

**SEEING THE BEAUTY**



**BEYOND THE THORNS**



## **SEEING THE BEAUTY BEYOND THE THORNS**

**The healing process begins as we extend ourselves to help others. Remember friends and neighbors are affected by the loss too.**

### **HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

#### **PART I          Pre-funeral Service**

- 1. Be available to assist. Only offer if you are going to follow through.**
- 2. Don't worry about what to say just being there to listen is enough.**
- 3. Pray for the family, friends, and neighbors.**
- 4. Don't wait to be told what to do, if you see something that needs to be done ask if you can do it.**



## **STATEMENTS TO AVOID/ STATEMENTS THAT HELP**

**I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.** One can never know that because each person and relationship is different.

**I AM HERE FOR YOU.** This expression lets the person know that you are there to help and understand there is pain and hurt.

**IT'S FOR THE BEST.** Perhaps you feel that way, but the family may not.

**OUR GOD SHALL SUSTAIN YOU.** Helps to reassure that God is the one to whom they can call on at all times.

**DON'T CRY, BE STRONG AND TRUST IN THE LORD.** Weather a person cries or not has anything to do with their trust in the Lord. We cry because that person will no longer share with us in this life.

**CRYING ALLOWS OUR EYES TO SEE CLEARLY THE BEAUTY OF LIFE, THE REALITY OF DEATH, AND THE PURPOSE OF ETERNITY.** We have opened the door to share in joyful times of earthly life. At a point discuss death and it's meaning and rejoice in the fact that they now rest with Jesus. Crying is a part of the grieving process and is a very necessary part.



## **PART II            Post-funeral Service**

- 1.    After the dinner, the friends and family leave, the cold loneliness sets in. Plan time that you will call members of the family. Remember they need to be included in activities even more so now than ever.**
- 2.    Send flowers, cards, phone calls, etc to let them know that you care.**
- 3.    Invite them to share a meal at your home, or share a meal at their home.**
- 4.    Assist them with writing thank you notes.**
- 5.    Assist with packing or cleaning the home. If there is need to remove a hospital bed and/or equipment or clothing etc. offer help but make sure you are sensitive to their feelings during this time.**
- 6.    Offer to help settle business issues. Asking if they have contacted the following places and/or need someone to go with them:**
  - Attorney if there is a will/estate plan etc.;**
  - Notify Social Security is applicable;**

- **Insurance company – auto, home, life, medical and dental;**
- **Banks – checking, investment accounts, and/or savings accounts;**
- **Pension plan administrators if applicable;**
- **Utility companies to change billing name;**
- **Loan, mortgages, credit cards companies to see if any action is required;**
- **Notify family physician;**
- **If there is loss of a spouse, Father/Mother, or parent with children, in addition to the above, contact the employer or former employer to determine if any action is necessary.**

**For some of the above, a Death Certificate will be required to complete any transactions. Copies can be obtained from the mortician or the office of the County Court. Call to determine location and hours.**

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## **Some Word Living Newsletter Notes.**

**In March 2000, the Lord guided us to write some notes about the various stages of grief. We have included copies for your reading in hopes that it will provide help to you as you help others.**

**Begin with prayer and God will guide you and strengthen you for the opportunity to share His love with others and renew their hope, faith, and inter peace.**

# WORD LIVING NEWSLETTER

## MARCH 2000

We are thankful to God for another day in this third month of 2000. We are here by the grace of God.

For several months, the Lord has placed a special subject on my heart. I have thought for a long time that there should be a place with some information that would help people understand what "Life after Death" really means. Now, before you say the Bible gives that information, let me define the subject. Life after death, in this letter, is looking at how a family continues their life after a loved one dies.

The Bible speaks of death and life and how people trusted God through it all. But how we feel, and how we are expected to feel may be different. Many Christians feel that when a loved one dies we should be strong, and in a week or two back to normal. Others may give a month, but one year is max. Surely, a real Christian should be able to deal with death in a proper manner. Does this mean if you are struggling with these feelings that you are not a Christian? Christians struggle. The difference is they have a friend who understands, and is able to help them and His name is Jesus.

Over the years, I have learned that there are stages to grief. I do not know them all but I know, I have experienced a few, and I feel the presence of the Holy Spirit leading as I share them with you.

### **SHOCK AND DENIAL**

When a friend or a family member dies, the initial feeling of death is **shock**. It does not matter if the person was sick and you expected their death, or if death came unexpectedly. The final act was a **shock**. The mind spins and seems to lose its ability to think clearly. Sometimes you feel physically weak. You try to make sense and even pretend it's not true. You even make statements like, "This can't be happening to me" or "Not now, we just got ready to live."

