

Comforting the Grieving
1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, 2024-01-07A, #2

Introduction: Today, I want to talk to you about comforting the grieving. I asked five men and five women in the congregation to give me a list of things that were comforting to them during their grieving process and a list of things that were not comforting to them.

I. Things Said and Done That Were and That Were Not Comforting:

A. What is comforting to one may not be comforting to another.

B. Some of the things said that were not comforting:

1. "The deceased is in a better place."
2. "At least they are not suffering anymore."
3. "Don't cry. Be strong."
4. "Time heals all wounds."
5. "You are not the only one who has lost someone. Get a dog or some pet."
6. "How are you feeling?" "How are you doing?"
7. Asking how the deceased died.

C. Some of the things that were said and done that were comforting or helpful:

1. Prayers of the saints.
2. Hugs and just being present.
3. Being available to assist with chores.
4. Talking with someone close to the deceased.
5. Talking with someone who experienced a similar death.
6. Fellowship with other believers.
 - a. Isolation is not good when one is experiencing depression or grieving. One of the factors contributing to Elijah's suicidal thoughts was isolation (1 Kings 19:1-4; Hebrews 10:25).
 - b. Isolation is good when one wants to be alone with the Triune God to practice – stillness, silence, solitude (Exodus 24:15-18; 1 Kings 19:11-18; Mark 1:35).
7. Staying involved with positive activities.

II. Things That I Found Comforting During My Grieving Process:

A. What was comforting to me may not be comforting to others.

B. These are some of the things that I found to be comforting:

1. The Word of God and the manifest presence of the Triune God Is Always Comforting.

a. There are three presence to be distinguished:

1) The omnipresence of the Triune God (Psalm 139:7-12; Jeremiah 23:24; Proverbs 15:3; Hebrews 4:13).

2) The indwelling presence of the Triune God:

a) The indwelling presence of God the Father (Ephesians 4:6).

b) The indwelling presence of God the Son (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27).

c) The indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 John 4:4).

3) The manifest presence of the Triune God (Exodus 33:15; Psalm 16:11; John 14:21).

- b. What troubled Job more than anything else was a loss of a sense of the manifest presence of God (Job 23:8-9; 42:5-6).
 - c. What troubled Jesus most as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane was the anticipation of the loss of the manifest presence of God as Jesus bore our sins on the cross for three hours (Psalm 22:1, 3; Matthew 27:46; Isaiah 53:6; 59:1-2; Psalm 23:4)
2. Listening to Comforting Songs.
 - a. I made a playlist that helped me to focus on where my wife was going and later on where she is such as “The New Jerusalem” and “I Bowed on My Knees and Cried Holy.”
 - b. I made a playlist of songs that reminded me of Oscar such as “Jesus Paid It All” and “Thank You” by Ray Boltz.
 - c. The songs that comforted me did not comfort my children.
 3. Weeping and mourning are both biblical and therapeutic:
 - a. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:35).
 - b. Joseph fell upon the face of his father Jacob and wept when Jacob died (Genesis 50:1).
 - c. The Children of Israel wept for Aaron 30 days (Numbers 20:29).
 - d. The Children of Israel wept and mourned for Moses 30 days (Deuteronomy 34:8).
 - e. Assignment: Do a study on the benefits of tears.
 - f. 30 days of weeping and mourning will not work for everyone:
 - 1) If you loved the deceased more than you love God, there may not be a termination date on grieving for you.
 - 2) Job is an example of someone who loved and valued God more than person, places, and things of this world (Job 1:6-22).
 - 3) Observe what Jesus had to say about loving God – Matthew 10:37; 22:37.
 4. Photos of my wife and me in every room in our home is still comforting.
 5. I find comfort in daily thanking God for 62 years 2 month and 12 days of marriage and also for blessing my wife Ann to live for 77 years 4 months and 12 days.
 6. Knowing that I did all that I could for my wife was and continues to be comforting.
 - a. The first funeral that I conducted for a relative was for my maternal grandmother, Willie Mae Medlock (Big Mama), on Saturday, April 13, 1996 at the Shiloh Baptist Church Pleasant Hill, Mississippi.
 - 1) As I returned to Milwaukee from the funeral, I vowed that I would do all that I could for my wife, mother, and others close to me so that I would not look back and regret failing to do something that I should have done.
 - 2) We should treasure our moments with those whom we love.
 - b. I did all that I could for my wife, mother, and cousin, Freddie Dandridge whose funeral I conducted Friday, September 17, 2021.
 - c. I have two Scriptures for those who may be tempted to look back and grieve because of something they did not do: Philippians 3:13-14; 4:8.

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