



***God's Hands of Compassion
Ministering to the Suffering***

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Christ established His church during His earthly ministry, and commissioned His churches to carry the Gospel message of Christ to a lost and dying world. We believe this is the first and foremost responsibility of Christ's church to carry out the great commission given by Christ to His churches. *Matthew 28:18 -20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24: 45-49; Act 1:8; 2Corinthians 5:18 -20;*

Christ has called born again believers, His children to minister to the suffering of others, both individually and collectively. *Leviticus 19:18; Mathew 22:39; Luke 10:30 -37; Matthew 25: 31-40; Acts 11:27-30; 1Corinthians 12:26; 1John 3:16-18; 2Corinthians 1:3-4; Proverbs 23:22; Leviticus 19:32; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; 1Timonhy 5:3-5, 8-10, 16; Genesis 2:24; Galatians 6:1-2.*

This free informative booklet was written from a lay responder's perspective. To provide general information in ministering to the suffering of others and biblical principles. Not for the purpose of counseling, or replace professional counseling.



In 2007 as we found ourselves ministering to the suffering of others who were grieving, it didn't take us long to realize that we really were not prepared and had little understanding of how individuals potentially could be affected: *Cognitively, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and interpersonally* as they find themselves grieving their losses in life.

Because of our lack of knowledge and wisdom in ministering to the suffering of others, we chose to pursue education and training in stress and trauma care. It is our desire that we might be a better tool and better vessel in which God could use as He ministered to the suffering of others through us.

Others have approached us for advice as they are ministering to the friends and family in their suffering. So we have put together this pamphlet with insightful information that we have learned through our studies, and have used in our personal lives.

It is our prayer that this informative pamphlet will better enable you to minister to the suffering of others.

Enter Into the Throne Room of God Before we enter Into Others Pain and Hurt

As we come alongside others in their pain we have the opportunity to be God's mouth piece, and His hands and feet as He comforts and heals. We must begin on our knees at the Throne of Grace, asking God to help us to be the vessel through which His grace and love can effectively flow as we minister to those that are hurting. Our character should always reflect that of Christ.

Biblical Understanding in the Theology of Suffering

There is a ripple effect that can occur when we come along side and step into the world of others and their pain. If we are not careful, we can actually find ourselves beginning to question our own biblical understanding in *the theology of suffering*.

We the caregiver can find ourselves questioning God, as we ask questions such as "Why God"? "Why would you allow all this suffering, this hurt, this pain to happen"?

Just as Job, we will never understand why God allows suffering to come into a person's life on this side of Heaven.

Educating oneself with a biblical understanding in the *theology of suffering* is essential because it will help secure and anchor you in your own faith as you come along side and minister to the suffering.

Our Personal Theology of Suffering

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Every heartache is an opportunity for ministry. God allows us to endure suffering at times so that we can minister to, or comfort others in their time of suffering, as He Himself has comforted us in our own personal suffering.

Has God ever walked with you through your pain and suffering? Do you feel that God has strengthened you in the midst of your suffering? Do you feel as if God, through your suffering, has changed your life in anyway?

Understanding how God has comforted and transformed our own lives, as we have *endured through* the suffering He has allowed, can have a tremendous impact on others, as we minister to them in their darkest hours.

There are times when those whom we are ministering to will need to draw from our strength, our faith, our hope and the trust that we have in Christ. As they *endure through* their pain.



Ministry of Presence

Has there been a time in your life, that unfortunate circumstances brought with it emotional distress? Maybe a church member or a friend during these difficult times was present with you in the moment. No words were being exchanged, they were present with a calm spirit, sitting quietly and listening. They were not judgmental in anything you might have said. You felt safe in sharing all of your emotions with them. You felt the love of Christ flow through them as they encouraged you with their presence. You experienced the ministry of presence! Just being present with someone as they experience pain and suffering is often what is needed for many survivors.

Job 2:11-13

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great

Job experienced many unexpected losses in his life. When he lost his seven sons and three daughters he was grieving a loss of relationship. He had material losses with the loss of his livestock and wealth. He was also suffering from a functional loss.

He had sores and boils from his feet to the top of his head. Job was too sick to function in normal life, but not sick enough to die.

