



come from grief losses. Since we are human, we will encounter many emotions that we cannot expect and have never faced before. Remember, “*Jesus wept*” (John 11:35), and if our Lord cried profusely at the death of a dear friend, we will also feel pain and will naturally grieve in the losses of our lives.

### What can church leaders and others do to help families in grief?

Have a continual support program of care and concern within your church programs for those who grieve. You will be surprised at the ones who might attend such a class, as they benefit from being with others who are grieving as well.

Be practical in what you do for others. Send a continual stream of correspondence to those who are grieving. A simple note of love and appreciation will be worth its weight in gold to those lonely folks.

Remember that people hurt for many weeks and months after some loss, just as they do during the first few days (in fact, they hurt more as the shock wears off). Just because you expressed your concern and love at the beginning, don’t forget them later on when they really need you!

Remember the rule: 97% quit visiting or spending time with the family within two weeks of the loss situation. Be part of the 3% that calls, writes, visits, or does whatever is helpful to express your concern in later times.

Continually ask, “What would I like someone to do for me if I were in this situation?” Tell your grieving families, “We want to do something to ease your pain. What can we do for you today to help you?” Be quiet and let them respond in good time. You might be surprised by what they say to you.

Genuinely care for the grieving. Show Christ’s love in all you do. Be an ambassador for good in all that you do as we “*rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep*” (Romans 12:15).






## When Families Deal with Grief and Loss

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## When Families Deal with Grief and Loss

### Ron Williams



“Grief is like being in a deep dark pit with no way out,” the couple from a grief support class wrote. In asking my participants to write in their own words the meaning of grief, the couple added, “Grief is a feeling of being under a dark veil that you cannot lift. There is a feeling that there is something heavy across your heart and a tight band that is around your head. Grief is total despair. Grief is a feeling of helplessness that seems unbearable.”

The above-mentioned definition is a heart-felt meaning of what happens when grief invades a person’s or family’s life. Grief, from the Latin word, *gravis*, means “heavy”. Indeed, if there has ever been an understatement for a word, that has to be one! Grief is one of the most debilitating expressions of emotion that a person or family can ever imagine. It is an all-encompassing emotion that can cause families to feel as if all of the problems of the world have suddenly been placed upon their backs and on their hearts!

**Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary** defines grief as a “deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement.” In my twenty-plus years of working with people that have dealt with the loss of something or someone precious to them, I have found grief to be an individual experience, generally a painful feeling of sadness that follows an actual loss or precedes an anticipated loss. For families affected by grief, their worldview can become quite complex and complicated as they deal with losses in their lives that will affect every relationship possible.

Grief is not something that a family can take care of like going to a doctor’s appointment to be examined, getting the prescribed medicine, and in five days, one is over this ailment called grief! Grief does not work that way; rather, it will invade every corner of the mind, body, and life in every way imaginable. One awakens facing grief in the morning and one goes to bed at night (if he/she can sleep) with grief staring from the darkness.

What can families do when they are in their crucible of grief? I offer these suggestions for now:

◆ **Face the reality of grief** when it comes

into your family’s life. Don’t pretend it has not possessed your family for a period of time. Don’t act like you can “wish it away” by persistent prayer; be willing to face it head on and deal with it!

◆ **Look for help from others;** do not act “so brave” as if you can handle it all by yourself. Most families need the strength and encouragement that comes from interacting with friends, relatives, loved ones. *Ask your church family* for help (or *allow* them to help you when they offer to do so). *Seek out competent counselors, ministers, and other support personnel as needed; read good books, find a support program* within your community (or better within your church family) that will allow you to know that you are not alone in grieving.

◆ **Don’t isolate yourselves from others.** There is a great temptation in grief to withdraw and “close the ranks” when you are encountering some of the real pains that come from grief and loss situations. If you can, fight the urge to get away from others, and choose to be present for services of the church, letting others see you in public situations.

◆ One final suggestion; “**feel what you feel**” as you initially deal with the pains that