# SWEET SPIRIT - GONE BUT NOT GONE: MOVING FROM GRIEF TO HEALING BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

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# ABSTRACT

# SWEET SPIRIT - GONE BUT NOT GONE: MOVING FROM GRIEF TO HEALING BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

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Many people recognize the different stages of grief after the death of a loved one; however, the grieving process can, in many cases, begin long before a person dies. If there is a lingering illness or grave prognosis after an accident, death, although certain, can be a long ways off. How does the person dying cope? How does the family deal with the stresses of caring for that loved one while watching them perish?

Conversely, after the loved one has passed and the funeral or memorial is over, everyone moves on to a new normal. For the caregiver and those closest to the bereaved, how is this handled? I submit that there are three stages of grief that need to be addressed, before, during and after the death of a loved one. Each stage is unique and has its different phases. This is what we will cover.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Most people will experience the loss of a loved one. That person may or may not be close to their heart. The loss results in many internal mixed feelings, which leads to differing thoughts, reactions and emotions. During periods of grief, one will go through a roller coaster of emotions ranging from sadness as a result of the loss, to periods of happiness in knowing they are not in pain, as well as remembering the good times with the loved one. Sometimes, a person can even become apathetic, not feeling anything. A person left grieving may or may not have conflicting, mixed up inner thoughts about their lost loved one. A seemingly apathetic person may have "frozen grief," meaning they go a long time without showing emotions while internally they are still holding on to the pain of the loss. Some people may or may not cry at the different stages of grief; before, during and after the death of a loved one.

Come journey with me into a world of things that may or may not be believable to you. You will read about many personal experiences of people in different stages of grief, before, during and after the loss of their loved ones. These experiences include things that have happened and things that have been seen. Some may seem mysterious, unreal, unexplainable, scary, sad, and even funny. There are some true as well as unsure answers to things that happen around and to their loved ones. Some facts may leave your mind in amazement and wonder.

Why does death have to come to our loved ones? Is there a higher power? Why must we even experience grief? We can be sure that we all will experience grief someday. Grief hurts physically and emotionally and the pain can be indescribable. Many

have shared experiences of losing a loved one and these are some of the ways grief has been described. Grief grows deeper and deeper and can be both unsettling and contagious to others close to us. It is uncomfortable most of the time. It can soothe the heart, cloud the mind and blind the sight. Grief can make you wonder if there really is a God and if so, if He still loves you. Grief can grow like a seed planted in the ground or like the wind. Sometimes it blows hard and other times you can't even feel it. Grief can run like a flood, so forceful that man can't hold back the strong waters. Grief may be like a river in that you cannot find an ending point. Grief may be like a stream that you may barely see it stop until the rain falls and fills it up again. Grief may even be like the ocean that stretches far out in the sea. You know that the water is deep and cold, heavy and dark with a pressure smelling like death. You begin to wonder if you can breathe life or if you will suffocate in your own air.

You begin to wonder why your loved one has to leave you. No matter what age they may be from infant to the elderly, that person is still your loved one. And while they are gone, they are not gone. You still feel their presence in your life. People may advise you to hold on to the pleasant memories, remember the good time you shared. They may also tell you that by holding on to thoughts of the love shared you will keep them in your heart but does that really ease the pain of missing them? The touch of death is like a bit of your heart is being cut out. It leaves you open, empty, still, frozen and void. Many times consoling words cannot fill the gaping hole in your lonely heart. During your time of bereavement, you may receive many hugs that will comfort you for the moment. People are generous toward you at this time, giving you things such as food and money, but nothing you will receive during this time can replace the love lost with the passing of

your loved one. I have learned that only God and time can release and relieve the void of that loved one that is gone but not gone. You may ask, "Sweet Spirit," why did you leave me all alone? Now, I will have to face every remaining day I have without you. You will lie down to sleep, rise in the mornings and go through days and months and years without that loved one. You may have asked them not to leave you and to wait awhile longer, but that person has transitioned from this life.

I whispered in your ear, please don't leave me, but you did. I sat and watched you with my eyes from a near. You looked back at me with a message in your eyes. It was the eye contact that spoke a million leaving words. I could interpret the message in your eyes saying, let me go, I got to leave you. Don't hold on to me because I can't stay here. I responded back with my eyes, please don't leave me. I don't want you to go. But you kept that still stare sending out to me, I got to leave you, I cannot stay. Then I would leave the room and sometimes I cry or sometimes I feel lifeless just because I can't stop death. I know that I am not a little god. I know that. But if I could just hold on to you and never let you go. If I could keep you and make you better. If I could stop the hurt, the harm or the danger from coming to you, I wouldn't have to go through this feeling of losing my loved one. If I could make you better and make your days brighter then you could stay with me and never leave me. I would make life where there would be no deaths and then there would be no grief.

Death is a transition. We live to live again in Christ. We watch people come and go through life. We pass people and see them and hear them one day and they are gone the next day. We speak to people never knowing if it will be the last time we see them. I have heard many people share their life stories that were good and bad. Some stories

made me feel uncomfortable, strange, happy, sad, sick. Their stories were either very much unbelievable, believable, or weird. But hearing the stories gave me a better understanding of grief and why the loved ones left behind feel and act the way they do. Sometimes people see things that will make them change their ways. Sometimes people know things that they can't share with others. Whatever they may feel, grief causes and brings about change. Grief makes your life to never be the same again.

I have watched so many families or individuals face the death and the hurt of losing a loved one. I often wonder if they have someone to care, to talk, to listen, to call or to give. Facing each day looks hard and cold, but sometimes just knowing that someone is there for you, makes it seem like the road is not as rugged as you thought. Even if that person doesn't say a word, you know that there is a group of people reaching out in love and hope. We hope the group is being led by the Lord.

#### CHAPTER 1

#### **HISTORY**

The grief ministry began at Macedonia Worship Center in Winston-Salem, N.C. on December 29, 2012. The group meets monthly from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm on a Monday or Tuesday evening. This group will be called the Hope Team after the ministry grows. The group consists of members of the church, other churches in the community, and people from the surrounding communities. People of all ages are welcomed. There are facilitators who bring and teach information on different areas of grief. The ministry has workshops on grief, such as learning what to say and what not to say to individuals or families going through the loss of a loved one. There are plans for rap sessions in all areas of grief, hoping to reach someone in pain and grief. The group will also have training sessions for understanding how to help each other in grieving before, during, and after the death of a loved one. This support group will be trained and equipped to encourage, nurture, and have knowledge of what it means to be part of a grief ministry. This ministry will grow into a loving, caring, community for helping each other in the group and outside the group in the different stages - before, during, and after in those difficult times of the loss and grieving.

My spirit yearns for the healing of their mind, body, spirit, soul, and most of all the heart of that loved one. This ministry will reach out to both the saved and the unsaved. Our main concern and interest is what happens to the individual or family before, during, and after the death of a loved one, moving them from grief to healing.

This ministry will share and listen to experiences and stories about when and how their loved one left, as well as how they are being missed and how their spirit still lives today. This support group will have trainings for understanding on how to help each other in moving from grief to healing. This group will reach out to the church and community to help each other during the difficult times of grieving. The group will be the listening tool to lean on for strength. We will listen to many experiences and stories from individuals and families who want to share memories about their dying or death of their love one. There will be experiences that will sound weird, true, unbelievable, strange, or even scary. Whatever will be stated, the group's purpose will be to encourage, nurture, to grow, to build up, to share, to learn, to get training, to love, to reach out, and touch someone else who is going through the loss or death of a loved one.

The goal is to become a support group for not only the church and the community but for each other in the group to move from grief to healing in a positive way. This group will have compassion and understanding that everyone is unique in their own grieving process and only they know how they feel. The group will not be judgmental over anything that is said. The group will be a source of knowledge for individuals or families in need of medical or professional agencies for further grieving needs.

The group will focus on some of the stages of grief such as shock, denial, numbness, disbelief, hidden and frozen grief. These feelings are ways of covering yourself from facing the realness of the loved one's death. Whether the loved one had a long period of illness or a short stint of illness or a quick or an instant death, many times the individual or family members do not face or admit that the loved one is gone. The stillness and numb feeling is "frozen grief." This simply means you do not want to believe your loved

one is gone. The hidden grief is locked away inside you like a freezer. Then there will be the stages of anxiety, panic, and fear. You may ask yourself, what am I going to do without my loved one; will I be able to keep on living? There may be a panic of no longer seeing the loved one day to day. Now you will have to face every day and every night without your loved one. There is also fear in your mind, heart, and emotions. You begin to wonder if you want to face tomorrow or people. You wonder will you be able to survive your daily living. You are left with making and adjusting to change in your life style. Some people also go through the stages of guilt and regret. Many people blame themselves for the death of their loved one. A major question is what could have been done to prevent the death. Many people feel that if they had only been there sooner or quicker, just maybe their loved one wouldn't have passed.

There is a sense of guilt. Then there is the loved one who has been sick so long either at home or a nursing home or in the hospital. You begin to feel guilty over not going to the nursing home or the visits to the hospital. You are relieved and you will feel that you can get some rest now that your loved one is gone. But you still feel guilty that your visits have stopped. Visiting that loved one regularly has become so routine that their passing leaves an empty hole in your daily schedule. You want to dial the telephone number and no one answers. The loss, emptiness, and depression stage is when you wonder if you can handle losing your loved one. You hurt.

The group will be available to listen and surround you with loving compassion and not judge you. If you notice any changes in your daily functions such as isolation, over sleeping, over eating, withdrawal, or lack of concentration, thoughts of suicide, these are all different ways of trying to find some relief from the pain of your grief. The

group will refer those in need to a trained professional for help. We are there to embrace your hurt to lead to healing in a positive way. It is ok to talk or write about the death of your loved one. It is ok to cry and it is ok to grieve. We have seen in our culture some people will tell you to get a grip on yourself, dry your tears because you can't bring your loved one back, stop crying. All those words are negative statements. This group will be able to give positive words of encouragement.

Expert psychologist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross wrote many books about death and bereavement. In her most famous text, "On Death and Dying," she names five specific stages that everyone experiences when they are either dying or grieving. They are:

- 1. Denial and isolation
- 2. Anger
- 3. Bargaining
- 4. Depression
- 5. Acceptance

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross believes that the stages are the essential way to experience and understand grief<sup>2</sup> The group will be able to tell the individual or loved one that it is ok to grieve. It is ok to feel hurt. It's ok to talk about your loved one. It's ok to keep memories and special moments of your loved one. It's ok to ask questions and think about times you shared with your loved one. It's ok to start thinking about yourself.

Make sure you are physically taking care of your body. The group will build a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Kubler-Ross, On Death and Dying, What the dying have to teach doctors, nurses, clergy, and their own families (NY: Touchstone Rockefeller Center,1997), 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (NY: Touchstone Rockefeller Center,1997), 39.

foundation of trust, dignity, grace, and love for people who are going through grief to healing.

# CHAPTER 2

#### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

An individual can find peace, love and understanding in the midst of grief over the loss of their loved one. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture reference will be the King James version of the Bible. Psalm 147:3 states, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." This verse tells us that God is continuously healing those who have a hurting heart. When the death angel comes and takes your loved one, you are left with a broken heart. The pain is so severe that a medical doctor cannot restore or fix it, but God is the one who is able to heal and set free. When the word states that he binds up the wounds it means he is sewing up holes over and over again.

I have always been told to take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there. How can you let go of a loved one who has been around every day? In his word, he gives us comfort in John 14:27 where he says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He also said in Isaiah 51:12, "I, even I, am He who comforts you," Jesus said he would comfort us and we are not to let our hearts be troubled. But what happens to the person who doesn't believe the same way? What happens to the person whose faith is not as strong? That is where the grief ministry will come in and give support to those who

are grieving, whether a person has faith or not. We want to encourage those whose sweet spirit (loved one) is gone but not gone. For the Lord said in Isaiah 43:2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." The Lord is letting you know that when you go through the death of a loved one, he would help you, he will bring you all the way through and heal your hurt if you trust him. No matter how deep or hard death came, he would be there for you. God wants us to cast our cares upon him because He cares for us.

In Hebrews 13:5, "He said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." God promised never to leave you so lift up your head and grab his healing. It is just a touch away. When you are weak, he will make you strong. In your darkest hours, the Lord is there. We may not see him or we may not feel him but he is always there waiting to heal your mind, body, and soul, but most of all your hurting heart. The Lord also promised in Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous hand." If and when you are dismayed, just remember and know that the Lord will give you strength and courage to face another day. It is the Lord who gives you strength daily, if you believe in him. The bible says he is a stronghold in the time of trouble so when you lose your loved one it is better to trust and lean on him.

The bible tells us in Isaiah 40:29, "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength." So as time goes on and you continue to trust in the

Lord, he will continue to comfort you in tribulations. You don't have to go through by yourself, help is available for you. It is told to us that we will all have to die someday. We did not come to stay here on this earth forever. We all have an appointed time and no one knows when, where, how, and how far away the death of a loved one is.

# CHAPTER 3

#### PROJECT PREPARATION

The project preparation began by writing a proposal to develop a Grief Ministry to meet at Macedonia Worship Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The proposal requested meeting in the fellowship hall of the church.

The main focus of the ministry is to help people move from grief to healing. The group will be called the Hope Team which will consist of church and community members. The Hope Team will be the support system and a pillar of the community to help others deal with the death of a loved one. There will be workshops, facilitators, training sessions, rap sessions, and regular meetings. This group will have trainings for understanding how to help each other in each stage of grieving, before, during, and after the death of a loved one. The group will be prepared to understand how important it is to know what to say and what not to say during this difficult time. This group will be equipped to encourage, nurture, and have knowledge on what it means to be a part of the grief ministry. The group will also grow and gain strength through sharing stories, experiences, and memories of their love ones with each other. This sharing will let others know that everybody's grief maybe similar but not the same. Everybody does not grieve the same way. Also this sharing and listening will let others know that their loved one's sweet spirit will still live on.

The plan for the grief ministry is to grow into a loving, caring, graceful group, reaching out to the church and the community for just being there in a time of bereavement. In preparing for the ministry, I have observed many people and families in all three stages - before, during and after the death of their loved one. Everyone grieves in his or her own way. I didn't see people grieving the same way; everyone has a way of releasing his or her own grief.

Observation example: There was a mother of seven children. One of her children passed a few years earlier, leaving six living children. Shortly after losing her sisters within a few days of each other, she took ill. This loving mother began going downhill quickly. The doctors performed surgery to no avail. I visited her regularly and would observe her. It seemed like she was alright. I watched her grown children respond to what the doctors told them. It seemed like each time the doctors talked to the family, they would find different things wrong in her body. This is the before and during stage of grief. The family was constantly hoping she will hurry up and get better. After observation and testing, the doctor's final report was that she was too old to do the kind of surgery needed. They told the family, "if we operate, we will lose her and if we don't operate we will lose her." I know how I felt at that moment, I can only image how her children felt. The doctors told her that she had two months to live and there was nothing that could be done. She told them that she just wanted to go home where she was familiar with her surroundings.

When I went to visit her at her home, she was in so much peace. She told me that the doctor told her she didn't have but two months to live. I responded and said "I hear what the doctors are saying but what do you say about that?" She responded at that time

that she wanted to live. She was upbeat for a while, but then I noticed a change in her spirit. Her conversation began to vary between wanting to stay and being ready to leave this life. My heart dropped every time I visited her. I could feel that she was not coming out of this alive. I prayed regularly for the Lord not to take her, because she was such a sweet lady. As the days passed, I could see that she was transitioning into a different world. Her children stayed by her side, and you could see and feel the hurt they were going through. Their whole world felt like it was closing because the love of their life was leaving them and they couldn't stop it. This was the time the family called Hospice to take charge.

