isn't you, don't let discomfort or awkwardness keep you away. Your physical presence is your most important show of support. It lets your friend know he isn't alone in his grief. You can be present, available, and Jesus to your friend in this time of need.



journey of desire

by Ed and Jo Newell

Grief is a pathway each of us will walk, yet none of us desires to travel. On February 19, 2012, we were awakened by a middle-of-the-night knock on the door. We learned that our only son, Nathaniel, had been killed in a car/pedestrian accident. At that moment, we began a journey that has been indescribably painful, yet replete with surprising gifts of God's grace.

Those early months of grief were confusing and uncertain. It was hard to think clearly and felt dark and heavy. It seemed all our energy was required just to live through each day. Yet God made two things clear to us from the very beginning.

First, we must embrace—or as Ed says, run toward—the pain, willing to fully experience the heartbreaking loss of one we love so dearly, letting God meet us in our brokenness. Second, we must allow ourselves to experience whatever emotions come. Not ashamed to cry when our hearts can't contain the sorrow, nor feeling the need to manufacture emotions when all we feel is numb.

In making these things clear, the Lord blessed us with the freedom to walk with our hearts open to Him. We could receive the comfort only He could give.

We have also experienced loneliness and a sense of vulnerability. Many people feel awkward around grief. They don't know what to say or do, and so they do nothing. One wise friend, as I described my struggles relating to some people, said it was as if I had a gaping wound and didn't want anyone I didn't trust to come near enough to touch it. That was exactly what I felt!

Yet the Lord Himself has been constantly present. Always true to His Word, He has been near to our broken hearts and saved our crushed spirits (Psalm 34:18). He provides the sweet companionship of "safe" friends who accept us in the messiness of our grief. They cry with us, continue to ask how we're doing, and listen for as long as we need to talk. One 11-year-old "friend" ministered deeply to our hearts through a handmade card that quoted Lamentations 3:32-33. "Although [the Lord] causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone." The goodness of the Lord has been the foundation of our ability to walk this daunting path.

Now, seventeen months since Nathaniel's home-going, we continue to grieve. Yet we find that the excruciating pain is beginning to soften, just a bit. We see glimpses of the Lord transforming our ashes into beauty and our mourning into joy (Isaiah 61:3).

In the allegorical book *Hind's Feet on High Places*, the Chief Shepherd invites crippled and disfigured Much-Afraid to travel to the High Places. There He will transform her and set her free from her fears. Her Shepherd gives her the perfect traveling companions for her journey, Sorrow and Suffering. In the midst of a barren desert, she finds a lone flower whose name is Acceptance-with-Joy. Much-Afraid says to herself, "He has brought me here when I did not want to come for his own purpose. I, too, will look up into his face and say, 'Behold me! I am thy little handmaiden Acceptance-with-Joy.'" When she finally comes to the High Places, her Shepherd transforms her from Much-Afraid into Grace and Glory, and her companions from Sorrow and Suffering into Joy and Peace.

We too find ourselves in a place we would not have chosen, accom-

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