

Finding comfort

GOALS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

1. Acceptance

2. Turn to God (Psalm 63:1)

3. Express your emotions

4. Establish a new identity

ADVICE FOR YOUR JOURNEY

Don't rush

People will try to rush you

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." --God (Hebrews 13:5b)

Dealing with those who rush you

SURPRISES ON THE JOURNEY

You may feel relief or joy

Your pain may get worse

Ambushes of grief

SURVIVING YOUR JOURNEY

Don't numb your pain (Isaiah 55:2)

Take your time

In this week's From Mourning to Joy exercises ...

Susan didn't have anyone she could honestly share her emotions with. She found this made her grief process last even longer. Find out how to work through some important goals of grief.

"The more you keep your emotions inside, the more they'll come out." –Dr. Robert DeVries

HOW TO WRITE A GRIEF LETTER

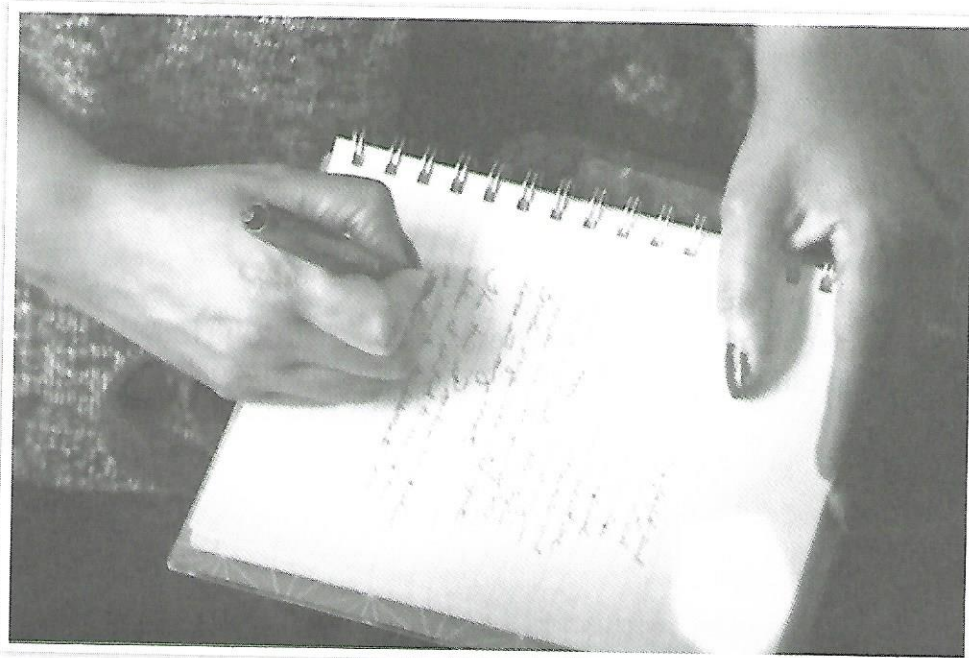
People mean well in their attempts to help you, but sometimes their efforts make things harder for you. It's helpful to write your friends and family what we call a "grief letter" so they can provide help that's best suited to you.

HOW TO WRITE A GRIEF LETTER:

1. Briefly describe your experience and your feelings.
2. Let people know what they can expect from you.
3. Tell them what they can do and say that you'd find comforting, and what's not comforting to you.
4. List specific, practical needs they can help with.

WHEN WRITING YOUR LETTER, REMEMBER:

- Share only your immediate needs. As your needs change, you can send or share a new letter.
- People won't be offended if you tell them exactly how to help you. They will appreciate your clear instructions. It takes the guesswork out of serving you.
- If you don't tell people what you need, you risk not being cared for and/or receiving unwanted help.



H. Norman Wright shares this sample grief letter in his book *Recovering from Losses in Life*.

Dear Friend (family, pastor, fellow workers ...),

Recently I have suffered a devastating loss. I am grieving and it will take months and even years to recover from this loss. I wanted to let you know that I will cry from time to time. I don't apologize for my tears since they are not a sign of weakness or a lack of faith. They are God's gift to me to express the extent of my loss, and they are also a sign that I am recovering.

At times you may see me angry for no apparent reason. Sometimes I'm not sure why. All I know is that my emotions are intense because of my grief. If I don't always make sense to you, please be forgiving and patient with me. And if I repeat myself again and again, please accept this as normal.

More than anything else I need your understanding and your presence. You don't always have to know what to say, or even say anything, if you don't know how to respond. Your presence and a touch or hug lets me know you care. Please don't wait for me to call you since sometimes I am too tired or tearful to do so. If I tend to withdraw from you, please don't let me do that. I need you to reach out to me for several months.

Pray for me that I would come to see meaning in my loss someday and that I would know God's comfort and love. It does help to let me know that you are praying for me. If you have experienced a similar type of loss, please feel free to share it with me ...

This loss is so painful, and right now it feels like the worst thing that could ever happen to me. But I will survive and eventually recover ...

Thank you for caring about me. Thank you for listening and praying. Your concern comforts me and is a gift for which I will always be thankful.

