

The Fair Havens

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In the Apostle Paul's first letter to the ecclesia in Thessalonica, concerning those of their number who had fallen asleep in Christ, he exhorted the brethren not to sorrow as others who have no hope. Our hope in the resurrection makes the loss of a loved one easier to bear, but however strong our faith, bereavement and working through the grieving process remain a part of life.

Words are inadequate to describe the heart-rending pain and depth of sadness arising from the loss of a loved one. Grief is a natural response to loss. It is the means whereby we can release the emotional pain within. With the loss of a spouse, or someone close to us, a huge hole can be left in our lives that no one else can fill.

Although death affects everyone differently the loss of a spouse or child can seem overwhelming. At such times it is helpful to meditate upon the precious promises of comfort God provides through His Word.

The Psalmist facing severe trials in his life declared,

"Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God." Psalm 42:11 NKJV

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Psalm 46:1-2 NKJV

"From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Psalm 121: 1-2 NKJV



Indeed, God is the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction. This can be a real source of strength when dealing with the loss of one whom we held dear. Grief goes through many distressing phases before there is acceptance and healing. The process cannot be fast tracked. It takes time. Some have likened it to major surgery where a living part of us has been amputated. This leaves a deep wound—both physical and emotional. If this is not addressed, and feelings remain bottled up without an opportunity to release them, the pain simply endures.

One of the Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation's mandates is the promotion of health and welfare issues affecting Christadelphian seniors. As our elders age, many may face life without their spouse at a time when they are ill equipped to cope with the loss. Adult children also

share in the grief arising from the death of a parent. As an ecclesial family we are filled with loss as loved brothers and sisters fall asleep in Christ and await the resurrection morn. To gain a better understanding of the grieving process, this issue of the Fairhaven newsletter focuses on bereavement—what to expect, how to cope and how to help one another.

Like the first century brethren, we can look forward to

a day when there is a new heaven and a new earth—when the tabernacle of God is among men and they shall be His people and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying or pain; the former things will have passed away. And He who sits on the throne shall say, 'Behold I am making all things new'. (Rev. 21: 3&4)

The Complexities of Grief

Our emotions are complex. After the prolonged illness and death of a loved one, some may think that they will feel relief. There may well be a sense of relief, but often it can be accompanied by guilt for feeling relieved. To help us understand this turmoil of emotion, there are three important principles in the grieving process that we need to recognize.

1. **Your feelings are subjective and unique. No one else can determine the weight and significance of your feelings.** While others may have some idea of what you are feeling, you alone know the depth and pain of your emotion. Others shouldn't assume they fully appreciate the depth of your loss.
2. **Feelings, in and of themselves are not good or bad, right or wrong.** They simply exist and need to be recognized and acknowledged for what they are. How we express these feelings may have consequences, but the feelings themselves do not. For example, one might feel anger towards a loved one for dying, and although that might not seem rational, particularly if the person didn't choose to die, the feeling needs to be expressed and recognized as real. By expressing these feelings, you enable yourself to begin to work through the emotions associated with grief.
3. **Where your grief and the feelings that accompany it are concerned, time alone will not heal you.** Resolution comes through facing your feelings and gradually working through them. Time will not heal your loneliness, anger, despair or fear unless you address these emotions. Time may soften the hurt, but it won't heal and resolve the pain.



Bereavement—An Unavoidable Journey

We know that sooner or later all of us will die, unless the Lord returns during our mortal lives. Death isn't a pleasant topic. When we're healthy and not imminently facing our own death, we can discuss it rationally. Down through the ages the cycle of life has repeated itself ending in death. For many in the world death is a frightening prospect but as brothers and sisters in Christ we share a hope beyond the grave.

