

AFTER THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

When a loved one dies, your family is suddenly confronted with a multitude of decisions which must be made quickly and with care. Your covenant family at Briarwood Presbyterian Church will assist you and your family during this time of grief. This booklet is intended to help guide you through the following steps of *what to do...*

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I. WHAT TO DO

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

At the time of death, you may ask your Shepherding Pastor, Community Pastor, or Pastoral Care Pastor to visit you. Any one of these ministers will be glad to come to your home or to the hospital to be with you.

WHEN A DEATH OCCURS AT HOME - If your loved one dies at home, you should promptly call your doctor or hospice worker. In the case of a sudden death, 911 or the local police should be notified. Possibly, the coroner also will need to be called to your home.

WHEN A DEATH OCCURS AT A HOSPITAL - If your loved one dies at a hospital, several things will occur following the death.

- Medical personnel will be present to request your signature on several papers.
- If the cause of death is unknown, an *autopsy* may be requested or legally required. An autopsy may be desirable for both the family's protection and to obtain valuable medical information. Often, an autopsy is not necessary and is the family's choice.
- *Organ donation* will be a factor to consider. Your loved one may have indicated in a living will or on his or her driver's license that he or she has chosen to donate his organs. If this decision has not been made, medical personnel may ask you to make the decision.

CONTACTING A FUNERAL HOME – The attending medical personnel will ask which funeral home you desire for them to call. As soon as possible, you will need to contact the funeral home to make an appointment with the funeral director to make funeral arrangements.

NOTIFICATIONS – Make a list of family members and friends who need to be notified about the death. If your loved one was employed or in school, you or a friend should contact his employer or educational institution as soon as possible.

II. WHAT TO DO

WHEN MEETING WITH THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR

We strongly suggest that one of your family members or close friends or a pastor accompany you to meet with the funeral director. They can support you through the process and help you discuss certain matters with clear thinking.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION NEEDED FOR YOUR MEETING -
During your meeting with the funeral director, you will need to provide your loved ones...

- Social Security number
- Birth Certificate
- Dates and Places of birth and death
- Veteran's benefits
- Any insurance burial policies
- Occupation and employer
- Mother's maiden name

DECISIONS TO BE MADE: As you meet with the funeral director, he or she likely will ask you to....

- Select a casket and vault.
- Confirm if your loved one will be embalmed or cremated.
- Identify what cemetery will be used.
- Provide the garments with which to clothe your loved one.
- Identify the minister who will officiate the service.
- Provide an obituary for publication. The funeral director may help you compose it and will send it wherever you wish.
- Determine number of death certificates you will need (10-15?).
- Identify the Pallbearers.
- List family members.
- State if you wish to have a memorial recipient in lieu of flowers. You may need to provide the address of the recipient.
- Determine the time and place of visitation, the funeral or memorial service and interment - *See page 8.*

- Confirm if you wish to have the casket at the service and when you desire it to be opened and closed.
- Indicate whether you desire a procession to the cemetery with a police escort - *These services may incur additional expense.*

CONTACT THE CEMETERY – Most cemeteries work independently of funeral homes even when they are adjacent. You will need to contact the cemetery to arrange for the burial. While making arrangements with them, you will need to:

- Decide what ceremonies will be conducted at the graveside. Sometimes a graveside service is simply a brief committal. Other times, in lieu of a separate service, it may include a homily, time of sharing and/or singing.
- Indicate your desires that equipment and workers not be visible if this is your preference.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS – Financial arrangements will need to be discussed in detail with both the funeral home director and the cemetery caretakers. Remember not to be hesitant to ask questions.

NOTES

III. WHAT TO DO

WHEN PLANNING FOR THE FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE

When a loved one dies, decisions will need to be made regarding a Christian service of worship to mark the passing of the deceased. Normally, the Pastor of Pastoral Care will help you plan the service and make the appropriate contacts within the church (i.e. with the Senior Pastor, musicians, facility and audio-visual personnel). He will also, plan and publish a program for the service.

