

## How to Deal with Grief

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### **How to deal with grief - Does the Bible give me any pointers?**

Of the many kinds of grief that afflict the human condition, the death of a loved one is often the hardest. Does the Bible give us any principles that tell us how to deal with grief and is there any process that we can use to help us as we face this test in life? I believe that the answer to both of these questions is yes.

There is an example of how to deal with grief found in 2 Samuel. King David of Israel went through a period of deep grief over the fact that his first child with Bathsheba was very sick (2 Samuel 12:15). David prayed and fasted while the child hung between death and life (2 Samuel 12:16). However, when the child died, his actions were different. "His servants asked him, 'Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!' He answered, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, "Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live." But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me"' (2 Samuel 12:21-23).

David's answer is evidence of a great hope in God and an acceptance of God's will in the death of this child. This example also speaks to the process of acceptance that we as humans must go through when dealing with grief. This is not something that may come over night as it seems to have done for King David in this instance, but it is a process that must be undertaken in order for the grieving one to proceed with life. The process of acceptance comes as a result of understanding that nothing changes the fact of separation through death except the hope of eternity. This is the basis of King David's acceptance. He had a hope that he would see his child once again. Without this hope, it is harder to come to the place of acceptance and yet the reality of life and death demands that this is the path to peace of mind and heart.

We learn how to deal with grief in accepting comfort. The Apostle Paul spoke of comfort, which is so very important in the process of dealing with grief. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). The comfort we need often comes through others who have been in the same place. There is a comfort in knowing that others have been through what we face and have survived by God's grace and comfort (1 Corinthians 10:13). The touch of a hand, the hug, the shoulder to cry on, the ear to listen, and the grace to come along side in what ever capacity that is needed are all the result of one who has been through the process of reaching out to someone else and giving the comfort that they themselves have already received.

Finally, how we deal with grief and the process that we go through must be filled with assurance in order to allow peace of mind and heart. "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The word "hope" here is not "I hope so" but it means a confident

assurance. I have personally been through the grief process with a husband, a son and a daughter and I can testify that the process each time was tempered by full assurance that I would see my loved ones again. If one lives long enough, one expects to see parents and grandparents go the way of all flesh. However, we never expect to lose a child. Like King David, the time for weeping, praying and fasting was while there was still life. When death came, the hope, the confident assurance in God as redeemer and LORD took over and the grief process was begun and I found His grace and strength was sufficient to take me through (2 Corinthians 12:9).

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