

Stop Saying These 5 Unbiblical Things to Grieving Friends

Grief is a complex journey.

One who has grieved the loss of a family member or close friend will tell you that it is a long journey. It is multi-layered.

Most of all, there are seasons of grief that don't make very much sense.

There are seasons of denial and anger, seasons of weeping and fear of losing memories or even forgetting their absence in our lives.

What can be very hard is watching someone walk this journey of grief.

In a sense, we feel very helpless because death isn't something we can fix.

We can't bring their loved one back to life; we can't make them stop mourning. And sometimes in our effort to help them feel better or "get over it," we say things that either do not help them at all or are just outright untrue.

Now, before you roll your eyes at me and tell me to stop splitting hairs, I do think this is important for this reason:

What we say to someone in their grief can either point them to God's Word and the peace only He can give or it can give them a false sense of comfort or even add to their pain.

5 Things We Should Stop Saying to Someone Who Is Grieving

1. You need to be happy; they are in a better place now.

Until you've lost a family member or close friend, you can't know how very unhelpful this statement is. The fact is, deep inside we are happy for them, but that doesn't change the fact that we are still sad for us. And that is OK.

It isn't wrong to mourn the loss of a loved one. In fact, it is normal. What is abnormal, and actually harmful, is to refuse to show any emotion at all—or worse, to pretend to be happy when deep inside you are falling apart.

2. God must have needed them in heaven.

I will never understand the logic behind this statement.

It's not like God didn't have them, and so He decided to take them from us so He could have them all to Himself. God is not confined to time and space, He isn't confined to heaven. So, it's not like God was sitting up in heaven one day really missing that person.

This statement is not only faulty, it's not even very comforting and can potentially plant seeds of bitterness in the heart of a person who completely misunderstands the misguided good intentions behind its words.

3. They wouldn't want you to be sad like this.

While it's likely true that the loved one who has passed wouldn't want your friend to grieve for them, I find this statement to be a little manipulative.

While I do believe that the journey of grief should lead the person mourning a loss to an eventual destination where they will find peace and comfort, we shouldn't try to hurry that process or circumvent it by placing on them the added pressure of trying to fulfill their loved one's wishes of not grieving.

The Bible does say that there is a time for mourning, and to mourn with those who mourn. Mourning and grief are natural emotions that need to be felt and acknowledged. And a good friend will encourage their expression and mourn and grieve alongside of them.

4. They are your guardian angel now.

This statement is just categorically untrue.

A person who dies does not become an angel. God created mankind and breathed life into him; God created angels as a different class of being. They are not the same created beings and one cannot become the other.

In fact, this is what the Bible has to say about angels:

“What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You attend to him: For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And crowned him with glory and honor” (Ps. 8:4-5).

“Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more the things that pertain to this life?” (1 Cor. 6:3).

When a person dies, they go to heaven where they dwell with God. There is no biblical evidence whatsoever to support the notion that our loved ones who have passed away become our guardian angels. In fact, this idea is dangerously similar to ancestral worship, which claims that deceased loved ones look after their family members.

5. They are always with you.

This claim is also untrue.

While the memories of the loved one who passed away will always be with us, the spirit of the person is no longer with them. The Bible is clear about this. Paul says that for the believer, being absent from the body is to be present with the

Lord.

Hebrews says, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this comes the judgment" (9:27).

While I realize this statement is meant to comfort the grieving friend who is wishing their loved one was still with them, there is One who is with them at that moment, who can offer them the comfort no person can give.

The Holy Spirit

The greatest comfort we can offer to a friend who is grieving is first pointing them to the cross. Point them to God's ultimate plan for mankind and remind them that this life is temporary, but there is another realm that is more real and that has eternal value for us all.

In the book *Grieving with Hope* by Samuel J. Hodges, we are reminded that God has a greater plan than what can be seen in this lifetime.

That greater plan is in Jesus Christ.

