

# portraits of **GRIEF**

## PRAYER:

*Holy Spirit, someone I love is hurting.*

*I'm not sure what to say or how to help. Give me courage and patience.*

*Allow me to be the comfort of Christ to them.*

*Help me be their friend as I listen patiently, remembering what has been lost.*

*Let me be slow to speak with correction, advice, and opinion.*

*Show me how to walk alongside my friend. Give me grace to simply be with them. Remind me that this is their journey and although I can't take away the pain, I can share in it for a while. Bring them the comfort, healing, and clarity which only comes from You. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE: Romans 12:15

## STEP ONE - Grief is ugly

*What do you consider most difficult, or perhaps uncomfortable, about walking alongside someone who's grieving? READ Job 2:11-13 and Romans 12:15.*

*What did Job's friends do? What did they NOT do?*

Job's three friends made a good start in "mourning with those who mourn." READ Job 3. Job's grief now has voice -- painfully raw and honest.

? TAKE a few minutes to WRITE down your response to the following questions then DISCUSS as a group:  
*Have you been with a grieving person who expressed these types of emotions?  
 Has there been a time when you felt emotions similar to what Job expresses?  
 Did you allow yourself (or someone else) to experience and express the emotions without trying to fix, correct, or edit the emotions? Why, or why not?*

It was the custom to audibly weep, tear your clothes, and sprinkle dust or ashes on your head whenever you were grieving. THINK about what those people grieving must have looked like. If you came across someone like that you'd immediately know something was wrong. They were not doing OK. Wearing black clothing was also an outward sign that someone was grieving.

? DISCUSS the following questions as a group:  
*How might these customs have actually allowed people to grieve better than we typically do today? What grieving customs do you see in our culture today?  
 Grief doesn't follow a certain pattern or timetable, but how long do you think we as a culture (or even as a close friend) allow or expect those grieving to grieve?  
 Do you think we have certain expectations about how they grieve? What are they?*

Often our words of advice, opinion, and even correction are more about our need for the person to be OK or "back to normal." Typically we don't do well seeing people struggle, especially if it's someone we depend on, look up to, or admire. We may become impatient and frustrated actually because WE want or feel the need for them to "get it together."

## STEP TWO - Grief is scary

READ Job 4:1-8.

Often our need to make sense of someone else's loss is more about OUR need to feel secure and safe from possibly suffering a similar loss. We think, "If I can pinpoint WHY this happened, then maybe I can keep it from happening again or avoid it happening to me." Job's friends were used to seeing him as a strong rock, a man of wisdom & understanding, someone to strive to be like.

Perhaps they thought, "If Job can fall apart like this, what keeps us from doing the same?" Job's friends were frightened by Job's words. They wanted him to think, feel, and act "right" during a time when he was clearly not all right. He was unable to honestly grieve with them.

WRITE down your response to the following questions:

*Am I a safe person with whom to grieve? Do I allow hurting people to hurt?*

*Am I OK with not having profound words of wisdom and healing to offer?*

*Is this more about MY fears, MY doubts, or MY story of loss than theirs?*

## STEP THREE - What doesn't help

? READ and DISCUSS "What not to say" listed in the weekend message outline.

Now READ and DISCUSS the following list of things we **shouldn't** do.

DON'T:

- pressure them to get over it and "Get on with life."
- push them to get rid of the loved one's belongings.
- be afraid to talk about the person who died. ■ offer easy answers.
- correct theological error. ■ blame. ■ tell them how they should feel.
- share your story. ■ give unsolicited advice.
- be impatient and/or judgmental.
- expect them to be polite, make sense, and/or behave "godly."

## STEP FOUR - What does help

READ 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

? READ and DISCUSS "What to say" listed in the weekend message outline.

Now READ and DISCUSS the following list of things we **should** do.  
DO:

- listen. Let them talk. ■ hold a hand. Touch. Embrace.
- share memories and look at photos. ■ help with day-to-day tasks.
- learn about grief. ■ ask for something specific you can do.
- be patient with them. ■ pray for and with them.
- call or visit (especially AFTER the first month).
- get them out of the house. ■ share a meal.
- remember holidays and anniversaries.

What those who are grieving want most is for their loss to have not occurred. We can't make that happen nor can they. That in itself is part of the grief we experience. However, what we can do is let them feel their loss, experience it, and grieve it as we come alongside - being with them and praying for them.