TYPES OF SERVICES – You will need to decide what type of service will be conducted.

- *Local Funeral Service* – customarily is conducted at either at the church or funeral home with the body present after which the family and friends travel to a local cemetery for a public or a private graveside or committal service.
- *Local Memorial Service* – is generally conducted in a church without the body present. A graveside or committal service may be held either before or after the service.

Often a time of visitation is planned before or after these services.

- *Non-Local Services* — will require additional scheduling and logistics. Of course, we wish to minister to you if at all possible, but it may not be feasible for our pastors to be involved in out-of-town services.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SERVICE – The purpose of a Christian service is to help grieving people hear vital truths from God’s Word in the context of worship and to derive hope and comfort from Christ.

It is a time of ...

Celebration – When a believer in Christ dies, it is right to celebrate his graduation into God’s presence. Christians celebrate through singing hymns of praise and reading of Scripture, especially passages that describe what happens at death.

Comfort – Knowing a believer is secure in paradise brings great comfort for family and friends who grieve their absence. Affirming that truth in praise and Scripture reading is essential. Paul reminds us in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.” Christians grieve with hope.

Challenge – If Christ carries in returning, everyone will die. Therefore, it is important that the service proclaim suitably the assurance that the gospel brings for all who believe. Coming to Christ is an ideal way to be strengthened and encouraged in the journey of grief.

SAMPLE ORDER OF WORSHIP – The following is the customary Order of Worship for a funeral or memorial service at the church.

Prelude
Call to Worship and Invocation
Congregational Hymn
Time of Remembrance by selected friends or family members
Congregational Hymn or perhaps a soloist
The Homily
The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Consecration
Congregational Hymn
Benediction
Postlude

SAMPLE GRAVESIDE SERVICE – The following is usually included at the graveside or other place of interment:

- Scripture Reading
- Words of Committal
- Prayer
- Benediction
- Fraternal or Civil Rites Tribute

SCRIPTURE AND HYMNS – In preparing the service, you may wish to have the minister select the hymns and scriptures for the service. Alternatively, you may prefer to make your own selections. The following lists give a sample of appropriate passages and hymns.

<i>Old Testament</i>		<i>New Testament</i>	
Job 19:25-27	Psalms 139	Matthew 5:4	1 Corinthians 13
Psalms 16	Ecclesiastes 3	Matthew 11:28	1 Corinthians 15
Psalms 23	Ecclesiastes 9	Matthew 28	2 Corinthians 1
Psalms 27	Isaiah 25	Luke 23	2 Corinthians 5
Psalms 34:18	Isaiah 40	John 1	Ephesians 1, 2
Psalms 39	Isaiah 43	John 3	Philippians 1
Psalms 46	Isaiah 44	John 6	Colossians 3
Psalms 90	Isaiah 55	John 10, 11	2 Timothy 1, 2
Psalms 116	Isaiah 65	John 14	Hebrews 9, 10
Psalms 121	Lamentations 3	Romans 8	1 John 5
Psalms 130		Romans 14	Revelation 7, 21

Hymns - from the church hymnbook

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (26)	Eternal Father, Strong to Save (575)
Abide with Me (41)	I Know That My Redeemer Liveth (218)
Amazing Grace (202)	Like A River Glorious (494)
And Can It Be (203)	My Jesus, I Love Thee (364)
Be Still, My Soul (347)	Nearer, My God to Thee (393)
Be Thou My Vision (382)	Now Thank We All Our God (556)
Blessed Assurance (345)	O God, Our Help in Ages Past (52)
Blest Be the Tie That Binds (286)	O the Deep, Deep Love Of Jesus (211)
For All the Saints (546)	On Jordan's Stormy Banks (552)
Great Is Thy Faithfulness (43)	The King of Love My Shepherd Is (468)
He Hideth My Soul (496)	We're Marching to Zion (555)
He Leadeth Me (461)	What A Friend We Have in Jesus (435)
How Great Thou Art (4)	What Wondrous Love Is This (177)
It Is Well with My Soul (493)	When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (185)
Jesus Lives, And So Shall I (224)	When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder (543)
Jesus, Lover of My Soul (466)	When We All Get to Heaven (542)

