

How to Respond to Those Who Are Grieving With Godly, Appropriate Compassion

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 have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Do Say

I'm sorry

Tell me how you feel

I can't imagine how painful this is

You're entitled to grieve

Can I help with your children?

It must be difficult to understand why

You must really miss him/her

How is this affecting you?

Let me offer you my support

It's okay to feel hurt

I can't imagine what it's like to lose a child

I'm so sorry for your loss

You must really miss him/her

Don't Say

Maybe it's for the best

I know how you feel

It's a blessing in disguise

You've got to be brave

You need to be strong for your kids

This is God's will for your life

He/she is in a better place

You mustn't wallow in self-pity

Get a hold of yourself

Keep a stiff upper lip

Be thankful you have another child

God never gives us more than we can handle

You need to be thankful you had them for so long

*"The horrible things people say to grieving people are revealing. For instance, I've heard people say to a woman whose child had just died, 'God must've wanted her in heaven,' and 'I know you'll get over this.' Worst of all they say, 'At least you have the other two,' and 'You can always have another one.' One grieving woman said to me, 'I don't doubt Anna is with God. I only know that she is not with me.' The clichés she had to endure went into her like knives. She knew they were well intended, but knowing that didn't help much." John Garvey, *Death and the Rest of Our Life**

*This material is condensed from the syllabus of "Sickness and Suffering," a class taught by Dr. David Calhoun at Covenant Theological Seminary.