The greatest comfort I have received in grief is from my friends who prayed with me and sent me verses of Scripture that remind us that God is with us, that He comforts us and gives us peace.

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her hero. Together they live in the country with their two active boys, where she enjoys fruity candles and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. She holds an associates of practical theology and is passionate about discipling and encouraging women. Her passion for writing led her to author a number of books. She is the author of *A Little R & R* where she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You can follow

her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

Making Your Child Feel Safe in a Terrifying World

“One of the ... me the Holy City, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. ... He then measured its wall: two hundred feet [thick} (Rev. 21:9-10, 17).

On May 22, Salman Abedi detonated a bomb in the Manchester Arena that left 22 people dead and scores wounded. As devastating as it was, the horror was intensified by that fact that the 21,000 seat arena was filled with young people—mostly girls, some as young as 8 years of age. They had gathered for an Ariana Grande concert. The evil viciousness that plotted and carried out such an attack is incomprehensible to our Western minds.

I have heard numerous discussions about how parents can calm their own young children and let them know they are safe. As I have heard the advice and counsel from professionals, I’ve wondered, *Really? How can we reassure our children they are safe? Are they?*

While we can be extremely vigilant—while we can watch and pray— we have no guarantee that our children or our grandchildren will escape violence and disaster. But there is one thing we can do that I have not heard the national pundits discuss. We can make sure our children will be safe in eternity—safe inside the 200-foot walls that encircle our Father’s house. Safe forever. How?

We need to tell our children and grandchildren the truth. And

the truth is that we live in a very wicked and dangerous world. But God knows this. And God who loves our children sent His own Son to save them. If they would put their trust in God's Son, Jesus Christ, asking Him to forgive their sins and come into their hearts, they would become His own children. He would be their Father. As a child of God, they will have certain privileges that include His own dear presence to walk with them through life. They will have access to Him 24/7 through prayer. And whenever the time comes for them to step into eternity, they will be ushered into the heavenly home He is already preparing for them. And inside that home, they will be absolutely, completely, permanently safe.

In the Father's House called heaven, there are no suicide bombers or bombs. No drive-by shootings or guns. No missiles or weapons of mass destruction. No terrorists or secret police. No war or fights. No rapes or robberies. No strangers or kidnappers. No scary sounds in the night. No night. No mean people or mean dogs. No bee stings or snakebites or spider bites. Heaven is a very safe place for children.

Please. Help keep children safe. Forever. Tell a child this week about heaven and how they can get there. {eoa}

Author and speaker Anne Graham-Lotz is the founder of AnGeL Ministries.

Digging Deep With God When You're Strapped for Time

I was exhausted from two nights of poor sleep, so I announced that Panda Express would be making dinner for the night. Matt had just gotten back from a four-day trip and realized he had

forgotten his tablet at the church, so he offered to go with me to get the tablet and the Chinese take-out.

Four days without that man, and I had missed him something fierce. In the car, I kept reaching for his hand, and we took advantage of rush-hour traffic to catch up with each other. (That means I talked and talked and talked, and he listened.)

The trip was short, maybe 20 minutes, but it was a sweet time to be in love and to relish our friendship before we got home to enjoy the evening with our kids.

This has been a wonderful but full couple of weeks. Our daughter and her husband just bought a house that they're trying to fix up before they move in, so we invited them to eat dinner with us every night. Also, our son is home from college with his sweet girlfriend, so we've been clocking precious family time around the table.

Great family time but not a lot of Matt-and-I time, you know? (Stinkin' kids.)

But hey, we snag us-time whenever we can get it, even if it's just a chat and holding hands while we run a few errands. Because we're in loooooove. So in love. It's almost our 26-year anniversary, and we are livin' in the sweet spot.

All that to say, my relationship with God looks much the same. This has been a full season—trying to finish up school while having the kids in the house all the time. I haven't had a lot of energy or brain space for long times of Bible study over the last few weeks.

