

HELPING YOUTH WORK THROUGH THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE



On the
Wings of a
DOVE



What is death? How do I cope with grief?

Compiled by Katie Weber

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to all who shared a painful part of
their lives to help others.

AND I SAID,
oh, that I had wings like a dove!
FOR THEN WOULD I FLY AWAY,
and be at rest.

PSALM 55:6



Dear young person,

Death...it seems so final, so painful, so full of questions and uncertainty. How do I cope with grief that I can't really understand? How do I cope with fear of the unknown future? Where is God in all my pain? How do I relate to that one word that is almost as old as death itself: Why...? Why this? Why that? Why him? Why her? Why now? Why me?

This easy-to-read book begins with the questions:

What is grief? (Page 1)

Why did God allow my loved one to die? (Page 3)

After these we move on to listen to the voices of young people who have faced death.

...their struggles.

...their questions.

...their embarrassments.

...their victories.

...and their advice, comfort and encouragement.

Jesus Christ cares. He has the power and the grace and the longing to see you through. *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy* (Jude 24).

What Is Grief?

Grief is broken hearts and broken dreams. You cannot explain grief. You cannot ignore grief. Grief is painful and it is real. It is not the same every day, every hour or every minute.

Each person must walk their own pathway of grief. You cannot walk it for someone else. You can walk with them, but you cannot walk it for them.

Grief is not a certain pattern or mold for us to be squished into. We are each individual beings. We each have our own pattern. The patterns may be similar or they may vary.

Do not compare yourself with others. Do not set a time limit on your grief. Let God lead you and comfort you as you walk through the valley. He will not leave you. He is no stranger to grief. He knows exactly what you are facing. He knows the way, even if you can't see even one step ahead.

Grief can be triggered by sights, sounds, smells and memories. It is a loneliness that reaches to the very depth of your soul. You can be lonely even when you are surrounded with people.

Grief can include crying. Never think you are too old to cry. Crying helps to release the pressure that builds up inside you. Crying is not just for women. Crying is also for men. Jesus wept too. If you try to hold back the tears, you feel as if you could suffocate. Crying in public is no sin. It is nothing to be ashamed of. Crying in private is healing too. Find a secret place and let the tears fall until your eyes are dry.

Grief can make you numb. You might be too numb to cry. This does not mean that you don't hurt or that you don't care. The depth of grief cannot be measured in tears. Some people might cry buckets of tears, but they don't hurt more than the one who has no outward sign of grief.


For some, grief is tears that come without warning. It is like peeling an onion. It comes off in layers. You think you are handling it well and suddenly without warning the tears start to flow.

Grief involves questions. You might have more questions than

answers. Dare to confide in a good friend. Maybe you don't know how to put your thoughts into words. Don't be ashamed if you cry instead of talk. A good friend will cry with you. You may forget with whom you laughed, but you'll never forget with whom you wept. A friend who is willing to weep with you is a true friend. This friend might be someone who is much older than you. That is okay. Age doesn't matter.

Grief may come in waves. You may think things are going calmly and suddenly the next wave comes rushing in. You cannot stop the waves from coming, but you can learn how to bounce along with them.

Grief can be like a wheel. Sometimes it turns fast, sometimes slow. With time it will slow down, no matter how fast it is spinning right now. Memories will not stop or disappear, but eventually they will not hurt as much.


Will time heal? We grieve because we lost. We cannot forget our loss. We must choose whether we will be bitter because we lost, or whether we will try to accept it as God's will. Accepting it takes time. You cannot accept it and be done with it. When memories or questions surface, we need to acknowledge them. We can't ignore them. We must spend some time thinking about them and trying to accept our loss as God's will. Even though we do not fully understand why God allowed our loss, we want to trust that He knows best. This acceptance brings healing. Time alone does not heal. Without acceptance, time can and will mar you more than it will heal. If we feel the death was unfair, we make our grief so much harder to bear. Yes, those thoughts might come. You will feel that you can't go on without your loved one. If we then dwell on the unfairness of it all, we open our hearts to let bitterness take root and grow. With time this will crush and crowd all else from our heart and we will find ourselves overcome with bitterness. God's ways are higher than our ways. We cannot fully understand His plans and purposes. Many of our questions will not have answers in this life. It is enough to know that He loves us and cares about us. Even in our deepest sorrow He will not forsake us. God is great, and He is good. 

WHY DID GOD

Allow My Loved One to Die?

Why does God have someone die? God has plans which we do not always understand. He does not cause grief in order to be mean to us or punish us for something which we did. It is all a part of His plan. Some people reach a ripe old age while others die in infancy. This is all God's perfect timing.

But what if I was doing something which involved the death? What if I drove over my little sister with the tractor? What if I forgot to close the gate? What if I didn't see my little brother? Is it my fault? Will God punish me for being careless?

No! No matter what happened, God is not punishing you. When God wants a person to die, He also has a plan when and how this will transpire. Sometimes God uses a human as a tool to be involved in the death. When this happens, do not let Satan convince you that it is your fault. God timed everything perfectly. We want to trust that He knows best, even if we do not understand. 



Dear friend,

I need to tell you something. I need you to listen to me. You don't have to talk, just listen. Listen with your heart.

When I want you to listen and you give me answers before I've even told you what I want to say, you hurt me. I fear your impatience.

I want you to simply listen and let me talk. Sometimes I need to talk. If I don't talk I feel as if I could suffocate.

Please listen. If you tell me that you've heard me say this before and that surely I should be over it by now, you push the grief deeper into my heart.

So please listen with your mouth closed and your ears and heart open. Then when I've said all that I've got to say, just love me and be my friend. Maybe not everything made sense to you. Maybe nothing made sense, but thank you for listening. It helps me feel better if I can pour out my thoughts and feelings to an understanding heart.

I trust you. I trust that what you have just heard will be kept confidential. I trust that if you really listened you will have heard that this is nothing to repeat. All I wanted was for you to listen.

Thank you for listening, yes, really listening and being my friend.

Your friend



I was not yet a teenager when my mother died. She had cancer and we knew the end was near, but death is still final. Dad had told each of us children separately that Mother is not going to regain her health. I feel it is good that we were told the truth. Her stays in the hospital were frequent, so we were used to her absence at home. However, death is final; this time she would not be coming back. It hurt to go on without her, even if someone we knew well moved into our home to help us. We all tried to make the best of the situation.