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, when they heard the news of what had happened to Job, traveled together to visit with Job, so they might mourn with him and comfort him in his time of suffering.

As they looked upon Job from afar off, they saw how he was disfigured beyond recognition. Each one then lifted up their voices and wept. Each tore his own robe. They cast dust over their own heads toward the heavens. They sat down with Job on the ground for seven days and seven nights. They all sat speechless, neither one spoke a word to Job. They could see how his grief, his pain and his suffering were very great.

I believe each one of them traveled to visit with Job, that they might truly comfort him. I believe they came with good intentions.

Job's three friends demonstrated a great ministry of presence, as they sat with Job during the seven days and nights, by just being present with Job.

Personal Testimony

My family and I know from firsthand experience as we have had to endure suffering within our own lives the importance of ministry of presence. "Momma Rose" was hospitalized at North Florida Hospital in January 2012, and later passed away on January 23 at 1pm, at the Hospice House in Gainesville. I remember how there were many that visited with her and our family at the hospital and at the Hospice House in Gainesville. They brought food to the hospital to feed the family, they sang with Mom at the hospital and at the hospice house, and they provided other things as they were needed. At times there was little conversation or even none at all as we visited with each other. Personally, I was ok with this.

Several times when my cell phone rang I handed it to someone else to answer, simply because I did not want to talk at the time.

Everything that was done for my family was deeply appreciated and beneficial in our time of need. We also understand that the love we experienced, was a blessing from God. For me and my family, just the presence of others as they demonstrated calm and a non-anxious presence, no matter what our emotional state may have been at the time was comforting. We witnessed first-hand the genuine love, compassion, care and concern that each one demonstrated with their presence. This in itself was beneficial to us more than words can ever express.

Without a ministry of presence, there can be no presence of ministry, ministry *in action* which is coming along side and ministering to others as they struggle in their pain and suffering.

And it is walking with them as they move forward and start to rebuild their lives. *Where they are, in the condition they are in, with their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.*

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Good Listening Skills

Psalms 34:15-17

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

One thing we can always be confident in as we continue in the ways of the Lord, His eyes will always be upon us. As we commune with God in our distress, as we cry to Him, His ears are always open to our cry. He is listening to our prayers. God always hears the prayer of the righteous. Not only does the Lord hear our cries of distress, He delivers us out of our distress, He is always nigh or close to those who are of a broken heart and He saves them.

As we visit with and sit with those who are suffering, those who are dealing with distress within their lives, we need to be fully present with survivors. We need to be fully present with our minds, our ears need to be open to their cry, and we need to be focused and attentive to what they are saying. We need to be fully listening and focused as we minister to them during their times of distress. This will enable us to truly hear and understand the needs of those who are hurting due to unfortunate circumstances within their lives.

One distraction individuals often face is trying to discern how they will respond while the survivors are still talking. Good listening skills is not thinking about what you're going to say when the other person stops talking, you need to concentrate on what is being said.

Good listening enables those who are experiencing distress to fully express themselves in whatever state they may be in emotionally. Good listening skills are completely accepting what is being said by those who are hurting, without judging what the other individual is saying or how he or she is saying it.

If they indicate in any way that they might hurt themselves or someone else. You need to get them connected with professional help. For their own safety and the safety of others.

We need to be mindful how suffering has the potential to affect the total personality of an individual, the body, the thinking, the feelings, the will, the behaviors and relationships. While survivors are hurting they are also dealing with the pain that accompanies suffering and are probably not themselves.

This does not mean that we agree with the content of what is being said, it does, however, acknowledge that we understand that what is being said by those who are dealing with distress is an expression of how he or she is feeling.

Good listening knows when to speak and when to keep quiet. Allowing those who are dealing with distress to communicate their pain is crucial as we comfort those who are hurting.

Ecclesiastes 3:7

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

Proverbs 29:20

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Proverbs 18:13

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

Good listening knows when to keep silent and when to speak. The Bible says of one who speaks in a hurry, who responds to others hastily without gathering all the facts, there is more hope for a foolish person than them.

Good listening is allowing those who are suffering to express their hurts, their pain and their needs. By allowing them to fully express themselves, this will enable us to be present in their pain, so we can properly respond to their needs.

There will be times when those whom we are ministering to will say something that we might not know how to respond. We should not feel as if we have to respond quickly with some quick fix answer, we need to take a few seconds and think about our reply.