SCHEDULING THE SERVICE – As you schedule a time for the service, the following factors should be considered:

- The *optimal days* for family members to attend – considering holidays, travel, employment demands, weather conditions, etc.
- The *schedule* of the participants in the service and other functions that may be planned already in the Worship Center or Chapel. It would be helpful if you can identify at least two or three optional days which would work for the family.

Remember, since *civil or fraternal rites* are not part of the Christian worship service, these organizations should pay tribute to the deceased at *another hour and place*, such as at the interment.

APPLICABLE FEES FOR BRIARWOOD CHURCH FACILITIES

WORSHIP CENTER OR CHAPEL - There is *no charge for members* for the use of the Worship Center or the Chapel for services in memory of a loved one.

Worship Center – seats 2600

Chapel – seats 175

AUDIO COPY – Audio copies either as an MP3 recording or on a CD are provided at no charge. There is a \$2 charge for each additional CD ordered.

VIDEO COPY – Video services are only offered if requested, and if scheduled with enough time to make arrangements. They normally involve a fee for editing and production.

STREAMING – Currently, we are not set up to stream services during the week on a routine basis.

HONORARIUM – These arrangements are made on an individual basis between the family and those involved in the service (*i.e. pastor, organist, vocalist or instrumental soloists*).

IV. WHAT TO DO

AFTER THE FUNERAL

Losing your spouse or loved one will most likely be the single most stressful event in your life. Along with the deep sense of loss and sorrow, you will face a confusing mass of legal and financial documents. We encourage you to reduce the stress of settling an estate and planning for the future by using some of these simple organizing tips and seeking the advice of trusted advisors.

TAKE TIME – Of first importance is to take time for grieving before making important decisions. The emotional strain on you in the death of your loved one may distort your objectivity in viewing certain situations.

SEEK ADVICE – You may have little choice in making some decisions within the first few months after your loved one's death. Therefore, you may need advice from several financial experts, both in settling the estate and for your own immediate and long-term financial and estate concerns. Such advisors may include an attorney, a banker, a trust officer, a tax accountant, a stockbroker, insurance agents, etc. Do not rush to make any major financial decisions. Always seek wise counsel from those whom you trust the most before making any major financial decisions.

- The *probate process* is complex. You will need to consult experts who are trusted advisors, such as a family attorney or financial services professional to guide you through the processes and paperwork.
- There may be certain circumstances that demand the attention of other estate experts, such as certified public accountants who offer tax advice, an estate-planning attorney, and/or a trust officer at a bank.
- Additional expenses that you may face are the funeral expenses, hospital or nursing home bills, and creditors seeking recovery of debts on joint accounts. You may need to develop a personal household budget.

- The information in this booklet is intended to help you prepare for and cope with some of these matters. To help you in greater detail with this, *seek the advice of financial and legal professionals* with regard to all financial and legal matters.

GATHER INFORMATION – You will need to gather information needed to settle the estate and plan for your financial future. *Nowadays, this process will include finding the necessary passwords to access financial accounts and computer sites.*

Below are listed some of the items you will need.

