

# T R A N S I T I O N S

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## GRIEF AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

*A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.*

Ecclesiastes 3:4

If you have ever known a time in your life when marking a special occasion was especially difficult, then you are not alone. Meeting up with certain dates on the calendar can be particularly trying when they mean that the heart has to meet up with them. Grief is a primary reason for such difficult encounters with time, place, and season. Grief is a barometer that directs the heart.

Grief is a universal experience yet a most personal journey. Grief comes into our lives due to losses of loved ones due to deaths, expected or unexpected, divorce, fires, hurricanes, tornados, accidents, terrorism, and suicide. Loss comes because of empty nest, retirement, and relocation. Even the joy of marriage, a new job or a new home can prompt grief; sadness may come because even though there is a new excitement ahead, it means leaving certain people and places in order to begin something new.

When birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, holidays, and graduations come about, they may be too difficult to face by participating in a gathering or even acknowledging it. The heart registers the acknowledgement. Depending upon when and what the event is, a heart will begin to steer as to how to meet that given date/occasion. Perhaps it is best to acknowledge it alone without others present or with a few close individuals who will be sensitive to your feelings. Maybe it is best not to give a date attention at all so that it can pass without too much emotional tension. There may come a time in the future when grief lessens and that day can be faced with greater strength.

Another way to address special occasions is to do something for someone anonymously. If a child or spouse has died, it may be helpful to contact a local church or charity to see if you can make a donation in memory of a loved one. If a soldier has died, you may contact the respective branch of the military to see if you can make a donation to a special fund in his or her memory. If doing something other than giving money is more meaningful to you, ask these same organizations if you can volunteer your time to help them. Ask them what their needs are and see if there is a need that corresponds to meeting the emotional need inside of you. The point is not so much what you do as it is doing something that makes you feel as though your act of giving of self makes a contribution to a broader cause and blesses the memory of your loved one. Take the time to consider how you can best meet those needs inside of yourself and the Lord will guide you as to where to offer your time, talent or treasure

The heart directs us as to whether we move with caution or readiness in a given situation. Sometimes grief can be so raw that our hearts sound the alarm and we are not to move to invest ourselves at all for a time. The heart is our guide and it is a reservoir for our love, strength, and courage. Because grief depletes energy and momentum, there are times when it is valuable to sit and surrender to sadness in order to be filled again with hope. Giving what we do not have within ourselves is futile. Being kind to ourselves and mindful of a season of acute grief is an act that actually aids in replenishing energy and potential. Do not berate yourself for not being able to participate in certain days as you once did. Do not let others berate you either nor coax you into something for which your heart is not ready. Grief is personal. Listen to your heart.

No one—no one—knows you better than Jesus does. Trust the Lord to be with you and to direct your needs at this time. By the presence of the Holy Spirit, He will guide, help, and comfort you. Let Him. When you do, you will come to find that although life will not be as it was before, it will still have meaning and hope. Let Jesus carry you through times of goodbye. Let Jesus be your companion through all days, stages, and places in your life. Jesus understands the human challenges we face. He is the One who gave His life in the interest of traveling with us through them all.

*Lord Jesus, You know those sad and unwanted places that hearts must navigate through when grief comes into our lives. You promised to be with us—no matter what. In matters that mark the calendar and mark our eyes with tears and longing, be our peace. Help us, Jesus, to settle ourselves in Your care and promises so that we can live with Your supernatural equilibrium. Your love knows no end. Throughout all the endings of our lives, Your love remains our steadiness and the reason for our every beginning. In Thee, Lord Christ, Amen.*