Although we understand these promises and believe God will fulfill them, this may not necessarily bring an encompassing peace if we are facing death, or have recently experienced a loss. This is where our intellect and emotions can come into conflict. What seems reasonable may no longer make much sense. Our conviction in the resurrection may be sidelined by emotions of loneliness, anger and loss. We may miss the loved one terribly and such feelings can override our intellect. When someone we love dies, things can become very unreasonable. Our heart is hurting and that is all we are likely to be aware of for a long time.

It has been suggested that the key to dealing with grief is giving oneself permission to feel the deep pain and emptiness that comes with losing a loved one. Many of us are uncomfortable with granting someone permission to grieve. We prefer to keep things to ourselves without any public displays of emotion. Our society often frowns on such displays. We, as a culture, don't like talking about death, and when someone dies, we encourage those who grieve to get on with their lives as quickly as possible. We want them to 'pull themselves together'. It can be very uncomfortable for others to watch someone crying in anguish, or perhaps getting angry, especially if the observers haven't shared in that grief themselves.

Sadly, we've been conditioned to feel awkward and uncomfortable when someone grieves in our presence. As a consequence we often say something that isn't helpful. Not meaning to be unsympathetic, we may simply not know the right thing to say. Although we may have good intentions, we can create rather than solve problems.

If the bereaved are able to confront the problem, they can indicate to those who attempt to console them that it is evident that they mean well, but it is not necessary for them to 'fix the sadness'—only to stay close and offer support. This can be reassuring to those who seek to help, knowing that it is not their responsibility to make things better.

When we are unwell and visit our physician, he may prescribe some medication to combat the illness. When we are grieving or sad, friends may suggest that we need medication to calm our nerves and settle us down. This suggests that our emotions are inappropriate. It is natural to grieve the loss of a loved one and we may need to express these emotions rather than mask them with a pill.

One clinician likened grief to food poisoning. Although it is an imperfect analogy, it makes the point. If you eat bad food, the sooner you vomit it up, the faster you'll recover. If you don't the poisons could affect your entire system.

Similarly, our emotions, like toxic food can roil inside of us until they are released. Grief and the associated feelings will not go away if they are simply ignored. We need to find ways to express our hurt. We need to grant ourselves permission to rid the feelings of anger, despair and sadness. The sooner these are released, the sooner healing can begin.

Recognition, Re-evaluation and Rebuilding

Although there is a danger in trying to stereotype people's reaction to grief—particularly when everyone needs to respond to their own unique sorrow, there are common mileposts that need to be passed.

The first is **recognition**. *Recognize that the person has died and that this is a painful loss.* This may initially appear obvious, yet it can be difficult to accept that the loved one is truly gone. It is necessary to overcome the natural denial response and realize that the person is physically dead. Sometimes it is helpful to view the body after death and attend the funeral and burial services. It may also be beneficial talking about the deceased person or the circumstances surrounding his or her death.

Once you've spent years together with someone, it can be very difficult to break familiar patterns of behaviour. Recognizing that someone with whom you've had a long relationship has died takes time to work through. Possibly you will continue to look for the person for some time after he or she has died.

Recognizing the pain and loss that death brings can be even more challenging. After many days or perhaps weeks, the realization of what has happened sinks in and it hurts. Often there is much attention and concern expressed at the funeral, but that is short lived and then the reality of the situation settles in. With that comes the hurtful but necessary grieving process.

Coupled with recognition of the loss, is the need to experience the grief. Many people try to avoid pain by bottling up their emotions or denying the feelings that they are having. But it is impossible to escape the pain associated with mourning. By fully experiencing the pain—most often through tears—relief can be found. Jesus himself, wept over the loss of his friend Lazarus even though he was about to raise him from the dead.

The second phase involves a **re-evaluation** of your life in light of the significance of this loss. You will need to adjust to an environment in which your loved one is absent. This can be a monumental task particularly if it involves the loss of your spouse. You will need to appreciate that the responsibilities you once shared are now yours and yours alone. The future plans you had together will need to be revisited. These adjustments can be difficult. You must take time to take stock of where you are, what is now gone and what remains. Once you reach this juncture you can begin to rebuild.