We should always remember the goal is to not cause any further harm, so when we are not sure how to respond; it is OK to say "I don't know".

As we quietly sit and Listen we Enable survivors to Process the Traumatic event they've experienced

As one experiences post-traumatic stress, there is the potential of possibly being temporarily cognitively impaired. They may find themselves having difficulty in processing what they experienced as they try to make some sense of it all.

They may have even lost a sense of security or safety within their life due to the nature of their trauma.

I personally have experienced this as an electrical line worker. We were working one evening changing out a transformer when things did not go as planned while working in a switchgear. There was an explosion, and all I remembered was being surrounded by a ball of fire.

When it was all over, I was facing in the opposite direction from which I had been in. There were on scene injuries and some life threatening. I, myself, experienced flash burns to the left side of my face and was out of work for a period of time. What I discovered was that I had difficulty processing what had actually occurred as I tried to make some sense of what had actually happened and what went wrong. It took time, and as I talked with others over and over, I found that I was able to put some of the pieces of the puzzle together.

Good listening is allowing individuals to tell their story over and over at their pace. When we listen this helps them to process and put the pieces together as they try to make some sense of the traumatic event they've experienced.

Psalms 116:1-2

I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

We see David's affection, his love for God. David totally understood that God had inclined his ear unto him and heard his prayer, his supplications.

David had experienced God's goodness in an answered prayer, God rescued him from death. David now had total confidence and trust in the Lord, because he understood that God truly did hear his prayer and would from henceforth call on the Lord as long as he lived with his supplications, his prayers.

We may feel at times that no one is listening or that others are not hearing what we are saying. We may feel as if no one truly understands our suffering.

We as God's children, who love the Lord Jesus Christ can be confident that there is one who is always listening.

As we face unfortunate circumstances in life, as we deal with distress and the suffering that will come our way, like David, we can have total confidence that God hears our supplication, our prayers. He hears our heart aches, our pain and He understands our distress.

Normalize One's Emotional Suffering

Genesis 6:5-6

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

Ephesians 4:30

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Matthew 26:36-38

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

Mark 14:32-34

And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

Luke 22:39-44

And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

God Himself experienced grief. The Holy Spirit grieves. Jesus in the garden experienced intense suffering. He experienced grief, sorrow and agony as He prayed more intensely. His sweat became as clots of blood dropping to the ground.

Numbers 20:29

And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

Genesis 50:1

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

Genesis 50:10

And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

When the people of Israel realized that Aaron had died they mourned. After the death of Jacob his son Joseph cast himself down upon his father's face and wept over him. The house of Joseph; his brethren and his father's house with the exception of their little ones, their flocks and herds left the land of Goshen. With chariots and horse men they traveled to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond and west of the Jordan River in the land of Canaan. There they mourned intensely over the loss of Jacob.

There are those who have the mindset that if they allow themselves to grieve their losses in life, or experience the tangled ball of emotions that accompanies ones grief, their faith in God is weak. They feel they have failed God in their Christian walk and that is far from the truth.

We believe that grieving the loss of our loved ones is perfectly normal, *even in the life of a Christian*. We are real people, we experience real hurt and real pain that accompanies the losses we face in life. You should normalize ones emotional experiences as they endure the suffering that God has allowed to come into their lives.

Benevolence

Act 11:27-29

And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul

Agabus, stood up and prophesied through the Holy Spirit that there would be a great famine throughout the entire world. We see the response of the Christian disciples upon hearing about this famine; they decided to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judaea.

They sent relief to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Each disciple gave according to their own individual ability.

Luke 10:33-35

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

We see here the example set by the Good Samaritan, as he found the individual who had been left by the road side, robbed of his clothing and possessions, they had beaten him and left him to die. A Samaritan, who happened to be passing by, saw the injured individual lying by the road side.

He had compassion on him and proceeded to minister to his wounds. He dressed his wounds, using his own oil and wine to aid the healing process. He then placed the injured man on his own beast and brought him to the inn and continued to care for him.