Another cornerstone of the hospice movement philosophy is the belief that a good life deserves a good death. When no further treatment of the illness is prescribed, hospice does everything possible to keep the patient comfortable and to let him die naturally when his time comes. <sup>1</sup>

This is the "during" process the family was going through - waiting on their loved one to die. Extended family members began coming in, in my opinion, to say their goodbyes to her. I sat and watched as the family members and friends would go to her bedside with kisses and hugs and even crying. No one could stop her from leaving. She tried to smile and say back to everyone, "I love you." You could actually feel grief in the room and that death was on the way. Time kept passing by but there was no relief in waiting for her to leave. The children and everybody who loved her like a mother were so sad. As the time continued to pass, some days she would seem like she was getting better, then the next day she seemed worse. I could tell that the family was growing tired and weary, but they tried to be strong in front of her. The days kept going by and she began to go in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Kenneth Wentzel, *To Those Who Need It Most...Hospice Means Hope* (Boston: Charles River Books, 1981), 6.

and out of consciousness. Sometimes she would be alert enough to talk to you and other times she just laid there. I believe that the Lord was preparing the children and grandchildren and other family members for her departure.

As visits continued and although it was not yet two months, I could see her body shutting down slowly. She only ate something that she really loved once during this time. She told me that she ate what she had a taste for and it was so good. After that she did not ask for any food. She would talk sometimes but mostly would lie there going in and out of sleep with a dry, throat breathing. Then it started getting closer to the time for her leaving so the nurse wanted the room quiet, as she was going through her transition. Her family loved her so much that all day long and most of the night they would go in her room. They would talk to her. They would cry. She would always tell them that she loved them. You could feel her saying in those four words, "I am leaving you." They would stare at her. In and out, out and in with laughter and sadness in a room already filled with sadness and grieving. The nurse felt that they were holding her up from transitioning with all that noise. She said that the hearing is the last thing that leaves a person and that she was trying to stay and go at the same time. One part of her was trying to stay and the other part of her was transitioning. So from then on they kept everybody near her room very quiet. Her body started getting agitated if anyone would touch her. The nurse would ask that no one would touch her. The only thing left was just to whisper "I love you" in her ear and give her a kiss. The time was getting near and she was leaving us. But one thing I noticed was that she did not leave when the medical people said she would; she left when God took her spirit out of her body. She left in

sleep and peace. By that time everyone was hurt and although they were ready for her death, they weren't quite ready. Such a loving spirit left in less than two months.

As Kubler-Ross observed, "watching a peaceful death of a human being reminds us of a falling star; one of a million lights in a vast sky that flares up for a brief moment only to disappear into the endless night forever."<sup>2</sup>

The children then prepared for the funeral services because they had already by her request prepared the burial arrangements. The funeral services and graveside burial went beautifully. Now the family was left to face the after portion of grief over the death of their loved one. This will be their first Thanksgiving and Christmas without their mother being here to cook with love while enjoying seeing the family eat so much. That used to make her so happy seeing the family eat a lot, enjoying their meal. Now there is nothing left but good memories of her. The question now is does anyone check on the family? After the funeral, going to the grave yard, and stopping by to eat, the sweet fellowship at the church or at the home of the loved one, then the next day everybody else goes back to their regular routines. Will anybody call or stop by?

Grief is colored by our emotional nature, the time of life when we grieve a loss, and the special nature of our relationship with the one who died. Grief is also affected by the way grief was expressed (or repressed) in our families of origin and by what culture tells us is 'normal' or 'acceptable.'

While watching families, each family had similar ways that they grieved but the sadness and hurt was still there no matter the age of their loved one. If you are a baby or child the stillness and hurt is there; if you are a young adult or an adult the stillness is still

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (NY: Touchstone Rockefeller Center, 1997), 276

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Paula D'Arey, When People Grieve, The Power of Love in the Midst of Pain (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 2005), 28.

there; even if you were very elderly, the stillness and hurt is still there. No matter what age a person is, the thought of that loved one being gone and is unreachable or untouchable is painful. Sometimes you just don't want to admit that your loved one is leaving you or they are going into transition or have left you in death.

I have observed the last breath of a family member and watched the look on their loved one's face, a look of sadness, hurt, joy, anger, relief, guilt, and for some as if their whole world has just ended. That is why there is a need for a grief support group. This group will be able to meet and talk it over. They can share if they'd like, but if not, just being in the midst might help by listening to others share. Some people open up and others may not want to talk about their deceased loved one. I have also observed that many people do not like to say the words "death" or "grief." It seems as if it is something bad. I see that people are dying every day and there are funerals going on almost every day. Death is a part of living.

On the other side, I observed how people seem to get some relief when they talk about their loved one after they are gone. I have listened to family or a person talk about a loved one before their death, during their transition, and after their death. I could hear the different moods and feelings coming from their conversations, their body language, and the emotional feelings. Sometimes they are loud, silent, frozen, or talkative. There is a need for a grief ministry. I have heard some people say they need a group where they can express themselves without judgment or people thinking they are crazy.

As a friend to one who grieves, you cannot choose healing for someone. But you can plant seeds with your words that will give the bereaved person every advantage. Remind those who grieve of their strength and of the power that lies within them. Remind them that there is healing equal to all pain.<sup>4</sup>

In preparing for this grief ministry group, it would be made known to the church and community that we are a support group and not a professional service. The group will know what agency to refer people to for professional assistance if needed. The group will be knowledgeable of different kinds of agencies if someone needs to be referred. Confidentiality and respect will be used in this group setting. Another strong tool will be trust and the ability to pray for and love each other.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> D'Arey, *When People Grieve* (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 2005), 127.

#### CHAPTER 4

#### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Grief is a process, not a competition, and when friends and family convey patience and understanding with the process, the atmosphere for healing is greatly advanced.<sup>1</sup>

This project started by realizing the need to learn how to reach out to families or individuals that are going through grief at the moment or still holding on to pain from the past. There was a need for group who will be able to meet and grow in many areas of grief and bereavement for helping others.

First, we started off by planning a meeting place where the group would feel comfortable and free to express themselves related to death and grief. The group opened up and got acquainted with one another. The group shares past or present stories of someone they remember who have died. The group is able to talk about it or listen to each other. No one is forced to talk. This is a free will group to open up or share thoughts, knowledge and memories, or moments they had with their loved ones before, during, and after the death of their loved one.

Going public with grief is a critical action to take to reduce the physical stress and anxiety you may be feeling. Here is where your support network comes in to help. Explain what you are feeling to those you trust. Your number one self-healer will be sharing sensitive issues, negative and positive thoughts, and emotions freely.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> D'Arey, When People Grieve (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 2005). 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Dr. Louis LaGrand, *Healing Grief, Finding Peace, 101 Ways To Cope With the Death of Your Loved One* (Naperville: Sourcebook Inc. 2011) 65.

Second we had someone to come in and talk to the group about related areas that will strengthen the group, enabling them to help others in a positive way. The facilitators brought information to the group to help equip, nurture, and learn how to help others during these times of bereavement. This group is now knowledgeable in different areas related to grief. For example: What is Hospice? Why do people or families need Hospice? What are the qualifications need to use Hospice? What are the requirements for their service for out-patients or in-patients? What is the cost of using Hospice? What services do they offer to the dying one and to the families or individuals? These are questions people have who are unfamiliar with the types of service they offer. Then there are the people who take care of the love one who is sick, dying, and struggling before, during, and after death. The question is who takes care of the caretaker? So many times the caretaker get run down from caring for the sick one. Sometimes the caretaker dies before the loved one they are caring for.

There are other questions like how to plan and have a funeral. This was addressed when a funeral director came in from a funeral home and explained their procedures and the cost value of every detail in having a funeral. Questions were answered like:

- What is the cost of a casket and burial slope? The people need to hear about all the cheaper plans to the most expense plan.
- What are the charges for the place and the cars?

The funeral director spoke about how the funeral home handles everything. He spoke about cost and how they have all type of plans to fit every budget. The cost of a funeral has gotten higher; and as a result, cremation is on the rise, especially among those with lower income.

Not many people have wills, so we will have a facilitator to come in and do a workshop on how to prepare a will and what is generally in a will. They will explain the need to have a will already in place before your expiration date. We will have a pastor to come in and talk to the group about a church funeral and burial for your loved one. What is the cost or is it free of charge? Many families prefer to have their loved one's funeral in a church and want the preacher to go to the grave yard for the old tradition. There are some families who love to be consoled and counseled by the preacher. We will also have a representative to come from a nursing home. They will discuss the process of putting your loved one in their facility. What is the cost and how long can a person stay in the home?

Those are just a few avenues we will be traveling so that we will be educated enough to help somebody else in a time of grief. There are many other areas the group will connect with and get an understanding of how these topics relate with grief and dying.

Grief is not a disease. No 'quick-fix' exists for what you are feeling. And healing is a process, not an event. Don't set a specific timetable for how long it takes for yourself or others to heal.<sup>3</sup>

After the group receives a good foundational understanding of grief, the members will be a called the "The Hope Team". The group will be able to go out into the community as a support group to aid individuals or families as they are going through the before, during, after the death stages of losing a loved one.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Alan Wolfelt, *Understanding Grief Helping Yourself Heal* (Bristol: Library of Congress, 1992), 161

The HOPE Team was comprised of a variety of people of all ages and backgrounds from both the community and the church. The group had professionals and white-collar workers and people of all ages. The group meets the first Monday of each month from 6pm-7pm. There is an average of 13-15 people in attendance each week.

Each person is instrumental in the project's success. The members are encouraging and supportive throughout the process. Members expressed excitement about the possibility of filling a need in the community. One of the most instrumental ways the advisory team helped was by praying for the project's success and God's blessing on the project.

Members would use their resources to find speakers and other resources for the project.

One of the roles of the advisory board was to promote the project to friends, family and others in the community who could benefit from the service.

A common thread among the advisory team was that they believed in educating and improving the lives of people in the community. They thought of the project as a tool to give the community both a sense of inner peace and outer peace.

# CHAPTER 5

#### PROJECT REFLECTION AND CRITICISM

The grief ministry was a new project added to the other ministries in the church. It seemed as if nobody wanted to touch that area of ministry. There were negative criticisms before getting started. Some people did not want to relate to the grief ministry because of the reminder of their loved ones who have passed on. There were some people who spoke out that this ministry would bring up old feelings and memories that would be unpleasant when they are trying to move on with their lives. They were saying that nobody wanted to hear anything about grief. It was hard enough to move on with their lives. I was told that this ministry would not work because it would bring back people's old hurts and cause them to be sad all over again. It was stated that nothing good would come out of talking about death, funerals, how the death happened, how long it took for the loved one to die, where and how they died, what was cause of death and how old were they when they died. It was even told that this ministry should not be and they don't need to have it in the church. They feel that it doesn't help anyone. It will not grow and be good for the church. People are hurt by the words of others, so we have to be careful of when and how we say things.

Criticism is always wounding; with grieving, it has twice the sting.<sup>1</sup>

Now let us look for the positive reflection of critics about the grief ministry.

When the project was presented to my pastor, he was in agreement that this ministry was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> D'Arey, When People Grieve (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 2005), 38.

needed. I explained the negative views against the positive points. It was shared with him that some people felt painful feelings would come back. It would be optional if a person wanted to talk or not talk. They may share stories or not share stories. There were more positive points with people ready to face or talk about the loss of their loved one. If they just come and sit quietly, somebody may say something that will help and encourage. Some comments were very positive. They were looking for a support group where they could share their stories and feelings regarding the death of their loved one. They did not want to be in a formal setting where they may not get to speak. They wanted to be in a relatable, opened setting where they were free to talk and not feel that they were crazy, stupid, weird, shameful, or ugly. They wanted an atmosphere of love without being judged about what they said or how they felt about their loved one. They wanted to talk it out.

This is where they could hear and see things, open up and get some relief in discussing their own story. This is where the person sharing and the group listened without being biased. As the group leader, it was explained to the members that we are not professionals in the grief ministry but we are a Christian based group open to the church and the community. The group is there for the people who are going through difficult times from the loss of a loved one. Another positive plus for the group was to have professionals to come in and facilitate meetings, workshops, and rap sessions. Each person was able to talk, ask questions, and to get resources that are needed to enhance their situation. I have seen more positive criticism than negative.

One lady came to a session and stated that she wished I had this group when her teenage granddaughter died three years ago from sickle cell anemia. She stated that she

was very close to her as if she was her own daughter. It had been three years since her death and she was still feeling guilty. She came to one grief meeting in hopes of getting some relief about her granddaughter passing. Not knowing that she would, she shared with the group that her daughter and granddaughter were real close to each other. Oh how she loved her granddaughter even though she has other grandchildren. When the granddaughter died, she said she could not help her daughter because she was going through with her own grieving. She knew that her daughter needed her but she just couldn't help her. She told us that she had been to Hospice grief counseling and she got no relief. She stated that she did not get a chance to express herself and really talk about how she felt during the time the granddaughter would be sickly, and when she was leaving them and they could not stop death. But at this group meeting, she was able to talk and we listened very attentively. We could hear in her voice and spirit that she had a lot of guilt, pain, and hurt. The group responded and shared experiences with her, and we listened. We could see her being relieved from holding things within her mind and spirit. She was able to express herself in depth around people who were not judgmental. They just listened. She left the group feeling good. She said that she wanted her daughter to come to a meeting. This kind of group would be able to reach out to her and help her get some relief in her grieving. What a great impact, she came back to the group and said, "Thank you. I now can feel good about her death." What a positive reflection upon the grief ministry. We want to be a group opened for growth and knowledge related to the bereaved, grieving, and dying. We want to reach out not only to the church but to the community too.

The wisdom of grief has a way of allowing the one who is gone to never be forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

The wisdom of grief is also telling you something about yourself and your relationship with the one you lost. Listen to it and treasure it.<sup>3</sup>

You have great wisdom within, if you will take the time to be honest and listen, so practice using your intuition and be open to creative flashes of insight. Ask questions and listen. Then make yourself take that first difficult step in tackling whatever problem you have to face that day.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Peter James Flamming, *Healing the Heartbreak of Grief* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2010), 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Flamming, *Healing the Heartbreak of Grief* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2010) 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Dr. Louis E. LaGrand, *Healing Grief, Finding Peace* (Naperville: Sourcebook Inc., 2011) 73.

# CHAPTER 6

#### THE PROJECT'S FUTURE

The grief ministry's future plans are to continue having monthly meetings and use our own experiences to learn more about the stages of grief and move on to healing. We will invite churches and the community to join our meetings. We will have different community leaders to come and talk to the group about areas that will help individuals or families get better prepared for the loss of a loved one. In such areas such as: having a will in place, and being familiar with the different kinds of wills. So many families have loved ones die and no will was prepared ahead of time.

We will also discuss information on the caregiver, such as who takes care of the caregiver. So many times the caregiver wears out before the loved one passes. The caregiver needs to know to take care of him or herself. We will also have a funeral home representative to inform the group about how to plan for a funeral, what you need to know about the different cost of caskets and all the other services that go alone with the burial.