(Revell, 2006)

FROM MOURNING TO JOY

ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

Session Three - The Journey of Grief - Part One



SUSAN: "I FELT LIKE I WAS ALONE"

"When I lost my mother, it was like becoming an orphan. She was my last close living relative. I felt like I was alone in the world. Being the only caregiver for Mother, my life had been wrapped up in taking care of her. When she had passed, a lot of that was immediately gone. I felt like I didn't have any purpose. I had no one to talk to, to get out some of my feelings. My friends didn't want to hear about it anymore, so I would throw a mask up to try to act like everything was okay."

If you hesitate to be honest about your emotional state, if other people are rushing you through grief, or if you have fears about your future, you'll find it helpful to work through the ideas and strategies in this week's study.

DAY 1.

Express your emotions

Expressing your emotions can be scary. But God will comfort you when you do. *"It's good to talk it out. You will get through to the other side."* –Susan

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"He has sent me [Jesus] ... to comfort all who mourn."
(Isaiah 61:1b-2)

1. Are you allowing yourself to express your grief?
Why or why not?

2. According to Isaiah 61:1b-2, what is one reason God sent Jesus?

3. Why do you think God wants you to know that Jesus is more than a great moral teacher, savior, or miracle worker—but that He is also a comforter?

4. We've suggested a few ways you can experience Jesus's comfort. Add your ideas to the list.

a. Reading the Bible.

b. Listening to others share how God has helped them heal.

c. _____

d. _____

"I wore a mask to try to hide my feelings." –Susan

CONSIDER THIS

If you're not sure how to release your emotions, consider the following suggestions:

- Write down your story of grief.
- Tell others how much your loved one meant to you and how your grief is affecting you.
- Read sympathy cards or watch a video of the funeral to help release pent-up emotions.
- Make a scrapbook or photo book of your loved one.

TALKING TO GOD

God, I know I have to release these emotions in order to heal. Help me to grieve honestly over the suffering and sorrow in my life and in this world, and then to seek, anticipate, and accept the comfort You have for me.

**DAY
2**

Accept the reality of your loved one's death

A goal of grieving you learned on this week's video is to face the reality that you are here and your loved one is not coming back.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"The LORD said to Joshua ... 'Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready ... because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.'"

(Joshua 1:1b-2, 6)

1. As Moses's successor, Joshua inherited the huge responsibility of leading the Israelite nation. Before God instructed Joshua on what to do, what did He remind him of (see today's Bible verses)?

2. Why do you think it was important for Joshua to accept the reality that Moses was dead in order for him to move forward with what God had for him?
3. Why is it important (and painful) for you to accept the reality that your loved one is dead?

CONSIDER THIS

"I had to tell myself that I lost my father and he was gone, and that was the first real step towards grieving for me." –Amy

SEASONS CHANGE

"When you make your way through grief, you don't leave that person behind. You bring that person with you, where your memories of that person and your thankfulness for that person [become] a happy experience and not filled with so much pain." –Susan Lutz

TALKING TO GOD

God, my loved one is no longer here. I don't like it and I don't want it, but I recognize that it's true. Help me to do the tough work of grief in order to make it through.

**DAY
3**

Develop a new identity

"Who am I without my loved one?"
Now that your loved one is gone, you will have to figure out who you are now. But there are some things that will never change.

"I came to realize I had never really grieved my dad." –Susan

CONSIDER THIS

"When I'm in a place of anxiety, I stop and say, 'What am I dwelling on?' and it's all the areas where I'm just not able." –Sandy Elder

TALKING TO GOD

God, I'm struggling with unbelief and fear. Help me to hold tightly to Your ever-present hand.
Your presence helps relieve my fears.
Keep me safe and strong.

**DAY
5**

When people try to rush you
Don't let people rush you past the pain.
They are not the authority on your grief.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot ... a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4)

1. Describe when you've felt rushed or pressured by someone to get through your grief.
2. Based upon Ecclesiastes 3:1-4, what does God think you should be doing during this season of your life?
3. How might these verses from Ecclesiastes help you respond to someone who asks why you are so sad right now and whether or not your happiness will return?

CONSIDER THIS

*"We don't get through grieving at least until the first anniversary of [the] death. And that's really fast. Most people, it takes two to three to sometimes even four years to really go through that grief journey."
–Dr. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge*

TALKING TO GOD

God, hold me firmly in Your everlasting arms as I try to face the tough work of grief.

SUSAN: LOOKING BACK

"After Mother passed away, I was fearful about what my future would be. Thankfully, I have come to realize I have people that would be there for me if I needed them, and God has always provided for me; for instance, shortly after Mother passed away, God gave me a job right when I needed it.

"Through everything I've been through, Mother's [death], my dad, loss of job, loss of friends, God has always been there, and He always will be there for me. And I tell myself, 'Susan, it's going to be okay; just walk through it, take hold of the people that are willing to help you, and you will get through this with God's love.'"

NEXT SESSION

Discover things you can do to make your grief journey more bearable.

Time is not the healer of wounds. God is.