In seasons like this, I go to reading a short devotional book instead of doing more intense Bible study. And you know what happened just this morning? I had been discouraged about something, and in my short devotional reading, God specifically spoke to my need. (Cool thing—the devotion was written by one of my longtime friends. I think God was

planning all along for her words to build me up right at that moment.)

I just want to tell you to stop worrying about the length of your quiet time with the Lord.

Be in love with him.

Want to talk to him.

Quit watching the clock and simply smoosh in as much communication with the Lord whenever you can, even if it's while you're in the car running errands.

Here's what Jesus says:

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind' (Matt. 22:37).

If someone asks you how long your quiet time with God is every day, just get all starry-eyed and say, "Never long enough. Never long enough." That's love talking. {eoa}

Christy Fitzwater is an author and pastor's wife living in Kalispell, Montana. She is the author of *Blameless: Living A Life Free from Guilt And Shame* and *My Father's Hands: 52 Reasons to Trust God with Your Heart*. Find her devotional writing at .

These 2 Types of Spiritual Bondage Still Plague the

Church

Observant Christians who have walked with the Lord for over 30 years, as I have, and students of recent Christian history, see an interesting pattern among evangelicals.

Early Pentecostals tended toward extreme legalism.

In fact, I remember as a teenager when my dad took over a church, we were cleaning out the secretary's office and found an old welcome pack for visitors. In it was information about the church and denomination, which included a comprehensive list of things they didn't do: such as wear pants, wear jewelry, cut their hair, go to movies and billiard rooms.

In the mid-80s, the pendulum began to swing in the other direction. As the Charismatic Renewal was exploding, there was a cry for freedom.

This cry for freedom was legitimate.

There were those, however, who misunderstood the biblical message of freedom and this freedom led to excess and excuses for worldly behavior, and we are reaping the consequences of that imbalance today.

The children of the Charismatic freedom fighters, and even some of those freedom fighters themselves, who became bloated with too much worldly freedom have now swung into even further imbalance in the other direction and are finding the discipline of orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism more to their taste.

The problem is that they have gone into even greater legalism and a works-based faith than even early Pentecostalism preached!

Paul addresses these two types of bondage in Galatians 5.

2 Types of Bondage and True Freedom

1. The Bondage of Legalism

In Galatians 1-4 Paul has already laid a foundation for the bondage of legalism, explaining thoroughly how preaching that the law justifies us and makes us acceptable to God leads us to destruction.

He goes on in chapter 5 to actually say that this doctrine has “estranged them from Christ”, that they have “fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4), and uses Jesus’ words “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

In Matthew 16 and Mark 8, after Jesus and the disciples fed the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish, He warns the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. Paul uses this same example in 1 Corinthians 5 when talking about how to deal with immorality in the church.

This “leaven” represents both types of bondage.

You have the leaven of the Pharisees that is legalism. Even the slightest legalism in the church will infect the whole church.

In fact, we see in Galatians 5: 15 and 26 that not only does legalism put people in a position where they must keep 100 percent of the law 100 percent of the time (Galatians 5:3 – “I testify again to every man who is circumcised that he is obligated keep the whole law.”), but the critical and judgmental spirit that arises from legalism causes a church to “bite and devour one another (v. 15), “consume one another (v. 15) and it causes it to become “conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (v. 26).

You could say that the leaven of legalism actually leads to the second form of bondage we see in Galatians 5.

2. The Bondage of the Flesh

Because the Galatian church had fallen under the spell of false teachers that enslaved them to the Law as a means of justification, they fell into the trap that all Christians fall into when they become legalistic.

Legalistic Christians have a judgmental spirit.

By means of their doctrine they must be so! Because their acceptance by Jesus Christ is based on how well they perform, they critique the performance of their fellow brothers and sisters.

They devour one another with condemnation and gossip, which arises from a spirit of conceit. They resort to provoking one another with pessimistic sermons and judgmental words, and grow envious of those who perform better than they do.