Another topic is the services of Hospice. We need to get a clear understanding of who they are, what services they provide and what are the qualifications in order to qualify for the use of them and if they are long-term or short-term services. We plan to invite a representative from the hospital to come and speak to let the group know all of the changes and services offered in the medical areas and the billing process. We will also include the Home Care Services, the group needed to know how to get services for a

Personal Care Aide (PCA), Certified Nursing Assistant I (CNAI), or CNAII to come in the home and take care of the loved one – what is the process and cost, the qualifications for their services. There is also a need to speak with a cemetery representative. The group needs to know how much graves are today. If it costs more to get them before or last minute specials, or is it cheaper to pay on the slot in installments? Lastly we will include the nursing homes. We need a representative to come from different ones to explain to the group when is the best time to use them. What are the qualifications, what is the cost and how are their services better for your loved one than the hospitals and how long can your loved one reside in one? What are the negative and positive points of living on a nursing home? There will be a lot of adjustments for your loved one to face. We will continue to have different groups to come in so we can learn and be equipped to help someone in their time of grief. There will be many questions to be asked and answered.

The next plan will be starting a scrapbook of Reflections and Remembering of the loved one before, during, and after. The book will consist of memories from the heart. Another project will be planting a garden in memory of a deceased loved one, along with a flower garden, and some trees. This project will have the grieving members to become active and involved. All of the vegetables grown will be first dedicated to God, which will be the tithe, and then all of the fresh vegetables grown will go to the people in the community who need food. The flower garden will be in memory of a deceased loved one for each season. When the pretty flowers grow, the group will take some of them to a lovely senior citizen, a sick person or a person in the nursing home. The planting of a tree will be named after their loved one in memory of their sweet spirit. Another plan is to have T-shirts made with the loved one's picture on the front. The T-shirts will be in

different colors. The group will start a memory fund to use for anyone in need while they are grieving. Someone may need some clothes, food, or just a little change that will come in handy during their bereaving time.

As LaGrand says in his book "Healing Grief, Finding Peace," "sometime your family and friends are unable to provide the assistance you need, especially for a long period of time. Therefore, look for a grief support group at your local hospice, hospital or church."

The group will be able to help educate others on updates of things you don't think about until or after the person dies. Many times it is too late to try to find out the loved one's business. This brings a hardship on the family trying to handle the loved one's business at the end and most of the time you have to pay out more money for the burial.

In working with this grief ministry we will try to avoid all negative comments. There is a need for getting trained in what to say and what not to say to the bereaved family or people as it pertains to the death of a loved one. Many grieving people want and have a need for somebody to listen to them. Some people are afraid to talk about death because so many people don't want to hear you or they may make you feel like you are crazy. Some people make you feel like you are grieving too much or too hard. They will tell you to get over it or stare at you like you have lost your mind or you have the feeling that nobody wants to hear you. Some people will ask you why talk about it; it only brings back memories that are good or bad to weigh you down, to leave you with a bad feeling and you are trying to get over it. Don't even think about that loved one. You can't bring them back and they are not coming back. These are sayings are all negative things. This group will be guided and taught what is appropriated to say and how to handle different situations. We will use one main tool in the grief ministry, which is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> LaGrand, *Healing Grief, Finding Peace* (Naperville: Sourcebook Inc., 2011), 169.

listening. Another strong tool we will use is just being there quietly in the midst, keeping quiet with just our presence in the room, which shows a good spirit in the atmosphere.

The project will grow to be a light in the city for all who will come to join this ministry. We will continue to connect to churches and the community for a grief support group just in peace to grow and encourage those who are hurting and reaching out in grief or silent pain. This project has evolved into a ministry to the community through Macedonia Worship Center<sup>2</sup>. I have also been invited on several occasions to fill in at funerals as a result of the growth of this project.

There are so many mixed feelings one goes through in each stage of grief, before, during, and after the death of a loved one. No one wants to lose a loved one. It doesn't matter if it is from a slow, long death, a sudden cause, or even from old age. As I watched different families, relatives, and people in general lose their loved ones, I understand more clearly that all forms of death carry a deep inward unexplainable wound of grief.

Many people deal with the loss of a loved one in different ways before, during, and after. Some are saddened, relieved, or in sharp pain. Some are in denial, feelings of guilt, bitterness, while some have understanding. Whatever your station in life, there is no way to get around death. Death is a part of life. Sometimes we want to hold on to that loved one forever but death says "no." If we could have our way, we would stop death and grief. But we have to face reality of life. We don't want our loved one to leave us but they will. We can't stop death. We don't like death but we don't have the power to intervene. As a result we feel hopeless. Our heart is like a broken treasure chest, locked

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1

without a key to open it back again. Pain hurts. Happiness has ended. Why does pain hurt so badly?

Where is death? Does anybody know? I feel only God instructs the death angel where to go or stop by, whether to visit you in your home or car, hospital, nursing home or in a train or plane. Nobody knows where death is. They don't even know when it is coming. But death will come. You don't have to look for it. Death just comes when it gets ready. It could be on a weekday. It could be any season. But death is coming. You don't have to push; you don't have to wait. Death can be on time, off time, unscheduled or scheduled; morning, noon, or night, and even in the midnight hour. But one thing I can say, even when dealing with death, God has been so good to us. My mother used to say that the death angel is coming, he doesn't have to be a guest, nor invited to your house, but he just slips in sometimes quietly, sometimes forcefully. Sometimes he takes a long time and you don't think you can make it through but somehow God sends strength and courage so that your loved one will know that you will be alright left here behind until it's your turn to leave. No one knows when death is coming, but when it comes, I want to be ready. My heart's desire is to go to heaven.

Nobody knows where or how death awakes. The Holy Spirit sometimes warns you or shows you. Even though the death angel has many assignments; you may or may not be ready to travel a journey into the unknown. Many times God gives the loved one or their family member visions of death as a forewarning. You may dream strange dreams that you can't explain or don't want to explain. Sometimes God has told you not to tell anyone. This dream is just for you to know and pray. Someone else may see things or hear things related to their loved one's death. Sometimes there is a strong spirit

that you feel, a gut feeling that you can't shake. This feeling may wake you up during the night or follow you during the day. It is very uncomfortable and scary. Then sometimes it may be a peaceful feeling but you know it is death. Many times you wish you are wrong and ask why we are seeing or feeling this for this loved one or some other person you may know. There are times when the loved one tries to tell you they are getting ready to leave you but you try hard to tune it out; you may have missed it until after they pass. Then it's like a flash back and you wonder why you didn't catch it when it was said. Now you remember, now you understand. They were trying to prepare you but you didn't want to accept death coming to take them away.

I can recall my mother's last days in the hospital when she asked us why was there a lady in white sitting outside her door turning the pages of a great big book. Mama asked us why she doesn't come in the room. We told my mom that there was no lady sitting outside her door. We could not see what she saw. We still did not think anything of that statement until she had passed.

I had another cousin in the hospital. He asked his wife why his father, mother, and uncles, all deceased, were in the room talking. She looked around and did not see them. She told him there was no one in the room with them. He saw what she could not see. Do you think he heard them talking about him joining them in glory? Only he knew and heard. You only think about what is said to you after the loved one dies. I wonder what they see and why don't they tell us all the things they hear and see. Many times they will just stare at you and say nothing. There are many times we wonder why our loved ones have to leave us. Why can't they live on? Why do they have to die? The love we have for them is not strong enough to stop death. You sometime wish you could prevent

suffering or pain. What can we do to hold back or slow down death? The feelings we carry are not powerful enough to intervene in their transition or to stop their crossover to the life beyond this one.

Who really understands death? Who really understands the pain or grief someone carries deep within their mind, heart, spirit, and soul? Grief is a natural emotional reaction to death. Grief is an experience that instills comfort, struggling with many intense emotions such as feeling relief, scare with fear, guilt, moving into isolation, loneness, depression, anger, bitterness, and feeling a piece of love is gone forever. During this difficult and discomfort time, who really knows what the bereaved person is going through. Will they be able to cope with the death of that loved one? Or will they live or die, too? Or will they feel all alone, building up a wall in a block closing everyone out.

When I was a little girl, there were people around me who would always lose a loved one. At an early age my heart would grieve for them whether I knew them or knew of them. I would wonder what I could do to help them. I could feel the hurt, pain, anger, relief, all of these mixed feelings going on within them. I would often wonder what or how could I help ease the pain for them. My heart would grieve right alone with them all within myself. I did not let them know that I hurt too. I would always keep a silent spirit in their presence. Just being there in their presence with a touch on the arm or a hug, or a pleasant look of understanding, no words just my presence brightened the atmosphere.

It seems as if I could feel some of their pain and grief. As I got older, I would have dreams of things happening or going to happen. I was in a world and I couldn't share or stop what I dreamed. Later I would hear of that person dying. My dreams

would be so clear that I often wondered why I would see this before it happened. I tried to talk to my parents but they told me I didn't know what I was talking about. I knew that I would have strong feelings about different people and the next thing I hear they have passed. To add on to that, I could see and hear things many times it would scare me but some spiritual people would tell me that is a gift from God. God wants you to know so you can pray for the loved ones who are getting ready to face a difficult time in their lives. I often wondered why me, because sometimes it would scare me so bad until I hated to go to sleep. Now that I am old, I have accepted this gift. I am stronger now and I try to deal with the dreams, visions, the seeing and hearings. It may sound weird to you but it is real to my spirit. Sometimes the dreams, the sights, the strong feelings frighten me but I can't get away from them.

One example, when I was young, looking out the kitchen window, my mother was there and I said, mama, why is three of my uncles on the stump outside. She asked what are they doing? I saw them standing and talking to each other. The three had passed. She told me that I don't see them. But I know what I saw.

Another example, I had an older cousin in high school with me. I started having an inner deep feeling that something was going happen. When we were at school, they started acting different toward me and I couldn't sense why the change. But for some reason I had to have them near me. I kept calling them and asking their mother to make sure that they come to see me after church Sunday evening. They always responded we got things to do. I called them and I told their mom that they just got to come and visit me after church that Sunday. She responded that she would tell them. I kept calling that Saturday night for them until 11:30am. They were not at home. I kept calling and

leaving the same message. After church that Sunday, my mom decided that we go to see some relatives in Greer, S.C. I quietly spoke up and said, no we can't go because my cousins are coming over here. My mom said no, get into the car. While my dad was driving, I started having a strong gut feeling. I spoke out and said, if one was on my left side and the other brother was on my right side, they would be alright now. Not knowing that was the moment they were having a real bad car accident. My dad said, what did you say? I repeated it three times. Once again, they responded, she doesn't know what she is talking about.

When we got back to Union, my mom stopped by her sick brother's house, to check on him. His wife ran to the door saying there was a bad car accident this evening and one of the brothers got killed. Six cousins were in the car driving over a river and crashed. She hollered the name of the brother who was pronounced dead but I spoke up and said no it was the other one. They all looked at me and wondered how did I know when I was not there but the news was announcing the other brother. My aunt said, listen to the news now. They are announcing who died in the terrible accident. Once again I said that's not the right one, it is the other brother. They did listen to me. But later they heard the news again saying they had made a mistake, it was the other brother. They had called the wrong name. My parents wondered how I knew. And nothing else was ever said.

I had to grieve silently because that was one out of six cousins and the one who died was my favorite cousin. At that moment I felt all alone. I felt that I could not talk to anyone about the before, during, and after experience. I was hurting, but no one seems to care or asked me was I ok. I hurt. Now that I'm going back thinking about it, there is

still some pain within me, even today. Why did that accident have to happen? They were good old country boys. Our high school did not have anyone the students could talk to, only what was stated how sad the loss of one of our students.

A sweet spirit was gone and I didn't have anyone to talk to and all kinds of thoughts were going through my head. I couldn't even express my thoughts, my feelings, or the love I had for my loved one. When I was growing up children were not heard. They had to listen and do what was told to them. In this situation, why couldn't I stop death? I tried to intervene but I was not successful. I had that gut feeling still I could not stop death. Another example of my inward feelings is having dreams over and over. There was another cousin I dream about. He was driving his sport car round and round in my mom's front yard. In the dream, I looked out the front window asking my mom why he is driving in the front yard, he never looked at us.

The next day, we got a phone call from his mother saying that he had gotten shot in the heart and he probably felt no pain. This death happened over an old love affair, a high school sweetheart who never stopped loving him, even after he married and had children. This cousin had months before lost his wife to cancer. Now there were two deaths his mom had to face before completely grieving over her daughter in law. What pain, what pressure, a mother's love for her only child? She told me that she felt like her life left her torn down. She had lost her only son, her best friend to death. An unbearable pain that cuts through the heart leaving all kinds of holes embedded deep within. The pain was so strong that it kept growing day by day until she later died. She did not move to the healing phase of grieving because she died with a broken heart. She had a grief that grieves for her only son who loved his mother and would do anything for her because

of his love for her. After his death, she grieved and cried every day, during the night, all the time; no one could really comfort her, not even her grandchildren. I do believe not even the Holy Spirit. Oh, what pain she suffered inward and outwardly, no scale of balance for her. No relief or release. I can image she felt a sadness that is indescribable. What a love for a loved one in misery. Can you imagine all the questions and answers were going on in her head? Now there are two sweet spirits gone because they loved a loved one. Oh what pain kept traveling through the mind? Can anyone stop this pain? I know the love of Christ but still there is an inward silent cry crying out in loneliness. It is a feeling that if my loved one could only come back to me. But once again, that is impossible because they are dead. Still that inward cry, I don't want them to be dead.

What a lonely journey to travel. No one wants to travel this road where death comes quickly, slowly, instantly, painfully, suddenly. This final journey is a one-time trip. Some trips are short and some trips are long. Some are unexpected. Some trips take years, a very long time to get there and other trips are short and sometimes quick. Some trips you start thinking about how you wish your loved one could travel with you forever. You want them to be there for the good times and bad times. I know you have a never ending love for your loved one but changing the route does not always go the avenue you like best, especially when there is a dead-end sign ahead indicating you have reached your final destination.

# CHAPTER 7

## BEFORE THE LOSS

No one understands the agony someone feels when their loved one finds out from their doctor they do not have long to live. No one knows the hour, minute or second the person is going to leave. Only God and Jesus know. Many times He reveals the time to the loved one and the family member has a gut feeling they are about to lose their loved one, although they may have denial. No one wants to hear they need to prepare for the death of a loved one. The loved one may or may not inform them of their prognosis. Many times God gives the individual a premonition. There are times you may have you may have a gut feeling that individual or loved one leaving you with no return. You are afraid of getting ready for loneliness with no control of having your loved one near; frozen grief with an inward hurt like an open hole in your heart which is seemingly bottomless. You wonder if you will be able to survive the loss of a loved one. You may have strong faith or little faith or no faith at all.

As a person, you still have the human side in you. The flesh is a funny thing. But yet the flesh holds emotions, feelings, aches, strains, tension, mood changes, and senses that make one wonder where all those behaviors come from.

You wonder will you be able to handle the death when the time comes. There is a need inside of you speaking out, how can I stop this from happening.

The medical people will tell you to get prepared for the ending. Yet and still you continue to hold on and hope that the love one will get better. As time goes on, you are

wishing and praying for a miracle and sometime you do get a miracle and sometimes you do not. How can I handle that? I don't want to lose the love of my life, the friend, the child, the father, the mother, the brother, the sister, the cousin, the uncle, the aunt, or just someone you know or have known for a long time. There are all sorts of things running in your mind, and heart. What if they eat right, exercise right, walk right, talk right, see right, and hear right, will these changes stop death?

You keep wondering is there a God? Can he hear my prayer, my plea, my heart, and most of my entire cry? Does he know that I hurt? The pain is so heavy hiding inside of your heart waiting for your own loved one to die. You asked the question why me? Why do I have to go through this grieving situation? I am grieving and the loved one is not gone yet. I love my love one and I don't have any power to stop death. No power at all. My love can't even stop the power of death. Hate can't even stop death.

