



Life after loss

A Christian perspective on dealing with loss

Using this booklet

This booklet aims to answer some of the questions asked about the loss of a loved one from the perspective of the Christian faith. It is hoped the questions answered here will bring a measure of comfort through this time.

Ultimately some questions will remain unfulfilled until we too see God face-to-face, but the Bible does give insights and encouragement regarding our loved ones who have gone to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. The questions contained in this booklet address those situations where someone is dying or has died, whether that loss was sudden or expected. **You may wish to read this booklet from cover to cover or you may wish to go straight to the questions that concern you the most. Having read this booklet (or parts of it) you may find it helpful to explore the issues raised further with your minister or another mature Christian.**

If you are not yet a Christian, you will probably find some of the answers confusing without the basis of belief in God and eternal life. Ultimately our greatest need is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ who brings forgiveness and the promise of a new life and, beyond that, life everlasting.

This publication is based on a booklet originally produced by Sandra King, in memory of her late husband Gary, an elder in Enniskillen Presbyterian Church, together with Rev. David Cupples, Kate Doherty, Heather Farrell, Helen Murphy and Helen Gilmour. The content of the original booklet has been adapted for wider use. As the words of this booklet arise from experience together with the living words of the Bible, the intention is to put into practice what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Life after loss

When someone you love dies, life is never the same again. Initially there is a total sense of unreality and you can feel numb and removed. Practical things have to be done, such as arranging a funeral service and coping with friends and family who come to share in your loss. At this time you can feel ‘carried along’ and this underlines the sense of unreality. Exhaustion, forgetfulness and an overwhelming feeling of a lack of control can mix with calmness and unknown strength.

Everyone experiences grief in an individual way and it is important for you to allow this to happen in your own way and at your own time. Reading about how other people coped or sharing with others can help you feel you are not alone. As in the Psalms, you can pour your heart out to God, expressing your loss, your anger and your questions. You can ask God for strength to cope. Life has to be lived, not only day by day but hour by hour. Sometimes in the midst of sadness there is a new appreciation of what is really important in life and the distance between this life and eternal life is narrowed.

A prayer for when you feel people don't understand:

O God, I come to you because there's no one else to whom I can turn. People are very well meaning, but unfortunately they don't always say helpful things. I realise that it's not their fault. Unless they have been where I am now, how could they understand, and even so, every loss is different and to each one we respond in an individual way. Lord, may I know the comfort that only you can give and then help me to share that comfort with others in an appropriate way.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

The pain and hurt of grief

Why as a Christian does it hurt so much to lose someone?

Being a Christian does not stop us feeling the intense pain, hurt and loneliness of losing someone we loved so dearly. Circumstances surrounding the death of a loved one are all different and feel shockingly final. The inconsolable sense of loss and despair we feel can seem inescapable and overwhelming. We will experience these emotions whether or not we have a Christian faith. The Apostle Paul, who was sure of the joy of heaven, nevertheless says he was spared “sorrow upon sorrow” when God spared his close friend and fellow worker, Epaphroditus, from dying (Philippians 2:25-30).

God is the giver of life. Having His presence in our lives does not mean that we do not feel pain and sorrow when sad things happen. Rather, because we are aware of the joy of life that God gives, we feel, as He does, sorrow when death occurs. Sorrow is not just a human response to death, it is a truly Christian response in the face of our broken world and yet the Christian response is not without hope and an expectancy of ultimate joy because Christ has conquered death.

A prayer for when it is hard to find the right words to pray:

Lord, at this time, you know that I find it difficult to pray. I can't seem to get the words in the right order. I am so grateful for all those I know who are praying for me. Thank you for those reminders of the comforting promises in your Word. Help me to trust you to make them real in my life. Thank you for all those who have sent me cards, text messages or emails. For those who have called at the house, held my hand or given me a hug. I am not used to being the centre of attention. Help me to receive graciously these precious gifts as from you.

In Christ's name. Amen.