In **rebuilding** you find new ways to look at life, new activities to occupy your time and new relationships to develop. With the death of a spouse, you may need to learn many things anew. For some rebuilding can be difficult. For

example, a grieving spouse may be challenged by household chores or cooking. Someone who never learned to drive must either learn, or find other modes of transportation. Recognizing the loss and re-evaluating your new situation apart from your loved one, although painful, can be managed, but rebuilding can be another story, particularly if you feel you can never enjoy life again. There needs to be a desire to forge ahead and refocus your outlook. Reinvest the emotional energy you would have spent on the one who died into other relationships. The goal is not to forget the person who died, but rather reach the point where you can remember your loved one without experiencing disabling grief. The alternative is social withdrawal and sitting home alone.

Try to imagine yourself five years from now. What would you like to be doing? Pray about how you can use your time and talents for the Lord. Goal setting is a way of promising yourself that you can go forward and live a full life. The death of a loved one can be a catalyst for significant changes.

Although your circumstances are unique, God knows your situation and will equip you to move forward with new purpose. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).

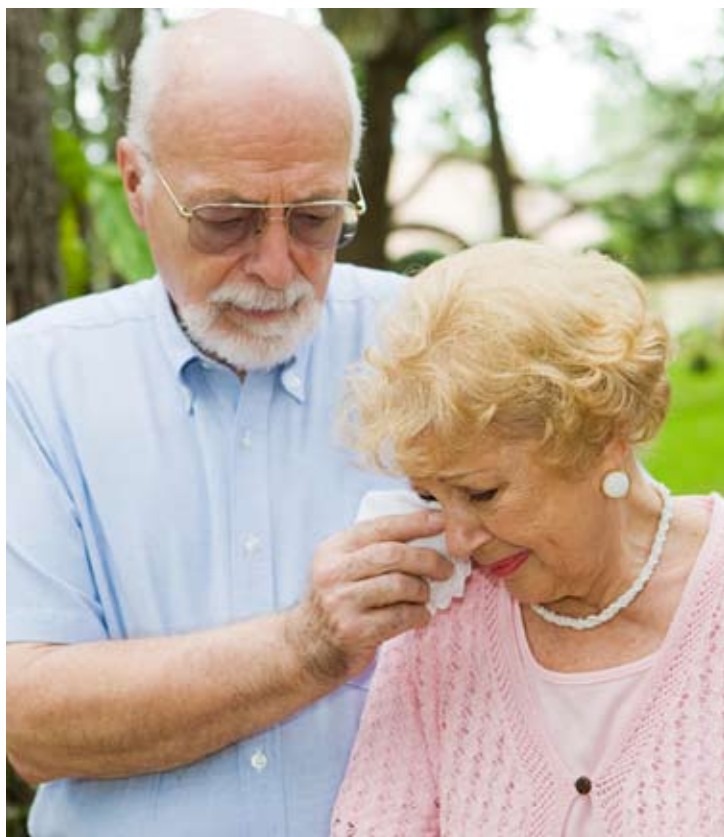
If you are caring for a surviving parent, offer support but don’t encourage your parent to grow overly dependent on you. It is not helpful to be too protective. Healing comes as a person begins to do things for himself that are consistent with his or her abilities. Encourage your parent to become as independent as possible without appearing to be insensitive or uncaring.

Grief--An Emotional Upheaval

Grief is the most intense and enduring emotion we can experience. There is no quick fix. Knowledge of the grief process may give us a generalized picture of the terrain, but each individual will take a different route. Grieving the death of a loved one is an individual process. Do not expect your feelings and emotions to be like anyone else’s. God made us all unique and our grieving process will be a personal journey.