- *Important Papers* - Locate important papers in your home or in a bank safety deposit box. If you cannot locate the documents you need, call a family member, or trusted advisor to help.
- *Death Certificate* – Secure copies of the death certificate. It would be advisable to *order a number of original copies* (perhaps 10-20) to avoid the delay associated with requesting additional original copies. For some matters, an original certificate will be needed; for others, a copy of the certificate will suffice. Always ask the person at the company or institution ahead of time what they will need.
- *Birth Certificate* – a copy of the deceased’s and if applicable, any children under 25 years of age and yourself.
- *Marriage Certificate* – often you must have it to prove that you were married.
- *Social Security Numbers* – the social security number of the deceased and if applicable any children under 25 years of age and yourself.
- *The Deceased’s Will* – the will is discussed in more detail below.
- *List of Bank Account and Statements* – both separate and joint accounts and recent statements from those accounts. Gather checkbooks, savings passbooks, certificates of deposit, etc.

- *List of Credit Cards* – both separate and joint accounts. Gather recent statements.
- *List of Mortgages and Debts* – locate the most recent mortgage statement
- *Recent Tax Returns*
- *List of Insurance Policies (with numbers)* – i.e. life, health, home, car
- *Armed Services Record*
- *Recent Statements of Mutual Funds, Stocks* – both separate and joint accounts.
- *Property Deeds and Titles* – i.e. home and auto
- *Partnership or Trust Agreements*
- *Retirement Plan and Employee Benefit Documents*
- *Leases, Notes, and anything else* related to your loved one's money and/or property.

IDENTIFY SOURCES OF BENEFITS

- *Life Insurance* – You will need to identify life insurance policies that were held by your loved one at the time of death. In addition to purchased policies, do not forget smaller policies that may have been in effect because of membership in various clubs or organizations, e.g. “AAA.” You will need to contact the insurance agent and company by phone and by letter. They will need either an original copy of the death certificate or a certified copy of it. Life insurance benefits disbursed to the named beneficiary are tax-free and “creditor proof” (*from the deceased's own debt*). Insurance companies usually disburse benefits within thirty days after receipt of all required paperwork.

- *Social Security* – You will need to contact Social Security directly to determine the survivor’s death benefit. Here are some general guidelines:
 1. Social Security – contact by phone or by website at www.socialsecurity.gov
 2. If there are no minor children under age 19, Social Security will not be available to the surviving spouse until age 60.
 3. If you and your spouse were already collecting Social Security benefits before your spouse died, you will receive only the greater of the two benefits.
 4. If there are one or more children under age 16, you, as the surviving spouse, are entitled to Social Security payments until the child turns age 16, 18, or 19 if the child remains in high school. After that time, the Social Security benefit will stop until you reach age 60.

- *Employee Benefits Plans* – You will need to contact your loved one’s employer and speak with the person responsible for administering employee benefits concerning....
 1. Continuation of health insurance benefits for you and your family.
 2. Life insurance policies
 3. Company stock and stock options
 4. Pension plans (see below)
 5. Profit sharing plans
 6. 401(k) accounts

If your loved one owned or controlled a business, you will need to make many decisions since the employees, customers, and creditors will want to know whether the business will continue. You will need to consult those who assist in running the business.

Pension Plans – If you are a surviving spouse, you may have a right to part of your deceased spouse’s pension. The money you are entitled to receive is called a *survivor’s benefit*. You will need

to identify all of the former employers for whom your spouse worked and assess what pension benefits may be available.

1. There are different provisions for employees of private companies, for employees of federal (including military), state, and local agencies, and for employees of churches and church-related facilities.
2. If your spouse died after retirement, you should start receiving benefit payments immediately.
3. If your spouse died before retirement, the plan can start making payments as soon as the date upon which your spouse would have reached retirement.

HANDLE ASSETS, LIABILITY AND ESTATE MATTERS

- *Bank Accounts* – If married, typically, joint survivorship accounts that were in both your names become yours upon the death of your spouse. *You will need to change the name on the account.* If the account was in your loved one’s name alone, then the account will be part of your loved one’s estate.
- *Wills & Estate* – Someone must take care of the will and estate matters after the loss of your loved one. It is important to find the most recent will. You will need this if you are applying to the court for probate.
 1. *A Will* - If there is a will, the Executor is the person named in the will to act as the legal representative to handle the deceased person’s estate.
 2. *No Will* - If no will exists or if the will did not name an executor, then the court will appoint an *Administrator* to handle the estate of the person who died. If there is not a will, the *state law of intestate* succession decides who gets what and how much.

