



GRIEVING

Death, Divorce,
Separation,
Change



HomeLife

Building your family's faith at home

— **Guides** —

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

> *Nothing hurts like losing someone you love to death, divorce or separation. Similar feelings often surface after a major life change such as job loss or a move. The ache inside can feel as if your soul will crush under the weight of a deep, paralyzing sorrow. You may find yourself asking how a loving God could allow such a painful thing to happen. The dull sadness often bleeds into denial or anger. Grief is unpredictable, affecting each of us in slightly different ways.*

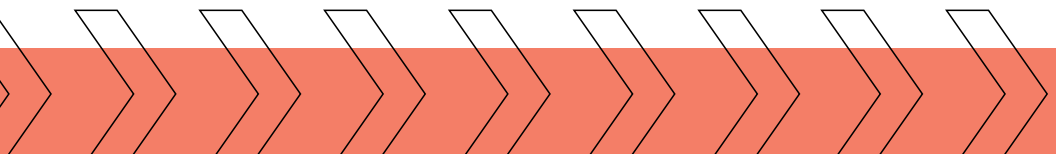
While it may not ease the pain, understanding that grief is normal can help us cope a little better when we lose a special person or go through a significant change.

How Grief Feels

If you feel as if you are losing your grip on reality, you might be a perfectly sane person enduring the confusion of grief. Perhaps you suffer irrational fear, dread or even paranoia. You may feel empty or numb as if you are in shock. Grief even causes some people to experience trembling, nausea, breathing difficulty, muscle weakness, loss of appetite or insomnia. Feelings of anger can also surface, even if there is nothing in particular to be angry about. Many people torture themselves with guilt by asking what they did wrong, how they might have prevented the loss, or some other form of self-condemnation. In short, grief makes us feel as though our emotions have gone haywire because, in many ways, they have. Over time, however, you will regain a measure of equilibrium.

Why Grief Hurts

God gave us the gift of pain so that we can react when something goes wrong. We limp when a leg bone is out of joint to protect us from further damage. In similar manner, losing an important person or going through a significant change can cause our entire system to react as it recognizes that something is wrong. You might say that the confusing emotions and ache in the pit of your soul are part of



grief's "limp." The more intimate the loss, the more severe your "limp" will be. The severity and length of your pain is a testimony to the value of the person lost or the importance of the situation that changed.

What Grief Means

God made us for intimacy and life – not separation and death. When we grieve, our deepest selves declare that something is wrong with this broken world. Death, divorce and separation were not part of God's original plan for humanity. The Bible tells us these things came into our experience as a result of disobedience when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. ***"...for when you eat of it you will surely die"*** (Genesis 2:17). Ever since the day mankind left the perfection of paradise, we have known something is wrong. Our bodies and emotions react against what should not be.

How Grief Heals

Even though it may not feel like it, grief can be a source of great hope. Your reaction against what is wrong comes from a deep yearning for things to be made right. Loss can open us to ultimate wholeness and restoration. While grieving the death of his wife, iconic writer and theologian C.S. Lewis asked, "What do people mean when they say, 'I am not afraid of God because I know He is good?' Have they never been to a dentist?" The dentist's drill, while an instrument of intense pain, ultimately brings health. The drill of grief fosters healing in our lives by raising ultimate issues and eternal questions such as "Who is my true beloved?" and "Where is my real home?" As believers, we know that a much better day is coming when God Himself will wipe every tear from our eyes. On that day, ***"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"*** (Revelation 21:34).

Children and Grief

If you have children impacted by the pain of a death, divorce, separation or change, it is important that you remain attentive to their needs. You are God's gift to them as they endure a loss that may be beyond comprehension. It is not your role to explain why it has happened. It is your role to be an agent of comfort and grace, allowing them to experience the confusing emotions of grief in the safety of your patient company.

Going Further Resources

When God Doesn't Make Sense by **Dr. James Dobson** // An excellent resource for those who feel betrayed by a good God who allows suffering in our lives

Someone I Love Died by **Christine Harder Tangvald**

When Bad Things Happen: A Guide to Help Kids Cope by **Ted O'Neal and R.W. Alley** // Can help parents comfort young children through the process of grief

Praying through Cancer by **Susan Sorenson and Laura Geist** // A 90-day devotional for women battling cancer or who have a friend or family member who is battling the disease; a collection of stories by women who have faced cancer, and with triumphant spirits, found comfort and sometimes even joy in the midst of it

Let Me Grieve, but Not Forever by **Verdel Davis** // Offers a source of hope and healing for anyone experiencing grief

Going Further Prestonwood Support

Support Groups // Prestonwood sponsors a variety of support groups for dealing with grief. For more information about the latest support groups and other counseling center services, visit prestonwood.org/liferecovery.

Professional Counseling // Prestonwood can refer members to offsite, Christ-centered professional counseling for adults, adolescents and children.

LifeGroup Bible Studies // Prestonwood offers a variety of Adult LifeGroups for every season of life. Consult the LifeGroup Locator Guide at the campus information booths to find one that fits your schedule and family life stage, or visit prestonwood.org/groups.

DivorceCare // Most people who have been through a separation or divorce will tell you that these are incredibly painful and stressful experiences. DivorceCare helps you face these challenges and move toward rebuilding your life. (The workbook is available for purchase in the Prestonwood Bookstore.)

For additional resources, scan code:



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