When I asked God how I should explain this first section, He took my mind back to days when I was young and in elementary school. Recess would just be getting good. The teams were formed, and we were really in a game. We were having the best time. Then the teacher would call and we had to quit and go back to class. I also recalled those rare times when I would play street ball. I'd be having so much fun. Then my parents would say, "It's time to come home." I wanted to play more. I would say, "Just a minute." The reply to that statement was a command to immediately depart for home. Now remember, it was known that we could not play forever. There was a limit on playtime. Yet, once we



started playing, we lost all conception of time. When the call came, we did not want to stop. We were not tired, hungry nor ready to leave the place that had brought us much happiness. Yet, the teacher, and our parents kept watch. When it was time, they called us to come in or to come home. Sometimes when one person had to go, we would stand around as if it was the end. We were doing so great and now we might as well all go home. Then someone would say, "Let's start a new game." Suddenly a light would come on and we would start again. We had fun, although it was not the same as the first game. Yet, our minds and bodies were able to accept the change and move ahead.

### **TIME TO COME HOME**

This is what happens when we leave this earthly life. We are born, and yet in a few days we must go home. Job 14:1-2, notes that the life of man has an end, as we know it on earth. However, the key is verse 14. This verse raises the question: If a man dies, shall he live again? This question is for men, women and children. All of us will receive the call. The hour is just unknown.

The answer: Yes, we shall live because our hope is in the word of God. Read John 14, Acts 1:11 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18. We have not come to stay on this earth. We must be prepared for God's call. If we are unprepared, that is we have not accepted Jesus Christ as our savior, we shall be cast into the lake of fire (Revelations 20:10-15).

We know we must be ready. However, how do we live after death has taken one from us?

Do you know someone who has experienced the loss of a friend and/or family member? If so, remember sometimes the stages of grief takes 4 to 5 years to complete. It varies depending on the individual and their relationship to the deceased. Being a Christian does not mean you don't grieve or feel hurt. Being a Christian means that in these times, we have a friend that we can call on for help and comfort.

God has called on us to provide support, compassion, and help, a listening ear, a visit, a phone call, prayers and patience to those who are bereaved. Don't walk away and tell them to get over it and move on.

Comfort one another (I Thessalonians 3:13-18). Remember when you were in difficult times and how God provided comfort to you? Share that experience and your faith (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

There is no timetable for shock and denial. Once a bereaved person passes shock and denial anger and/or depression can set in.

We will continue this special series on Life after Death.

# WORD LIVING NEWSLETTER

## APRIL 2000

Thanks to God for another day in this fourth month of the year 2000. We are here by HIS grace.

This month we will continue the overview on the subject "Life after Death".

There is no timetable for the first stages of grief. Shock and denial sometimes carry past the funeral. Some people move into the area of reality when they have to make arrangements, attend the service, and follow through with addressing business matters. However, the day-to-day living without that family member (spouse, brother sister, mother or father), friend, co-worker, neighbor, etc. becomes a struggle. As each day goes by, depending on the relationship, the reminders of how they touched your life seems to overshadow each waking hour. Now, as you begin to feel the pain of actual separation, you can find yourself angry that they are gone. At this point, an individual moves from the shock and denial stage to anger and/or depression. The most commonly asked question during this time is "WHY GOD?"

Now, if you are a Christian from my age group you were taught to never question God. You were probably told to "take it on the chin and move on." Well, the Bible notes that others questioned God. Besides, who else is there to question? There is no other authority than God. According to Isaiah 45:1-11, you and I can ask God those questions that burden our very soul. As I begin to ask God why, I must refer back to my youth. Back to a time called recess. Playtime was scheduled and timed. Everyone knew it was only 20-minutes or so. Yet, when the teacher called us, we were never ready. It was never enough time for recess. It seemed as though we had only just begun to play, then recess was over. Perhaps we are like young children at play and no matter how long we are allowed to live on this earth, it would never be the right time to receive the call to come home.

What is the anger that causes us to want to march up to heaven and question God on His decision? It's love. We love that person so much. We enjoyed their companionship, their smile, the funny things they did, and we even miss the annoying things they did too. Each day we want to share some bit of information to hear their response or hear words of wisdom as we pour out our frustrations. Oh, God, we cannot be angry with you. You knew how much we needed and loved them. Oh, God, my heart is filled with pain and I feel alone. WHY? WHY? WHY?

We may never know the answer to God's timing. However, when we don't understand we only need to trust (Proverbs 3:4-6).

As I traveled the narrow road called grief, I too came to the why crossing. There I stopped and asked why? As I did, a small voice spoke to my heart and said, "WHY NOT?"

Question: Does GOD know pain?

Answer: He gave his only begotten son to die on the cross for you?

Question: Does GOD know the feeling of separation?

Answer: It was sin that separated GOD from the people HE loved.

Question: Does GOD know rejection?

Answer: Yes, when man follows his own ways and never has time for HIM.

Question: Does GOD know how you feel during this temporary separation?

Answer: Yes, because that is what took place after the crucifixion of HIS Son.

God wants you to trust HIM. My child, you see only at the earthly level. God sees and knows the beginning and the end. His ways are far from your ways. You cannot understand it now, but until then you must trust Him.

