

Understanding How to Handle the Death of a Loved One

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Scripture References

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
John 11:11, 35
Psalm 13:3
1 Corinthians 15:22, 26, 54
Philippians 1:21-24, *NLT*
Matthew 5:4
Romans 12:15

2 Corinthians 1:3, 4
1 John 3:16, 18, *GNT*
Ecclesiastes 7:2-4, *NIV*
Ecclesiastes 3:4
Psalm 147:3
Romans 15:4
Revelation 21:4

Summary

The death of someone we love can be heartbreaking. Whether it is gradual or sudden, it is painful and brings sadness and grieving. Loving someone makes us vulnerable to sorrow; however, God does not want us to refrain from loving people simply to avoid future grief when they die. God's Word reassures us that any emotional pain we feel now is only temporary, but the joy from being reunited with our loved ones in heaven will be forever. This redirects our focus and gives us hope. It is okay to grieve when someone dies; however, knowing God's promises of life after death helps in the healing process, matures us spiritually, and enables us to comfort others in their time of sadness. We will never become trapped in despair or hopelessness when we depend on God and His Word to comfort us when we are hurting.

A. Death is not forever; God sees it simply as being asleep. Believers will wake up in heaven.

1. The biblical definition of death is "sleep;" God will eventually wake up those people. This gives us great comfort.
 - a. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
 - b. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep (John 11:11).
2. Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death (Psalm 13:3).
 - a. In the Bible, death is referred to as sleep, which is a complete lack of consciousness.
 - b. Physical death is temporary; everyone who dies will be awakened.
3. The Bible portrays death as an enemy. However, this enemy will be defeated after Christ's return.

- a. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive... The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death... So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:22, 26, 54).
- 4. Someone who is close to God can look forward to putting on their new spiritual body when they get to heaven. Paul wrote about facing this situation.
 - a. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live (Philippians 1:21-24, *NLT*).

B. Grief and sadness at someone's death is normal; this is part of the healing process.

- 1. We must not be ignorant of the promises God made us concerning life after death.
 - a. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4).
- 2. It is normal and healthy to grieve when a loved one dies; dealing with the reality of death helps us heal. Understanding God's Word regarding life after death rescues us from fear and despair. When grieving, it is essential to avoid making two common mistakes:
 - a. We must not try to mask our pain or drown our sorrows through substance abuse or addictive behavior.
 - b. We must not neglect getting enough rest and eating right. Becoming physically ill only adds to our stress.
- 3. It is okay to reminisce at the death of a loved one, and even to laugh and cry. This aids in the healing process.
 - a. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep (Romans 12:15).
- 4. When Jesus' close friend Lazarus died, He sympathized and empathized with those who were grieving.
 - a. Jesus wept (John 11:35).

C. The pain we go through when someone dies helps us grow and mature spiritually.

- 1. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 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 (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4).
 - a. What we go through at the death of someone we love can actually benefit us. We can learn compassion for others, and we can comfort and console them when they go through the same pain.
 - b. This is especially true for our children; they must be included in the grieving and healing process.
- 2. This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for others! ... My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action (1 John 3:16, 18, *GNT*).
 - a. Words of comfort carry great power, but sometimes we need to offer someone more than just words. Pitching in and helping mourning families with everyday tasks means a great deal to them.
- 3. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart. Frustration is better than laughter,

because a sad face is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure (Ecclesiastes 7:2-4, *NIV*).

- a. Everyone needs time to laugh, but they also need time to weep and mourn. There is a season for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:4).
- b. More spiritual growth happens in difficult times than in easy times. The death of a loved one provides us an opportunity to reflect on our own lives and on our relationship with God.

D. The promises of God concerning eternal life in heaven give hope to the believer.

1. When someone dies, God is our greatest source for understanding and comfort.
 - a. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds (Psalm 147:3).
 - b. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Romans 15:4).
2. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Revelation 21:4).
 - a. Suffering and emotional pain from death has an expiration date; God promises it *will* end.
 - b. Families will be reunited, and we will all be members of God's family.
3. There are some practical tips to apply when dealing with a loved one's death.
 - a. Realize that everyone deals with death differently.
 - b. Open up and talk about it, but only when you are ready.
 - c. Let yourself be vulnerable.
 - d. Allow your friends to be there for you.
 - e. Realize that you are messed up at the moment, and allow for it.
 - f. Avoid masking the pain; doing so only delays the healing process.
 - g. Go someplace you have never been before; this shows you that life still continues.
 - h. Continue doing what you love to do.
 - i. Cherish your loved one's memories.
 - j. Give yourself time to heal.
 - k. Take it one day at a time.
 - l. Keep it moving.

Category: spiritual growth

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