Such a toxic environment, a perfect lab for the works of the flesh to overtake their hearts and lead them into even further estrangement from Christ!

With this, Paul segues into a list of the works of the flesh, ranging from sexual sins and pagan sins to sins of temper and drunkenness.

I find it interesting that he titles these "Works of the Flesh."

Works: things we do of our own volition, and he uses the plural form of the word.

Contrast this with the spirit-filled Christian.

The leaven of the works of the flesh is powerful. When one begins to "fall from grace" and entertains sin in their heart, they relinquish the control to say how far into sin they will go.

They are already in delusion concerning their justification. This only leads them into even greater delusion as they fall

even farther and farther from grace and into even greater works of the flesh.

True Freedom

Paul's second list in Galatians 5:22-23 is titled "Fruit of the Spirit."

In contrast with the "works of the flesh", fruit is something that cannot be brought about by our own volition. Fruit in the life of a believer is something only the Holy Spirit can bring about.

Furthermore, it is singular.

Love is the fruit.

From love flow the remaining eight elements of the work of the Holy Spirit: joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

The freedom to walk in the spirit first begins with salvation.

If you are not saved, you cannot walk in the spirit. You may learn certain behaviors that mimic the fruit of the spirit. One may be loving, happy, appear peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful and gentle, but the fountain from which those behaviors flow is not from the Holy Spirit. The fruit is not genuine and it is not lasting.

Once we are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, we must learn to reject the temptation to try to earn God's favor by our good behavior and rest in His perfect *agape* love.

When we are filled with *agape* love—God's kind of love—these eight elements of that fruit will begin to grow and spill out of our lives, touching and impacting those around us.

When we begin walking in love, we will naturally obey the Law—not out of performance but out of love and honor for Jesus

Christ.

Jesus said, "If you love me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

Only when we walk in true freedom from the pressure to perform as a Christian, will *agape* love grow in our lives. And when *agape* love is present we will begin grow in joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her hero. Together they live in the country with their two active boys, where she enjoys fruity candles and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. She holds an Associates of Practical Theology and is passionate about discipling and encouraging women. Her passion for writing led her to author a number of books. She is the author of A Little R & R where she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

10 Scriptural Reasons Every Christian Should Go to Church

When generous people made a California trip possible for our family several years ago, we did the Disneyland thing and the outlet mall shopping trip and the sand-n-sea excursion. We also visited a megachurch one Sunday morning. When it came to extra time and choices of activities that weekend, I suggested we visit one or two or three other church services in the area. Because how fun!

But to the beach we went.

Mom. Is. Weird.

I just love the church so much. The church.

Last Sunday morning, we went to a little town called Libby, Montana, where Matt has been filling in as preacher for a few weeks. It's a small church in the sticks, you guys. But oh, the people are sweet, and I have been enjoying worshipping the Lord with them as much as I enjoyed the lights, cameras and action of the megachurch we visited in California.

There's something rich about gathering with other followers of Christ.

Over time, I've heard from some of you readers who tell me you haven't been going to church for years, and in my heart this feels like you're turning down Disneyland, outlet malls and a sunny day on the beach all at once.

I told my friend last night that I was shipping this blog post to you, and she said, "What look will your readers see on your face when they're reading about why you think they should go to church?" So I showed her, and it looked like a child's best, "Mom, pleeeeeeease can we go to the park today?" look. So are you picturin' it? Me here with this begging face on?

My Top 10 Reasons Why You Should Go to Church

1. If you follow Christ, you are part of the body of Christ, and body parts, by nature, are super-connected. I know a sweet young woman who is recovering from surgery on the stump of her leg right now, so I can picture what a troublesome thing it is to have an amputation (1 Cor. 12:27).

