

Church Family Care

One of the privileges of a church family is to “weep with those who weep”(Romans 12:15). As we seek to give wise care and comfort to those who have a measure of pain due to physical and mental illness, emotional distress, relational brokenness, spiritual doubt, or all the above, I suggest a few things to do and not do.

When we grieve in community, consider a few things not to do:

- **Don’t make careless statements.** “She is better off now.” “I understand how you feel.” “You just have to get over it.” If we are not careful, our insensitive comments will enforce a natural tendency to emotionally detach when going through difficult times.
- **Don’t make it about you.** Many people go through similar struggles, but unless the person asks about your situation, please do not make their pain about you.
- **Don’t attempt to answer theological questions.** If you walk with people through the valley of adversity, there will opportunity to help people struggle with theological issues, but not in the early days of suffering.

When we grieve in community, consider seek to do such things:

- **Pray, pray, pray.** Ask people how we can pray for them.
- **Acknowledge people’s pain.** Do not pretend that nothing has happened in their life. We do not need to make a big deal of it but acknowledge it.
- **Allow the grief-stricken person to talk about their pain.** Some people want to talk about their loss and pain. Some people do not. For example, when your friend’s spouse dies, their marriage hasn’t died. Most people want to talk about the joys and sorrows of life with their soul mate.
- **Allow people to emotionally process their loss in their unique manner.** There is no one magical way to move toward healing.
- **Give practical help.** When crisis strikes a family, people still have to do life. Practical helps such as carpooling children, bringing meals, helping with babysitting, going to the grocery store, cleaning the house are invaluable.
- **Show up, Hush up and Follow up.** “Be quick to listen and slow to speak.” (James 1:19) Follow up. If you are a good friend, or primary mercy-giver to someone who has gone through a loss or tragedy, follow up daily for several days, weekly for two or three months, and regularly for a year. This is where a Stephen Minister can be so helpful.