Well, that is easy to say, and the words sound good. I am human. This loss is great. God knew we would struggle so he permitted a great loss to come upon a person, like us. The person who suffered this earthly loss was a perfect and upright man. God permitted this to take place that we might see how he struggled and the victory that was received. Have you read JOB???

The passing of anger leaves in its place a feeling we call depression.

Depression: Sadness, the feeling of hopelessness, despair, feeling gloomy and/or alone without a friend.

These feelings can come at any time. Usually they are a part of the second stage of the grief cycle. I will not say you can make the feeling go away by only praying. There are times when the support of family, friends and even the assistance of a Christian counselor are needed. Never be afraid to seek help during any of these stages, especially during periods of depression.

Let's deal with depression. First, pray for guidance and tell your friend/family member or extended church family member that you are experiencing periods of depression, and you would like them to be your prayer partner when these feelings take charge.

Emotions are normal and are to be expected. However, like any other emotional reaction, they must be kept within normal limits. You must recognize each emotion for what they are, and set out to control them by regaining a normal perspective. If the emotions of grief continue too deeply or for too long, you will give in to them. You may even encourage these emotions. At this point, you must seek help to regain a proper perspective in order to get along with the business of living.

From shock, denial, anger, depression, to the business of living.

Should the Lord delay His coming we hope to provide some special resources to help you.

# WORD LIVING NEWSLETTER

## MAY 2000

Thanks to God for another day in this fifth month of the year 2000. Oh what a special time to be alive. The birds, the flowers and the green grass remind us of the newness of life. As winter yields to the warmth of spring and it to the heat of summer and it to the cool of fall and it to the cold of winter, such is the life of man. Each day we should give thanks to God for HIS grace and mercy. This month we will continue the overview on the subject "Life after Death".

### **From shock and denial - anger and depression to the business of living.**

There is no timetable for the first stages of grief. Now, as you begin to feel the pain of actual separation, you can find yourself angry that they are gone. At this point, an individual moves from the shock and denial stage to anger and depression. The most commonly asked question during this time is "WHY GOD?"

Perhaps we may never know the answer to God's timing. However, when we don't understand we only need to trust (Proverbs 3:4-6). Remember, even when God seems silent, He is at work.

The passing of anger leaves in its place a feeling we call depression. Depression: Sadness, the feeling of hopelessness, despair, feeling gloomy and/or alone without a friend. These feelings can come at any time. Remember, when the feeling of depression begins, do not try to hide it and hope it will go away. Begin immediately to ask God for guidance, seek His word for comfort and hope. Call your friend/family member or extended church family member and tell them that you are experiencing a period of depression and would like them to join you in prayer as well as verbal support.

Emotions are normal and are to be expected, but we must move forward toward the business of living. However, how can we move from shock, denial, anger, and depression, to the business of living? The answer is found in a sermon by Pastor Tony Evans – "When Depressed, Encourage Someone."

When we are in the stage of depression, we tend to have the mys. That is we focus on **my** problems, **my** loss, **my** burden, **my** sorrows as if they were the only issues in the world. Now, I'm not saying that you begin counseling, **but what if you –**

Spoke to the person that never smiled. If you offered her sincere love, would she be uplifted?

Wrote a note to someone who touched your life and just said thank you?  
Give a hug to someone who had a loss in his or her family?  
Call a senior who lived alone to say, "hello" and offer words of cheer?  
Thanked the custodian at church, school, or work for the job they do?  
Volunteered one hour or more a month helping someone in need?  
Purchased three extra can goods to help feed the poor during the year?  
Sent cards to the sick and those in prison?  
Offered to help that struggling family with the wayward children?  
Pray each day for someone else who was experiencing depression and  
loneliness.

As you begin to minister to the needs of others, the healing process will begin. When you become a tool for others, God will be the tool for your help. Focusing on the needs of others allows your mind to rest from your troubles. Soon you will realize that there are others less fortunate and for every burden, you have someone else has more.

Reminding others that God knows how they feel and that He is always with them, will strengthen your relationship and love for God. Where there is depression He can give joy. Where there was anger and pain, He can replace it with comfort and peace. He can help you utilize your experience to help others.

This newsletter in no way can tell all the steps of grief nor address all the feelings that take place as you learn to adjust to the business of living without the one you loved.

Each person walks the road of grief at a different pace. All of us will experience grief, that is, the temporary separation from a loved one, because death is a part of life. Grief can shake even the most solid person to his/her very foundations. We cannot ignore it or gloss it over; above all, we must not yield to the temptation to "act as if nothing had happened." Something has; something that must be acknowledged and faced up to by everyone concerned.

We must help others understand that grief is normal. And with time, we must do our part to help bring the grief-stricken back to reality, through the stages and focus on the business of living.

## REFERENCES

Vincent P. Collins – Grief, How to Live in Sorrow  
Sermon – Dr. Tony Evans – When Depressed, Encourage Someone  
Sermon – Dr. Joseph Stowell – When God Seems Far Away  
The Guide for Christian Living – The Holy Bible

HIS STEWARD,  
Karen

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