

PRACTICAL WAYS TO COMFORT & MOURN WITH THOSE WHO MOURN

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"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17

Part of doing life is enduring all things. We were made for heaven, and groan for it so that when the broken shards of our world still touched by sin scrapes our hearts, we need our people and our people need us. It may feel weird to get practical when it comes to raw, but strategic thinking coupled with a compassionate heart could bless the lives of your people as great comfort.

"For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." -- 2 Corinthians 5:4-5

Possible Comforts:

1. **Come close.** Maybe this is the best thing we can do. I'm pretty sure lots of times a quiet presence drowns out a thousand words. Sometimes we have no idea what to say, but withdrawal can cut like a knife. Job's friends got a lot of things wrong, but their presence wasn't one of them.
2. **Remember what has been promised.** When speaking feels appropriate (and often it's not) highlight promises with compassion. I've said a thousand times this year, "I truly don't know how people grieve without hope." But as long as a person might have lingered on truth before tragedy, all of our hearts need reminding. I've watched some of my people this year survive loss by circling around God's promises. There is hope in that. And hope doesn't diminish pain. And grief does not diminish trust. It trudges forward anyway. Music is another amazing salve that can sing what our hearts have trouble saying. [Shane and Shane](#) and [Bethany Bernard](#) have incredible songs around grief and lament.
3. **Consider your relational equity.** Whatever your relationship looked like before will probably be welcome in the deeps. Consider mirroring that. When hearts already know one another, groundwork has been laid for wading into places others might not have a right to. If you're only contact is through social media, this probably isn't the time to send a sermon. There are too many gaps to understanding intentions, and asking questions can feel like curiosity rather than empathy. Usually. Not a formula. If you want to engage, just saying, "I'm so sorry," might mean the most. Maybe mowing the lawn or bringing food, or covering some costs would be the most impactful thing you can do to say I care. Let's not be afraid of words, but let's weigh them out.
4. **Pray.** This is not a last ditch hail Mary. This is perhaps the most powerful thing you can do. You know that shield I mentioned earlier? This is it. One friend sent daily 1 sentence texts about what she was praying for. Jesus says "Come to me," and he is well acquainted with suffering. I remember my surprise when I looked back and saw the [blog post](#) that my heart had circled around and posted the day before our family experienced loss. Which leads me to #5.
5. **Look for God's hand:** I believe that **God is intimately involved in the details of our lives. So be looking for his hand in things.** That happened a lot this year. I look back at some of the conversations that had taken place with key people that in

retrospect feels like God's preparation and kindness. He is doing that for you too. Keep going. Keep holding up arms and keep looking for his hand on your life and those you love. *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* -- Psalm 34:18

6. **Gift Remembrance:** There are beautiful ways to remember beautiful things. There are stones you can have engraved. Some friends bought us a tree. I've seen my people gifted beautiful treasures they hadn't thought of in the midst of their grief and deeply cherish now. This can be both a comfort and a delight. Even our walls can bear testimony of the stories God is weaving.

Here's the thing that gives me pause... **all of this requires discernment.** Maybe speaking truth in one moment can be well received, and in another feels like an ice bath. Not because truth changed, but because hearts are complex. Some people in pain exercise grace to those around them like legit *saints*. I actually wonder if it's evidence of God's hand on their hearts. But hurting humans can't be expected to receive everything the way you expected — that doesn't mean you were wrong, it just means you get to be gracious too. Let's encourage one another, place our hope in His promises, and all the more as we see the day approaching where everything will be made new.