



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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PRAYING FOR THE GRIEVING

It is heartbreaking. It is tragic. It severs relationships. It completely changes the lives of those who face it. It is called death. Death is inevitable for every person. People have an appointment with death, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27)." This is an appointment that people will keep. Just as people have a time to be born, people also have a time when they will die, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2). People must face the reality of death.

Nothing can protect a person from the inevitability of death. Fame, position, success, riches, the love of family and friends cannot prevent an individual from facing death. The greatest of all engineering miracles--the human body--will close down completely. Medical science continues to explore death, to redefine it, and to try and delay its arrival. Contemporary western society does everything it can to distance itself from its reality. Yet, people continue to die on a daily basis. The greatest and least of all people will be humbled in death.

Death is so devastating because our lives are so busy that we do not think of and consider its reality. We are consumed with "now". This world seems so real and weighty. Death seems distant in space and time and unreal in our experience. It suddenly and harshly invades our lives without any

warning, bringing life on earth to a conclusion and ushering us into our eternal destiny.

Each person will face death. This is an absolute. Yet, a person will also have to deal with the deaths of those around himself or herself. One must not only face the inevitability of his or her death, but also the death of those whom he or she loves. Just as a person must cope with his or her death, he or she must also cope with the pain and grief of seeing loved ones pass from this life into eternity.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will deal with praying for those who grieve. Prayer is essential in helping those who grieve. The power, mercy, grace, and love of God are released into this person's life by prayer. These attributes and blessings of God are desperately needed by those who are grieving. The best way to enable a person to cope with grief and pain is to intercede for him or her. Every opportunity to minister to a grieving person should be seized and utilized. However, this cannot substitute for Spirit-guided and empowered intercession.

The primary focus of this issue will be praying for those who grieve over the death of a loved one. Yet, the principles and prayer requests presented in this issue can be applied to those who grieve for other reasons. Grief is not limited to or triggered solely by death. People grieve over a variety of losses--loss of job, loss of a relationship, dreams that never materialize, and so on. You can

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adapt the principles and prayer requests to the particular needs of the person and his or her situation.

The prayer requests in this issue are presented only as a guide to help you pray for those who grieve. You can use the suggested prayer requests or develop your own from them. As always, you need to pray that the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom and insight in how to pray for the person who is grieving. Be sensitive to His leadership as you pray for those who grieve. He can grant you insights on how to pray about the specific needs that the person has. Seek His leadership as you intercede for this person and his or her needs.

Unhealthy Ways of Dealing with Grief

In order to overcome grief, a person cannot deny the reality of the loss nor the corresponding pain that one feels due to the loss. Grief is normal and inevitable in the face of a loss. It is not a matter of **if** a person is going to grieve; it is a matter of **how** a person will handle the grief.

Grief can be so painful and overwhelming that a person panics. But, ultimately, one has to face the pain in order to break through to a deep peace. When a person grieves, he or she needs to work through his or her feelings. A person should never ignore, rush, or delay these feelings.

The danger of failing to work through grief is that a person can get bogged down in the grief. At worst, the person can be overcome by it. When it is not dealt with or is turned inward, it is likely to surface in some form or another. Often it surfaces in a harmful form such as ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attacks, nervousness, inability to function in life, or emotional disorders.

There are some unhealthy ways to deal with grief. Rather than facing the grief and working through the pain, some attempt to use other means of coping with the pain and the loss. A grieving person may exhibit one or all of these characteristics for a short period of time. Yet, it becomes dangerous when the person continues to use these means to cope with the pain and the loss.

Some of the unhealthy ways of dealing with grief are:

(1) *Avoidance*: Some attempt to deal with grief by filling their lives with activity. The person feels that if they can get busy enough, they will forget the pain and it will go away. This is an attempt to bury the pain with busyness. When a person experiences a loss and has to endure the grief that this brings, he or she cannot stop living. The grieving person must continue to live and function. However, the grieving person must deal with the pain and grief. A person cannot be busy twenty-four hours a day. The pain and loss will surface at some time in some way in the person's life. Busyness cannot be a substitute for honestly admitting and dealing with the pain that comes after a loss.

(2) *Withdrawal*: Some people cope with grief by withdrawing into a world of sorrow and self-pity. The person isolates himself or herself from the world. The only contact that this person has with other people is shallow and limited. The person copes with the pain by refusing to face it and by retreating into his or her own reality. This person no longer cares about anything but withdrawing into his or her prison of misery and sorrow.

(3) *Despair*: Some cope with grief by being overwhelmed by it. The person is filled with hopelessness and depression. Those who grieve will experience these things in varying degrees. But, for some, the despair continues. It clings to the person. It drains the life out of the person. The grieving person, overwhelmed by despair, finds it difficult to make it from day-to-day.