Settling an estate will usually take a minimum of several months. The main responsibilities of the person handling the estate are to:

1. Find the will if there is one
 2. Gather the assets
 3. Pay the estate's (or person's) legitimate debts (*including funeral expenses and any attorney's fees*)
 4. Identify any money owed to the estate
 5. Pay any taxes due
 6. Distribute the assets according to the will (*assuming there is something left over*)
- *Bills* – A person's estate is required to pay any outstanding bills to anyone that the person legitimately owes money. The estate pays the bills that are in the name of the person who died. If married and the bills are in both spouse's name, then they are jointly responsible; in this case, you must repay the debt even though your spouse has died.
 - *Income Tax* – when a person dies, his legal representative (the Executor or Administrator) must file a *final tax return* for them. This is usually the responsibility of the spouse. All required forms must be filed, all taxes must be paid (including any previous unpaid taxes), and all beneficiaries must be informed of which amounts they received from the estate that are taxable. It is very important to file the final tax return on time; otherwise, the estate may be charged a late-filing penalty, plus interest on any balance owing, and any penalty charged.
 - *Credit Cards* – It is important to inform the credit card company of the death of your loved one. *If the card was issued only in the name of the deceased, then payment is due for interest on any balance from the date of death forward.* The credit card company will also need to know who the executor is since a statement will go to the executor for settlement. If married and the *card* was issued in both of your names, ask the company to *remove the name of your deceased spouse*, and have the card transferred to your name (you will be responsible for any outstanding debt).
 - *Utilities* – It is important to inform the utility companies of the death of your loved one. If married and the bill is in the name of

the person who died, you may desire to *have the utility transfer it to your name*. You will need to consider whether you want to change the name listing in the telephone directory.

- *Homeowner's Insurance* – Notify the homeowner's insurance agent of the death of your loved one. If married, make certain that your name is listed on the homeowner's insurance.
- *Transferring Title to Land or Property* – If married and the property is registered in both of your names jointly, with what is referred to as a "right of survivorship," then the property passes to you on your spouse's death. However, you will still need a copy of the death certificate for this. For other types of ownership, your spouse's share of the property belongs to the estate.
- *Vehicle Registration & Insurance* – If married and vehicles are registered in your spouse's name or in both of your names, you will need the registrations and insurance transferred or changed into your name.
- *Stocks, Mutual Funds, & Other Investments* – Check with your loved one's brokerage firm or financial planner concerning any investments. Request a current statement of all of your loved one's accounts. If married, change the ownership of any joint survivorship accounts to your name.

EXECUTING THE WILL AND DISPOSITIONING ESTATE - Detailed information on executing your loved one's will and distributing the estate is contained in the material compiled by the Deacons, which is available from the Pastoral Care Ministry Office.

THE DEACONS SUGGEST THESE FINAL THOUGHTS....

Take Care of Yourself – With so many things demanding your attention when your loved one dies, this can be a challenging time. Some days will be better than others will. Do what you can on your good days. Sometimes, you will simply have to let things sit for a

while. When this happens, take time to recognize how much you have accomplished.

Watch your physical health. Many counselors recommend that you remember the acrostic “DEER” which stands for **drink** water – stay hydrated; **eat** healthily – be careful of too much weight gain or loss; **exercise** regularly – for all kinds of reasons; and **rest** sufficiently – grieving alone is an exhausting process.

Be Cautious – Some people will follow the obituary section of the newspaper to prey on people at their time of grief. Use your best judgment if someone suddenly contacts you to sell a service of some sort. Ignore them if they pressure you.

Do Not Decide in Haste – During the first year after the death of a loved one, it is a good idea to postpone making certain far-reaching decisions. These include selling your house, changing employment, moving in with or closer to family, loaning money to family members, or making a major investment.