The next day as he departed he left money with the innkeeper so that his care could continue as needed. The Good Samaritan even promised that he would cover any cost that was not covered by the money he had left when he returned. *Luke 10:37 Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*



1John 3:16-18

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Just as Christ endured suffering on our behalf at the cross of Calvary, we should have the same heart of compassion and willingness to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

If we see one of our brothers and sisters in Christ, who has a worldly need, *that is in need of resources for sustaining life* and we have within our means the ability to fulfill this need and we turn our backs on them *how dwelleth the love of God in us?* Our actions **DO** speak louder than our words.

Meeting the practical needs of the suffering in itself can be beneficial in stabilizing individuals as they find themselves dealing with post-traumatic stress. For example meeting basic needs such as food, water, etc.

Our Communication to the Suffering, Can be Beneficial - or Our Words Can Actually Do Further Harm

Job 1:1-3

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

As we look at the life of Job, he was a man who was perfect and upright in the eyes of God. He was a man who reverently feared God and abstained from evil. God had greatly blessed Job with seven sons and three daughters.

He possessed seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she asses, and a multitude of servants. Job was considered to be the greatest of all the men of the east.

Job had been enjoying all the great blessings God had bestowed upon him.

That is, until Satan desired to test Job. Satan's desire was that Job would curse God to His face *Job 1:11 "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face"* and in *Job 2:5 "But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face"*.

The Lord did allow His servant Job to suffer at the hands of Satan, as we read in the book of Job chapters one and two.

God did however put limitations on Satan *Job 1:12 "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand"* and in *Job 2:6 "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life"*.

At the hands of Satan, Job experienced a *relationship loss* he lost his seven sons and three daughters, he experienced *material losses* he lost his wealth and his livestock, he experienced a *functional loss*, his health, he had sores and boils from his feet to the top of his head. Job was too sick to function in normal life, but not sick enough to die. All these losses were *unexpected losses* to Job.

Job 3:1-3

After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.

Job 3:11

Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?

We see Job's struggle with his losses really begin to surface more in this passage. Job's pain was so great, he wished he had never been born, or that he had died at child birth.

**Man Always Tries to Find Logic in
Pain and Suffering**

John 9:1-3

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his arents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

We live in a society that when we see others experiencing difficult circumstances within their lives, we usually attempt to find some logical reason for their suffering. And, it is not uncommon for individuals to try and find fault, or even put blame on those who are actually enduring the suffering. They try to discover some logical answer why Jesus disciples expressed similar thoughts to Jesus concerning this blind man.

Eliphaz Rebukes Job

Job 4:1-2,7-8

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking? Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

Job 5:17-18

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.

Bildad Rebukes Job

Job 8:3-6

Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.

Zophar Rebukes Job

Job 11:4-6

For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were trying to explain to their friend that he had un-confessed sin within his life and because of this sin God was now punishing or chastising him. They even informed Job that if God himself would speak, He would tell Job that he was getting what he deserved. They were trying to help Job understand that God was bringing judgment upon him.

Job's three friends were giving him a theology lesson, *which by the way sometimes our suffering is a direct result of the sin in our lives*, the only problem is this did not apply to Job. Job was not singled out because he was ordinary, or evil, Job was a child of God, and faithful *to God*. Job was not enduring God's wrath.

What happened to Job could happen to anyone. What about those who face tremendous loss in life due to tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, typhoons, winter storms, tsunamis, hail storms, wild fires, epidemics and earth quakes, transportation accidents, hazardous material releases, explosions and domestic acts of terrorism? It is not unusual for parents to bury their children for many reasons. Spouses forsake one another in times of stress. Disease and discouragement are inevitable in human life. None of these are evidence that God is punishing us.

Job 13:4-5

But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom.

Job 16:1-4

Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

Job informed his friends how they were *miserable comforters* they were of *no value* to him as he was facing these difficult circumstances within his life. Losing his seven sons and three daughters, the loss of his wealth and his livestock, the loss of his health, he had sores and boils from his feet to the top of his head.

Job informs his three friends of how he would conduct himself differently as he came along side of them while they endured suffering within their own lives. He would strengthen and encourage them with his words.

Have you ever thought about the impact you may have had on those in which you have come along side as they dealt with pain in their life, *were you of value?*

God has a lot to say about communication

Proverbs 12:25

Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Proverbs 15:23

A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

Proverbs 16:24

Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones

Proverbs 25:11

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Proverbs 15:28

The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue:and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

We should always stop and think before we speak. We can do a great deal of good by the words we speak, and just the opposite we can do a great deal of harm or hurt by the words we speak. Kind and encouraging words can heal and give life, meanwhile harmful words (whether intentional or not) can crush one's spirit.

