



## 2. Comfort and Care

### TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

After viewing my last video on “Healing Matters” my daughter WhatsApped me, “It might be nice to share how you and Mum have supported grieving families.” Since the suggestion was good Shammi and I sat down together on Thursday, May 13<sup>th</sup> and noted down how we comforted, consoled and cared for people who have experienced the loss of a dear one.

Little did we realize that the very next day we would need to be comforted and consoled, as our Lord decided to call my dear brother Deepak home very suddenly. The verse that came to my mind at the surreal moment watching my brother’s mortal remains being laid to rest in Calicut was this. *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of COMPASSION and the God of all COMFORT, who comforts us in ALL our troubles so that we can comfort those in ANY trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Cor 1:3-4)*

Let me share what Shammi and I with God’s help have used to comfort those who have lost a loved one.

#### 1. Fool’s rush where angels fear to tread:

The first thing is that we never rush and saying anything to the grieving person beyond a hug and an expression of sorrow. We then wait for the person to share whatever is on their mind and heart. All we need to do is at appropriate times say a few words to encourage them to speak. At times we may use words to help them get a hold of their emotions.

But, then a point will come when we will have to say words of comfort and do some practical things to bring comfort. Let me present four things we say or do in no particular sequence. They can be used as per the situation and as led by the Holy Spirit. Some may not need to be used as well!

#### 2. We present the truth about God:

When comforting someone it is not a good idea to say, “I know what you are going through” or “I know how you are feeling.” Instead, we usually say, “We can’t imagine how you must be feeling.” Why? Because that is the real truth. Everyone’s grief is unique. In addition, such statements rarely reduce the pain the person is going through.

We then go on to say that “While we don’t really understand the extent of your grief, God does.” Then we share this message that I have adapted and added to from a thought expressed by Philip Yancey in his book “The Jesus I Never Knew.”

The Old Testament is filled with writers including David who tell God, *“You don’t know what it’s like we are going through here on earth!” Job of course takes the cake when he brazenly asks God: “Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees?” (Job 10:4)*

While during the Old Testament these were valid questions they are totally invalid in the New Testament. You see God came as a human in Jesus and lived among us. He was well versed with all kinds of troubles. I actually like to think that one of the many reasons for Jesus' Incarnation is to answer Job's accusation: "Do you have eyes of flesh?" Yes, while Jesus was on earth, God did have eyes of flesh. Eyes that wept at Lazarus's tomb and a heart that ached when He longed like a mother hen to gather Jerusalem under His wings. Yes, the truth is God understands our pains, knows what tears feel like and longs to comfort us in our troubles. That comforts people.

### **3. Present the pragmatic truth:**

Next, there is a story in the Bible about the death of the child born out of the adultery committed by King David and Bathsheba. When the child fell ill for seven days David sat in sackcloth, refusing to eat or drink anything and pleaded with God to spare the child's life. When the child dies his attendants are scared to break the news to David thinking he may do something desperate. David notices them whispering and asks, "Is the boy dead?" When they answered in the affirmative the Bible says, *"Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request, they served him food, and he ate."* (2 Sam 12:20)

David was able to almost immediately get back into his routine because he took a very pragmatic approach. When asked by his puzzled attendants about this swift change in behavior and attitude, David replies. *"While the child was alive, I fasted and wept, thinking God might have mercy on me and the child would live. But now that he's dead, why fast? Can I bring him back now? I can go to him, but he can't come to me."* (2 Sam 12:22-23)

One of the most pragmatic words of comfort Shammi and I received were from our former pastor Rev B J Premiah who comforted us similarly with these words when Shammi's father passed away. *"He is in a better place, in a better condition and the better company of Jesus."* Like David, it helped us get a very pragmatic perspective of the situation. We have comforted many others with those same words or variations of it.

Another very pragmatic perspective is Paul's beautiful explanation of what life and death mean to a Christian when he says, *'For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.'* (Philippians 1:21)

### **4. Present practical help to the person:**

People grieving go through a roller-coaster of emotions. The negative spectrum can include depression, disappointment, defeat, guilt and the like. This distress can make the best of us lose our normal efficiency in doing practical matters. We have found offering food and running errands for them is a very practical way to help, during the first week to ten days.

Other common practical help is when the spouse or family members left behind lack knowledge or skills of tasks usually handled by the deceased person. Simple things like if they need to move - helping them sell items like cars and getting a good price or organizing packers and movers. Of course, many will also need help with sorting out legal paperwork, bank accounts, etc. Be willing and available to help or to connect them with help when needed.

### **5. Present the eternal truth about God:**

Finally, when dealing with a Christian family, we remind them of God's eternal truth. We remind them that by believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus we have the hope of meeting our dearly departed ones one day. We remind them of what Jesus told Martha. *"I am the resurrection and the life. The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live. Indeed, everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe that?"* (John 11: 25-26)

If our answer to that question is "Yes, I believe." then we can have the comforting assurance that one day we will be reunited with our loved ones. I am comforted that due to the love of Christ my brother Deepak and I will be reunited.

I am bold to say as Paul said, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

Amen

## CONNECT WITH US

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