Educate Yourself – Do not rely solely and completely on your professional advisors, family, friends, or this material. Consider:

- Taking a financial planning course
- Joining an investment club
- Checking with other survivors about financial mistakes they have made.
- Joining a grief recovery group.

Your Adult Children: If you have adult children, some experts suggest that you should not rely on them for advice unless you are certain that:

- They are knowledgeable about finances.
- They have your best interest at heart.
- They do not want to borrow money from what at first glance might seem like a large “nest egg.”

V. WHAT TO DO

IN YOUR GRIEF

Dealing with the grief associated with the death of your loved one will not be easy. It is not uncommon for grief from the loss of a spouse to last for two years. Grief from the loss of a child can last much longer. Our hope and confidence is as you adjust to the “new normal” in life without your loved one, that God will draw you close to Himself as He comforts you (II Cor.1:3-5).

You must take the time to grieve. As God spoke through Solomon, there is a time to weep and a time to mourn (Ecclesiastes 3:3,4). The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will use several means to minister including the Bible, prayer, and members of the church who are here to help you.

Please feel free to...

- Call upon your Shepherding Pastor, Community Pastor, or the Pastoral Care Minister to talk about what you are going through.
- Take advantage of bereavement support groups like GriefShare which is offered periodically at our church.
- Never feel ashamed to ask your friends, family, and Congregational Community for help. Let them minister to you!
- Contact the Briarwood Counseling Ministry. There are trained counselors to help you in your time of grief.
- Grace Ladies is a ministry designed to minister to women who have lost their husbands. A member of this ministry will contact widows during this difficult time.

Most importantly, *rely on the Lord*. Look to Him. Listen to Him in His Word. Cry out to Him in your prayers. Return to times of public worship with God’s people as soon as you can.

Matthew 18:20 *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*

The chapters of the Bible listed above on p.7 as suggestions for the worship service would be worthwhile reading. Also consider...

Psalm 116:15 – *“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”*

Philippians 1:21-23 – *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.”*

Philippians 3:20 – *“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”*

1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14 – *“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.”*

John 11:25, 26 - *“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

Also consider these words from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*:

Q.37 – *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?*

A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united in Christ, do rest in their graves, until the resurrection.

Q. 38 – *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?*

A. At the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the Day of Judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

Bob Moorehead, in his book *Counsel Yourself and Others from the Bible*¹ gives the following counsel from God's Word:

1. *Know that God understands and cares about your grief.*

No one cried more than David when told of the death of Absalom, his son. He felt so devastated that, at first, he could not bring himself to join in celebrating the tremendous victory his army has just secured.

Yet David knew his God, and wrote, "*Thou hast taken account of my wanderings; put my tears in Thy bottle; are they not in Thy book?*" (Psalm 56:8 NASB). ...God must have many bottles to be able to put all the world's tears in them.

The promise of God never fails: "*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit*" (Psalm 34:18, NIV). He knows, He cares, and He will act.

Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, His friend. He knows what it is to experience loss, and is more than able to help us when we are walking through the valley.

2. *Ask God to turn your sorrow into joy.*

[That] may sound impossible, but this is what Scripture actually teaches. Just before Jesus left his disciples and went to the cross, He said:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. Whenever a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore, you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one (will) take your joy away from you" (John 16:20-22, NASB).

¹ Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Books, Questar Publishers, Inc., 1994

Notice what Jesus said, “*Your grief will turn to joy.*” He did not say, “Your grief will be replaced by joy.” No, the very thing that brought grief because of pain is the same thing that later brings joy. What happens? God creates a metamorphosis. He takes the very source of our sorrow, and turns it into joy.

Review the wonderful memories you have of your loved one.

