

Loving Relating Encouraging -----In Grief Ministry

The Purpose of LRE:

To **consistently** love others **unconditionally** with the love of Jesus Christ, expecting **nothing** in return.

Who said: People don't care how much you know about them when they know how much you care?

Authentic Ministry:

1. Comes out of a heart for God
2. Grounded in authority of scripture and spiritual passion
 - a. "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us." Rom 5:8
 - b. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? And Jesus said, Love the Lord your Godand your neighbor as yourself." Matt. 22:36-39
 - c. "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" Luke 15:4
 - d. "...carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Gal 6:1-2
3. Listening is critical to any ministry
4. They have a story to tell
5. Why should we care enough to act? Out of our love of God comes a desire to BE God's hands and feet in loving others. To reach out we must CARE:
 - a. Redefine our mission as reaching with love
 - b. Spiritually feeling God's burden
 - c. Gaining Joy through action

Goal:

To show compassion consistently with sincerity and the love of Christ

Don't:

- Don't lead; follow
- Feel like you have to problem solve for them
- Feel like you have to say 'all the right things'
- Talk more than you listen
- Don't promise won't you can't/won't deliver
- Do anything out of obligation
- Ask "how are you?"
- Say you 'understand' or "I know how you feel"
- As an individual, take on too much; never feel obligated to act

Do:

1. BE completely PRESENT; focused intently on them and not other things
2. Pray for God's blessing upon your conversation or interaction **before** you have it
3. Show empathy and sincere care
4. Listen carefully
5. Acknowledge their feelings (I can see why you feel that way); 'mirror' their comments
6. Desire to reach out and love them out of God's love & grace for you
7. Use positive body language (solid eye contact, don't cross arms, etc)
8. Pray with them or ASK if you can pray with/for them
9. Pray God GIVES: Peace (that transcends understanding, my fav), strength, purpose, etc
10. Pray God TAKES: Pain, brokenness, extreme heart break and sense of loss, etc
11. Go and Do what you feel God leading you to in any situation
12. Ask them what you can pray for **SPECIFICALLY**
13. Ask "how is today going for you?"
14. Pastoral support and counseling (Rev. Kurt's gift and training in grief)

Framework of Ministry:

1. Identify our target audience (our church, our community, obits)
 - a. People still reeling from past grief
 - b. People with new loss
2. Identify needs of specific grief situations
3. Create a letter of outreach for the grieved shortly after death
4. Create a plan of communication (letters, phone calls, visits, note cards, goodie bags, etc)
 - a. Acknowledge important time points
 - i. Each week following loss is grieved for several months (i.e. every Monday is one more week counted)
 - ii. The Anniversary of loss
 - iii. Birthday of deceased
 - iv. Every holiday (Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc) take **the 'adjective' out of the holiday. Birthdays aren't 'happy', Christmas isn't 'Merry' etc; acknowledge but don't 'wish' them happy or merry, etc**
 - v. The day of the month of loss (i.e. 21st of every month)
 - b. Track personal interactions to know how they are progressing and address specific needs as they arise.
 - c. Communicate to team via email
5. Be flexible to meet the needs of those we seek to reach....match people that seem to have a 'connection' that will bond them.
6. Utilize Sandy Fanning and others for training on areas that will improve our ability to care for our folks i.e. active listening

7. Consider assigning 1-2 people to each person to pray over so the prayer can be deep, focused and very intentional. (too many names can reduce prayer to a quick mention of name only)
8. Minister in a way that is unique to each team person and really connects to the grieved. (we need to be ourselves in our outreach using these things as guides)
10. Consider having each team member write their own initial letter of outreach vs. a single letter for the first contact.

Grief areas:

1. Loss of child
 - a. Parents struggle to function little lone parent their other children.
 - b. Offer to take other children for activities
 - c. Run errands
 - d. Clean house
 - e. Baby-sit
2. Loss of spouse
 - a. The emptiness of a lonely house
 - b. Many things needing done that spouse always did (i.e. fixing things, cooking, etc)
 - c. Run errands
 - d. Clean house
2. Loss of parent; realization of aging and impending death, loss of relationship
3. Sudden unexpected loss
 - a. Brings greater shock of loss
 - b. No time for closer in relationships
 - c. No time to say “goodbye”
 - d. Guilt may (will likely) accompany the loss
4. Long illness
 - a. Death may be seen as a gift rather than a loss
5. Suicide
6. Divorce
7. Other _____

Opportunities of Support for the grieved: Some may depend on familiarity with family

1. Provide aid and comfort to the family in the early stages by bringing water, snacks, etc.....ask extended family if there are any logistical things you can help with.
2. Let them know you are praying daily and intentionally for their needs.
3. Hugs, pats on the back or arm show care and concern
4. Spiritual cards and notes of encouragement; home made or store bought
5. When God leads you to call or act, **then call or act**. Meet God’s time
6. “I just want you to know that you’ve been on my heart and I’m praying fordaily” “Is there something specific I can pray for you?”

7. "Is there anything I can do for you?...anything that needs done that I can do"
8. At church: if there's a chance to "lay hands" during prayer time....Do it!
9. At church: a warm squeeze or hug during greeting time lifts the grieved and shows them they're not alone.
10. Food is appreciated as people deep in grief can't think far enough ahead to plan a menu
11. **Text** scripture and notes of encouragement. It allows the person to know you are reaching out but doesn't require them to interact.
12. "bag of goodies" with a note of encouragement or scripture
13. Poems (some written by Sarah Filbey and others)

The grieved:

1. Are warmed to know they are not going through this alone.
2. If there're up for a phone call they'll take it; if not they won't answer but a number on caller ID shows you care
3. Can't think and process beyond the moment.....knowing people are intentionally praying will be felt and appreciated
4. Don't ask how 'it' happened; explanations take the person back to the moment to relive the events over and over again. Dead is dead to the person and the 'how' is irrelevant. You may have heard it once; they may have been asked it 100 times.
5. The farther removed from us the person is the greater impact reaching out has. We expect our pastor, family and friends to reach out.....but folks we know less well show us God's grace and love in entirely new ways.
6. Deal with a great sense of other's lives moving forward while they're 'stuck in a ditch'
7. Can be hurt when people (we expect through relationship) who don't know what to say, say and do nothing