



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

November 2, 2017

WHEN YOU'RE GRIEVING

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me... Psalm 23:4

Picking up the pieces of your life after someone you love has passed through the valley of the shadow of death is never an easy task. Because no two individuals are the same, facing grief doesn't necessarily follow the same pattern. Some express their emotions, which is usually healthy, and some internalize them and take much longer to reconcile their loss.

Some find healing through tears and talk; others find it by pouring themselves into work or by reaching out to help others who are going through the same process. But ignoring loss or pretending that it is not there only compounds the pain.

Working through loss usually involves four phases: 1) Shock, 2) Protest, 3) Disorganization and finally, 4) Reorganization. There are no clear boundaries in these four phases, but those who survive see markers which mean that the passage from pain to healing is under way.

First--when you sustain loss, you don't want to believe that it is happening to you. You are numb, your mind refuses to accept the reality of what you are seeing, and you think of everything as a bad dream which will go away in the morning. When that happens, don't attempt to repress those feelings. You may want to talk and you may want solitude. Different people face loss in different ways.

During this period of time, most individuals wage war with God over what has taken place. "God," our hearts cry out, "Why did you allow this to happen to me?" I'm thinking of one dad who lost his little son, who sat at the funeral and caught himself saying out loud, "God, I'll get even with you if it's the last thing I ever do." Does God take seriously what we say or think in a time of crisis?

David, a man whose heart had also hurled some recriminations towards heaven's door, wrote, "the Lord knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). When you sustain a loss, everything in you protests--your body, your emotions, your hopes and fears. As one friend put it, "My husband and I had worked all



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our lives looking forward to retirement, getting to travel and doing some of the things we had no time to do before, and now I'll have to sit at home alone." No wonder she felt angry and disappointed.

The darkest part of the process of working through grief is the period of disorganization when you don't want to dig into the family finances, or face old friends, or start sorting through things. If you know someone going through this, please don't take what he or she says seriously. "You don't have to be nice to me," was the response of a recent widow when a family friend invited her to dinner. Offended, he didn't press the invitation and the friendship fell apart through misunderstanding.

Finally, there is the phase of reorganization when you finally decide to get on with you life and to meet new people and plant the garden. How long will it be until you can laugh again? For some, that time never comes; for others, it may be gradual. But moving on with life is exactly what your husband or wife, your friend, or your Lord would want. It also includes appropriating the promises of Scripture which remind us that someday we will forever be with those whom we love, those who are even now in the presence of the Father in Heaven.

Because God is the God of the living--not the dead--He's there to help you, to bring comfort and healing to your broken heart. He's the God of the valley who helps us learn to say, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me..." (Psalm 23:4). And knowing that He is with you gives you the strength to face a new day and to go on with your life.

Resource reading: Psalm 23