Death may snatch your loved one away, but it cannot rob you of the wonderful memories you have. Bring those memories to mind from time to time. Paul wrote,

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” (Philippians 4:8, NASB)

There is no area of life where this is more applicable than in the loss of a loved one. Cherish the memories of good times, of goals reached together, of the birth of your children, of birthdays, of anniversaries, and of other happy times.

3. *Spend time praising God.*

The praise and worship of God wards off sorrow and sadness. Isaiah realized this when he spoke of “*...beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair*” (Isaiah 61:36, NIV).

When Jonah was in the belly of the fish, grieving over his disobedience, he began to praise God. Soon thereafter God caused the great fish to spit out Jonah onto dry land!

When Paul and Silas were severely beaten and then thrown in jail for preaching the gospel, they began to sing praises to the Lord. At midnight, God caused a great earthquake, opening all the jail doors.

In your own times of grief, sing praises to God. Especially go back through Psalms 95-150 and meditate on all the great praise passages.

4. *Get involved immediately in ministering to others.*

Becoming a servant to others has a way of dissolving the cutting grief in our own lives. Paul reminded the Ephesians, “*Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men*” (Ephesians 6:7, NIV).

For one thing, when we are busy ministering to others, we do not have time for self-pity. Beyond that, pouring out our lives into others is therapeutic. As we serve others, we ourselves are blessed.

Jesus taught that [His followers are to serve one another]:

“...whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43b, NASB).

It is in ministering to others that [His followers] realize [their calling in Him].

5. *Move forward with your life.*

That may sound trite, but it is true. Paul himself said, “*one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind, and straining toward what is ahead, I press on*” (Philippians 3:13, NIV). That is what God wants you to do, too.

In order to do this effectively, you need to set some vocational, educational, or other goals. The longer you put off moving back into the mainstream of life, the harder it will be to do it.

There is a legitimate time to grieve, but then we need to move ahead. Solomon wrote there is, “*A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.*” (Ecclesiastes 3:4, NIV).

6. *Find your strength in the Lord.*

Friends are wonderful, relatives are helpful, and co-workers are kind and compassionate. They all fill a very important role when we are going through the agony of grief. However, ultimately, you need to find your strength in the Lord.

A good example of this is in I Samuel 30. The Amalekites had raided the town of Ziklag, burned it, and taken captive all who were there. When David and his army arrived at Ziklag, they saw the horrible carnage and devastation. They grieved for their wives and children. Scripture says, *“David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep”* (I Samuel 30:4, NIV). That is serious grieving! To make matters worse, some talked of stoning David. It was surely [one of] his lowest hour, the loneliest time of his life. However, the Bible says, *“David found strength in the Lord his God”* (I Samuel 30:6b).

[David] did not find strength in his army, his weapons, his clever strategies, or his own strength, but in the Lord. What a testimony! It is no wonder David later said, *“The Lord is the stronghold of my life”* (Psalm 27:1, NIV).

By now, you may be wondering how I handled the loss of a best friend. It was not easy, but knowing he is in heaven and knowing the Lord appoints the day of our death, I have rested my case with God’s sovereignty.

Remember that grief does not last forever, David wrote, *“weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning”* (Psalm 30:5, NIV).

Some individuals may wish to discuss the contents of this booklet well in advance of their own death. We encourage this to lighten the load the family will bear when a loved one dies.

VI. IMPORTANT PHONE NUMERS

BRIARWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In the event that you are unsure of whom to contact regarding your loss, please use the following list as a guideline.

Pastoral Care Department

Pastoral Care Pastor ----- 205.776.5350

Pastoral Care Pastor's Administrative Assistants ----- 205.776.5227

If Pastoral Care is unavailable, please call one of the following:

Senior Pastor ----- 205.776.5204

Senior Pastor's Administrative Assistant ----- 205.775.5204

Executive Pastor ----- 205.776.5384

Facilities Services ----- 205.776.5317

Audio/Visual Services ----- 205.775.5277

Main Church Number ----- 205.776.5200