Even knowing the situation, many times you can't fix what is breaking down. You can't fix what is leaving you. You may try to fix the Sweet Spirit but you can't. Nobody knows what goes on in the mind of just waiting. Friends, co-workers, church family, and loved ones may come around but every now and then, they can't stop death. Time can't even stop death. Day and night, night and day, you wait before that moment comes. There are times you wish someone would hold you and say everything is going to be alright. But you know deep down in your heart it's not going to be alright. How do you get relief? No one has a good remedy for death. Sometime you toss and turn all night long. Then other times you dream dreams. You feel so heavy burden but you don't want the loved one to know what you are feeling or thinking. You want to make your loved one feel as comfortable as possible. You don't want them worrying about you and

what you are going to do after their death. You want your loved one to see that you are strong yet inside you are killing yourself with mixed feelings. Praying and wishing that your loved one will stay forever. Nobody knows like you all of the memories you had down through the years. Life is not fair to take a loved one who you can't do anything for and make them get better.

# CHAPTER 8

## DURING THE LOSS

The time has come to let go of the loved one. The death may ease through or quickly come by. Whichever way death comes, moves, it leaves a stillness, soundless, sadness, open empty feeling. This is a feeling no one can fill. It is like a hollow opening just full of air. You wonder how I can close this hole. What could I have done to turn this thing around? Was the death my fault? I don't even want to let go but one deep feeling I have is telling me I have to let go. There are so many mixed feelings running through your mind. It is a hassle of what can I do now? I can't stop death. I wish and want death to go away. I asked so many questions why my loved one? Why couldn't they get better and live forever. I see that I have no power over death. I can't stop a delicate flower or a mean weed from dying. Sometimes I am angry because the loved one left me. There were times you saw that the loved one was giving up, or letting go or the illness was so severe, or their age or instant or natural causes was the cause of their own death.

In one sense, you are still not ready to let go of that loved one from leaving you.

You want to hold on to the loved one even in death. You start thinking about your loved one was just here yesterday. But now they are gone.

If I could only bring back yesterday or last week or last year, but I can't. I hurt. Here you are waiting for the final day to face the death of your loved one. Once the casket is going down in the ground it seems like an ending to the death of a loved one.

But it's not over, it's only beginning. A new start of life has opened up to start all over again. You are sitting and waiting for this part of grief to be over. You watched your loved one transition and cross over to the beyond. But they can't even include you. The loved one cut you off at the top of the road at the end without saying so long or good bye. I hate death. Your loved one talk up until the time they couldn't. The medical people stated to you that your loved one still can hear you but they can't respond back. This is a time when you can tell your loved one anything you want to. The only disadvantage is they do not talk back to you. All the dreams, plans, things you wanted to do or places you wanted to go will never happen. You are all along. Togetherness is over. It seems like you lost your best friend. You ask the question why my loved one had to leave me.

You are waiting and planning for arrangements. What is the right time and place? What is a good day to have the funeral? Will everyone get to come? Will my loved one like the funeral? Do you think my loved one will be pleased with how everything is going? You're getting closer to the moment that you don't want to come, the funeral or the grave side moments. This is when you know, it is getting to the final point of an ending that you don't want to come.

There are many times I have been to visit with a loved one just to be there while they are leaving this world. I am there with my quiet spirit and my presence to encourage the family. Sometimes I know the person and sometimes I don't. I have seen some people recognize that the death angel is coming. And what is so strange about it sometimes they will tell you it won't be long now. I'm getting ready to leave you. Then there are other times you just sit and wait. There are some loved ones who will

encourage you before they leave. I have been sitting there with a pleasant spirit, trying to uplift the family, then that old person will tell us how grateful and thankful they are because God has blessed them to live a long time. I think of the song, "Down through the years, the Lord has been good to me." Being in their mist you can actually feel a sweet spirit getting ready or should I say a sweet spirit knows where they are going on to.

There are some people who struggle hard in their spirits what seems like a fight of not wanting to pass over. It leaves in the atmosphere a heavy spirit of sadness and hardness in the room. It seems like you can't shake it off.

Death is strange but real. You are saying to yourself, I wish all of this will be over soon. You have to treat the family, the people pleasant. You don't show them how you really feel; you can't say what you really want to say. You can't tell them to go so I can get some rest. You can't share your hurt the way you really want to express it. People really don't know what to say to you. Some people are rude and ugly. Some people are just downright nosy in asking all kinds of questions about your loved one. For example, how did they die? What did they die from? How long did they know they know what they had? What caused them to have that? Are you alright? How do you feel? Do you think you're going to make it through this? He's in a better place now. How do you know where he is? Don't cry. Get a grip on yourself. Everybody has to die someday. What's wrong with you, you can't bring him back. Get over it. These are words people who are not mindful say. People are hurting. I can't tell you how you are supposed to feel. You may feel relieved. Some loved ones may have given the family member a hard time while going through. And some loved ones may have been an angel going through. No matter how silent or how they may wrestle before leaving, it still

leaves a blunt feeling. There's a silent lifeless feeling. It seems as if a part of you is gone. You didn't want to believe it. Why is it so hard? If the loved one could just come back from being dead then everything will be back to normal.

I watched my mother in law who was in her 90's, when she started going down. She started out with dementia. The family got thrown off schedule because they were so used of having her around in her right mind, moving, cooking, talking, and loving them the more. As time went on, she started diminishing. The family had a hard time adjusting to the change of her moods and style. How do you handle a loved one who you count on being there for the whole family? She was always there with a kind word. The older person who tells you right from wrong is shutting down. She was the one who cooked your favorite homemade food just to make you happy from the heart. She was the one who the children and grandchildren call "Mama" and "Grandma" at all times. She would never go anywhere but to church and home, and sometimes visit some family functions or churches. Now she was gradually fading away not only physically but mentally. Why does this great change have to happen to our family? She is a good lady. She would always be there to give you words of wisdom and encouragement that would be non-judgmental. She was a lady of class who would try to help somebody. Days and months went on as we watched her get worse with her memory fading. Instead of getting better, she is going down. It hurts seeing the loved one you loved so much not remember you. The medical people told us that she would not get better. Her body begins shutting down as she deteriorates. You wonder what you can do to save her from slowly dying. Why can't she live forever? I hurt. You can tell her memory is getting worse and you can see how hard it is for her to do things. Now she begins to stare at you with a pleasant look. Why can't she remember? Why don't they have a medicine for the cure of dementia or Alzheimer's? As time moves on, she is still going down. You can actually see her spirit and body shutting down. She goes into a stage of not eating to eating, sleeping a lot, and never wants to take her medicine. What a change in her demeanor. No more good conversations together. Most of the times she would give you a pleasant stare but no talking. Sometimes she would sit in the kitchen and look out the window. She would asked you did see that man and woman in that tree. Everybody answered no. I would ask her what are they doing in the tree. She did not answer me, just a stare. She would everyday watch TV, sometime she would say something. I often wondered what was she thinking. She was eating the table food well, and then it came to a point where she would eat grated up food and on to baby food. Watching her continue to go down was not easy. In the beginning you hate the waiting. You tell yourself how long do I have to wait for death to come.

As the months pass and she keeps going down, you still don't want death to come, no matter how old the loved one maybe. Waiting and waiting, hoping and praying that the day won't come for death to stop by. It seems like it is so hard on the family members watching the loved one slowly leaving this world. Time is still going on and the days look like they are getting better. The family is watching their loved one require help in moving, changing, and putting her to bed. Why is she giving out? Her mind is giving out day after day. How long is the wait?

She has a sister who 99 years old living with her whose health was declining. The older sister's health started wearing down but her mind was very sound. Week after week, we watched her body slow down until her body went out for good. Death stopped

by over in the night to take her right before her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. She slept away without letting anybody know. She didn't even make a sound. So in peace and sleep, she didn't even warn us when she was leaving. This was such a sweet spirit that didn't even tell us good bye. But I noticed toward her last days, she would tell us that she loved us and there was nothing we could do about it. That was her signature of her leaving from this world. The medical people told us there was nothing you could do for her due to her age. If she needed to be operated on, the answer was no. Why is it when you get old that you are too fragile and surgery will not help the old person? To me, it seems like you are just waiting on that old person to just die. There is no hope of getting better. You just look forward to dying.

These two sisters had been living together over forty years in the same house. A few days after the 99 year old sister died, the other sister 98 years old died. The family started grieving over the aunt's death. Now the family has to grieve over their mother's death. How do you handle two beautiful sisters dying so close together? This is not the right timing. I have grown to know that death has no right time or wrong time to take a loved one. Death comes when it gets ready. I watched the family care for two old people at the same time. Both sisters were loved and cherished by the family members of all ages. Death doesn't even think about a person's feelings. Death doesn't care about the pain, the heart break it causes to the people who love the deceased. Death is never welcome. The funeral home workers did not know that they would turn around so quick to come back to the same house for the other sister. You wish there was some space between the two deaths. Families that came from out of town had to come back again within two weeks.

Death isn't fair for any special people. One sister slept away during the night and the other sister started her transition one morning. The Hospice nurse told the family members to get ready that it shouldn't be long before she crosses over. As the day went on, as many family members came by to see her for the last time alive and to say their goodbyes. The evening before, I was able to feed her and I noticed she ate some of her baby food and stopped. She shook her head indicating that she did not want anymore. I could tell that she was shutting down. She drank a little bit of water for me. She smiled and said thank you, no more. I then took her great grandson who is 5 years old to her bedside and she looked at him with a smile and said to him, are you being a good boy. He answered "yes Ma'am." She said that so clear and then she went back into that quiet stage just staring.

As people and neighbors were coming in and out to see her, you could tell that her body was shutting down. Everyone could tell she could hear them but she did not answer back. What do you do in an atmosphere where everybody is sad and some people are crying? You could feel that everybody is just waiting on her to die. The atmosphere is tense. Do you know what to say, how to say, or what not to say in the mist of the family? Most of the time, I keep quiet and just be present, not saying nothing. When needed, I would just say something very gentle and caring to the family. You really have a feeling as if you're all along even though many people are in the room with the loved one. You still wish you could stop the transition but you can't.

All that day I watched family members come and go into the room. The family and friends even sit all through the house waiting for her to die. Family kept going into the room and talking to her but she still did not answer them. As the day kept going by,

the Hospice nurse told the family to start telling her to go to the light, it was ok. I only sit there watching and listened to them telling her to go to the light. So many was telling her to go to the light, I was wondering was she tired of hearing go to the light, over and over. The nurse said that it was getting close to the leaving time. Her family asked me did I want to tell her anything before her hearing leaves. I went to closer to her head and said to her, I love you and thank you for being my mother in law. All this waiting, sitting on the porch, going in and out of the room, the Hospice nurse told the family to keep it quiet as possible in the room so she could go through her transition easy. The atmosphere grew cold, silent, and tired of waiting. Then there were family members who couldn't handle her leaving with high emotional comments, the ones that cry out loud expresses their pain and hurt loudly. As the evening came in her vital signs were getting weaker and weaker. You could tell by her breathing she was almost gone. It seem like we were waiting for death to stop by again but hoping that it would go somewhere else. You're watching and waiting. Why does this day have to come to someone who is so loving and sweet? Why can't she stay with us? All kinds of thoughts are going through my mind. No one was expressing openly but you could feel everybody thinking many things. A little before 9:00, death came and got her. She gave that last breathe and that was it. Life was here and now it is gone. You could not hold it in your hand. You could not stop her transition. You could not intervene and keep her here. No matter how hard you told her not to go, she went anyway. It is like you are powerless in a room of space. Man has no power over death.

Where do we go from here? She is almost gone. How can we start life without her? She would always be there day by day. Now we have to plan for a funeral. What is

a good day? Will you have time to contact everybody? The death can't be real, she was just here yesterday. Why did she have to leave us? Her older sister slept away and left us just a few days ago. We really haven't had time to grieve over her yet. Now we got to grieve over our mother. How much can we bear? The pain is double heavy. Life hurts. No longer will she be in the kitchen waiting for you to come and eat. Those favorite meals and deserts fixed by grandma will now be a memory. This is the time when you try to put the past, present, and future in order. Again, how will we make it without that loved one gone but not really gone? The voice you're used of hearing from day to day full of pleasant sayings is gone away. No more will you be able to hear stories about the past. No more will you be able to see the little sweet things about her. She is just a flower to be remembered as a beautiful rose. In her garden, she planted seeds of love, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, and respect for others, everyday living, and simple facts about life. You wonder how can a flower so strong could wither up, dry out, and die.

This is the "during" phase while you wait so long in getting ready for your loved one to die. You watch them go through different stages of sickness. You watched and hoped that day would never come. You visited, you fellowship all through the months. Some days it looked like they were getting better and some days it got worse. If a little inch seemed like the loved one was leaving, you got scared and started praying. Lord, please don't take my loved one now, just a little bit longer. Please let them stay. The pain starts growing on the inside. You don't want your loved one to know how vulnerable you are. You are trying to stay strong so that you can encourage them to hold on. You don't want them to see you breaking down. You try to keep an upbeat spirit.

You ask the question so many times, why does this have to happen to me? The loved one is a good person and they don't bother anybody. I need them to be here with me. But who am I? I have no power. Then comes that delicate moment of when the loved one dies.

How will you handle death? Sometimes you feel like giving out or even up. You watch them die. You don't want to believe this time they are really gone. Why was the wait so long? Why was the wait so short? All kinds of questions related to the love one are running through your mind. All kinds of thoughts are remembering about the past. Things that you did when you first met or things you did whether they were good or bad. You feel like life is at a still moving and going nowhere. You're just in a frozen stage. You can't believe your loved one has died. You wonder if anybody really know how much you are hurting. You feel like you're bleeding with silent pain on the inside. You want to cry out but no one hears your silent cry. You wonder what is wrong with me, why can't they feel my pain. It is too heavy to bear. You want to share your thoughts with someone but you don't know what they will say to you. You don't know if they will hurt your feelings or help your feelings. Some people can be so ugly and some people can show so much love with a caring spirit. Then there are some people who will just be there and not say one word, but you know that they are there for you. This is the time when people will bring food, drinks, baked food, utensils items, and anything that they think you can use to make it easier while you are waiting for your loved one to die.

As I speak about the "during" phase, I will share a story about an aunt and mother passing a few days apart. There were three sisters, two are gone. Now their last sister who is 89 years old was told by the doctors that she had two months to live. As I think

about the family, we have not really had time to grieve over the other two sister's death. You asked the question "why?" Why is this happening so quickly together? Why can't we have time to grieve over the other two? I am observing it is not the age it is the person who you are grieving about that makes the difference.

This last sister is another sweet spirit who was a good wife, a nurturing mother, grandmother, great grandmother and aunt. She is also known for a mother in her community and always helping somebody. She had a husband who died, she still lives. Out of their seven children, one died. She is very close to her family. I heard each one of them go by her bedside to tell her, thank you for being a good mother. She always provided for them and they never went hungry including the neighborhood family. They told her thank you for always providing for them. They thank her for loving them and she had enough love for other people's children. Other family members and people in the neighborhood came by to see her and say their goodbyes and tell what she meant to them. It was just like her life was over, hearing what the doctor told her. No life left to live. Where is the hope, no joy to live, no joy to fight to stay? It seemed like the news that the doctor gave told her it was over. The family took grip to what the doctor said and started planning for a funeral.