Not all people grieve the same way or for the same length of time. The circumstances of your loved one’s death can affect how you grieve. If a spouse or a parent had suffered with a long illness, death might be considered a blessing. For the families of Alzheimer’s patients, mourning begins with the onset of the disease, long before death occurs. Because of the time spent anticipating death this sort of bereavement differs from the intense grief over someone who dies unexpectedly.

People may experience a variety of emotions during their grief. One of the most common emotions is **loneli-**



ness. Even though death is not a time to blame people, we often do. Couples make commitments to each other and when one partner dies the other often feels betrayed or abandoned. So many things that you counted on disappear when your partner dies. You may lose some of the friends you thought were there for life. Others may feel awkward around you and be uncomfortable talking about your spouse because they don't know how to broach the subject. Many decide its better never to say anything for fear of upsetting you. When in the company of other couples, you may feel like a 'fifth wheel'.

The loneliness will pass eventually, but only if you spend time working with your feelings. Don't hesitate to tell someone how alone you are, or how lonely you feel, and with time those feelings will finally become manageable.

Some people try to cope with the loneliness by getting a pet. It provides them with something to love and care for. It can fill many gaps. It can be warm and responsive, but it is no substitute for the person who has died.

Anger is another emotion that can surface at the loss of a loved one. Some may feel helpless and powerless as they watch their partner slip away. Then they feel anger and rage at this helplessness and loss. Anger can consume a grieving spouse. Many different situations can trigger such a response. The rest of the world appears to carry on as if nothing happened. Because no one else seems to understand your grief, their apparent indifference can make you even angrier.

Usually when significant changes occur in our lives, they are often under our control—where we choose to work, whom we marry, our home, the decision to have a family—but we have no control over death.

You may become angry with those close to you. It may be an anger directed at the person for dying, at the physician who attended your loved one or at yourself 'because I should or shouldn't have...'. You may also feel angry with God for permitting such pain and suffering, and then guilty with yourself for thinking such thoughts. Friends and family usually want to help, but often they're like Job's friends—miserable comforters. It is very easy to feel patronized by them. Even though their intentions are good their clichés can make you angry. Instead of being honest and saying they can't imagine how you feel, many feel that they need to pretend that they do understand.

It is often a fine line between saying nothing and blowing up at people when you hear things that anger you. Try to be honest. Acknowledge that you know they're trying to help, but what they say causes you pain. By doing so, you'll let those close to you know how you feel, and simultaneously be able to release your emotions without necessarily offending anyone.

Acknowledging anger, especially in prayer can be a decisive step in the healing process. God knows what you are

going through. Storing up anger inside you is never a good idea. Without warning you may find yourself snapping at those close to you or challenging those with whom you have no issues.

Well-meaning friends may think they know what is best for you. These 'fixers' may think they have all the answers to getting your life back on track, but they fail to grasp that you need time to cope with your grief. Consequently you must also now deal with the anger and resentment toward those who feel too uncomfortable to let you grieve and who want to stifle your feelings.

Find someone with whom you can share these feelings; someone who will hear your anger without judgment; someone who will stay beside you, no matter how angry you become. Find an outlet for your anger and rage. Pray, keep a journal, write letters, or work out.

Sometimes anger can arise over failure of the deceased to make adequate provision for the surviving spouse, or amongst siblings squabbling over an estate. Scripture provides sound advice. "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31-32 NKJV).

Nothing can be more frustrating than having someone you love die. You want things to be the way they were. When they are not, you can become angry. In time the pain and anger will fade, but your circumstance will not be as it was.

Guilt may also be an emotion that those who lose a loved one experience. Often the helplessness one experiences standing by the bedside of a loved one can turn into guilt that you're okay while they are not. If you've been used to enjoying activities with your partner it may feel wrong to do those same activities on your own.

Guilt is a common emotion experienced by caregivers following the death of a loved one. Usually guilt occurs when a caregiver thinks back and wishes he had said or done things differently. Sometimes caregivers have nagging doubts about whether they provided too much or too little care. Regrets and 'if onlys' are common.