2. God wants to show others who he is through you. When you get involved at church, people get a bigger understanding of who God is. Crazy, huh? (1 Cor. 12:7)

3. You have been given a spiritual gift that is to be used to build up the body of Christ. Your gift is something other believers desperately need (1 Cor. 12).

4. You need to eat and learn and pray with other believers (Acts 2:42-47).

5. You need to share with others, which means you have to hang out enough that you see the needs your brothers and sisters have. And they're gonna wanna share with you (Acts 2:45).

need encouragement, and other believers need encouragement from you on a regular basis, because this life is seriously hard (Heb. 10:25).

7. You need to laugh and cry with other believers through all the ups and downs of life. That can only happen if you're meeting with other believers through a lot of days (Rom. 12:15).

8. God is going to comfort you, often through the words and actions of other believers, and he wants you to pass on the comfort to the believers around you (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

9. If God is your Father, that makes church a family gathering (Phil. 1:2).

10. When you gather with other believers and love them, God's love is made complete in you (1 John 4:12).

See, you need the church, and the church needs you.

It's messy. You'll get hurt by folks sometimes and will be disappointed by them often. But church is God's design, and if you risk going to church, you will bring glory to God and find your own great joy.

Christy Fitzwater is an author and pastor's wife living in

Kalispell, Montana. She is the author of *Blameless: Living A Life Free from Guilt And Shame* and *My Father's Hands: 52 Reasons to Trust God with Your Heart*. Find her devotional writing at .

Maintaining Intimate Quiet Times When Your Schedule Is Packed

One of the most common problems women face today with maintaining a consistent quiet time is time.

Most women find that they are extremely busy and find it difficult to make time for personal devotion, and yet personal time with the Lord is vital to Christian growth and maturity.

5 Quiet Time Tips for Busy Moms

1. Prepare ahead of time.

If your best time for quiet time is in the morning, lay everything out the night before so that you maximize the time you have.

Create a quiet time box or bag where you have everything you need: your Bible, a notebook, devotional, journal, pens, post-it notes, a highlighter. This way everything is already in one place, handy and ready to use.

2. Take it with you.

Make a quiet time tote and take it with you to your car and have your quiet time on lunch breaks or during your kids'

sports practices and music lessons. You can even have your quiet time while your kids play in the park.

3. Break it up.

Maybe you genuinely do not have a one-hour chunk in your day. Break it up into smaller chunks throughout the day. Here are some practical ways to do that.

Use Timers: Set your phone to remind you throughout the day to take time to pray.

Leave Your Bible Open: Designate a spot on your counter or desk to leave your Bible open to where you are currently reading so that throughout the day you can read and reflect on God's Word.

Write Out Scripture: Use index cards and write out two or three verses to take with you in your pocket or purse and read them throughout the day.

4. Multi-Task.

While I believe we should have at least one time in our day when we have undistracted time with God, you can use other times throughout the day to multi-task your quiet time. While doing housework or driving, you can:

- Listen to the Bible on YouVersion
- Listen to Podcasts: I included a list of podcasts in this post.
- Pray over your house: Here are some suggested prayers.

5. Become Accountable.

Join a group of women online or at your church and keep each other accountable to your quiet times. I recommend Good Morning Girls as a great accountability program. We are reading through the Bible one chapter a day. There are small Facebook groups that you can join where you will find

encouragement and accountability for your quiet time.

Set a time or several times each day and commit to consistency with the Lord and I believe that you will be amazed at the difference it will make in your heart and in your day.

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her hero. Together they live in the country with their two active boys, where she enjoys fruity candles and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. She holds an associate's of practical theology and is passionate about discipling and encouraging women. Her passion for writing led her to author a number of books. She is the author of A Little R & R where she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

Fight for Your Dehydrated Marriage With These 7 Insightful Strategies

You try. You really do. But your spouse seems to show no interest. You want your relationship to improve, and occasionally your spouse promises to do better. Then you're frustrated when nothing changes. What can you do when it seems as though your spouse doesn't care about your marriage?

