

HELP FOR A HURTING HEART

INTRODUCTION:

“May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of compassionate feelings and the God of all comfort, be praised. He comforts us in all of our troubles so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any [kind of] trouble, through the comfort we ourselves have received from Him. For just as we experience an overflow of Christ’s sufferings, even so we also experience an overflow of comfort through Christ. But if we experience trouble, it is in order [to provide] for your comfort [also], which enables you to endure patiently the same sufferings we experience. And our hope for you is firm, for we know that just as you share our sufferings, so you will also [share] our comfort.” II Corinthians 1:3-7

I. EXPLANATION OF THE PROBLEM

Grief (or, suffering) is usually caused by *personal loss*. Loss of a loved one in death is perhaps the most severe form of grief. But other occasions of loss also cause grief: Loss of a mate through divorce, loss of the commitment of a mate through adultery, loss of affection from a child, parent or friend, loss of reputation, financial security, or some prized material possession.

But grief is also caused by sorrow, loss, injury or misfortune befalling a loved one. Grief over the waywardness of a child is a major cause of grief.

Grief as defined by the dictionary: “the deep and poignant distress caused by, or as if by bereavement.” *Bereavement* is defined: “the loss of a loved one by death.”

The source or seat of suffering grief, for whatever reason, is a *hurting heart*. This is the experience of your inner being feeling extreme discomfort and stress. It is triggered by the slightest thought of the one lost or the occasion causing the grief. The more you think about it, or the longer it is thought about, the greater and deeper the grief. But the problem is, “How can I *not* think about him, her or it?” The world attempts to counteract grief-causing thoughts by sleep, pills, alcohol, drugs, pleasure, etc.

II. SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF GRIEF

Just not thinking about it will not make the cause of grief disappear. It won’t bring the deceased loved one back; it won’t change the heart of an unfaithful mate or wayward child; it won’t restore lost goods or reputation. So a person has to ask himself:

1. If I can do anything to change the conditions causing my hurting heart, what should it be? If there are things I can do, decide what they are and set about doing them.

2. If there isn't anything I can do to change the *conditions*, then set about *changing my thinking*.
3. Assuming there is nothing you can do to change the situation (as in the case of death), focus on *changing your thinking*. (Phil. 4:8)
4. Think about the needs of some individual in the church, your family or neighborhood (meals, cleaning, babysitting, visiting shut-ins, volunteer work, etc.)
5. Think about ways to improve your knowledge of the Scriptures. (Bible reading, memorization, study project, Bible college class, etc.)
6. Think about what you can do by way of useful church activities (calling, yard work, phoning, cleaning, office work, teaching a class, helping in nursery, missions team, send greeting cards, etc.)
7. Think about some project or opportunity you have put off for a long time (letter writing, phone calls, traveling, redecorating, visiting, hobby, repairing something, fishing trip, vacation, music lessons, exercise program, etc.)
8. Think about spiritual ideas and concepts (listening to meaningful Gospel music, reading devotional books, etc.)

When you occupy your *thoughts* with worthwhile things, you will eventually occupy your *time* with such things, and your focus will be *away* from the cause of your grief and *toward* some worthwhile, constructive activity.