

Support For A Grieving Mother



It is often very difficult to know how to minister to the needs of a grieving mother who has just lost her child. There are no magic words to take away the pain of such a loss, and many find it overwhelming just to look into the face of such suffering. Here are a few suggestions from a mother who has walked this path more than once.

1. Don't allow the fear of saying or doing the wrong thing keep you from reaching out in love. There are no perfect words. A simple, "I'm sorry," and a hug can go a long way.
2. Acknowledge the baby. Refer to the child by name. It is often a blessing to a grieving heart to hear her child's name spoken. Do not think that talking about him/her will bring the mother more pain. The memory of her baby is always on her mind. Sharing can be a comfort. Be willing to listen. She may need to tell her story over and over again.
---"If you know someone who has lost a child or lost anybody who's important to them, and you're afraid to mention them because you think you might make them sad by reminding them that they died, they didn't forget they died. You're not reminding them. What you're reminding them of is that you remember that they lived, and that's a great, great gift."—Elizabeth Edwards
3. Those who are grieving are not always able to ask for help. Instead of saying, "Let me know if you need anything," just do something for the mother and her family. Be available, but also willing to give space when needed. Bring a meal. Offer to watch the other children for a while. Come over and sit with her, offering a listening ear.
4. Realize that she has been forever changed by the loss of her baby. Don't expect her to be exactly the same. And please realize that grief has its own time table. Allow her the time she needs, and remain supportive. Everyone grieves differently. Don't judge her choices or her "performance." She may not react the same way that you think you would.
5. Avoid clichés such as, "You can have more children," or "This was God's will." Even words meant to comfort can actually sting a grieving heart as salt poured into an open wound.

A wonderful quote by Patsy Clarimont from her book *Stained Glass Hearts* sums up well the art of ministering to a broken heart: "Honestly, when I'm hurting, I'd rather have a friend who stands and weeps with me or wonders with me than one who rattles off his or her thing take on the universe." Sometimes we just need a friend to walk with us a little while, to sit with us, to love us as we are, to impart grace, to listen, to hurt with us, weep with us and pray for us. "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." Romans 12:15