Oft times feelings of guilt are unfounded and unreasonable. Often our emotions are not based in reality, only perception. It's important to remember to do things when you're ready not when others are ready for you to do them. Guilt may arise from trying to live up to the expectations of others—particularly if they think they know what is best for you. A simple "I'm not ready yet" or "I hope that will come one day" will tell people that you're not yet ready. In time, if you give yourself permission to let it go, you can move beyond your guilt, or at least put it into a manageable perspective.



Despair often accompanies the loss of a spouse, particularly when there may seem to be little reason to carry on. The realization of what has happened and the recognition of what it all means can cause terrible despair. This deep sadness and sense of hopelessness is the underlying emotion of grief. For those around you, these feelings may be some of the most difficult emotions you'll have to deal with. Express these feelings to those who will listen and in time they will pass.

Many grief experiences are similar to those of a major depression. Under the duress of the loss, some may feel life has lost all its meaning. While feelings of loneliness, emptiness, lack of motivation and pain may continue for some time, thoughts of suicide should not. If you are contemplating ending your life, or have worked out a plan, you need to share your thoughts with someone you can trust. There is life and light at the end of the long journey through grief.

Physical Responses to Grief

While there are no certainties about our grief reactions, some common physical responses to such a trauma are listed below. As with every reaction to grief, you must recognize the change and work through it.

Sleep Disturbance: As you grieve, your sleeping habits may change considerably. Some griever sleep all the time. Others may sleep hardly at all or wake much earlier than

usual. Any change in sleep patterns can be disturbing, especially if you are tired and run down. As a rule, it is better to work through your grief than cover it up with a sleeping tablet.

Change in Appetite: Eating is a social activity. While we're grieving, we're not usually feeling very social, and it's common for us to eat less. If continuing weight loss develops, you should seek assistance from your physician.

Lack of Motivation: Many griever experience a profound lack of mental and/or physical motivation. There may be a general malaise and sense of fatigue. Again, having an opportunity to express concerns over the loss and talking to others about the pain and how their systems responded to the stress can be therapeutic in itself.

Hallucinations: You may think you hear your loved one's voice, glimpse them moving in a room or hear their footsteps. These may be triggered by normal sounds or daily events.

Not all grief reactions are healthy. If you continue in isolation your grief may go on much longer than you ever imagined and it may impair your ability to rebuild your life.

Overworking: Many people find it easier to get back to work rather than absorbing what has happened and how significant their losses have really been. Work becomes a screen to avoid dealing with the grief.

Increased alcohol intake: Alcohol is a depressant. If your alcohol intake has increased since your loved one's death, you may have a problem. Although it may appear to be an instant fix for our feelings, it actually only covers them up temporarily and prolongs the pain. It is much easier to work through the grief that is driving the drinking before the drinking becomes a big problem in itself.

Unnatural Attachment to objects: Sometimes grief can lead to forming an unnatural attachment to objects that belong to the person who has died. It might involve wearing an article of clothing, refusing to let anyone sit in the dead person's favourite chair, or resisting packing up his or her things. Whatever the case, if you've changed your attachment to something, discuss this with someone willing to listen.

Working Through Bereavement

Grief hurts a great deal. Because the pain can be so intense, and your life has changed so dramatically, it is natural to experience changes. Some are predictable while others may be unexpected. Discuss them with someone you trust. Only you can work through your grief, but you don't have to do it alone. God has promised, "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength" (Isaiah 40:29 KJV)

Deal with your grief by expressing yourself, by talking things through, and finding a way to let your feelings run their course. Let others be there for you. Support from others can help us handle the aftermath of our loss. Because we don't want to be a burden on others, we keep our grief hidden, but this simply prolongs the grieving process. It may also deny a brother or sister opportunity to express their care

and concern. Find someone who will listen and encourage you to describe how you're feeling, not be judgmental or try to talk you out of your feelings. If possible find a brother or sister who is used to helping people deal with grief. You could also ask a close friend or family member to help you explore your feelings—someone who is a good listener, empathetic and patient. Alternatively, your family physician may be able to recommend someone who is skilled in grief counseling or suggest you join a grief group. Bereavement groups are often very helpful because the survivors can find people who have gone through similar experiences. Writing can also be a useful tool such as maintaining a daily journal to write about your emotions. Eat well and exercise. Try to maintain a daily routine.

