



CARIBBEAN BRETHREN ASSEMBLIES CONFERENCE 2017  
Cascadia Hotel, # 67, Ariapita Road, St. Ann's, Port of Spain, Trinidad

## **Workshop Title: 'Ministering to the Bereaved'**

**Facilitator: Ora Gordon**

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### **Ministering to the Bereaved (Eccl. 3:1-4)**

Many churches do a decent job caring for grieving people from their congregation in the immediate days surrounding a death and a funeral. A service is conducted, cards and flowers are sent, and phone calls of condolences are received. Typically a church leader and others render practical support to those who have lost a loved one before and immediately after the funeral.

#### **But the griever needs more.**

A few days after the funeral, most of the people surrounding the griever return to their daily routines. They don't understand the deep, prolonged impact caused by the death of a spouse, child, family member, or close friend. The griever needs ongoing support and encouragement, lasting months or perhaps even longer.

Often the grieving person needs a level of care that even the most conscientious pastor/elder is unable to provide.

Grief emotions are not orderly, but are more like a tangled ball. Some people feel abandoned, afraid of facing emotions, anguished by grief, angry (sometimes at God), anxious, disappointed, despair, disbelief, depressed, disoriented, disorganized, empty, hopeless, intensely lonely, overwhelmed. The list of emotions is endless.

Some people avoid church, some can't pray, some even experience a crisis of belief. Others face denial and bury themselves in busyness. Some turn to God. There are those who feel they can't go on. People experience problems emotionally, physically, spiritually and relationally.

How can we help the grieving? We need to understand what is normal and help grieving people know that their feelings are normal. Every body's grief is unique.



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### **Goals for the grief journey:**

- Acceptance
- Turning to God
- Expressing Emotions
- Establishing a new identity

### **Support for the Grieving:**

Grieving is a process. Don't rush the process. Let them take their time. However some people get stuck in grief. They need to confront their grief and do the work necessary to journey from mourning to joy. Some may need referral for professional help.

- Empathize with them, pray with them, and listen to them
- Give practical help as supplying meals, helping with child care, chores etc. without enabling.
- Help them to avoid numbing the pain. Let them express their emotions.
- Encourage them to ask for and accept help.
- Help them get comfort and encouragement from God's word and talking to God.

### **Dealing with Misconceptions**

**Wrong beliefs have caused people to become stuck in grief. We need to help the grieving deal with these misconceptions such as:**

- Time heals all wounds.
- Holding tightly to my grief honours my loved ones.
- Progress means taking steps forward but never backward.
- The lessening of pain means the lessening of love.
- God took something from me that I can't live without.

### **Support at special times**

Anniversaries, birthdays and special holidays as Christmas are especially difficult for the griever to handle and we should be sensitive to such occasions and come alongside and support the grieving.



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**Deal with questions about the afterlife.** After a loved one's death the grieving think a lot about the afterlife. Knowing the truth about heaven is a source of great hope.

### **The Joys of Heaven**

- Reunited 1 Cor.2:9
- It's wonderful Matt 6:9-10
- Heavenly bodies 2 Cor. 5:8
- What if my loved one isn't in heaven? 2 Peter 3:9
- Do all religions lead to heaven? Jn. 14:6; Psalm 5:4

### **GriefShare support groups.**

GriefShare is a network of thousands of grief recovery support groups meeting worldwide. A local group has met on occasions at Maranatha Gospel Hall, Arima, Trinidad. GriefShare seeks to equip the church with a complete set of resources that help them offer ongoing, weekly support for the grieving. The material will minister to grieving people in your local church and throughout your community. GriefShare will provide your church with the tools and structure to offer weekly support for the grieving. Leaders do not have to be professional counsellors. GriefShare provides training videos plus online and telephone support.

The GriefShare program provides both inreach and outreach for your church. It is designed for two broad groups:

Those in your congregation who experience loss (inreach)

People throughout your community who are grieving (outreach)

There are many in your community who are dealing with grief and are struggling to make sense of the death of a loved one. They've also been confronted with their own mortality and are dealing with questions about death, dying and eternal life. This leads many to be open to spiritual solutions for their lives. They are looking for help and are often willing to turn to the church to find it. That's why a GriefShare group can be an especially effective outreach for your church.

### **The GriefShare Design**



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GriefShare is an easy-to-implement, video-based program that is simple for non-professional leaders to start and maintain as an ongoing effective ministry.

The GriefShare program consists of:

- Complete training materials for leaders and volunteers, Promotional Tools.
- Video teaching for group members on grief recovery issues.
- Weekly lay-facilitated discussion/care groups.
- Take-home workbooks which include a short daily Bible-study and weekly grief work for personal application, journaling and reflection.

GriefShare consists of 13 weekly sessions, designed to be repeated in regular cycles throughout the year. It is Christ-centered and Biblically based. **Each GriefShare session has a video seminar portion, a workbook session based on the video and a small group discussion relating the video content to their experiences.** GriefShare is produced by Church Initiative, Wake Forest, NC, USA. [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org).