I could tell that she was getting drained by just lying there. When I went to her bedside, she told me how much she loved me over and over. She told me what the doctors said to her that she only had two months to live. I responded and asked her what do you say. She told me that she was ready to go. I spoke back selfishly and said I don't want you to go; I want you to stay so I can love up on you awhile. I love you please don't leave me? She responded that she was so sorry. It was like I could hear her say

behind what she told me that she was at peace with death and whenever it comes I am ready. She told me about the phone call she received from her dead sisters before she went to the hospital. She said she was at home and the phone rang. She said hello. No one answered back but the caller ID had her sister's name. She said she kept saying hello, but no one said anything. She responded; don't call me no more, I am not ready to go yet. She checked with the family and no one was there at that time. She went to the hospital and had surgery. They told her what they saw and she needed another surgery but they told her that she was too old and if they operate, she would die and if they don't operate she is still going to die. So if you heard something like that how can you want to go on? The doctors were the one who told her that she was too old to be operated on. After hearing all of that her countenance changed.

It seems as if life does not matter anymore. I know that the medical doctors have to tell you everything that is wrong with you. I often wonder if you don't know everything, would you try to live a little longer. Now you wait for death. You know its coming but you don't know when. You only know that it will be very soon. She also told me how she was walking in this beautiful flower garden. She said that the flowers were so beautiful. She said it was so pretty. I asked her who was in this beautiful flower garden with her. She said one of her dead sisters who went on a real long walk and they talked a long time in the flower garden. The first visit was beautiful; I asked what did your sister say to you? She told her that she was waiting on her. She said that she told her that she was not coming yet. But when she got the report of the doctors, I could tell her happy spirit to live had changed. Now she is on a second walk in the garden, I asked her what did she tell your sister this time. She told her that she was I am coming. I said,

why did you tell her that? I don't want you to go. I could tell her joy to live have made a U-turn to a negative spirit. There is no desire to continue to live. A few days had pasted and she keeps on talking about this beautiful flower garden. She told her daughter that her dead daddy had brought her some pretty flowers from that flower garden. She said he had visited her in the back room. They had the best visit. She said they talked and laughed and fussed and fought. She told her daughter that when she gets to heaven they were going to have the best time and fight like cats and dogs. She told me that she went over to her sister's house and worked on her flowers in the front yard. She said that she pulled all of them up so that it could look neat. You wonder what causes a person to see so clearly, things that we don't understand. Then the loved one will tell you just like you're looking through a looking glass. You wonder why they see so many loved ones who have passed on and sometimes hold a conversation with them. Sometimes they will tell you what was said and sometime they will not tell you.

I am now watching the aunt who the doctors said that she has only two months to live. She had a sweet pleasant spirit lying in the bed. She did not get up. She did start eating very light foods such as Jell-O, liquids soups, yogurt, and drinking liquids. There was not enough energy in her body to move and want to get up? Do you think the loved one stopped having a desire to live and just waited for death to come? It seems as if the loved one is just waiting to die. Just maybe after hearing all the things that was wrong with her, it really sounded as if there was no hope left. Do you really be prepared for that moment of death? When death comes no human can stop it. You can be standing in the room by your loved one and there is nothing you can really do to stop death. You are there, you watch as their last breathe leave their body. You can't even stop that. You

want to hold on to them but they just sleep away right in front of you. It leaves a lifeless air hole inside of you. It is like an open sore with no bandage to fit the open cut. The hole gets deeper and deeper.

# CHAPTER 9

## AFTER THE LOSS

Where are the people, the family, and the friends who said I'll be coming to check on and see you after the death of your loved one? I will call you. If you need me, just let me know. I'll be seeing you soon. But they sometimes come or never come. They may see you out and ask how have you been? They may say do you need anything, just let me know. This is one favorite statement I have heard someone say to a grieving person, who they have not seen since they lost their loved one, how have you been? They will respond, oh just fine. Deep down inside, I believe they want to tell you, they have been lonely, hurt, and empty. There is a pain inside of me that is indescribable. If only I had someone to listen to me. It seems as if nobody care or think to check on me. Why don't you just call me every now and then? If they just say, I have been missing you. That would make the grieving person feel like you care a little bit. Even when the person says, "I know how you feel." Do they? They haven't even taken the time to talk to you. We assume so much about grieving people, when we don't really know their thoughts or how they really feel. You really don't know what to say. You have all kinds of thoughts running through your mind. Should I say this or should I not? What can I say to make this grieving person ease their pain? How can I bring healing into their wound in their heart for this loved one who left them? What can I do to make it easier for the grieving person to know that they are still here and you still can enjoy the beauty in life? We all

are not scheduled to stay here forever. We have an appointed time by God to leave this journey of life and go into an eternal life.

Why is it so hard to let go of your loved one? Why is it easier for some people to let go and others can't hardly bear it. There are many reasons the person won't let go. Some reasons are due to how much they loved them. It could be because of how much they hated them. The memories still carry mixed feelings of how that loved one lived and treated them. That's why you don't know how hard death is to visit different individuals or families. You don't know what they saw, heard, or were told before their transition. We just keep assuming we know. Some people die quiet or instance, some people go slowly, and some people have a long laddering death. The thoughts comes to your mind, how long or when are they going to leave. There are some people who will tell you some things before they leave and some people will just stare at you. No talk, no sound, no movement, just a glossy stare. I looked into those eyes wishing I could interrupt what they are saying to me. But I just look back in wonder. There is no way out, just a still, cold, stare. I believe that they can hear me but they don't talk back. Many times before your loved one get to the point of death, they will alert you or tell you many things. But your mind doesn't really be on the loved one getting ready to leave. You don't remember the things they said until after they die. Then you say, I remember now what that meant. Sometimes you are left with a good feeling, or a weary, or bad feeling, it depends on which one ladders with you. You begin to put the pieces together and sometimes the puzzle will still have one piece missing. You ask the question over and over why do you have to leave?

There are many memories left behind. There are good memories, bad memories; still memories, happy memories, and I wish I should have memories. The good memories are the ones you want to keep forever in your memory chest. The bad memories you wish you could throw them far away and never bring them back to your mind. The still memories are the ones you wonder why did they do that to you. Why were they so peaceful and some were so mean? Why do I feel so bad after they have died? Their death is like a bitter taste that is left in your mouth. Then there are the memories you think back and laugh over them, memories that bring joy and fun thoughts of your loved one. And I can't leave out the wish I should have memories of wishing we could have done this before they left me. I wished we could have traveled or done things together. I wish we could have talked more. I wished we could have been together more often looking at each other in the eyes. My love for you was so strong but I didn't get to tell you as many times I wish I could have told you. This leaves an opening inside of you that no man can close up. It is an uncomfortable feeling. Memories start coming back of that loved one. You picture them sitting in church, in the house, in their favorite chair. I was sitting in church; there was a sweet saint who had passed away one year ago. I was looking at the place where she used to sit just wishing she could walk through the church doors. I kept looking and waiting but no, she did not walk in. Why couldn't she walk in and sit where she normally sit. She was here last week but this week her sweet spirit is gone. Grieving is like you are relieving your pain and hurt over and over again. You always wonder if the grief will ever completely heal. I've watched so many people grieve after their loved ones have gone and the pain is so heavy I can understand how a person can say that they want to be with them. There is a void now in their life and

surroundings that no human can fill. There is a stillness that is indescribable and invisible but yet so real. The heart is aching. Why so much pain? I hate pain whether it is physical or natural. I hate death. I hate hurt. I don't like to experience the atmosphere of death. I hate fear. I hate trouble. After the death, many people tell the story over and over again. Whether the story is good, sad, bad, shocking, happy, unusual, exciting, unbelievable story, they will share memories of that loved one. No matter how many years or months or days after the death, they tell the story just like it was yesterday. There are some stories being told that will make you want to cry, laugh, be sad, or happy. You got to keep in mind it is their story. They may want to tell the story every time you come around them. To me telling the story is a part of their grieving process to healing. I carefully listen.

In many of the stories you may learn a lesson or you may not. You may get a taste of wisdom or you may not. But it is their story. You could get some history or you may not. In telling the story, the loved one could find a turn of release or relief. The loved one is trying to find a comfort zone. Some people may have a feeling of guilt, anger, shock, bitterness, numbness, sadness, loneliness, and especially emptiness. Whatever feelings you hold, there have got to be some type of freedom in your spirit. There may be thoughts of what I should have done better or what I just didn't do. I keep telling myself, why I didn't talk more to my loved one. There are days we just didn't say nothing to each other but we were alright. Why didn't I forgive more or now since they are gone forgive myself. You take for granted that your loved one will always be there for you. Whatever the reason may be they are gone now. Things that are undone will have to stay undone. Places we were going, I will have to go by myself. Moments spent

together will have to be alone now. Whatever the reason may be, they are gone now and you will have to adjust to the missing link. The link that you now will never replace will have a hole in your heart. Why because they were one of a kind that you can't replace. The question still rests on the inside why did they have to leave me. All the money in the world can't stop them from leaving this life. If it is their time to leave nothing can hold them back. We can't stop death no matter how hard we try. You may even have families, friends, or just people to try to help serve and e there after the death of a loved one but the pain is still there deep on the inside. The void is like a giant hole on the inside that you can't describe or fill. There is a hollow place in your heart that is hurting. There are moments you think back about your loved one up to the point of them leaving you. There were things that they said and you didn't understand until after they die. There were loved ones they saw who were gone before them. They told you what the dead said to them and you tried to comprehend. They even told you what they were doing. Why is it so real to them? What do they see that we don't see? You watched day after day wishing you could make it better for your loved one. But time keeps on ticking. You're the count down because at the last click it is over. No more watching and waiting. Time has a tic-tic-tock. Why can't the clock stand still? The tic- tock starts to get weaker and weaker until you hear no tick. The time has come to stop the clock. All kinds of thoughts are going through your head after the death of the loved one. Some thoughts are why it couldn't have been me? They were so young to die. They were so old to die and lived a long time. It does not matter what age or how they died. They are gone but not gone. Death has one expiration date for each person on their personal card.

Now that your loved one is gone the visits slacks up, the cooked food stops, the phone calls stops, and the loneliness kicks in. Why do people stick by you all the way until the end of the funeral? They will come to the house after the funeral and may be the next day but most of the time you are on your own. Every now and then somebody may call or check up on you if they have not seen you out. After the funeral is really when the loneliness, the heartache and pain come to a surplus. There are so many mixed feelings running through your mind and heart. And you wonder if anybody really cares. Does anybody remember that I exist? You're wishing that somebody would just say something to you, so you will know they care. If they just say something I might talk about my loved one to them. I have met many people who loved their loved one and it may have been a year ago or a few days ago or just yesterday, people have memories they want to share them over and over about their loved one. Many times just talking will help them get closer to healing. You have some people who have had dreams, or hear things in the house or see things around when related to their loved one. They want to talk about it if someone don't think that they are crazy or losing their mind. Some people know if they share different things that are unbelievable or weird to others most people will form an opinion of them which may not be so good. There are some people who wish they could hear or see some sign of their loved one's spirit but they don't see or hear or dream anything. You are wondering should I tell you what I know I have seen, dreamt, or sensed in the house or should I keep it to myself? Some people will tell you that you didn't see, feel, or dreamt that. Then you get the feeling of I shouldn't have said that because of the way the people respond or look at you.

I enjoy hearing different things people have seen, heard; experience after the death their loved one. Some things I heard have made me wonder, amazed, and say yes I can see why some people would never believe what the person has said. And on another side of the picture, the things some people have shared are so real whether it is a dream or vision. So many people have shared with me after the death of their loved one that you may believe it or not believe it. This is a shared incident that happened to an old church mother at her house. Her husband had died and he had hid some money in a white envelope in the house but she didn't think to ask him before he had died where he put it. She came to a time that she needed that money. She told me that she tore up their bedroom looking for that money. She looked under the bed, between the bed, in the closet, so she just decided to stop looking and sit down, get still. No one was in the room with her. All of a sudden the white envelope fell off of the bureau on the floor. She had previously searched the bureau and she did not see that envelope.

This is another shared experience that happened after this young lady's father-in-law passed some years ago. She said that he would come over to see them any time during the day in his truck. Her drive way is made up of gravel. They would know when he was in the drive way because they would hear his truck on the gravel when he would pull in the drive way. The whole family today hears the gravel and look out the window and there is no one out there. She said their daughter does not like to be at home by herself because she always hears his truck drive up and nobody is outside.

There was another lady lost two sisters to death one shortly after the other one.

They were very close in age and with a sister's tight bond. She told me that she kept having this dream about the three of them over and over. They were in the dream

walking forward in a line. She was in the middle of them. I asked her what did she do or say. She told me every time in the dream she would jump out of the line and let them keep going. She felt that they were coming back for her so that they could be always together like they were in this life and where ever they are now in the other life.

My daddy had an aunt who did not like my mother. But my mom asked her if when she died, if she could have her old antique china cabinet with the glass that comes all the way down; the one you could see everything in it. Almost every night around 2:00 to 3:00 am, the dishes would rattle or shake. I would not go into the kitchen but I would hear old aunt's china cabinet, the dishes in it making noise. The next morning I asked my mom, did you hear the dishes in the china cabinet making noise? She responded, oh that's nothing, they do that very often. That response left me speechless.

My grandma told me that she would always hear my daddy, who is dead singing to her in her house. The song was "Will you be ready when Jesus comes?" It seemed as if she had so much peace in hearing him. She said that she would never forget holding his hand as his last breath left his body. I pictured a mother by her son's bed, holding his hand. She said he started off with a tight hand grip. Because the hearing is the last thing to go, he couldn't say nothing but in that hand grip. She said son if you can hear me hold my hand. He took her hand and held it tight. As he was leaving her the grip got lighter and lighter until he let go. And she knew with that last grip he was gone. At 7:00 in the shower at school, I felt my daddy had left me. I started praying asking the Lord to take my daddy out of his pain he was in. My family called me and said that he had left at 7:00 that morning. When I came home from school on a break, I would say, Daddy, you got to be here when I come back. He would tell me of course, I am going to be here where

am I going. Several times I would ask him would he be there when I come back. The VA doctor had told my family that daddy only had six or less months to live. I noticed that the last time I asked him, daddy are you going to be here when I come back? His respond was no answer. He wouldn't even look at me. I knew deep down in my heart that was the last time I would see him alive. He died in 1974 but when I think about his death, it seems as if it refreshes in my mind. The hurt is still there when I think about it. It feels like yesterday. I can remember all over again. The hurt is still there when I think about him leaving me. I try to blank his death out of my mind but it comes back. It brings sadness with a silent pain.

There are also times when a person dies, you don't find out until after the funeral. You don't even know that person was leaving. Sometimes you say to yourself, I didn't get to tell them how much they helped me by just the words of wisdom they shared through the years. You wanted to tell them how much you appreciated them but you didn't get to do it. You didn't take the time to tell them. You didn't even tell them how much you loved them and there were many times you could have. This leaves a lonely taste inside your heart. Life is not fair. If I only would have told them how I felt. It still remains the need to talk or call them on the phone. Then I remember they are gone, I can't talk or see them anymore.

There is an old mother who had one daughter who lived away from home. This mother could see all the things her daughter was going through but watching and getting an inner sense of what's going to happen down the road. Her daughter worked for nineteen years in Georgia, five years in South Dakota and one and a half at Elon College and two years in West Virginia. There she met a friend who was sick taking care of his

sick mother and they both died. The daughter decided to come back home. Her mother had a gut feeling that if she moved back to town within three years her only child would die. The daughter came home and within seven months she passed. She was only 50 years old. The daughter had a blood clot. Seeing how hard this death was on her father, he was dealing with grieve in his own way. It was heavy. She died on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. As time moved on and the longing for his daughter, the void was never filled. A few years later, her father died on January 27. This mother knew deep inside when both daughter and husband was going to pass but could not tell them or share with any one, she kept what the Lord revealed to her to herself.

