

# "HIS" and "HER" GRIEF



*"Why can't she understand that I hurt too?"*

*"I can't stop crying, why isn't he crying?"*

*"We don't talk like we used to."*

Do these statements sound familiar? If death strikes a family, everyone may suffer in his or her own way. Grief journeys can be very personalized journeys. Sometimes they may consume us to the point where it is hard to look around and see that others in the family are grieving as well.

God created men and women to be different in many ways. In general, men are doers and fixers whereas women tend to be feelers and negotiators. When a death occurs in a family, men may tend to internalize their grief and maintain an outer strength that glues the family together in time of crisis. Women might express themselves more freely through many tears. Men sometimes prefer to "work out" their grief by keeping busy, first with the funeral arrangements but later on with lots of projects which help them express their grief in a practical way. Women tend to feel their way through each of the avenues of grief. Men can sometimes become frustrated because they can't fix or put things back the way they used to be. Women can become so overwhelmed with their grief that it is hard to function with daily routines.

Because men and women are not always on the same page, misunderstanding can creep into a marriage and destroy communication and sensitivity to one another's needs. In Colossians 3:12-14, we are encouraged to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. We also should bear with each other, forgive each other and most importantly "put on love". If we are wearing all of these "clothes", then we are equipped to bear one another's burdens and sorrows.

What can you do to help one another through your grief journey?



- You can help one another grieve by not demanding that the other person grieve the same way you grieve.
- Talk about how each of you are feeling about the loss, what helps you grieve most effectively and how each of you can be an encouragement to the other.
- Give each other the proper amount of space. If one or both of you need time alone, encourage it.

- Don't be afraid to let each other see how much you are really hurting inside. When you withhold your true feelings in order to protect the other person from additional hurt, you not only add to their burden but also may reduce communication and weaken your marriage.
- Talk with other couples who have lost a child through death. This can be done through informal discussions or in a parent support group. It helps to hear that you and your spouse are normal in your grief reactions.
- As a couple, seek out the support of a pastor or counselor to help you verbalize what you are feeling and how the loss has affected you personally. Your actions and expressions of grief affect your partner too.

Sometimes marriages fall apart when a child dies. Even though your grief journeys are **your** individualized journeys, be aware of what can happen and take the steps to support one another in love. For "two are better than one,... if one falls down, his friend can help him up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

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