



# A Silent Love

*A Ministry of Community Bible Church*

A Guide for Family and Friends  
of Grieving Parents

## Do's and Don'ts for Caring for the Bereaved

- DO recognize the loss of a child during pregnancy as the loss of a child.
- DO allow them to express as much grief as they are able and willing to share with you.
- DO allow them to express as much unhappiness as they are feeling and are willing to share with you.
- DO allow them to talk about their loss as much and as often as they want to.
- DO be available to listen, to run errands, to help with other children, or to do whatever else seems needed at the time.
- DO deal with the grieving individual gently.
- DO encourage them to be patient with themselves and to not expect too much of themselves.
- DO encourage them not to impose any “should's” on themselves.
- DO give special attention to the child's siblings at the funeral and in the months to come. Often they are in need of attention their parents may be unable to give.
- DO let your genuine concern and caring show.
- DO offer to be a friend.
- DO recognize that grief has no time limit and varies from person to person both in the way they express their grief and in the time required to stabilize.
- DO tell the family how sorry you are about the child's death and about the pain they must be feeling.
- DO acknowledge the death through visits, phone calls, sympathy cards, donations, and flowers.
- DO remember important days such as the due date, the death anniversary, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and any other significant day which may be difficult for the bereaved. A telephone call, visit, or card means a great deal to a grieving parent.
- DO offer to take the living children to school, birthday parties, and extra-curricular activities.
- DO, immediately following the loss, offer to take charge of the household, help with living children, and set up a meal plan.
- DO call. Call often.

## Do's and Don'ts for Caring for the Bereaved, cont.

- DO appreciate that the bereaved may not return phone calls right away.
- DO realize that bringing up the deceased child will never make the grieving parents more sad than they already are.
- DO talk in your natural tone of voice.
- DO remember that it is the little things that usually mean the most.
- DO listen.
- DO continue to support the bereaved parents well beyond the acute grieving period, even if it means years.
- DO congratulate the mourning parents about good news while still appreciating that they carry a tremendous burden of grief.
- DO be sensitive to the fact that being in the presence of other children or pregnant mothers may make the mourning parents uncomfortable.
- DO give the bereaved time to resume the activities they participated in before the loss.
- DO expect your relationship with the bereaved to change. When you are grieving, every relationship is affected in one way or another.
- DO feed and walk the dog who may have been forgotten about.
- DO say any of the following:
  1. Call me at any time if you need to talk.
  2. I can't begin to imagine how you feel.
  3. I am so sorry for your loss.
- DO make specific offers to help, realizing that the parents may not ask for any help. Do offer the following, or anything else that seems needed:
  1. I am going to the store. What do you need?
  2. Can I take your kids on Sunday afternoon?
  3. On Thursday, I will bring dinner over for your family.
  4. I will take your child to piano lessons on Saturday.
  5. Can I come by and baby-sit tomorrow evening and give you a break?
  6. Do you want to get out tonight and walk, talk, or both?

## Do's and Don'ts for Caring for the Bereaved, cont.

- DON'T avoid mentioning their loss or their child's name out of fear of reminding them of their pain. They have not forgotten it!
- DON'T change the subject when they mention their deceased child.
- DON'T tell them what they should feel or do.
- DON'T avoid the bereaved parents because you are uncomfortable. Being avoided by family and friends adds pain to an already painful experience.
- DON'T let them grieve alone. There is a tremendous sense of isolation and abandonment during the grief process. You can help by being there, caring, and being the best friend you can be.
- DON'T make any comments which suggest in any way that the loss was their fault.
- DON'T point out that at least they have their other children. Children are not interchangeable. They cannot replace each other.
- DON'T say that you know how they feel. Unless you have experienced their loss, you probably don't.
- DON'T suggest that they should be grateful for their living children. Grief over the loss of one child does not discount the parents' love and appreciation of their other children.
- DON'T tell them not to cry. Don't tell them not to be sad. Their child has died.
- DON'T try to find something positive, like a moral lesson, to point out to them about the loss.
- DON'T allow your own fears from supporting the bereaved during their grief.
- DON'T offer general statements like, "If you need anything, call me." The grieving parents may have a hard time reaching out for help.
- DON'T be afraid of making your friend or relative cry.
- DON'T think that good news (family wedding, pregnancy, job promotion, etc.) cancels out grief.
- DON'T have expectations of what the bereaved parents should or should not be doing at different times in their grief.
- DON'T forget the overlooked mourners (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) who need your support too.

## Do's and Don'ts for Caring for the Bereaved, cont.

- DON'T force the bereaved to talk about their loss. They will engage you when the time is right for them.
- DON'T be afraid to laugh or cry in front of the grieving parents. Be yourself.
- DON'T assume that when the grieving parent is laughing, they are “over” anything or grieving any less.
- DON'T underestimate the impact of grief on children.
- DON'T find yourself saying any of the following:
  1. It was God's will.
  2. It was meant to be.
  3. He/she's in a better place now.
  4. Time heals all wounds.
  5. I know just how you feel.
  6. You're young... you can have more children.
  7. Are you not over it yet?
  8. At least you have other children.
  9. It was for the best.
  10. It could have been worse...
  11. It's been (amount of time), and you have got to get on with your life.
  12. At least you know you can get pregnant.
  13. There was probably something wrong with the baby.
  14. At least you didn't carry the baby full-term.
  15. Well, it's not like you lost a real baby.
  16. “It” was still just a clump of cells at that time.

## Gift Ideas for Grieving Parents

- Grief books specifically about miscarriage or stillbirth
- Flowers or any other gift you would send for the death of a family member
- A wind chime that will honor the baby's life each time it chimes
- A tree to plant in honor of the baby
- A name plaque (if the parents have named their baby) with the baby's name, the origin, the meaning, etc.
- A memory box big enough to contain ultrasounds pictures, sympathy cards, dried flowers, etc.
- A simple card that lets them know you care
- A poem that shows you sympathize with them and that honors their baby's life (see the last page of this packet for a great example).

Go ahead and mention my child  
The one that died, you know.  
Don't worry about hurting me further,  
The depth of my pain doesn't show.  
Don't worry about making me cry,  
I'm already crying inside.  
Help me to heal by releasing  
The tears that I try to hide.  
I'm hurt when you just keep silent,  
Pretending he didn't exist.  
I'd rather you mention my child,  
Knowing that he has been missed.  
You asked me how I am doing,  
I say "pretty good" or "fine."  
But healing is something ongoing,  
I feel it will take a lifetime.

-Unknown Author

# I Do Not Know

By Sarah Overholt

I have not walked in your shoes, so I confess there is much I do not know.

## **I do not know...**

Why some people have children while others cannot.

How you may feel when you walk past the store's Baby Department.

How you may feel when a close friend announces the news that she is pregnant.

How you may feel when you receive an invitation to a baby shower.

How you may feel when friends send you photos of their "perfect" families.

How you may feel when seeing a child walking hand in hand with their parent.

How you may feel when you are asked how many children you have,  
and then how long you have been married.

How you may feel when you are asked whether you have considered adoption.

How you may feel when other parents wonder what you do with all your "free" time.

How you may feel when you read statistics about abortion.

How you may feel when you see a father playing ball with his son.

How you may feel when you see a lonely or neglected child.

How you may feel while shopping for cards and coming upon  
the ones for daughters, sons, and grandchildren.

## **But there are two things I do know.**

### **I know...**

*...The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youth grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31 NIV).*

**And I know that you are loved, thought of, and prayed for by me.**

Taken from "Stepping Stones," a publication of Bethany Christian Services.