

Ministering to the Bereaved (Part 1)

Introduction

I. Who Are the Bereaved?

A. Definitions

1. Bereave – to leave desolate, esp. by death, to deprive of things, comfort, reason, etc., to suffer loss. Such loss may be that of a family member, friend, house, job, pet, from death, divorce, fire, etc.
2. Grief – deep sadness, intense emotional suffering, acute sorrow
Caused by loss

B. Descriptions (Possible emotions or reactions of the bereaved)

1. Refusal to accept the facts (denial)
2. Robbed/Ravaged
3. Regret (“I wish I had...”, “I could have done this or that...”)
4. Remorse (unresolved sin issues, guilt, etc.)
5. Relief (est. after a long illness and care)
6. Rejection (by deceased or by other family or friends)
7. Run down (exhausted)
8. Rage, revenge (anger at God, hospital, caregivers, drunk driver, etc.)
9. Rejoicing (giving thanks for past, for glorious future, etc.)

C. Do the Scriptures recognize the condition of bereavement?

1. Situations (Job, Jesus-John 11:35-38; Matt. 26:37-38; David-II Samuel 12:16-18; Different durations of grief – Genesis 50:10; numbers 20:29; Genesis 50:3)
2. Sympathies (Psalm 56:8; Hebrews 4:15-16; Isaiah 65:19; Revelation 21:4)

II. A. Scriptural Examples of Initial Bereavement Care – Job 2:11-3:2

1. Information is heard (2:11)
2. Individuals respond (2:11)
3. Intention clarified (2:11)

To come	-	To cry	-	To comfort
Per. Contact		Emotions		come alongside so
				Pers. Can lean on you
4. Identification with the bereaved
 - a. Saw impact of the loss
 - b. Shed tears, were saddened
 - c. Shredded clothes, sprinkled dust (1:20, 2:8)

- d. Sat down with him on the ground**
- e. Stayed (7 days/nights!)**
- f. Silenced themselves, then listened**
- g. Sensed the greatness of Hob's grief (Ackn. It)**

B. Some Practical Suggestions for Initial Care of the Bereaved (in 4 general areas)

- 1. Acknowledge that such a "loss" has taken place. Identify with the bereaved person or family. Empathize with them, letting them know that we see their tragedy as real and painful. Come, sit quietly, shed tears, share hugs, etc. "Weep with those that weep." Don't be quick to "preach" answers or solutions.**
- 2. Allow the hurting to express their grief normally and appropriately (may include any of above emotions). Listen much, talk little. Give people permission and space to grieve. Don't "slam-dunk" their efforts at conversation. Don't correct everything. It is not the time to judge, criticize, or to pontificate. Don't smother them. Don't fear their emotions but patiently listen and then lovingly care for them. Encourage them to be honest with/to God about their feelings/questions, etc. Pray for them and with them expressing honest emotions and concerns.**
- 3. Actively involve yourself in practical ways to convey your love and care for them.**
 - a. Tell them of your appreciation for the deceased and how their lives blessed yours (if they indeed had).**
 - b. Take initiative to help with the provision of food, babysitting, transportation, making phone calls, lodging, doing housework, wash, ironing, keeping of records, clippings, etc. etc.**
 - c. Don't say, "If there's anything I can do. Let me know...", but determine how best you can help and get started yourself or coordinate with others in it.**
 - d. Pray much and often for the bereaved and for God's guidance of all who are caring for them.**
- 4. In time, help to guide them through their grief and enable them to see reasons to go on. (This involves longer-term care, which will be addressed in a future lesson.)**

Some of the resources used for this material have been the following sources:

Comfort and Care for the Critically Ill by June Cerza Kolf, 1993, Baker Books

The Dynamics of Pastoral Care by David Wiersbe, 2000, Baker Books

What You can Say When You Don't Know What to Say by Lauren Briggs, 1985,
Harvest House Publishers