



MINISTERS FORUM

INFORMATION MINISTERS Can Use

GRIEF COUNSELLING

*****AMBIGIOUS LOSS*****

Who will separate me from the love of Christ? Will distress, or persecution.....For I am convinced that neither death nor life... ..nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8: 35, 38-29



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**“One Lord, One Faith,
One Baptism.”**
Ephesians 4:5

Dear Ministers of the great Gospel of Jesus Christ Our Lord and Saviour:

In this month’s Newsletter we continue to focus on Grief—Counselling with a focus on what is called Ambiguous Loss. As pointed out in the last Newsletter Grief and Grieving are common every day activities for human beings and is a reaction to any form of loss. Ambiguous Loss is not widely recognized nor is it obvious because it is not supported by visible things such as seeing a lifeless body which signifies death or end of life.

Ambiguous loss is a loss that occurs without closure or understanding because there is no visible evidence that death has taken place. It is a case of missing without a trace and most times presumed dead but there is some anticipation in those left behind that the loved one may reappear and be seen again .

According to **Boss, P (2006) in her book entitled Frozen Grief:** this kind of loss is the most devastating because it remains unclear and there is no definite proof that one has either passed or a situation/relationship has ended. For the person left to grieve, ambiguous loss can be tormenting and painful causing ailments to develop which can not readily be diagnosed or are sometimes misdiagnosed especially if they are being evaluated in the traditional way that medical practitioners make their assessment or diagnosis.

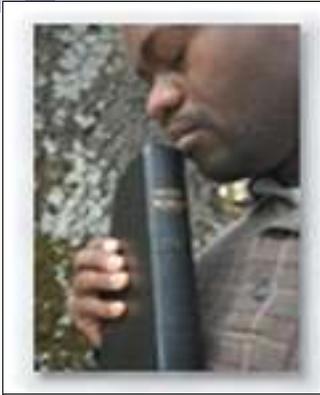
Basic kinds of ambiguous loss

Boss identifies two basic kinds of Ambiguous Loss based on her experience as a Family Therapist. The first is when friends perceive an individual or family member as physically absent but psychologically present. This conclusion is arrived at because it is unclear whether their missing loved one is dead or alive as in the case of a soldier who is missing in action, a child who has been abducted or has ran away from home or an immigrant separated from family. The latter is very common in countries where people leave their homeland to live in other countries away from loved ones and do not keep in touch.

The other kind of ambiguous loss is said to be likened to the person who is present in body, but not in mind. An example of this condition is illustrated when members of a family has to cope with a family member who has, for example, has Alzheimer’s disease, other chronic mental illness such as depression, or a chemical or psychological addiction.

Jesus said
*“Blessed are
those who mourn
for they shall be
comforted”*
Matt 5:4

*According to this
verse there must
be time to
mourn before a
comfort can be
experienced*



A Recommended Book for the Minister

When God Breaks Your Heart—Choosing Hope in the Midst of Faith-Shattering Circumstances
by:
Ed Underwood

“Every sufferer looks longingly to Christ and secretly asks, How could you let this happen? This story will show you how to take Christ’s hand through your darkest days..” Bruce Wilkerson (author of NYT Best seller—The Prayer of Jabez.

There is perhaps no greater challenge to our faith than personal suffering {and grieving}. For Pastor Underwood ...in his journey from tragedy to hope he takes a fresh look at the story of Lazarus and his sisters—a story that explores suffering through the eyes of our Lord and His people. You’ll find comfort during difficulty, be inspired to ask for the impossible and discover a God whose heart breaks with yours.

Book available in bookstores or Amazon online

GRIEVING “AMBIGUOUS LOSS”

When someone is missing there is no proof of death, no funeral, minimal public grieving, making it very difficult to bring closure. There is also the case of not knowing a parent or parents and not being sure if they are dead or alive. The ambiguity is in the fact that no one is sure of what has happened or what is going on and the result can be very stressful. Uncertainty plays a big part in the family’s attempt to adjust.

Because one is not sure that there is no hope in the loved one coming back or the situation being resolved, there is hesitancy in accepting and moving on. In the case of possible death where loved ones are denied, [what Boss calls] “symbolic rituals” such as funerals, it is difficult for the extended family and by extension the community to accept or verify that a death has taken place and to even share in the grieving process. The reality of Ambiguous Loss is that it is accompanied by little or no support for the process of grieving.