As we come along others in their suffering, our words should strengthen and encourage them as they deal with the unfortunate circumstances within their lives.

Do we have a right to enter into another's suffering without an invitation? NO!

Proverbs 15:1-2

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

How do we respond to those who direct their anger towards us? We need to use calm and gentle words of compassion as we interact with others; this will possibly calm the anger or rage they may be feeling. As we interact with others, the use of words that are painful or hurtful, can stir up anger. As caregivers we should always use words that are beneficial to those whom we are ministering to.

There will be times when our presence is not wanted. Maybe they do not know who we are, maybe they are just overwhelmed by the presence of others and they just want to be alone. (*There could be times when survivors will demonstrate anger at your presence*).

We need to remember *and recognize* that some responses are possibly a secondary emotional response to the unfortunate circumstance they have found themselves overwhelmed by and dealing with. *Their emotional response is not necessarily directed exclusively toward the caregiver*, in other words, don't ***take it personally***.

They may not be receptive of your help the first time, which does not mean that they will reject your help in the future. The door has not necessarily been closed because of a previous response. How you the caregiver respond to their emotional response, will *greatly determine* the future of the relationship between you the caregiver and who you are ministering to.

Always remember we are ambassadors or representatives for Christ. We are His tool, His vessel, His apprentice, in which He works within us and through us, as He ministers to those who are hurting and dealing with pain and suffering in their lives.

We need to remember it is God that we serve, and serving God is an *honor and a privilege*, not a right. *God owes us nothing, we owe Him everything.* Everything we do as a child of God should always be for the purpose of *bringing honor and glory to God.* Our *action, our conduct, our words* and our *personal testimony* should always be one that brings honor and glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How we the caregiver respond to their emotional response, can *greatly determine* the future of the relationship between Christ and the survivor.

How do we Minister to those in their Suffering

As we come along those suffering due to a relationship loss, when speaking of the deceased individual, always *use their name, they are a real person.*

This is Not a Time for a Theology Lesson

My wife and I were working in a disaster stricken area, where there had been several lives lost, and many homes destroyed. As we were working cleaning up debris one day, I had an individual come up to me and say, *Brother you need to come and talk to this woman.* She was a member of this community who had lost her home and was now living in a tent.

A preacher had stopped by and visited with her and told her how she had lost everything she had because of her sin. Sounds like Jobs three friends doesn't it? However genuine his intent was, that did not change the fact that this woman was devastated, not to mention that her emotional suffering had now intensified.

As we minister to the suffering of others, this is a time that they need to see our theology and not hear our theology. This is a time in which they need to experience God's love and grace as He works through us to heal.

We have had survivors ask us biblical questions. In these cases we answered them the best we could. When we use scripture it is usually in our prayers and even then we try to use scriptures of encouragement.

Don't Try to Fix Everything

You cannot. And don't make promises you cannot keep, this can further discourage survivors.

Do Not Try and Answer the Why? Question

Only God knows why individuals endure suffering in life, and there are things we will never understand this side of Heaven.

Just a Few Words can be Beneficial

You might say "*I cannot imagine how you are feeling, but I am here for you*" or "*This must be such a difficult time*" for you or "*Please accept my deepest and sincerest sympathies*" or "*My heart goes out to you*" or "*I am sorry for your loss*", but beware some may ask you, What are you sorry for?

Avoid Statements, I Know How You Feel

We have no way of knowing what is going on inside of another individual as they experience suffering.

I and my wife experienced the loss of both our mothers four months apart. What we discovered is that even though our losses were similar relationship losses, we are two different individuals. Not that we did not both endure the hurt that accompanies grief. But our grief journey differed somewhat.

It's not so Bad, Others have it Much Worse

We should never belittle another individual's loss and the emotions they may be experiencing.

This Was God's Will

It is part of God's plan. This phrase can make people angry. Due to the circumstances surrounding some losses, Christian and non-Christian alike can find themselves angry at God.

