

Daily Devotional Reflection Resources

We encourage you to use this for personal reflection and prayer.

Verses: **Psalm 34:18, 145:14, 1 Cor 12:26**

Title: **How to be Jesus to the hurt?
What to say or not to say when someone is
experiencing the death of a loved one, or
suffering great pain or loss**

Speaker: Esther Marr

Questions and Resources

Why do we want to do this?

Ps 34:18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit

Ps 145:14 The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down

Because He has given us new life and we are His, we want to follow in His footsteps.

1 Cor 12:26 If one part suffers, all parts suffer with it. If one part is honoured, all parts are glad.

Because this is what we should do for all in the body of Christ.

In this time of Covid19 and even without it, we are all familiar with losses big or small; we also need to remember a loss is a loss to the person undergoing it. How much they are impacted by it can only be answered by themselves. It's up to us to listen well and say and do the helpful things.

Here then are 6 things not to say followed by 7 to say or do.

Don't Say:

1) "I know (or worse still, exactly) how you feel." When we do this, it minimizes others' experience. We can never completely know how another feels. Think of the times someone close to you, whether in family or outside of it, who thought or said something that you responded with, how can that be? I thought I knew that person.

2) Don't press or push your advice or opinions on others, even if you've found it helpful in a similar situation. Eg "why don't you go out more, exercise more", and things along this line.

3) "I know somebody who went through the same thing." When you share this, it becomes something about you and your friend and not about the person needing comfort. You've just taken away the opportunity for you to grieve with them.

4) Sentences that start with "At least you are..."

"Alive, and not hurt" or

"It's just a cat, and you have 3 others" etc. etc.

This unwittingly tries to force gratitude on others and this is not the time now or ever.

5) Don't make it about God, or faith or religion. This is most surprising to us perhaps. Maybe it's because we are a people of God and faith and we really want to help by quoting verses esp.

"And we know that all things work together for good"

Rom 8:28..etc.

Or things like, "O it's meant to be"

Or, "God only gives you what you can handle"

Perhaps this kind is not supportive at this time because they already know and have considered them and they don't help with the heaviness.

6) This is especially for someone whose dear one has passed away. Please don't say,

"He's in a better place now, there's a reason for everything."

"It's her time to go, such a good person that God wants her to be with Him."

"He's no longer suffering." (It's not about the person who has passed, but the one left behind who is in pain.)

“Be or stay strong” (they don’t have the wherewithal to do that).

Say or Do:

1) The simplest, “deepest sympathies” or “deepest condolences”, work well.

2) “I’m so sorry; I feel your pain” (if you do)

3) “It’s OK to cry or you can cry if you need to.” Even Jesus wept (Jn 11:35).

Ps 56:8 “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in a bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.”

This verse is ok to quote. It helps to know our Father is not only compassionate but goes so far as to save each tear.

4) “We don’t have to talk about it unless you want to and are ready.” Remember some people are processors and other expressors and many in between the 2 ends of spectrum. For the former, your just being with them already helps. For the latter, the expressors:

5) Let them talk...they need to get it out of their system. An example in point, when I listened to someone, an expressor, who was in terrible pain, all I did was listen, make occasional sympathetic responses like, nodded, sorry to hear, and so on. I was surprised to hear later that it was very helpful. Later a short animated video will further explain why this seems to work.

6) Rather than, “let me know how I can help or do anything...” be specific in your actions:

a) Check in on them regularly

b) Food is always needed, so eg “I’ve made a casserole, can I drop it by later?”

Or if you know they like some specific food, you can buy it for them. Not all of us are fantastic cooks after all.

c) Can I run an errand for you? Get groceries, etc.

d) This one is particularly effective but only if you know some things of the person who has passed: Recount

some funny, good, heartfelt stories. The reason this works so well, is because this person is constantly on the grieving person's heart and mind.

7) All of us have different timelines for our grief. Be with them whenever painful and despondent memories surface without judgement or advice.

Sadness and heartache can pop up unexpectedly throughout our and their life time. Triggers are unplanned and unpredictable.

Here's a loose quote from Nora McInerny from Ted Talk which I found particularly helpful.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khkJkR-ipfw>

Definitions for 2 terms she uses will help clarify what she's saying:

"Move forward" - The wound becomes a part of them for the better

"Move on" - Totally disregarding, not learning from or denying the pain.

"Grief is not something like a bone that can be reset or a disease like bronchitis that will heal after medical intervention. Instead, it's more like you are touched by something chronic, incurable, not fatal but feels like it could be."

Since we cannot prevent death or other devastating losses, what are we to do? We are remind each other that:

- Some things can't be fixed
- Not all wounds are meant to heal
- Grief is a multitasking emotion. It can be sad, happy, grieving, BUT still able to love all in the same week, year, or same breath.

A grieving person is going to smile and love again.

They will absolutely move forward but it doesn't mean they have moved on.

Animated video called How Do You Help a Grieving Friend? By Megan Devine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2zLCCRT-nE>