After her daughter's death, this same mother said she saw her coming through the door and told her goodbye. She told me that her father died at age of 89 and her mother at the age of 90 years old. She said that she would wake up at 6:00 every morning and she would hear two voices in the kitchen. Her daddy and her husband are in the kitchen talking about fishing. Then her daddy would change the conversation to golf and walking. She realized that they were not coming to dinner ever. She said that she told them to stop waking her up at 6:00 in the morning talking. And when are you two going to talk to me? When she said that, she never heard them again in the kitchen.

There was another member of her church that she would play the piano and he would sing with her for years. He died. He would always come to her house for rehearsals. I asked her had she seen him since he passed. She responded that just last week she heard him going through a stack of music papers by her piano. She went down stairs where her piano is and he asked her could she help him find a song to sing. She said she told him she was busy right now, she would do it later. She thought about how

every Christmas for 25<sup>th</sup> years, he would come and sing "O Holy Night" to her father until her father died. No matter what kind of weather it was, he would always come and sing. This mother shared some things with me you probably think is weird or not true. She said that you can't share this with everybody. Most of the times, she gets a messages of what is going to happen to someone and she gets dates of when they will be leaving but see does not share it with anyone. She said that the times are always correct as she is told in the spirit.

What do you do when the phone stops ringing? What do you do when the caring loving people stop checking on you? Do you sit and wonder how lonely you are even if there are other family members living in the house. Sometimes nobody wants to talk to nobody. Then there are times when you get together and everybody wants to reminisce on past times that you spent with the loved one. There are memories of all sort of fun days, happy days, sad days, hard days, and hopeful days.

When the funeral is over for your loved one, I have noticed how tired the family may be. There are moments they are wishing the people and family members to go home. It seems like families get tired out from the people going and coming. Everybody is trying to wait for the loved one to cross over. Sometimes loved ones latter and the doctor or hospice tell the family that it won't be long until your loved one cross over. If it takes a long time, people and friends keep running by the house. Some people bring food and other items and some people just stop by and visit awhile. This waiting may go on and on. By the time the family is wearing out, the people are being thoughtful and nice while are getting weighted down. The families try to smile and welcome you each time you come by but you can see where they are getting tired and they need to get some

rest. It seems that the traditional thing to do is keep going by the loved one's house until the person dies. After they die continue to visit short or long times until their family set the funeral date and time. When the funeral is over and going to the grave yard for the committal afterward most families go back to the church or family house and eat food together. The family and friends will visit the bereaved awhile and most people will join them in eating. They will continue to visit until most people have gone home. Most of the time, people or friends or other family will tell you caring words such as: I'll check on you tomorrow or this week; I'll call you; call me if you need something; I'll be back; You're not along; and I'll be checking on you.

Many times it seems like people feel that loved one is buried now and it is over with stopping by, bringing food, and not calling. This is when the loved one's family needs you more after the burial. I have experienced after the death of a loved one. There is a very lonely feeling inside. Sometimes you wonder if people, friends, and family have forgotten you after the death of your loved one. You wonder if they even care. You start remembering how they told you, "I'll be there for you any time." Well, where are they. Many times if you just had somebody to talk after the funeral is over. If you just had somebody to listen to you. Oh the pain of not having my loved one with me might ease up. All kinds of thoughts are running through your heart. Where are all the people, friends, family and church people?

You want to talk but you don't want people to think you're crazy. Some people will tell you strongly to get over it. You can't bring back the loved one. You're wasting time worrying about them. You need to move on. You will hear from me. Try not to worry. Well, they are gone now and like goes on. You need to start doing things to get

your mind on something else. These words are just a few things people will say to a person who has lost a loved one. You begin to wonder over and over do they really care. Is it real when people say they care and will check on you from time to time? It does not matter how short the loved one's death came about or how long and drawn out the timing it is still your loved one whether you loved them or not or didn't mind them going on to the other side.

There are times the pain is a relief and a release for you. Some feelings will make you feel uncomfortable, guilty, sad, glad, happy, or appreciated that you knew the loved one. You wonder do people have the right words to say to you after the death of your loved one or do they just avoid you because they do not know just what to say. The holidays come by and you missed them. You spend your Thanksgiving and Christmas without them. You go to the family gathering but it is not the same where is she, why can't she walk in just like she used to and look forward to the next family gathering. It is impossible for her to come because she is dead. The family member who is responsible for keeping the family together and all the family functions has left the scene. No longer will the family be the same.

The death angel came one night, taking the matriarch of my family at the age of 100 years old. She was a mother to all of our family and to other families. I watched her transition from a vibrant lady to an old lady. When she fell down the last time, I had a gut feeling that she would start going downhill. She went to the hospital and from there she was sent to the nursing home. The doctors told her only when she could walk again on her own would she get to go back home. While visiting her in the nursing home, she was upbeat for a long time. Then I noticed a change in her motor skills. She had a strong

desire to go back to her home but being able to get around was the problem. She went therapy but that was not really working. Did she like being at the nursing home? No, she would tell me, I don't like it here. As some years went by, I noticed her body was beginning to shut down. She was the oldest church mother and some time she would get to go to church and out to dinner before coming back to the nursing home. That made her happy. Time was going by and she was not moving well enough to get out of the nursing home but yet she still longed to go back to her house. Everyone in the nursing home fell in love with her. She became known for her wisdom and style of talk. Visiting her was a long journey. I finally came to the conclusion that she would never be going home. As she kept on aging, her body got weaker but her mind was sharper than a tack. She was confined to a small room with strange people coming to wait on you daily whether they were nice or nasty. That was a great change for her when you were so used of doing for yourself. Why the change? Here is a lady who had been so use of helping others is now in place where you may get some visitors or you may not. This is an atmosphere of being around strange people and you're wondering if you are safe in a strange place.

As time moved on, she was getting near her 99 birthday, one nurse told her that at her 100 birthday she was going to bring her 100 red roses as a gift to honor her. She started marking down the calendar every day. As the time got closer, she would make a statement, Lord if you just let me make it to a 100 that's all I want. I started telling her; please stop saying that because many times he will give you just what you ask for. She was so happy because her children were going to give her a 100 th Birthday Party. It seem like that was all she would talk about when I would visit her. Oh how happy that made

her. She made it to 100 years old. The nursing home gave her a party and a beautiful plaque. She was so proud. The nurse did give her the 100 red roses. They were so pretty and strong just like her. The birthday cake even had red roses on top of it. She was so proud when they read her the plague in honor of her. What a mile stone to reach a mark as powerful as 100 years on this earth. She had a life well lived and loved for a woman of God to see her appreciated by so many. She worked over 50 years at the same place. God blessed her with a good husband and children. Even though she was old, she was still grieving over losing her husband and daughter years ago. I often wondered what was behind her eyes. She had been through history and seen more changes than most. Her children did honor her at her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration Party. It was a blast. The 100 roses were her center piece on the table. She received plaques from the president, the governor, the congressman, the major, and many more letters. I watched her expression on her face of being pleased and done, finished. I didn't say anything but I could see that look in her eyes that she was ready to leave this world. She had made her mark and she was ready to go home.

As the time moved on, she started getting weaker and weaker. She had made it to 100 and 2 months. When I visited, I told her God gave her what she asked for. Watching her getting ready to may make her journey away from us, I shared with her how much she meant to me for many years. I thank God for her. No one would ever take her place. There was only one of her. I would read the Bible to her and she even asked me to bring her a Sunday school book.

There is a time in a patient's life when the pain ceases to be, when the mind

slips off into a dreamless state, when the need for food becomes minimal and the awareness of the environment all but disappears into darkness.<sup>1</sup>

Her mind was on heavenly things. I asked her not to go but she did not response or answer. Each time I asked her not to leave me, she wouldn't say anything. I started my grieving before she left me. Watching her at her last days and seeing that I could not stop death made me lifeless and the pain deep inside of my heart was indescribable. I loved that lady so much and I don't know if she really knew it. My love could not stop death as strong as it was. Why did she have to leave me? Was she too old to stay a little while longer? Was I being selfish because she was paining so bad at different times? Even during this time, I didn't want her to leave me. I felt all alone and I didn't talk to anyone because I knew that they would say, let her go because she was real tired. She had a full life and she was at peace with her creator. Why nobody could see my silent grief? As her body started shutting, I could feel her leaving me and it wasn't getting better. What could I do to stop this process of dying? I even went by her ear when no one was in the room and I kept asking her not to leave me, I needed her. She still didn't answer me. She heard me but no respond. I often wonder why they won't say something in that transitional stage. Do you think they want to answer you but they can't? Day after day passed and she was still lying there not moving but breathing peacefully. Every now and then she would call your name. We watched and waited, watching and waiting on her to take her last breath. I was sitting in the room watching her rest in so much peace. Every so often I would go up to her ear and tell her that I loved her and did she have anything to tell us. She never answered back. She just pleasantly stared at me.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (NY: Touchstone Rockefeller Center, 1997), 275.

She was sent to Hospice and they could tell time was cutting out. They said that it wouldn't be long now. Those were the words I hated to hear from the nurse. She was finally in the still stage and not moving. If I could have turned everything around and made her better but I would have quickly. The final day came and she was going in and out. That night I was sitting there and she was not moving and it was 11:30 p.m. so I went home. As quick as I was in the house, the phone rang and I was called to come back. She slipped away so that I could not see her leave because I was holding tight onto her spirit. When I got to the room, she was so peaceful lying there just as if she was sleeping a nap through. I went over to the bed and kissed her and whispered in her ear to wake up, I don't want to let you go. Please wake up. She still did not respond to me. Again I said, please don't leave me. I need you. Hospice is so nice, they will let you sit in the room as long as you want too with your loved one while they are dead. The family can touch, stare, pray, love, and hurt on each other until the undertaker comes to take them away. She fought a good fight and I believe that she was ready to go to heaven. She had told me about seeing her mother so many times before she got worse. I asked her what did her mother say to her when she saw her. She responded that my mother said that she was coming to get me and take me with her. At that time I didn't want to hear that because I wanted her to stay here with me. She also told me that she saw her dead brothers and they were so happy to see her. This is my family who I love so much. It seem like everybody is leaving me who were the foundation of the family. This lady's heart desire was for her family to stay together and strengthen each other in love and unity. She wanted our family to be together through sickness and death, the bad and the good times. Be there for each other no matter what. We went through the family time of

going to her house and reminiscing over the years in the past of our family reunions, big dinners and looking at pictures of the past and present. We had friends and family to come by her house every day and night until the funeral. The funeral was beautiful. One of her granddaughters gave the tribute and her topic was "Family". There was a message in it that touched everybody in the church. After going to the graveyard, back to the church for the family eating, we went back to her house and fellowshipped. The house was crowded with family and friends. I wondered will they still come next week. Will anybody call to check on us? I hurt badly. I started missing her before she left me. The next day came and the next week and the next one. Everything was back to normal. Everybody went back to their everyday lives.

There was a girl who ushered at church who would stand tall at the door with a big smile as people come in, she would greet everyone passing by so pleasantly and now she is gone. Talking to her one day and the next day she is gone. She went to church with her mother one Sunday evening. She got to praising God and thanking him for being so good to her and her family all through the years. I was told that she praised God like she never praised him before. Then she went to the rest room and passed out. She was gone in a second. They tried to revive her but no one could. The paramedics tried to no avail. They took her to the hospital to try and it was no good. She was at the Lord's house and she still could not get revive. Why was it her time for the death angel to come and get her. Nobody saw him, he just came that quick. Every Sunday I watch for her to come into the door but she doesn't. I can feel her spirit so strongly in the church. I will actually cry because I miss her so much. I would go into my phone contacts and pull up her number. Why did I keep her phone number in my phone until it went away on its

own? I would look at her number almost every day wishing I could talk to her but there was no answer. She had a personality of loving folks no matter who you were. She always prayed for you no matter what the situation was. She was a sweet spirit but now that spirit is gone but not gone. I am grieving inward and silently.

I watched my husband after losing his mother. He would go and sit in her bed room daily. No one was talking to him. He started off crying until that turned into silence. He would be just sitting with a quiet spirit, missing the one he loved so much. I observed him several days. He did not want to talk about it, he just keep his grief bottled up on his inside with no expression or showing any pain or hurt. He was the only boy she had so there was a special bond between mother and son.

One older man who had been married over sixty years and his wife had passed. He would not let family members move any of her things in the house. He kept everything just the way his wife had the house set up. He did not want them to move her clothes, shoes, hats, or anything how she left things. He told the whole family not to touch anything.

There is a grandson who was raised by his grandma and he lived with her for many years. After the funeral, he told all the family members, do not touch anything, everything will stay the same. Don't move anything in the house from the kitchen to the living room; let everything stay the same, dishes and all. We will use this house for a family house to come to. I will be responsible for keeping everything up. The lights will stay the same. The phone will stay the same. Everything will function as if grandma is still here. This will be a meeting place for the family to meet on holidays and other occasions. This will be a place for family members coming from out of town to stay and

feel that they are at home. He is still grieving the loss of his grandma. It has been many years since her death but he lets her spirit live on in her house.

Death has a way of keeping memories well alive no matter how many years it has been since the death of your loved one. I don't know if it is you still feel close to the loved one by not changing anything or moving anything out. Just keeping some item that belonged to the loved one keeps a strong feeling that their presence is still here, even though you can't see, feel, or touch them. Many times if keeping a piece of their clothes or their picture to hold on, makes the family member feel closer to that loved one. I have watched different families react similar but the fact still remains the same that the loved one is gone and will not be coming back.

Sometimes I see this young lady who lost her teenage son in a high school football game on the field. Her only son who was a sweet heart had to leave her so young and full of energy. Every time I run into her, she will show me his obituary with his picture on front of it. And I listen to her talk about her baby. He wasn't a problem child, just a good loving boy. All the kids at school loved him. This last time I looked at his picture, I saw a helot over his head, shining bright. I told his mother that he was alright. He gave me a big smile. (Now that was weird and strange) but yet so beautiful. I can't explain it but that's what I saw. Just to make sure, I stared at the picture and it did not go away. She looked but she did not see what I saw. For some reason, telling her what I saw, I could feel a relief in her. There was nothing she could do to stop death. His assignment was finished on this earth. He touched so many hearts in a short length of time. I can imagine his mom have asked the question, why did the death angel come for

by baby at his early age. He had a bright future ahead of him. Deep on the inside, she is dealing with grieving every day.

There was one family at the grave yard and a great granddaughter was paying attention to the preacher doing the committal and after he finished, the little girl with a soft voice started singing, "Let the Church Say Amen, God has spoken, let the church say Amen". When the family went back to the cars and got in another little great granddaughter looked at the driver and asked, why are we leaving grandma back there, we can't leave grandma back there. Her mother replied, grandma is going to heaven. The little girl said, from back there. Even children go through a part of grieving in their own little way. Adults are not the only ones grieve.

I can remember after my father passed, the light on the night stand in his bed room would come on during the day time every so often. No one would go cut it off. I asked will anybody go cut off that light. No one answered. Everyone acted like nothing happened. Then there was a knock at the front door. The knock was just the way my daddy always knocks. All the guest and family were sitting in the living and kitchen. Everybody got quiet and nobody went to open or look out the front door. My mother wouldn't even go to the front door and look out. After the funeral, my mother did not move any of my daddy's clothes, shoes, tools; everything was just like he left them. She didn't even change anything. Do you think my mother thought daddy was coming back? We watched my mother during my dad's passing. She did not show any sadness or pain. We did not see her cry. She did not show any emotions in front of the family. Not one tear did she shed. The family doesn't know her feelings or how she grieves. She could have been having frozen grief. All of us were sad, but my mom was acting normal.