Your Loved One is in a Better Place Now

Those in whom you are ministering to, may or may not believe this. There are times when we need to keep our beliefs to ourselves unless asked.

I Know You Feel Bad Your Loved One is in Hell Now Really?

Believe it or not I have heard testimony by some who have had these statements made to them by preachers.

Look at What You Have to be Thankful For

They know they have things to be thankful for, but right now they are not important.

There are those who have made the statement, *I know your life will be less stressful now because of all you were doing as a caregiver.*

Care giving can be stressful times within a family's life. If I had to choose between losing mom and caring for her, as she faced the frailties of life and chronic illnesses, I would choose to be a caregiver. I am so thankful to God that He allowed me the opportunity to minister to my mother in her later years of life.

God Won't Give You More Than You Can Handle

If we are not careful we can bring guilt or shame upon those suffering. Especially Christians, as they endure grief and experience all the emotions that accompany grief, can begin to feel as if they failed God, or their faith was weak because they allowed themselves to grieve. We believe that grieving is normal even in the life of a Christian. As caregivers our goal should be to intentionally avoid or prevent any further harm.

This is Behind You Now; you need to forget about it, it's Time to Get on With Your Life

Sometimes the bereaved are resistant to getting on with their lives because they feel this means *forgetting their loved one*. In addition, moving on is easier said than done. Grief has a mind of its own and works at its own pace.

For Christians and non-Christians alike, the significance of their loss and the circumstances surrounding their losses in life, can play a major role in how they are impacted. Grieving is a process that each one journeys through at their own individual pace, as they adapt to and move forward in life.

There are losses in life that one may overcome fairly soon and there are losses that one may have difficulty adapting to and moving forward in life. We need to be supportive of all survivors with love, care and compassion as we walk with them in their pain.

Don't Give Advice of What to do With Their Loved Ones Belongings Unless Asked

We actually experienced this during the loss of one of our mothers. We had not even had the services yet and there were people giving the family advice on what to do with our loved ones belongings. This was not the time.

There Were no Warning Signs, or Symptoms...

Can create guilt

One thing that we know from the loss of our mothers is that we have played over and over in our minds the circumstances surrounding their death. We have asked *ourselves* "If I...", "Would I...", "Should I...", "Could I..." Were there any signs that we missed or that we should have seen? False guilt or real guilt, there is a sense of guilt present at times and we need to make sure that we don't intensify ones guilt or make matters worse.

Bad Things Are Always Happening to You...

Don't bring up losses from their past

One day I was on a disaster scene speaking with an individual. Her family's home had been devastated by a tornado, a year earlier they had lost their son in a motorcycle accident, two years earlier her husband's mother had passed away. She was telling me about a fellow church member who had made hurtful statements to her. *This dear old church member comments to them one day how bad things are always happening to you and your family.*

She and I spoke for a while and she understood that this individual truly meant no harm.

But even so this statement triggered some old emotions, and they found themselves dealing with past hurts as well as the present suffering due to the devastation of the tornado.

**When we don't know what to Say,
it would probably be Better Not to Say Anything**

We do not always have to speak and offer our advice when our friends are in trouble. Job's friends should have *restrained their opinions* and concentrated their energies on being Job's friend. Just being present, and walking with others as they deal with the pain in their lives, is powerful.

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.



There is one thing we can always do for the suffering of others.
"Call 911 on their behalf, go to God in prayer"

Prayer

James 5:13-16

Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

When we are afflicted we are to draw near to God in prayer. When we are sick we should always seek out a doctor's care for our health concerns. And when we are sick we should also call upon our pastors, elders, and spiritual leaders of the church to pray for us with faith in the name of Jesus, trusting in God for healing. Does this mean that healing will take place? Not always.

The power of prayer; our daughter was born with scoliosis. They told us she needed surgery, and due to the type of surgery she would possibly need a blood transfusion. My mother-in-law had the same blood type as our daughter and she donated blood before the upcoming surgery so it would be available if needed. During the surgery our daughter did lose blood and was in need of a blood transfusion. Leaving the surgery room she went to the intensive care unit.

