

Comforting and Ministering to the Afflicted
Equipping the Saints for the work of the ministry---Practical Principles and Applications
“If you are called to minister to hurting people, you will never run out of something to do.”

There is no standard comfort package

But there is a DIVINE STANDARD: “Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love,” *Romans 12:10*

DO’S

Maggy stayed by her husband’s bed side for 6 months while as he died of cancer. She wrote:

- The greatest gift others gave was prayer. When I didn’t answer calls, they prayed on voice mail. Late at night, I played them over and over.
- One friend cried every time she left a prayer message. Maggy calls these her “*liquid prayers*”.
- Another, left silly pictures of her baby nephew. *She made me laugh.*
- One friend sent text messages as she prepared for her daughter’s wedding ... It was my escape.

DON’T FORGET—

- Grieving is a process. Don’t rush them – “back to normal” may never come.
- Affliction comes in many forms. Although each is *very different*, divorce, a miscarriage, bankruptcy, a prodigal child, death of a loved one, severe illness or pain, a handicapped child, infertility, these things effect many facets of life.

DON’T SAY ---

“If there’s anything I can do – call me.” When you are grieving you don’t want to ask for help specifically. Susan, (a Pastor’s widow) writes;

- #1 You have a difficult time defining help.
- #2 You don’t know if they mean it – if they could take the time, if they said it out of duty.

DO

Denise (who is in constant pain from 4 failed back surgeries) wrote:

- “Pray for sensitivity and compassion. Pray that the LORD will show you SPECIFICALLY how to help them. For example: meals, rides to doctors, housekeeping etc. But also pray for the LORD to LEAD YOU because depending on the personality of the one who is suffering, some need privacy, some need companionship.”

Dotty writes;

- “*Depression is such an enemy and in times of deep trouble (death and other things) there is a tendency to hibernate, which is bad. DO:* Call that person and say, Hey, I’m coming by to pick you up at so-and-so time tomorrow, be ready. If it is fall take them on a drive, if it’s summer, make it a day at the beach or mountains. Get them out of their dismal routine.”

DON’T SAY

1. “I know how you feel.” Each person’s pain has its unique complications and deep emotions.
2. Don’t say...“You’ll get over it – This was all for the best.” Clichés are lead bells.
3. Don’t quote lots of scripture. **DO:** if God puts a specific scripture on your heart, pray it for them, write it in a card, print it on the computer to frame it and give it.
4. Don’t try to give them answers. Job’s comforters got in trouble doing that.
5. Don’t be critical.
6. Don’t offer a lot of advice. Let them ask and then pray with them before answering.
7. Don’t say, “I can’t do something because I can’t do something big”. It’s the little things that sometimes count the most.
8. Don’t shy away because you don’t feel comfortable. Grieving and pain are not comfortable for the hurting person either. Remember, a burden shared is a burden divided.

DO

Remember that certain days, times, and seasons are tough.

1. The first Christmas—in fact—every Christmas makes hardship feel lonelier.
2. “Sundays were hardest. We couldn’t go to church (Maggy)
3. “Sundays are hardest. I go alone.” (Tammy)
4. Susan wrote: “2 years after my husband died, a thoughtful friend sent me a card on Father’s day.”

The Power of Presence

“The Lord is near the broken hearted”. And you are Jesus, “with skin on”.

Don’t be afraid – TO STEP INTO OTHERS PAIN. Just your presence and tenderness helps them feel *not so alone*. The first part of the word “comfort” is “come”. Kindness can be tangible and “felt”.

- A kind, caring look
- A hand on the shoulder
- A hug.
- Allow them to cry – cry with them.
- Allow them to talk or be silent. Require nothing from them.

Pat’s daughter Kelly died a tragic and sudden death. She writes;

There is no pain like it - I barely remember the next days and maybe weeks. I only know that the Lord sent us many loving people to comfort us. They didn’t know what to say but they knew they had to be with us. I was numb, blinded, scared, and broken, so broken words cannot describe and desperate.

- I loved when friends would hold me a little longer and cry with me. No words.
- I loved when one friend flew from far away - just because she knew she needed to be with me - she knew Kelly and what I was missing.

DON’T GET HURT FEELINGS

- When they don’t remember you sent flowers.
- When they don’t call you back.
- When they decline your invitations. Try again.

DO

- When someone asks for prayer, don’t say; “I’ll pray for you”. DO PRAY THEN. I’ve prayed in parking lots, stores, the hall at church. A prayer together, takes you to the throne of grace, together.
- Laugh with them about some fun memory.
- Give little gifts: a music CD, A rich brownie tied with a bow, a silly card or book, arrive at their doorstep with a Latte’. I keep a box of fun gifts, framed scriptures and cards to have available.

DO

Be who God made YOU to be. Minister with the gifts and “joy of doing” that He puts in your heart. *“Having then gifts differing according to the grace give to us....LET US USE THEM!” Romans 12:6*

- Some people are criers...if you are, don’t be ashamed...cry for and with that person.
- You might have the gift of helps or organization. Help them with their paperwork, organize a closet.
- Another has the gift of giving, “give with liberality”
- Another the gift of mercy...Another, the gift of wisdom...Another, the gift of hope or joy.

There is no “Comfort Package” and there is no “packaged” Comforter. Let God Inspire you and Encourage you and Equip you and Commission you. “Not by Might, nor by Power, but by My Spirit”, says the Lord.

**“Comfort ye, Yes, Comfort ye My People”, says the Lord.
For the “Love of Christ Constrains us.”**