Marriage takes two. That means your spouse gets a vote—just as big a vote as you do. But that doesn't mean you're powerless.

You've learned by now that you can't change your spouse. But

you can certainly influence them. And regardless of what your spouse does or doesn't do, there are things you can do to live well yourself and to move your marriage in a healthier stronger direction.

Ask yourself these questions.

How do your attempts to improve your marriage appear to your spouse?

You believe your ideas, suggestions and efforts would make things better if only your spouse would go along. But your spouse may see things very differently.

- You believe your comments help your relationship by sharing your feelings—negative as well as positive. Your spouse experiences your comments as belittling and critical.
- You believe your requests for time or communication would help the intimacy between you. Your spouse feels overwhelmed and controlled.
- You see your corrections and suggestions as trying to help. Your spouse feels like nothing they do or say can be good enough.
- You believe the relationship would improve if your spouse would do what you ask. Your spouse feels you don't understand or value their feelings, needs, personality and desires.

The point is not who's right or wrong. Every relationship is unique. But try looking at your attempts to "improve" your marriage through your spouse's eyes.

Are you noticing and encouraging the good things in your spouse?

Your spouse may be making attempts to improve, to care, to show you love. Are you noticing them? How are you responding

to those attempts? Are you making fun of your spouse's attempts, criticizing his/her failures along the way and holding them to an impossible standard? Or are you being their biggest cheerleader, cherishing and respecting who your spouse is and any way they do invest in your relationship?

This is not to minimize or ignore serious dysfunction, violence or evil. But if you become like a whack-a-mole every time your spouse sticks their head up, can you blame them for retreating? How safe is your spouse around you? Your spouse may not show that they care in the same way you do. Welcome, treasure and value the ways your spouse does show they care.

Most men thrive when their wives demonstrate honor and respect and are their biggest fan. Most women flourish when their husbands show them sacrificial love and treasure who they are as an individual. Look for what is good in your spouse, and you'll likely get more of it.

Is your own heart open?

Forgiveness and trust are big issues in a troubled marriage. If you are holding on to bitterness the poison in your own heart will keep your spouse at a distance and block any improvement in the relationship. Intimacy and love cannot grow when your heart is closed. The only way to get to an open heart is on your knees before God.

Forgiveness in marriage is absolutely necessary, but it's not easy. Forgiveness does not say everything is OK; it's not OK. That's why forgiveness is the only possible way to move forward. Forgiveness means giving up your right to still be hurt as a result of your spouse's behavior or to hold it over them, and giving up your right to exact revenge.

Forgiveness does not necessarily mean that trust has been restored. Once broken, rebuilding trust takes a long time, and it takes both partners' investment. It takes lots of communication, an open heart and God's intervention.

Are you continuing to grow and mature yourself?

Your own well-being does not have to be dependent on your spouse's degree of caring. Yes, you have needs. Some of them your spouse can meet; some of them they cannot. Learn to feed yourself. Spend time with other healthy believers. Take in some nourishing mental/spiritual food daily, such as books, time in nature, inspiring media and so forth. And spend time in God's presence; let Him fill your heart in a deeper way than your spouse ever could.

You have the choice to be happy. Your spouse cannot make you feel any certain way. Determine that you will own your thoughts and feelings. If you need some help, get it. And most of all, make certain your relationship with God is growing. You are not saved as a couple; your relationship with God is just between you and Him. Take care of that first and most importantly.

Whom does God need you to be in your marriage right now?

Marriages and human beings go through seasons. There's a specific role God has for you right now, in this season, in your marriage. Find out what that is, and focus there.

Perhaps God needs you to:

- Support your spouse through a season of illness, depression or other serious challenge.
- Be an example of joy, hope, healing, growth and love that invites your spouse to follow.
- Care enough to confront bad behavior from a position of love.
- Set healthy boundaries.
- Forgive what seems unforgiveable.
- Significantly change areas of your own behavior, attitude, communication or character as it relates to your relationship with your spouse.
- Stay on your knees.