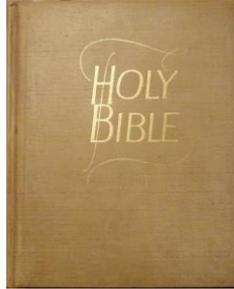
The nursing staff was concerned because of the amount of blood she had lost and its negative effect on her vital signs. They had given her all the blood that had been donated for her behalf and her vital signs remained low. At this point, it was time for a shift change; we had to leave the ward for a short period of time.

My wife and I chose to go to the hospital chapel and pray, this was an earlier time in my life and my prayer life was not very good. There is no doubt in our hearts and minds as we entered into the throne room of God, He heard our prayer.

Not only did He hear our prayer, He responded to our prayer for our daughter. When we were allowed to return to our daughter's bed side, it was like a light switch had been turned on. Things turned around and her health condition headed in a positive direction.

The earnest, heartfelt, continued prayer of a righteous man is powerful. We also understand that God may choose to heal supernaturally, naturally, or not at all depending upon His sovereign purposes.

One thing that we always do, *with the permission of those whom we are ministering to in their times of suffering*, is have a word of prayer with them before leaving.



**Provide Written Material to Survivors
Containing the Word of God and Self-Care Tips**

John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

1 Corinthians 2:10-12

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

The Holy Spirit knows the thoughts of God. And the Holy Spirit imparts that knowledge to believers. He is constantly working to *reveal* the thoughts and truths of God.

This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit opening our minds and hearts, so that we might understand the thoughts of God as we have them recorded in the Scriptures.

Have you ever had a verse of Scripture jump off the page and affect you in a way that takes you by surprise?

Have you ever read a passage that is very familiar to you, and you gain new insight from it? Have you ever been in an uncomfortable situation and from out of nowhere a verse comes to mind that brings you comfort or a renewed perspective? When these things happen, I don't believe they are coincidental. Most likely the Holy Spirit is at work illuminating our minds, opening our eyes and infusing our hearts with the specific truths we need for the moment.

There was a pastor that shared a testimony with me one day concerning an individual who had contemplated committing suicide one evening. At some point in this individual's life someone had given him a copy of the gospel of John and Romans. This individual took the booklet and placed it in his nightstand drawer. Two years later, he was considering ending his life. For some reason he chose to pick up the gospel of John and Romans book that he had in his nightstand drawer and read it. This offered an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to penetrate his mind and heart with the truths of God's word. His life was changed, and literally saved, he chose not to commit suicide. **Praise God!**

We believe that in God is where one can find the only true source of comfort in the midst of suffering. We also believe that anytime one opens up the word of God, this provides an opportunity for the Holy Spirit, also known as the comforter, to penetrate our minds and hearts with the truths of God's word. He also reminds us of the truths He has previously revealed at a point and time in our lives, as He comforts, strengthens and consoles us during our suffering.

We try to leave survivors written material containing scripture that focuses on the suffering they may be experiencing. There are various materials you can find available that will benefit those in their pain. We also try to provide survivors with written material containing self-care tips. We encourage them to read this material at their convenience and in their own time.

John 16:8-11

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to reprove or convict the world of sin. The Holy Spirit also known as the Comforter has the role of exposing the faults of people to themselves. This will cause conviction and reveal the need of repentance so that the sinner can find the love of God. The Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers that they do not measure up to the divine standard set by Jesus, and the need for God's righteousness to be imputed upon them. The Holy Spirit convicts the unsaved to prepare for the coming judgment of God.

Satan will not escape his own judgment in the end and neither will any man or woman who fails to trust in Jesus as their Savior.

There was a time when my mother did not want to hear anything about church or God. I would encourage her to attend church with us and she would actually get angry with me.

My wife and I gave her a Bible for Christmas one year and we started to notice the bookmark in the Bible had moved each time we stopped by to visit. Later, I started teaching in the Gospel of John somewhere around September of the next year. About this time we started to see a change take place in mom's attitude towards going to church. We could not believe it! Mom actually asked us if she could come to church with us one evening. She also informed me that she had read from Genesis to the gospel of John in her Bible we had given her for Christmas the previous year. My wife and I believe with all our hearts that this was accomplished only by the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the word of God. She later became a member of our church. And I, under church authority, had the privilege of baptizing my mother. Amen! Praise the LORD!!! Now she is not only my mother, but a sister in Christ. Praise the LORD!!!!