(4) *Doubt in God*: When a person endures a loss, it is common for that person to question God. Yet, some endure a crisis of faith. This person begins to doubt the wisdom and the goodness of God. There are questions concerning God's sovereign control of the world. This person often feels that God is unkind and cruel to allow him or her to suffer like this. The grief process invariably throws the question in your face, "Why, God, did you let this happen to me?" The grieving person can become extremely angry at God, feel deserted by Him, or even wonder if He is there. The person may choose not to pray, attend church, or have a devotional time. This reaction is common and for

many it will eventually pass. By clinging to God in faith, this dark night of the soul will pass. Yet, for some, this experience continues. Rather than seeking God and His Word, the grief and the pain causes the person to withdraw from God and to doubt His character.

The Myths About Grief

When praying for and ministering to a grieving person, there are some myths that need to be exposed. A lot of myths have been handed down from generation to generation about grief and loss. In order to help you better minister to and pray for those who grieve, you need to understand these myths. By accepting these myths, it can lessen our ministry to and intercession for those who grieve. The following are some erroneous beliefs about grief:

(1) *Grieving extends over a set period of time, moves through definable stages, and should decrease after three months and be completed after the first year.* People grieve differently. You cannot put time limits and definable stages on how people grieve. The key issue is for the grieving person to work through the pain and to accept the death of the loved one.

(2) *The sudden death of a person is far worse than a death as a result of a long-term illness. Being able to anticipate the grief makes the grieving process easier.* This is simply not true. Regardless of how the death takes place, the grieving process will be painful and difficult. It is simply a matter of which issues and questions that one has to consider.

(3) *The loss of a child is far worse than other losses.* It is tragic when a child dies. Yet, the pain and grief that people experience is not determined by the age or condition of the person who dies.

(4) *A grieving person should keep himself or herself busy; too much time alone is not good for him or her.* A grieving person needs time alone--time to remember, to reflect, to pray, to worship. Being alone with God is an essential part of the grieving process. A person cannot avoid the

loss and pain forever. It will surface and needs to be faced.

(5) *Don't focus on the fact that you're loved one is dead; don't talk about the loss or tell the story of the death.* A person needs to talk about these things in order to deal with the grief. A person should not become obsessed with this, but, it is healthy to talk about these things openly and honestly with others.

(6) *A person will never get over the loss of a loved one and he or she will always feel the pain.* Through the power and love of Jesus Christ, an individual can overcome grief and loss. No matter how overwhelmed a person feels, he or she can handle grief (**Philippians 4:13**). God is so powerful and wise that He can take our greatest tragedies and bring good out of them (**Romans 8:28**).

(7) *A grieving person must look and act happy even if he or she is feeling awful.* A person should not fake being happy in the midst of grief. This only makes the grieving process more difficult.

(8) *You will never be able to resolve old conflicts that remain with the one who has died since you can no longer talk with each other.* Even though you cannot talk to the other person, you can still resolve any sinful feelings or conflicts that you have had with the person. God is merciful and forgiving; He will help the grieving person do this.

Prayer Requests For The Grieving

The following are prayer requests that you can use to intercede for those who grieve. There will be suggested prayer requests for both saved and lost people who grieve. There is a difference between the grieving of a person who knows Jesus Christ and a person who does not follow Him. The Word of God declares in **1 Thessalonians 4:13**, "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." Paul distinguishes between the grief that a Christian feels

and that grief that a non-Christian experiences. The Christian experiences sorrow over the death of loved ones, Yet, it is very different from those who have no hope, those who do not know Jesus Christ as the Lord and the Savior of their lives. The person who does not know Jesus Christ in this way faces grief without the hope of the gospel, resurrection and eternal life in heaven. Because of this truth, our intercession for these two groups should focus on different issues.

Praying For A Christian Who Grieves

(1) Pray that the Holy Spirit would grant this person strength and determination (**John 14:26; John 16:7**). The Lord Jesus Christ described the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter" or the "Helper". It is the Holy Spirit who gives strength and determination to the believer to face the trials of his or her life. Plead that the Holy Spirit will release His power into the life of this person so that he or she will have the strength and determination to deal with the loss and the grief attached to it.

(2) Ask that God would grant this person comfort in the midst of his or her grief (**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**). Our heavenly Father is a God of mercy and comfort. He is able to grant this mercy and comfort into the lives of those who grieve. He knows exactly how to comfort each of His children. Plead with the Father to provide the comfort that the grieving person needs.

(3) Plead that this person will cast all his or her burdens on the Lord (**1 Peter 5:7**). Pray that this person will bring his or her fears, worries, sorrows, and frustrations to the Lord. Ask that this person will develop a greater dependence on the Lord. This is especially true if the person's spouse has died.

(4) Pray that this person will rejoice in the Lord (**Philippians 4:4**). A person who is grieving may not feel as if there is anything about which to rejoice. Yet, he or she can rejoice about who God is, what God can do, what God has done, what God will do, and who he or she is in the Lord Jesus

Christ. Ask that this person will have joy in the midst of the grieving process because he or she is in a relationship to Jesus Christ.

