

Grief - continued

for the child's death. Rather, we are told, *"Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate"* (2 Samuel 12:20). He had wept and mourned and he knew that it was now time to move forward with his life in service to God and in service to others. His wife needed comforting and he provided that comfort to her (v. 24). She later became pregnant with Solomon. Interestingly, that Solomon was the one who would later pen the words, *"There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance"* (Ecclesiastes 3:4). People need to grieve their losses, but they also need to accept those losses at some point and do as David did. They need to move on with their lives.

Acts 9:36-42 tells of the death of Dorcas. Peter eventually raised her from the dead, but before that, we are told that the widows who had gathered there, *"showed the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them."* At this memorial ser-

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vice the deceased was acknowledged for her particular skills. People obviously took comfort in that memory of her. Their grief was consoled by being reminded of Dorcas' good character, her industry, skills and accomplishments while she lived. We are no different today. I have seen this same practice at many funerals. Grievers are definitely comforted by this practice.

- Tim Haile -

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Grief From The Loss Of Loved Ones

The Bible tells us that men are appointed once to die (Hebrews 9:27). Death is an unavoidable “event” that happens to people of all walks of life (Ecclesiastes 9:2). We are constantly reminded of this fact in our daily lives, whether from the news or obituaries or by our personal experiences and observations. Grief comes when one of these deaths was someone close to us — a mother or father, a grandparent, a spouse, a son or daughter or a close friend. The depth and degree of grief is directly related to the closeness of the relationship and thus the degree of personal loss.

Grief is a healthy human emotion. It helps us to empathize with others who have also experienced loss. Solomon said that it is in “*the house of mourning*” that “*the living will lay it to heart*” (Ecclesiastes 7:2). Death forces us to ponder the thing that we typically avoid thinking about — *death*. It is in “*the house of mourning*” that we contemplate the brevity and frailty of human life. It causes us to

take both life and death more seriously.

Solomon also spoke about the healthful benefit of grieving when he said, “*by sadness of face the heart is made glad*” (Ecclesiastes 7:3). Psychology teaches us that grieving helps people to more quickly recover from the loss of loved ones. Visitations, funerals and subsequent gatherings of family and friends can be helpful in the grieving process. They provide opportunities for grieved people to give and receive emotional support. Interestingly, on such occasions one is likely to see expressions of deep sorrow mixed with expressions of great joy, even laughter. Though these two emotions are very different with regard to the particular feeling that they reflect, they are nonetheless both *emotions*. We must remind ourselves that different people have different ways of expressing and dealing with grief and we should be as understanding as possible.

Some Helpful Examples

John 11 records the death of Lazarus. After his death, family, friends and acquaintances traveled from Jerusalem to Bethany to “*comfort*” his sisters, Mary and Martha (v. 19). Jesus also traveled to

Bethany and met with both Martha and Mary. He “*comforted*” Martha with words about the resurrection of the dead (vs. 23-26). Of course, Jesus had something more immediate in mind than what Martha inferred. He would soon raise Lazarus from the dead, long before the *final* resurrection. He later met with Mary and “*comforted*” her (v. 31). We learn that truths from God’s word, visits from friends and expressions of emotional support can help others through their grief in such times of loss.

2 Samuel 11 and 12 tell the story of David’s sin with Bathsheba and against her husband Uriah. Chapter 11 ends with mention of David’s marriage to Bathsheba and of her pregnancy. Chapter 12 records Nathan’s rebuke of David, his subsequent repentance and God’s forgiveness of David. However, David’s sin would result in the physical consequence of the death of his newborn son. Though David had prayed earnestly that the child not die, it died on its 7th day. David did not become angry with God or grow bitter against Him. He did not blame God