You see we never know when or how God will work in the life of an individual. We believe that anytime the word of God is opened accompanied by the Holy Spirit; there will be a transformation within the heart and mind of individuals. If you have available a Bible or the Gospel of John and Romans you might at a later point and time leave this with who you are ministering to and encourage them to read this material at their convenience.

Phone and Card Ministry

Psalm 92:14

They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;

This is a ministry in which everyone can take part in. This is an excellent ministry in which the seniors of churches could be involved in.

As my mom dealt with the frailties of life and was dependent upon others for her care, she was not able to get out and go as others could. She was either at her home or she stayed with my wife and me. She had weekly doctor appointments and some days there would be three or four different doctor appointments.

There were those within our church that had been sending mom cards in the mail. I remember taking her back to her house one day and as we pulled up in the parking area she could not wait to check her mail box to see if someone had sent her a card in the mail. They brought her so much joy, you could see the excitement on her face as she read those cards.

There were those in the church that would call and check on her. She told me how she and one of the members of the church talked at times for three hours on the phone. I responded with *what could anyone talk about for three hours on the phone?* I and my family are so thankful for all those who, through the phone and card ministry, encouraged and strengthened mom as she faced the frailties of life in her later years.

Sharing the Good News, the Gospel Message of Christ

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

2Corinthians 5:18-20

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

There are times when people will be receptive to spiritual things, if no other time in their life; news from a doctor concerning a serious health condition or surgery, going through the process of a divorce, death of a loved one, or catastrophic events

As we stop and engage with those who are suffering, we can give them a reason to hope, which is hope in Christ. Our personal relationship with Christ, the message of our own lives, will speak volumes as we minister to those in the moment and as they look upon us and witness the hope that we have in Christ.

As relationships are built, somewhere in our ministry we have to point them to the great physician. Keeping in mind that suffering has the potential to affect our whole being, we need to be sensitive in our timing and we need to be sensitive in how we minister with words.

I was standing at the top of a driveway one day ministering to an individual whose home had been devastated by a tornado, when a gentleman out by the road side spoke out with a fairly loud voice, "You have to call on the name of Jesus, you have to call on the name of Jesus". This same gentleman began to approach the home owner as he repeated the same statement, *you have to call on the name of Jesus*. Well, the home owner very quickly departed from everyone's presence as he went into his house. The door for ministry was closed that day. We encourage you not to use this method of evangelism.

The Ministering to the Suffering One Soul at a Time Ministry, is a ministry of God's hands of compassion and evangelism. Ministering to the suffering starts with compassion. As relationships and bridges are built, opportunity will allow us our ultimate purpose as a child of God, which is to introduce the lost and dying world to the Kingdom of God. Introduce them to the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

God can use you to touch those who have been impacted by tragedy, grief and loss. We need to be sensitive as we minister to them and point them to Christ. They need to see that believers serve a God of hope and that hope is in Christ.



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Romans 3:23

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.



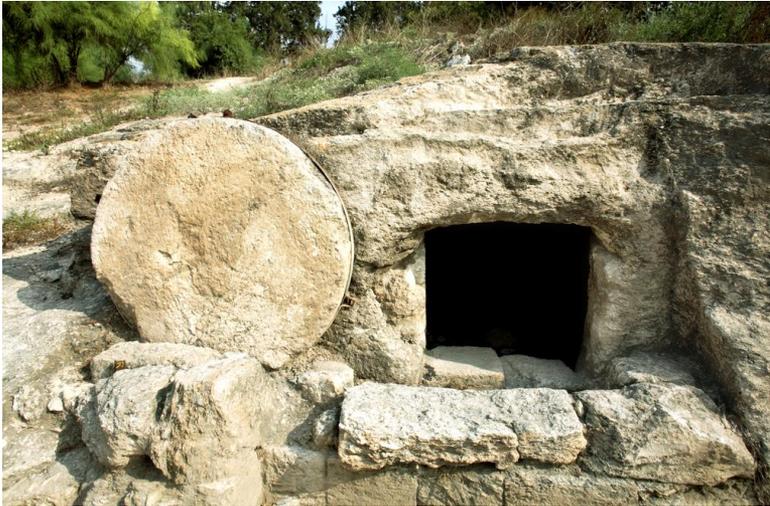
Romans 5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

He Is Risen



Romans 10:9-13

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.