From the Family Stress Perspective it is seen as the most stressful loss and can become physically and emotionally exhausted from what is said to be relentless uncertainty. It can also become difficult to achieve the ‘detachment that is necessary for normal closure to be able to move on.

Living with Ambiguous Loss

According to Boss, the best way to live with this kind of loss is to recognize and accept the situation instead of denying or avoiding it. The goal for families in this situation is to find some way to change or make adjustments even though the ambiguity remains.

Families should seek to celebrate the part of their loved one that is still present and mourn the part that is lost by telling their stories to anyone who will listen in order to make sense of, and receive the validation needed to move forward with their grieving process.

In essence what is being said is that whatever the difference in values, culture and theoretical preference with the right kind of intervention people can learn to live well despite suffering ambiguous loss.

Boss, P (2006) . Frozen Grief: Therapeutic Work with Ambiguous Loss (pg 1024) NY :W.W. Norton & Co.

Grieving is a Process , not and Event

THE MONTH OF MAY IS CHILD’S MONTH

In Jamaica we are concerned that 783 children have been reported missing between January and May, 2014. To date 204 are still missing [166 girls and 38 boys]. In the same period 18 children were murdered, 131 reported raped and 230 children are in custody on different charges.

Source: Betty Ann Blaine, Executive Director -Hear the Children Cry

According to Police Statistics 800 children were reported missing in the last 5 months of 2014

THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER/PASTOR

SEVEN (7) STAGES OF GRIEF



It is the responsibility of the Pastor to ensure that the congregation is informed about both their spiritual and physical preparation for (Life) Death. While it is the view of many that people are adults and should make their own plans for their natural lives and how their end of life issues are going to be handle – the Pastor who is symbolic of father should ensure that awareness of what is to be done is created, bearing in mind that if this is not done the impact on the church can be more than what is bargained for. For example, the church might have to take responsibility for burial and caring for those left behind.

The weeks and months immediately following a funeral are often the hardest for family members. This is when continued pastoral care giving, counseling, visits, and gestures of support and encouragement are most appreciated. Every individual grieves in different ways, and may have different needs.

Helping loved ones of the deceased feel that they are still connected to, and part of a larger faith community may be one of the most loving things anyone can do—So part of the Minister's job at this point may also include educating congregation and family members on appropriate follow-up care. The goal is to be sensitive, compassionate, understanding, and genuine.

Role of the congregation when the Minister/Pastor is Grieving

The congregation is to be understanding and supportive in every way remembering that the Minister is human and have *thoughts, feelings and emotions* and is not yet supernatural being. It is not a question of feeling sorry for the Minister but knowing God and of His ability to turn mourning to dancing that each member should focus on and encourage the bereaved to focus (although he knows). Isaiah 61 should be a comfort knowing God comforts the mourner.

Preparing (members & Self) for the occasion of Death

Every Minister should at all times be prepared because the word of God demands that you be. It is also your duty to prepared the flock because if you don't it is going to become [ultimately] your problem. Some people will say 'when I reach that bridge I will cross it' because the dead must be buried—but the question is "at what cost"? The question also is, why not be prepared for something that you know in advance will happen if the rapture does not come before.

Many Pastors have by now learnt that a number of their members do not make plans for 'end of life issues' forcing the church to take care of them including funeral costs which most times the church is not financially able to or do so with much strain. While I am aware that many Christians do not want to face this natural reality; it is the role of the church to help them to face this important aspect of life. Among the many matters to be dealt with is the settling of what's left behind. The wishes of the deceased is usually dealt with in a Will—*Last Will & Testament*.

The information below is provided for your use if needed for both self and Saints: *Making a will* forces some of us to face up to our mortality but it's worth the effort—One lesson it can teach is **humility**. Making a Will ensures that your family will have no reason to be in conflict over anything once you're

There are seven (7) stages of grief that has been widely accepted by practitioners working with people who are grieving namely:

*Shock and Denial—

You will probably react to learning of the loss with numbed disbelief. You may deny the reality of the loss at some level, in order to avoid the pain. Shock provides emotional protection from being overwhelmed all at once.