Do not rush into making major decisions or changes that could add stress to your life. Give yourself time and space to mourn. If at all possible do not move for at least a year. Rely on God's word. "In the multitude of my anxieties within me, your comforts delight my soul" (Psalm 94:19 NKJV)

It is okay to grieve. Express your sadness. Grief is a pain that may impede your life later on if it is not dealt with now. Acknowledging the loss and allowing yourself to express these emotions can help in the healing process and lead to accepting a life without your loved one. Grieving can be a painful process of readjustment. The way out of it is by traveling down that road, and as brothers and sisters in Christ it can be a privilege to 'bear one another's burdens' and help on that journey.

God can use your experience for the good of others and for His glory. Allow time to work through your grief, cast your burdens on the Lord, and reach out to others.

Foundation's Terms of Reference

How can the Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation be of assistance to your ecclesia? Are there health and welfare needs in your meeting that require attention, but ecclesial resources are strained or insufficient? The Foundation, operating under the applicable government regulations, may provide grants only to registered charities in Canada. We must disperse a percentage of our investment income each year, based upon a government regulatory formula.

Ecclesias in Canada may request assistance from the Foundation by following these guidelines:

Only requests from Arranging Boards will be considered. Requests from an individual member of an ecclesia will not be accepted by the Foundation. Priority is to be given to the welfare needs of Christadelphian elderly, since this reflects the original purpose of Fairhaven House. If additional funds

are available after meeting these needs, then more general health and welfare needs of the Christadelphian community will be considered, followed by health and welfare needs of the community at large. Requests must be in writing and should document, in confidence, the need, the background, the amount of help required and the amount of help being provided by the ecclesia. It is expected that the ecclesia requesting support will also provide funds to assist from its own resources. It is preferable, if possible, that ecclesias address emergency situations, and subsequently follow up with a request to the Foundation. The board of the Foundation considers requests at its semi-annual meetings in March and August each year. Emergency requests will also be addressed as quickly as possible.

Requests may be sent to:

The Fairhaven Christadelphian Foundation
c/o Sister Penny Sheppard, Secretary
728 Church Street
Toronto, ON, M4W 2M6

It is important to appreciate that the primary responsibility to meet the welfare needs of our brothers, sisters and young people lies at the ecclesial level, and consequently the Foundation's role is to supplement, rather than supplant this ecclesial responsibility. We encourage ecclesias to be actively aware of situations where there is a need, extend help, and then approach the Foundation as a funding partner.

Year End Financial Report

Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance for the Year Ending March 31, 2011

Revenue

Investment income	12,240
Donations	400
	12,640

Expenses

Grants	30,911
Professional fees	2,100
Administrative	1,523
	34,534

Net Income (Loss)	(21,894)
Opening fund balance	380,186
Closing fund balance	358,292

An Appeal

In this low interest rate environment, income generated from investments has been inadequate to address the needs of recipient ecclesias and consequently, the Foundation's capital has continued to diminish.

The Foundation would welcome ecclesial and individual gifts to support this work of the Lord. Donations may be sent to the treasurer: Bro. Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Pk. Dr., N. Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7

The Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation
c/o 728 Church Street
Toronto, ON, M4W 2M6

Directors

Bro. Brent Curry
Bro. Clive Daniel, Treasurer
Bro. Alan Ghent, Chair

Sis. Penny Sheppard, Secretary
Sis. Marie Klien
Bro. Ian McPhee
Bro. Tom Thorp

Sources

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