

HELPFUL HINTS FOR HELPING THE HURTING (John 11:18-36)

I. **Reach out to those who are hurting (vs. 19).**

- A. It seems that Lazarus died kind of suddenly.
 - 1. They had sent to Jesus as soon as they could to let the Lord know Lazarus was ill.
 - 2. It only took a couple of days for Lazarus to die.
- B. The sudden death or unexpected death of a loved one is very difficult because we don't have time to say goodbye.
- C. It is never easy, but it the pain can be lessened when we know and can come to grips with the fact our loved one is dying.
- D. Thankfully, Mary and Martha had good friends.
- E. We are told that many came to the sisters to comfort them.
 - 1. The English Standard Version has "console."
 - 2. It is an interesting Greek word.
 - a. It is a compound word.
 - b. One of the words means "beside."
 - c. The other comes from a word that means "to instruct."
 - d. Put together it means to instruct beside.
 - 3. When one consoles or comforts there is some instruction going on.
 - 4. We are helping the person get through the grief.
- F. One of the most difficult aspects of helping the grieving is knowing what to do or say.
 - 1. Many people don't feel qualified or able to help someone who is hurting in this way.
 - 2. Often I've heard people say that they just don't know what to say.
- G. More often than not, it is best not to say very much at all, just our presence there is comforting to the grieving.
- H. There are some helpful things I came across in studying for this.
 - 1. Don't put time expectations on the grieving.
 - a. We might think they've grieved long enough or too little a period of time.
 - b. We aren't in that person's shoes and we can't put our expectations on the one grieving.
 - 2. Remember that everyone grieves differently.
 - a. One of the worst things we can say is, "I know exactly how you feel."
 - b. You and I have no clue how they are feeling or what they are thinking because they are not us.
 - 3. Ask them if they want to talk about the one who died and respect their wishes is they say no.
 - a. I read of one lady who refused to speak about her brother when he died.
 - b. She said that her mother, however, couldn't stop talking about him and put up pictures of him everywhere.

- c. We won't know until we ask but we need to know so we don't open wounds unintentionally.
- 4. Write a note and if you knew the one who died include a funny story about him or a time when he showed care or concern.
 - a. The note is important to the one grieving to show we care.
 - b. The message about the one who died shows how important the person was to you as well.
- 5. Help out in any way possible.
 - a. Wash dishes, answer phones, cut the grass, bring a meal are things we can do.
 - b. Be specific when offering.
 - c. Often times we'll say, just let me know if there is anything I can do.
 - d. The one grieving is so overwhelmed at the moment they don't know what you can do for them so be specific.
- 6. Handle their anger gently.
 - a. Often those grieving will lash out at the nearest object.
 - b. Try to be understanding if it is you.
 - c. If they lash out at God, wait a while to confront them with it and even then do it in a loving manner.
- 7. Be there and keep your promises (Romans 12:15).
 - a. If you have offered something then follow through.
 - b. This is especially important if the promise is to a child.
 - c. They are already feeling abandoned and they don't need to feel it even more by us failing to do what we promised.
- I. Long ago the wise Solomon said by inspiration that there was a time to mourn (Ecclesiastes 3:4).
- J. Job's friends came to him and were just there for a week before they said anything (Job 2:13).
- K. Those that are hurting need us to reach out to them to console them and comfort them.
 - 1. When we do it properly, there is instruction taking place.
 - 2. We are helping them through the grieving process.
 - 3. Our words can help them (Proverbs 17:27).
- L. Our role as friends and brethren is to help the grieving by reaching out to them.

II. Rest in the resurrection (vs. 23-27).

- A. Martha came to Jesus when she found out He had come to town and let Him know she was disappointed that He had not come sooner to heal her brother.
 - 1. She wasn't unkind or ugly to the Lord.
 - 2. In fact, though disappointed, she felt He could still do something for them.
- B. Jesus let her know what He could do but she didn't grasp it (vs. 23-24).
- C. What she had already taken comfort in however, was the fact that there was going to be a resurrection and she would see her brother again.

1. She said "I know he shall rise again."
2. There was no doubt in her mind about the fact of the resurrection.
- D. When someone is grieving, we need to remind them in some way, that there will be a reunion one day.
- E. Our Lord then promised Martha and us that those who believe in Him, which is the idea of faithful obedience, would live again.
 1. He had already taught about the resurrection (John 5:28-29).
 2. He let Martha and us know that there is hope beyond the grave.
- F. Our resurrection is based on the fact that the Lord was resurrected.
 1. This is the basis of the gospel message (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
 2. It proved that Jesus is the Son of God (Romans 1:4).
 3. Because He did come back from the dead we can have hope (1 Corinthians 15:17-20).
- G. We ought to use the fact of the resurrection to give us hope in times of hurting.
 1. Those that believe in Jesus will not take part in the second death.
 2. They will live forever and we will, as long as we believe in Jesus, be able to be with them in the future.
- H. Jesus let the fact of the resurrection bring comfort to a grieving sister.
 1. Of course, she didn't know He was going to raise Lazarus right then.
 2. He did know, because He had planned it already (vs. 4).
- I. We need to help the grieving by allowing them to be reminded of the resurrection that will take place when the Lord returns (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

III. Remember that Jesus cares (vs. 33-36).

- A. Our Lord was moved by the pain of those affected by the death of Lazarus.
 1. The word translated "groaned" carries the idea of anger.
 2. I believe this means that Jesus was angered in His spirit that people He loved hurt.
 3. Jesus knew the source of all pain was sin and it angers Jesus that sin has such power over those He loves as to cause death and pain.
- B. It moved Jesus so much that it caused Him to weep.
- C. We should never doubt the compassion our Lord has for us when we are hurting.
- D. God is the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
 1. He is the source of all comfort.
 2. His word brings comfort (Psalm 119:50).
 - a. How many times, when saddened by events or feelings, have we turned to the Bible and found comfort?
 - b. God is present in His word and wants us to feel Him and His care for us come through His word.
- E. Even in the darkest times, God is present (Psalm 46:1).
- F. We sometimes sing a song that asks the question, "Does Jesus care?"

1. Of course, the song answers the question with the fact He does.
 2. We see the care He has for us in His word.
- G. Jesus wept at the pain through which His friends were going.
1. He sees each tear we shed.
 2. He hears each sob that comes from the pain caused by this world.
- H. Our Lord cares and wants us to know that in our darkest hour.