

# Bereavement and Loss

## Acquainted with grief

Examples of grief and mourning in the Bible:

- Genesis 23:2 'Sarah died at Hebron and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her.'
- Genesis 37:34 'Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave." So his father wept for him.'
- 1 Samuel 1:16 Hannah was praying 'out of my great anguish and grief.'
- 2 Samuel 1:11-12 'Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan....'
- King David also mourned for his baby son (2 Samuel 12:15-23) and his adult son (2 Samuel 18:33). The psalms often express feelings of loss and sadness.
- Many of the prophets speak of, and reflect in their own lives and actions, the grief and pain of God over the loss of his people who have abandoned him.
- Isaiah 53:3 describes the coming Servant of the Lord as 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' Jesus was no stranger to grief and sadness.
- Acts 8:2 'Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.'
- Philippians 2:27 'Indeed he (Epaphroditus) was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.'

## **What does grief look like?**

- “No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear.” C.S Lewis, A Grief Observed
- Initial numbness is common, lasting moments or going on for days
- Denial
- Crying, weeping, sobbing – waves of sorrow
- Pangs of yearning
- Physical effects – loss of appetite, profound tiredness, sleep disturbance
- Guilt
- Anger

## **Not everyone grieves in the same way**

- Individual responses
- Cultural expression
- Men and women
- Husbands and wives

## **Complicated Grief**

- Unresolved conflict
- Suicide
- Death at the hands of another person
- Loss of a child
- ‘Hidden’ loss – miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion

## **Children grieve too**

- Understanding of death develops with age
- Children's grief is often shown in changes in behaviour

## **How to help**

- Show up
- Listen
- Don't make assumptions
- Help practically
- Be there for the long-term

## **Being prepared**

- Accepting the reality of death
- Have a good theology of suffering and death
- Read or listen to a good book or two about loss and bereavement
- Know what to do in dealing with a death

# **Resources**

## **Government information**

<https://www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies>

## **Care for the family**

<https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/support-for-you/family-life/bereavement-support/>

## **Cruse (national bereavement support service)**

<https://crusebedfordshire.org.uk>

## **CHUMS charity – bereavement support service**

[Neonatal Bereavement Service. | CHUMS Charity](#)

## **Griefshare – online and in person support groups**

<https://www.griefshare.org/>