(5) Ask that the person will not be overcome by anxiety (**Matthew 6:25-31**). Worry over the details of life seem to heighten after a loss. Pray that this person will not give into worry but will be determined to face life with faith.

(6) Plead that this person will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**). When a person experiences a loss, he or she will not seek God and serve Him like he or she did before the loss. Pray that this person will keep his or her relationship to Jesus Christ as the top priority. Plead that serving Christ would be uppermost in his or her mind.

(7) Ask that the loneliness that the person feels would become the path to a deeper relationship to God (**Psalms 42:1-2**). Loneliness does not have to be a negative. It can be positive if a person uses this loneliness to have more time to spend with God. Pray that the loneliness will drive the person to the Lord Jesus Christ.

(8) Pray that this person will acknowledge and receive Christ's power and love to face the grief and to cope with the pain (**Philippians 4:13**). It is only through the Lord Jesus Christ that the believer can face and overcome grief and pain due to a loss. He can give the person the power and love to cope. Pray that the person will be enveloped in the love and power of Jesus Christ.

(9) Plead that this person will develop a deeper prayer life and by doing this will experience the peace of God (**Philippians 4:6-7**). The peace of God is connected to a fervent prayer life. Pray that the person will mature in prayer and will see the need for prayer more than ever before in his or her life. As the person submits more of his or her concerns to the Lord, he or she will experience more of God's peace. God's peace comes when a person releases the burden to the Lord through prayer.

(10) Call on God to surround this person with merciful and faithful friends who will support, pray for, and minister to this person (**Proverbs 17:17**). This is especially needed after the funeral. This is when the grieving process begins and the grieving person will need faithful friends who will be there for him or her.

(11) Pray that this person will receive hope and strength from the truth that Christ will return and unite him or her with loved ones who died in the Lord (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-17**). This is the glorious hope of Christ's return. Not only will we be with the Lord Jesus Christ, we will also be with all the believers whom we loved and knew on this earth. Death is not the end for the Christian; it is simply one more step in God's plan for him or her. Death separates believers only for a period of time.

(12) Ask that this person will be comforted and given hope by the truth that Christ has conquered death and that he or she will share in this (**1 Corinthians 15:51-56**). Jesus Christ has removed the sting of death. The Christian can stand against death through the realization that Christ has conquered it and that he or she shares in this victory.

(13) Pray that this person will know that Jesus Christ sees and understands his or her pain (**John 11:35**). Grieving people often feel as if no one can understand how they are feeling. Yet, there is one who understands. Jesus Christ understands the pain and the grief of seeing a loved one die. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. The amazing thing about this is that Jesus had the power to raise him from the dead. Yet, He still wept. He knows what it is to suffer. Jesus Christ has walked through the valley of suffering deeper than any person who has ever walked the face of this earth. He can see and understand the depth of pain and grief that a person feels. Pray that this person will turn to Christ and will lean on Him during the grieving process.

(14) Plead that God will strengthen and deepen this person's faith in the face of the uncertainty that this death has brought (**Hebrews 11:1, 6**). Dreams and plans for the future are smashed. One's life is

significantly altered due to death. One often wonders if anything remains in this world on which one can rely. Pray that this person will trust in God for the future and will look to His guidance on a daily basis.

(15) Pray that this person will trust Christ and be submissive to Him in all matters (**Romans 14:9**). Death shows you that you are not in control of life. Pray that this person will have a greater submission to Jesus Christ who does control all things.

(16) Pray that this person will look to and trust in God as his or her Provider (**Psalms 25:3; James 1:17**). This is especially true when a spouse dies. When a spouse dies, it can take away a significant amount of income from a family. This can cause the grieving person to wonder how he or she will make it financially. Plead that he or she will look to God as his or her Provider. Call on Him to cause them to rest in His provision.

(17) Ask God to give this person wisdom to cope with the grief and the financial and legal decisions that he or she has to face (**James 1:5**). There are many practical matters to deal with when someone dies. The grieving person will have to make crucial decisions. He or she is in need of wisdom to make the right decisions. This person also needs wisdom to cope with the grief. Call on God to grant him or her the wisdom that he or she needs.

(18) Pray that this person will depend on God and not give in to fear and frustration (**Isaiah 40:31**). Ask God to create in this person a spirit of dependence on Him. Pray that this person will turn to God in faith every time he or she feels fearful or frustrated.

(19) Plead that this person will not die until he or she is dead (**Psalms 30:5; 1 Corinthians 10:31**). After experiencing a loss, people simply exist. They are not living; they're simply surviving. Pray that this person will not give up on life until his or her life is over. Pray that he or she will use each day to the fullest and do all things to glorify God.