*Pain and Guilt

As the shock wears off, it is replaced with the suffering of unbelievable pain.

*Anger and bargaining

Frustration gives way to anger, and you may lash out and lay unwarranted blame for the death/LOSS on someone else

*Anger bargaining

This is a normal stage of grief, so do not be "talked out of it"

*Depression, reflection and Loneliness

Just when your friends may think you should be getting on with your life, a long period of sad reflection will likely overtake you

*The Upward Turn

As you start to adjust to life without your dear one, your life becomes a little calmer and more organized

*Reconstruction and working through

As you become more functional, your mind starts working again, and you will find yourself seeking realistic solutions to problems posed by life without your loved one.

Acceptance and Hope

you learn to accept and deal with the reality of your loss
You will start to look forward to actually plan things for the future .

It's
Not
About
Who
Brings
The
Message—
(Messenger)

It's
about
the
Message.



Anticipatory Grieving is exactly what its name implies—anticipating the death that is to come. This is most pronounced when someone has a prolonged illness. This can be an exhausting time for those who experience it because one is always on heightened alert and this can go on for months and years. Ministers, it is important for you to be aware that this may be happening to persons in your church who are caring for those who have progressive illness and help them to cope. Coping can be guide through the process of grieving and by just “being “ and not necessarily “doing”.

“A grieving person must allow him/herself to face and experience Grieving in order to begin the journey towards Healing “

gone. You may also want to include a **Health Proxy (which is the appointment of someone who will make decisions for you if you are unable to do so while alive)**. Once completed they should be witnessed.

In writing a Will the following must be noted:

- You do not need a structured Will form. You can use any paper as long as all the necessary components are in place (**See copy attached**)
- There **MUST BE** an Executor, someone who you trust and believe will honour all your wishes as stated in the Will. *Note carefully that your Executor is entitled to 6% of all your assets left behind (under the Law) so think carefully as to who you would want to have that. However, there are some Executors who do not accept the offer of 6% out of goodwill*
- Your signature **MUST BE** witnessed
- It **MUST NOT** be witnessed by anyone who is a beneficiary. A beneficiary however, **CAN** be your Executor. [See the attached sample of a Will on pg 5]

What if I don't make a Will?: If you do not make a will the assets left behind will be administered on. This means that those left behind will need legal assistance to be able to share what is left – this also depends on whether or not the assets are jointly owned/tenancy in- common, you have a spouse/children/brother and sisters etc. *In the case where there is a child under age eighteen (18) years the Administrator Generals Department will adjudicate in the best interest of the under-aged child.*

Make Funeral Arrangements : Make funeral arrangements so your family does not have to; make specific arrangements or you can leave instructions regarding who to do what , if you are that particular such as the music to be played, who should speak and who the pallbearers should be etc. The idea is to write it all down and leave it, along with the necessary documentation, where someone will be able to find it.

Write the details of your life: Focus on the joy and pain of your life, the people you knew and loved, as well as, the events that shaped your life. You can also include old photographs with the biography. This memory book will give your loved ones a chance to reminisce about your life and ease the grieving process. You may also want to videotape important things in your life, such as special events or family gatherings. Your loved ones will cherish these memories after you are gone.

While I am not an Insurance Agent, I have found that one way to ensure that you can afford burial and related cost is to purchase insurance that will be available within 48 hours of Death. This is suggested because most persons don't go saving money specially for these, especially when they are young.

*****You may also want to consult a legal person if in doubt*****

*Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows
Isaiah 53:4
Father God, Thank You for always being there for me no matter what I face.
I know You will never fail me, even in my most intense trials. I have not always understood why I was going through certain things; however, I do not have to understand, because You are God and You are in control, in spite of my lack of understanding.
I know that all You require of me is to trust You, and look to You in faith and You will come and save me, and bring me an answer. You always have, and You always will, because you are faithful. You never fail any of us who look to You. I have failed You, Lord, by my doubt and unbelief at times, but You have never failed me.
Lord, please remove all the sorrow and grief I feel. Heal this pain I feel in my heart and help me to trust You more.
Fill this empty place in my heart with more of Your Spirit. I ask this in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ.
Amen.*

**Send Comments & Feedback:
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