I can look back to when my mother had Alzheimer and we took her to her favorite niece's funeral. My sister did not tell her where she was going. Maybe because she felt she wouldn't know anyway but she could tell that she was in the church where she grew up. When we were in the line for the procession, she looked at me and asked why are we here. I looked back at my little sister and said, you didn't tell Mama where she was going. She replied, no. As we walked into the church, I didn't want her to be shocked. She looked at the casket and saw her niece in it and said, we are at my favorite niece's funeral. She was named after me. Even a person with Alzheimer can remember death. Such a sad countenance came over her and she kept quiet during the whole funeral.

Another young lady had a sick husband that went to the hospital off and on regularly. During the year he had gotten worse. The doctors told him what they saw and how bad it was. He tried to keep a good spirit but he began to go down. He stayed in the hospital so long and his body kept getting weaker by the weeks. His wife was trying to hold on but hearing the doctor's report did not make it easy to look toward life. In his last days of his life, he had already planned his funeral services and burial. He was at peace for leaving this world. I see so much where grieving starts before the loved one dies. She finally had to send him to Hospice. His wife asked me did I think he was going to make it. I couldn't break her heart and tell her what I felt. So I in return asked her what did she think. Do you think he is going to make? She paused and stared at me. I wanted to tell her when you come to Hospice that is the number one sign of not coming back home alive. The last day I went to visit him at Hospice. We sit and talked. He called out my name and he was so happy to see me. We prayed and sit in the room feeling good and the atmosphere was pleasant. We ate lunch in his room. He was not

eating just sitting up looking at us. Little did we know that would be the last time for him to sit up? His wife was so happy that I spent a long time with them.

When we walked to the front, as I was leaving, she could sense in her spirit that he was leaving her for good. She asked me one more time did I think he was going to die? I told her to pray and ask the Lord. I could not tell her that I could see death all on his face. And the Holy Spirit was letting me know that he would not be here. I left and went home. The Holy Spirit let me know that the death angel would take him that night. I was praying and hoping that I was wrong. Around 7:00 p.m. my phone ranged and she was upset. She said her husband had turned for the worst. She said what happened? When I was out there earlier, he was fine. Now he is not. I told her I would come back out there to be with her family. When I got there, he was still holding on. He was very calm. Once again, we are all sitting around in the room, just waiting on him to complete his transition or should I say waiting on him to die. Her family was very pleasant and calm. Her mother was talking to him about being a good son to her for some years. Now he is leaving her and she is sad. The grieving process was starting with all of them. The nurse kept coming in and out checking his pulse. I noticed as close to the end, his breathing was getting lighter and lighter. He still could hear us whatever we were saying, he was listening to us. Around five minutes until nine, her mother hollers out he's gone. I had been sitting there quiet and just listening to everybody else talk in the room. She was getting very emotional and she thought he was dead. I could see from where I was sitting that his pulse in his neck was going up and down. He was not dead yet. The nurse ran in and checked his pulse. She said that he was not gone yet. At 9:00 p.m. the death

angel came and he slipped away very quietly and peaceful. We are standing over his bed, looking at how peaceful he was lying there.

Before the funeral, many people came by her house to show their condolences and brought food. After the funeral, going to the grave yard, back to the church to eat was a long day. People and family going by the house to show their support was extremely in order for helping the family get through a rough time. But now that the funeral is over and your loved one is gone. Who will come by or call just to let you know that you are loved. You may want to talk to someone to share things that your loved one said or did for you. Then you may enjoy company so you won't be alone. Whatever you like in your grieving time, it helps just to have someone to encourage you and not make you feel out of place by your grief. I check on her regularly because I know that she is lonely and misses her husband. He is gone but not gone. She told me that no one calls or come by to see how she is doing. I believe people think that if they see you at church, work, or out and about you are doing fine. They will even ask you, how have you been or is everything been alright with you and or you alright? Sometime I wonder do you really mean that or you just trying to pass conversation or you don't know what to say.

I do understand that some people are very private people when their loved one dies. Those are the ones you handle very gently. Please know that if they hurt your feelings that they are just being themselves and it is not you. You just move on and reach out for someone who really doesn't mind you caring. But keep in mind to check on that person no matter how cold they react to you but don't overdo it. People are different in many ways. We have to have an understanding of all the different emotions, personalities, and styles of each individual. Some people snap at you real mean when

they talk to you. I have observed those are the ones who need a lot of love. And you have to have some patience to deal with them. You never know how a person is thinking on the inside.

Some people I have talked to about the grief ministry, have told me that they have grieved over a loved one for many years and the grief have not left them. They just don't talk about it. Now they will be able to come and share their memories and stories about their loved one gone but not gone. I see where it ok to grieve and we will move on to healing. This grief group will be opened to always listen to the person and let them know that what they have to say is important to us whether you think it is weird, good, bad, sad, or terrible, we are here to support you and your family to help move on from grief to healing.

I met a young girl in her early twenties who saw that I had a breast cancer tag on my jacket. I told her that I was a survivor since 1999. She shared with me that she had three sisters who had been through the cancer. Two of her sisters died young and she had one sister left fighting the cancer still. Can you imagine how heavy the load for that family grieving over two sisters gone and one left to fight it. I know their grief is too unbearable to just think about. I wonder if her family had people to check on them. Now her grief is more than enough to endure for just a moment of time. I said to myself, she is such a nice young girl it is sad has to face so much pain to be so sweet. Why is there so much pain in one family? She said they only had each other. She seemed like a loving child, so incident, so manner able. She asked me to keep them in prayer.

The young go through grief just as the old go through. Grief doesn't care who it hits, it hooks on to your emotions, mind, heart, spirit, and soul. Grief seems cruel. No matter what age you are when grief hits, it burns the heart.

There was a seventeen year old girl driving from work and she decided to pass a truck on the highway. Sweet, young and incident did not see the car coming head on and hit her. This caused her to die quickly. She didn't get a chance to tell her mother she loved her for the last time. And her mother did not get to tell her she loved her. Through this death, the whole family was not the same. Everything changed including the family's lives. No one was anymore good after that great trauma. Everyone went into separate ways. That hurt was so deep for a little girl just trying to be obedient and good to die so hard. Grief is so unbearable in the hearts of the loved ones. Why so much pain you have to go through in this life. Will it ever get easier for living without your loved one?

There was an incident involving two teenage twins driving from work one night who had an accident. They always did everything together. They wore clothes alike and they went everywhere together. One had their seat belt on and the other one did not. The twain that did not have on her seat belt went through the wind shield and died. What a tight love that had to part. One lived and the other died. What pain the other twin had to bear in a world all by herself? She lost her best friend. She had a hurt that no one can put back together again. Their families are so loving and caring to help each other but who helps the strongest one to be strong. After the funeral and the next week go on, who will continue to check on the loved ones? Can you imagine how lonely that twin may

be? I can also imagine that her heart is broken. She probably had so many plans and dreams for both of them. Now she has to start a new life without her mate.

When my mother passed, she left us with a spirit of sadness and grief. She had been suffering with Alzheimer for a few years. At the end she remembered each one of us. She never forgot my baby sister because she was her care taker. I lost my mother the moment she forgot who I was. I started grieving when I could see that she did not know me. I felt like she was dead then but still alive. She would talk about her relatives as if they were in the past time. It was when things were years ago, she was living in the past with remembering all the people who had been dead for years. When she would be out and see someone's child, she would ask about their loved one who had been dead for a long time. They did not understand why would she ask about the dead, but we mentioned that she did not remember the present.

I see clearer in the mirror now. You need to accept grief instead of running from it. As for me, I saw a lady that I knew all of my life died but yet still living in this world. She would stare at you and could not remember who you were. If that is not dead, tell me what is dead. It still hurts that she did not know me, her own middle baby girl. I could not share with this with anyone before during and after her death. I did not have anyone that I knew of that I could feel free to talk to and pour out my feelings of hurt, pain, guilt, anger, denial, and many other grief emotions. I went through all of those stages paining on the inside.

In grieving, it seems like sometimes some loved ones die hit your heart harder than other ones. I had a niece who 37 years old. She was full of life, never gave her parents any trouble. She finished college and a master's program. She got a good job in

government. She was the little girl that you wished could have been your child. Sadly to say she got breast cancer. She started leaving us toward the end of her sickness. After her death, the whole family was turned around in everything that we did. Our grief was too much. Everybody stayed sad for months. She was a sweetheart to the whole family. We asked the question why did death have to take her. She never bothered anyone, always trying to help everybody. The hurt was so hard and nobody talked about how they missed her so much. Everybody just kept silent when it came to thinking about her. But you could feel all the anger, bitterness, denial, shock, terrible sadness, guilt, and love in the atmosphere wherever the family could be. Nothing was the same anymore. The Sunday dinners were sad because we would all meet up at one house and eat dinner together. She was the missing link and there was no place for repairing, fixing, restoring, or replacing. She is gone but we don't want to accept her death. I want her here with us. But that is impossible to have her to come back on this earth. It is so strange that the family's grief still ladder on day by day and it has been three years since her death. It is now at a cold stillness of grief when everyone thinks about her. But the pain is there.

My close friend's husband took sick. His cancer came back. He never complained about being sick or hearing the bad news from the doctors. He was a quiet and humble man who would help anybody. As he was getting ready to check out of here, he told his wife that their pastor and his wife had stopped by the hospital to see him. He said to his wife, you should have been them when you were coming in, they just left. We had the best visit and we talked a long time. That was nice of them to come by. She saw her pastor on that Sunday and thanked them for coming to see her husband. The pastor responded no, they did not go to the hospital to see him. So why did he see them and talk

to them? He was on his spiritual journey. As the time got closer to the end, he knew that he was dying. I went in and prayed for him. I told him that angels were in the four corners of the room. He responded thank you for praying for me. Another friend came into his room and said she could see the angels standing in his room. I didn't see them but I could feel their presence. Now we are at the stage of the nurse coming in and out of the room saying it won't be long. Each time she would come in and check his pulse it started to get weaker. I watch him ease on out of here with a sweet spirit in peace and love. He was very much alert. At that point and moment, there was a calm spirit in the atmosphere. You could actually feel the love of God radiate in the room. Seeing one moment life in your body and then the next moment the breath and air in your body is gone. That grief was a different kind of grief. You didn't feel any sorrow or sadness. You felt like he was alright. This is a good grief. There was no guilt, no struggle, no pain, no anger, and all was well in our souls. There was a release of acceptance in the atmosphere. He fought a good fight and I do believe he won the battle of victory.

As his wife prepared for the funeral, everything fell in order. Going to the grave yard and family eating was a joy. He had a home going that I know if he was alive would have made him very proud.

There are so many stories and shared stories I have in my memory chest. Some stories that I can discuss and some stories I cannot discuss. There are many things the dying one has told me that most people will not believe. To you it may sound real or unreal to others. I have enjoyed all of the words, seen, motions, dreams, visions, and feelings that I have experience through getting a better understanding of a person dying and the family or individual grieving because of from their loss. I count it a blessing just

to learn more about the different ways people react to the death of their loved one. Grief weighs heavy upon the heart. The heart is what's being wounded and needing to be fixed and healed. Inside of the heart holds so many grief emotions whether they are bad or good.

In the end, there are only two certainties: losing something or someone dear to us evokes feelings of sadness, and the healing process begins when the heart reopens to love.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> D'Arey, When People Grieve (NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 2005),

### CONCLUSION

"Sweet Spirit - Gone But Not Gone; Before, During and After the Death of a Loved One" is an ongoing process of releasing many emotions in finding oneself and adapting to change resulting from the loss of a loved one. Grief is a human reaction to the loss of a loved one. By facing the hurt and pain you begin to heal. Grief is a growth experience. As you heal, you get stronger, better and find new ways to deal with adjusting and adapting to life. The healing process continues as the person reaches out. They begin to find inner peace and strength. Attitudes and choices made determine one's growth or hindrance in moving from grief to healing.

You can make changes in your life if you do three things:

- Acknowledge that who you are is defined primarily by what you do and think.
- Believe you can change what you do and how you think over time.
- Never forget: attitude, your gateway to emotional resilience, is highly influenced by where you place your attention <sup>1</sup>

When you are grieving, follow your heart in finding a person to talk to for support, care and trust who is willing to listen. Your support group will encourage you to believe you can make it and live. You will overcome. Do not keep grief bottled up inside. Do not isolate yourself from others. Strength and power are within you.

You have great wisdom within you if you will take time to be honest with yourself and listen. So practice using your intuition and be open to creative flashes of insight. Ask questions and listen.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> LaGrand, *Healing Grief, Finding Peace* (Naperville: Sourcebook Inc., 2011), 60

You have journeyed with me through the process of grieving before, during and after the loss of a loved one. In each story shared, I could hear the different emotions of regret, release, loneliness and pain.

Telling the story is a mental trying-on. It's a process of taking an enormous reality and breaking it up into pieces small enough to fit inside of you. It's a way of taming something wild and unruly until it becomes manageable.<sup>3</sup>

Yes there is a need for our support group in the community. I saw the need in each stage of before, during and after the loss of a loved one. When visiting the bereaved, we know to make the visit short so that we do not invade their privacy. The grieving person(s) need a group they can trust and feel safe with and know will be non-judgmental. The grieving person needs to know that they can focus on healing, love, peace, trust and release. They need to know that they have to continue to live and love. Come join us; we are "Hope In Action."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> LaGrand, *Healing Grief, Finding Peace* (Naperville: Sourcebook Inc., 2011), 73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> D'Arey, When People Grieve (NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 2005), 70.

### **APPENDIX**

### Welcome

Macedonia Worship Center
500 Kinard Drive
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101
Senior Pastor: Chief Apostle S.D. Johnson
4 Co-Pastor: Bishop-designate Billie Mason Johnson

Pastor In Charge: Grief Ministry
Bishop-designate Debra Moorman Bradshaw

### The "HOPE TEAM"

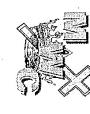
Subject: "Sweet Spirit" – Gone But Not Gone: moving from Grief to Healing before, during, and the death of a loved one.

Purpose: To grow, to build-up, to encourage, to share, to learn, to nourish, to get equipped, to get training, to love, to reach out & touch someone else.

Goal: To become a support group for each other and to move forward in helping others to move from grief to healing in a positive way.

Aim: To give God all of the Glory and Praise!!!

