

There is nothing more valuable to people facing loss than good friends who have chosen to give of themselves and to be there for them. You can be such a friend.

If you find yourself alongside someone suffering from loss, God is likely asking you to play a strategic role in bringing that person back to a place of restored usefulness. Initially your role will be to comfort and encourage, but it doesn't stop there. The goal of ministering to believers who have suffered loss involves helping them through their pain to become more effective servants for Christ, servants who are willing to allow God to use their pain to reach others.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH LOSS

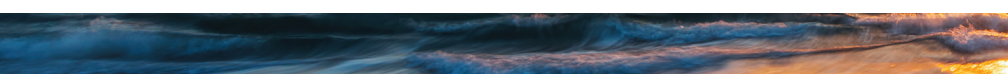
As I was walking down the hallway of church one Sunday several weeks after my twelve-year-old son, Travis, died, a tall, rather burly man began to pass by me. But suddenly he stopped. Saying nothing, he just grabbed me and gave me the biggest bear hug I have ever received. I will always remember that hug. As I tried to refill my lungs with air, I saw tears in his eyes. I still remember those tears. People have said many things to me since Travis died, and I remember a few of them, but what I remember most are the hugs, the tears, the hand that squeezed mine, or the one that was placed on my shoulder.

VALUE THE LITTLE THINGS

Responding well to those who mourn requires that we value the little things we can do for them. A simple word, a small gift, a brief phone call, a note at the door, a basket of oranges, a hug, a tear—all have the capacity to lift a great burden from someone who is grieving. Jesus refers to such small acts as giving a “cup of water to drink in my name” (Mark 9:41).

When Jesus approached the site of Lazarus's funeral, He simply wept (John 11:35). Lazarus's family would always remember how Jesus arrived at the moment of their deepest pain and just wept! That was all Jesus did. No sermon. No profound statements. Just a few tears, but they spoke volumes to Lazarus's family.

If you desire to minister to someone who is grieving, keep in mind that the little things matter most. You need not do something big or offer big explanations to prove that you care. I



agree with C. S. Lewis, who wrote, “An arm about the shoulder, a firm grip of the hand: . . . these are the proofs grief needs, not logical reasoning.”

Do something tangible though little for a grieving friend or family member today! ■

Mitch A. Schultz served as a pastor and missionary and now works with a ministry that offers counseling and support to hurting pastors and ministry leaders. This article has been condensed from chapter 4 of his book Did I Say the Right Thing? (Regular Baptist Press).



We're Here
to Help

Consider these words of Jeff Newman in his book *Facing Life's Challenges*, part of RBP's BuildUP series.

God has given believers to one another so we can help each other face the challenges of life with trust in Christ. We need each other to strengthen each other's faith. We need each other to help each other see areas of spiritual blindness. Left to ourselves in times of trouble, we will struggle to view our lives and circumstances from God's perspective. Left to ourselves, we will give our energies to our own desires.

In her women's Bible study *Growing through Crisis* (a study of Nehemiah, Regular Baptist Press), Martha Tyler writes,

[Nehemiah's] life shows a balance between dependency on God and his own action. Both are taught in Scripture. John 15:5 says, "Without me ye can do nothing." James 1:22 states, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Nehemiah combined both principles, and he showed careful planning in carrying them out.

When Nehemiah heard of the conditions in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:3), he had a choice to make. He could have said he felt pity for the people in Jerusalem and left it at that.

Former pastor and wife David and Pat Warren wrote an entire book on helping others; in fact, *Helping Others* is its title. (It, too, is in RBP's BuildUP series.) They write,

One mark of Christian maturity is the ability to exchange our self-centeredness for an others-centeredness—to put others before self.

The only way a believer can consistently obey the Biblical commands to be involved in the lives of others is by yielding to the Holy Spirit. . . . Ask God to give you a yielded heart.

“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). To “visit” means more than to make a social call and express interest; it means to help them and relieve their trouble. Money, effort, expertise, time—all should be spent in assisting these hurting people.

The Holy Spirit selected orphans and widows for special mention because they are the kind of people who cannot repay our efforts in any way. It becomes an appeal to complete selflessness on our part because we can expect nothing in return.

In her women's Bible study *Soul Rest: A Journey with Jesus* (Regular Baptist Press), Amy R. Dunham writes,

Too often we make it our goal to never feel tired or exhausted, as if feeling this way is terribly wrong. But the truth that Jesus felt weary means that such feelings aren't wrong at all. Rather they signal the body's need for rest.

Even as Jesus rested by the well, His actions were orderly and intentional. He didn't abandon His calling; He didn't walk away from His disciples. In fact, His rest would benefit both Himself and them. Jesus sat at the well providing a picture of soul rest.

Then along came a woman. Jesus offered her living water. He told her it would never run out.

Living Water, the Holy Spirit, is the source of soul rest in our daily walk. He is the bubbling stream that is ever available. When we need refreshment and renewal, we know where to find it. The Source of our contentment, our refreshment, our renewing, and our rest is right here with us in the Holy Spirit. Are you choosing to act toward your grieving friend, or have you been intimidated by uncertainty?

After praying, yielding to the Holy Spirit, putting others first, and depending on the Lord's leading, you can minister to someone who's mourning. God bless you as you do. ■