Name:
(Circle Category) Age: 5-10 / 11-15 / 16-20 / 21-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50-59 / 60-70 / 71-79 / 80-89 /90-100
"Sweet Spirit" Gone But Not Gone: Moving from Grief to Healing In Macedonia Worship Center — Bishop-designate Debra M. Bradshaw
"Hope Team"
What stood out to you the most in the meeting today?
1
Was anything positive or negative said that made you think about the before – during – and - after your loved has gone?
1
2.     3.
What do you plan to get out of the Grief Ministry Meetings?
1.
2
Comment(s):



# Macedonia Worship Center

# Apostle Sylvester Davis Johnson, Senior Pastor Most Apostolic Primate/Establishmentarian

# MINISTRY GIFTS 2014 APPOINTMENTS First Lady Billie Mason Johnson, Co-Pastor

# Adjutant / Armourbearer Ministries

Pastor Patrice Scriven, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Pastor Kerry Thomas, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Bishop-Designate Carnella LeSaine, Associate Pastor

# Administrative Procedural Ministries

Bishop Dr. Elvira Rebecca Caldwell-Carter, Coordinator

# Auxiliary Support (HELPS) Ministries/ Volunteerism Ministries

Bishop Kenneth Lee Singletary, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Pastor Jamorice Hughley, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Bishop-Designate Carnella Dunlap LeSaine, Associate Pastor

Bishop Rinaldo Purcell Branson, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Bishop Debra Moorman Bradshaw, Associate Pastor

Bereavement (After-Care/Grief Support) Ministries

## Campus Ministry

Minister Cathy Jessup, Special Administrative Assistant Minister Bishop Dr. Elvira Rebecca Caldwell-Carter, Associate Pastor Dr. Myron Brown, Coordinator

# Christian Education Ministries

Bishop Jacqueline Cassaberry Hill, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Pastor Kerry Thomas, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Principal Ruth Hopkins, Director (Macedonia in Training) Deacon James May, Director (Family-Life Enrichment) Bishop Dr. Willie George Stevens, Associate Pastor Deacon Donald Scales, Superintendent

## Consultation Ministries

Bishop Debra Moorman Bradshaw, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Pastor Crystal Rook, Associate Pastor

## Evangelistic Ministries

Bishop Jacqueline Cassaberry Hill, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Minister Justin Vannoy, Special Administrative Assistant Minister Bishop Mary Ross Singletary, Associate Pastor

# "Follow -Up"/Covenant Ministries

Elder Kerry Thomas, Special Assistant Administrative Pastor Bishop Rinaldo Purcell Branson, Associate Pastor

## Marketing Ministries

Bishop Rinaldo Purcell Branson, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Pastor Jamorice Hughley, Associate Pastor

# Marriage (Couples ) Enrichment Ministries

Deacon Ronald & Trustee Shelby Harper, Coordinators Bishops Kenneth & Mary Singletary, Associate Pastors Deacon Clifton & Deaconess Janet Wilson, Directors

# Media Ministries (Communication/Publication)

Minister Cornelius McLeod, Special Administrative Assistant Minister Elder Kerry Thomas, Special Assistant Administrative Pastor Brother Roberto (Clem) Williamson, Co-Coordinator Bishop Willie George Stevens, Associate Pastor Brother Eric McAllister, Co-Director Brother Keewanee Frost, Director Brother Rudy Hill, Coordinator

# MINISTRY GIFTS 2014 APPOINTMENTS

### Men Ministries

Overseer Rickey Carter, Associate Pastor
Bishop Bennett Oliver Alexander, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor
Deacon Isaac LeSaine, Coordinator
Brother Bryce Worthy, Co-Coordinator

## Mission Ministries

Bishop Bennett Oliver Alexander, Associate Pastor Bishop Kenneth Lee Singletary, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Pastor Crystal Rook, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor

# Multicultural Ministries

Pastor Crystal Rook, Associate Pastor Overseer Carlotta Fleming, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor

# Music & Arts Ministries

Overseer Christopher Farabee, Associate Pastor
Overseer Carlotta Fleming, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor
Dr. Myron Brown, Minister of Music
Trustee Ahmad Johnson, Director of Music
Trustee Vernice Scales, Director of Drama
Trustee Tasha Greggs, Coordinator of Teen Dance
Sister Kennethia Mason, Coordinator of Little Angels

## Parish Ministries

, Bishop Dr. Elvira Rebecca Caldwell-Carter, Associate Pastor Bishop Debra Moorman Bradshaw, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Deaconess Janet Jackson-Wilson, Director Trustee Denise Green, Co-Director

# Prison/Rehabilitation (Restoration) Ministries

Overseer Carlotta Fleming, Associate Pastor
Overseer Rickey Carter, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor
Minister Jemar Russell, Special Administrative Assistant Minister

## Sacred Ministries

Bishop Debra Moorman Bradshaw, Associate Pastor Pastor Sharon Stewart, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor

# Senior Citizens Ministries

Bishop Dr. Elvira Rebecca Caldwell-Carter, Associate Pastor Trustee Helen Johnson, Coordinator

## Singles Ministries

Pastor Sharon Stewart, Associate Pastor
Overseer Christopher Farabee, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor
Pastor Crystal Rook, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor
Trustee Vernice Scales, Coordinator

# Transportation Ministries

Bishop Bennett Oliver Alexander, Associate Pastor Overseer Carlotta Fleming, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Bishop Kenneth Singletary Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Sister Carla McCoy, Director

## Women Ministries

Bishop Jacqueline Cassaberry Hill, Associate Pastor Pastor Sharon Stewart, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Minister Cathy Jessup, Coordinator

## Youth Ministries

First Lady (Bishop-Designate) Billie Mason Johnson, Associate Pastor Pastor Patrice Scriven, Special Administrative Assistant Pastor Trustee Ahmad Johnson, Director

# THE. SULCOLLE Triend

a loved one, go to your friend, listen, show you care. Continue to share your concern throughout the entire difficult first year – and longer if needed. Here are fifty ways you can do this: When a friend experiences the death of

- Ask a simple question about the person who has died. Give the grieving individual an opportunity to talk if they wish.
- Offer to accompany them to the planning conference at the funeral home and/or to the funeral.
- 3. Speak of the deceased one by ... when talking with your grieving friend. Speak of the deceased one by name
- able at first; this free expression of grief Allow for tears sions of emotion. critical to healing. Allow for tears, anger and other expres-ns of emotion. You may be uncomfort-<u>S</u>.
- 글 e Help arrange housing and transporta-tion for out-of-town visitors. If you prepare a meal for the family of grieving, use disposable dishes.
- If your friend is receptive to your assistance, tape your phone number to their phone so that the bereaved family/friend might contact you with minimal effort.
- Consider providing a light meal, such as sandwiches, that can be eaten during a break at the visitation. Prepare a tray of fruit and rolls that can be available to the family before the service.

when possible. tion and funeral services Attend both the visita-

formation about the death Give children truthful in-

11. Use correct terms with children, e.g. "Grandpa died." (We did not lose him; he is not sleeping.)

12. Children of any age should be invited (not excluded or forced) to join their family and attend the visitation and funeral service. The amount of time spent should be determined by the interest, maturity and comfort level of the child.

13. Send children symper.
They also need their pain recognized.

14. Children sometimes respond to the news of a death by playing or ignoring the information. Remind friends and family that ing the painful truth a little at a time. this behavior only means they are process-14. Children sometimes respond to

son who died. another trusted adult about the special per-. Provide time for the child to tell you or

ing the first week the grievers are alone again. Learn when out-of-town guests are re-turning home so you can call or stop by dur-

some special memories you have of the person who died. Write your friend a letter and describe

plate.

19. Avoid encouraging the bereaved to "get back to normal" or to "get on with your life." Grief is a process different for each person.

tos of the person who died may bring comfort to one grieving person and painful re-21. Remember that pictures and memencompany the bereaved person on errands.

person. After a death, it is often difficult go to church alone. Offer to attend church with the bereaved person. After a death, it is often difficult to

Share a copy of a favorite poem or

Send children sympathy cards or notes

Give a gift of food on a good plate so you can visit again when you collect the

20. Driving can be a challenge for the be-reaved for a long time. Offer to drive or ac-

fort to one grieving person and minders to another after a death

23. If you have been through grief, share a little of your own story, so that your griev-ing friend feels less alone, knowing that you have some understanding of his/her pain. If you have been through grief, share

prayer with your grieving friend

25. For the grieving person, activity can be helpful, but it isn't necessarily healthy to always stay busy.

26. Grief has no SHOULD's or NOT's. SHOULD

27. As the months pass, short frequent visits and calls to your bereaved friend are appreciated. The bereaved rarely have the energy to set up meetings or call for help.

quently or not at all. Respect the needs of your grieving friend. Some bereaved have a need to visit the cemetery often, while others visit infre-

29. Offer to go to the cemetery with your grieving friend for a few months following the funeral and maybe around the first anniversary of the death.

30. The bereaved person has the right to grieve each death to the extent of their relationship with the deceased. Society sometimes discounts a death if the person was very old or very sick.

dental 31. Encourage the grieving to stay schedule with routine yearly medical a appointments. y on and

32. Your friend may recount a single extraordinary event of closeness with the deceased. Experiencing the presence of the deceased is spoken of more often in certain cultures than in others.

 Pray for your grieving friend and the de-ceased. Gently let your friend know that you are doing so.

- 34. Establish some simple traditions. One idea is to meet for breakfast once a month so that the two of you have a time together that your friend can rely on.
- Make available information about support groups or grief retreats.
- 36. Allow the grieving to tell their story as often as they need to repeat it.37. Collect photos of the deceased from your
- own photo collection and have them copied for your grieving friend.

  38. Remember your friend on difficult days such as: Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day, holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries and the

anniversary of the date the loved one died.

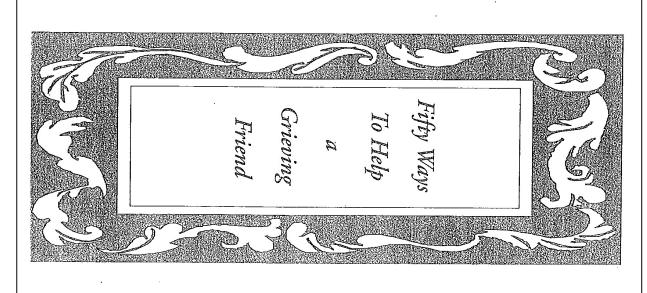
- 39. If you have always acknowledged the birth-day or anniversary of your friend with a remembrance, be creative and consider the circumstances of the bereaved. A widower with children might appreciate a gift certificate for a home-delivered pizza. A widow might appreciate a gift certificate for a beauty shop.
- 40. Compile a list of those generous, talented persons who might offer to teach new skills to the bereaved (cooking, tax preparation, driver's training, etc.).
- 41. When your grieving friend declines your invitation or suggestion, accept the decision gracefully.
- Remember that the grieving also need quiet time alone for reflection and remembering.
- 43. Remind family, neighbors and co-workers to offer companionship and not management to the grieving person.
- 44. Speak up, risk your friendship and suggest professional help if you observe your friend abusing alcohol and/or drugs.45. Assure the priever that you have no time-
- 45. Assure the griever that you have no timetable or agenda for their grief.

- 46. Consult the grieving person before planning a celebration party for a special occasion. The celebration might be too difficult for them to attend the first year.
- 47. Be willing to contact educational resources and request lists of grief-related materials such as books, TV specials, lecture presentations, movies, newspaper and magazine articles and memorial programs.
- 48. Cliches are not helpful and often leave the bereaved feeling that their pain is being considered trivial. ("It was God's will." "He/she is out of pain now." "You can have another baby." "God never gives you more than you can handle.")
- 49. Continue to support your grieving friend during the second year following the death.
- 50. Listen, listen and then listen some more. In our efforts to support the bereaved, we can offer them our presence, our affection and our time and willingness to listen. Effective support of the bereaved is more dependent on careful listening than on any words that we can say.

In Loving Memory of Bernard and Helen Bowers



National Catholic Ministry to the Berezved 28700 Euclid Avenue Cleveland, Ohio 44092-2527 (440) 943-3480 Fax: (440) 943-3500 E-Mail: NCMBereave@AOL.com Website: www.griefwork.org © 2001. All Rights Reserved



### BECAUSE:

You deny the grieving person the opportunity to deal with the grief.

### SAY INSTEAD:

- Remembering the person who died is part of the healing.
- than the person who died. hard to think about anything, other I understand that for a while it is
- \* I did not know your loved one, but it would be a privilege to listen

## PLEASE DO NOT SAY:

- \* Your mother was elderly, so it must \* The death of your baby should not be hard. You really didn't know her
- \* She was a good friend. Why are you upset?

be easy for you.

### BECAUSE:

relationship one person has for another. We cannot judge the depth of the

## SAY INSTEAD:

- \* When a baby dies we lose part of our
- \* When a parent dies, no matter their history. their death, we still lose part of our age or circumstances of
- \* No one can judge the depth of the relationship one person has for another.

powerful. Many bereaved people bereaved. The gift of listening is need to talk about the death over we are there to be present to the there to cheer the person up. Rather, True support does not mean that we are

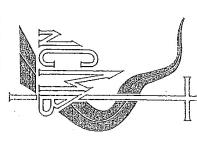


need to be quiet. Allow for the silence. Your presence alone can be comforting. and over again. Other times the bereaved may

how much we say but rather on our presence True effective support is not dependent upon and how effectively we listen.

This brochure created in memory of Theresa M. Teipen Mary M. Teipen

Joseph, John. Jim & Kathy Teipen Donated by their family: Joseph L. Teipen



National Catholic Ministry to the Bereaved, Inc. St. Louis, MO 63125 Box ≠16353

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What to Say...

to Say the Bereaved Comforting

anger producing for the grieving person. prove comforting to the bereaved person. Often in meant, they are often not helpful and sometimes our discomfort we fall back on clichés. While well sometimes hard to know what to say that might hen we are reaching out to the bereaved it is often common to feel helpless. It is

## PLEASE DO NOT SAY:

\* I know just how you feel



\* Think about how happy he is in heaven



# We cannot truly know what another

BECAUSE:

person feels.

still very real. heaven, the pain of missing that person is While the bereaved may well believe in Time alone does not heal the pain.

## SAY INSTEAD:

- This must be a very hard time for you.
- \* I have heard that each person grieves in

SAY INSTEAD:

\*This has to be a hard time for you. Does

\* We cared about him too. Can we talk

it help to talk about him?

about him?

\* Grieving people have told me it helps to

talk about the person who died.

# PLEASE DO NOT SAY:

- \* I know someone who had two family members die at the same time.
- At least you have others in your family.
- \* There are other people worse off than you.

of the death for the bereaved person. These statements lend to discount the impact

## SAY INSTEAD:

BECAUSE:

PLEASE DO NOT SAY:

\* He had a good life.

\* Be thankful he was not aware at the end.

- \* I wonder if you feel like you will never get \* Expressing your tears and your pain will better.
- \* Talking to the person who has died can help you sort out your feelings.

SAY INSTEAD:

person's pain.

bereaved. This discounts the grieving perspective, not from the view of the We are justifying the death from our

\* It must have been difficult to watch her

pain all those months.

## \* When I came to visit it always hurt to see her in pain. But I still miss her.

\* I am wondering if you are feeling empty. Is it difficult to fill the time?

## PLEASE DO NOT SAY:

- \* It will take two or three months to get over \* Your grief will lessen in time. your grief.
- \* You need to get on with your life

### BECAUSE:

our own way and in our own time. person's grief. Each of us needs to grieve in These types of statements put limits on a 

- \* I hope others are not trying to hurry you through your grief.
- their own way and in their own time. The state of the s

### BECAUSE:

- help you feel better eventually.

## PLEASE DO NOT SAY:

- \* You shouldn't get so upset.
- \* Your loved one wouldn't want you to be
- \* You can't stay sad forever

BECAUSE:

expressing strong emotions is a very You deny the fact that being upset and necessary part of the healing.

### SAY INSTEAD:

- \* It must be hard being so sad.
- \* Expressing your tears and your pain will help you feel better eventually.
- \* Talking to the person who has died can help you sort out your feelings.

## PLEASE DO NOT SAY:

- \* God needed him in heaven
- \* It was God's will.
- \* God does not give you more than you can handle.

### BECAUSE:

God's will. These statements assume that we know

## SAY INSTEAD:

- \* It must be hard to understand why these things happen.
- \* Sometimes these things are just not fair.
- \*There is no way to justify why this, happened.

## PLEASE DO NOT SAY:

- \* It is better to put this painful experience out of your mind.
- \* Just think happy thoughts.
- It is time to get on with your life.

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