Don't underestimate the value and power of a praying spouse. God may use you to be the vehicle through which your spouse and your marriage is healed. You give Him that chance when you let Him do what He wants to do in you.

You cannot force your spouse to care. But you can notice where they do care and become the kind of spouse they want to care about.

Your turn: How have you responded when your spouse seems not to care? How can you respond in a healthier way? Leave a comment below.

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a board certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained Doctor of Ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the **Fully Alive** kind of life that Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .

Responding to Inconsiderate Words When You're Grieving

I'll never forget the confusion I felt after my second miscarriage.

Words that were meant to comfort me rang hollow in my ears. Some of them just annoyed me and even hurt deeply.

"It must have been God's will."

"Your baby must have had a disability that would have prevented it from living anyway."

"Maybe God hasn't called you to be a mom."

“It was so early, at least you hadn’t felt it move yet. That would have been a much more painful loss.”

“Don’t be so sad. You’ll have another one.”

I know the people who wrote these messages or hugged me and whispered them in my ear meant well. I don’t think for a moment that any of them intended to hurt me in any way. They simply didn’t understand my pain—or me.

In his book, *Grieving with Hope*, Samuel J. Hodges shares how to respond when people’s words of healing actually hurt instead.

I found his advice so practical, because while some people might avoid us when we are hurting because they don’t know what to say or do, there are others who will reach out to help us—in ways we find painful or annoying.

They don’t understand that their words and actions are missing the mark and not having the effect they had intended.

So, what do we do when people’s comforting words hurt?

1. Have Grace: It would be very easy in our pain to pull away from those whom we know would never intentionally hurt us. We must embrace and extend God’s grace, knowing that their intentions were for our healing.

2. Communicate: Sometimes our friends say or do hurtful things because they simply don’t know better.

The most loving thing we can do in that situation is to communicate with them how their words or actions come across to others. If something they’ve said was truly inappropriate, lovingly share with them why what they said was hurtful and what they should say instead.

Perhaps a food train isn’t at all helpful to your family, but donations to medical research would bring you a lot of

comfort. Communicate this to your friends.

You can help your friends do and say those things that truly bring comfort and healing by extending grace to them and communicating with them what your needs are.

If you are walking through a time of great loss, I encourage you to purchase the book *Grieving with Hope*. I have found it very encouraging and healing as I walk through my own season of loss.

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her hero. Together they live in the country with their 2 active boys where she enjoys fruity candles and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. She holds an associates of practical theology and is passionate about discipling and encouraging women. Her passion for writing led her to author a number of books. She is the author of A Little R & R where she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

Adorning Yourself With Holy Spirit's Treasures

I was on a quest with dire consequences: Find the perfect outfit and jewelry to make me feel like Cinderella. Should I fail, I would end up wearing a dowdy outfit from my closet and some dinky jewelry from my jewelry box and feel instead like the unfashionable wicked stepmother.

I might admit to a little drama there, but I suspect most of

you understand what I'm saying—clothes and jewelry can make a big difference in how we feel and in our confidence for an important event.

For example, awhile back I was scheduled to attend the red-carpet premiere for a movie, and I had nothing to wear that was suitable for the evening. I'd attended premieres before in my role as a member of the press junket, and I knew how glamorous and perfectly attired the rest of the media ladies would be. Yeah, all of those young gals with their perfect figures.

And then there was me—the country grandmother housewife chick. Not a fashionable bone in my body. Did I mention I was also horizontally challenged (aka fluffy, chubby, chunky, rotund)? It kind of reminds me of that worksheet we did back in grade school, the one where we had to pick out which item doesn't belong with the others. Yeah, that was me.

After an intense search, I found a dress that was suitable for the event. And miracle of miracles, it even helped to camouflage my muffin top, belly rolls, and love handles.

But I still needed the perfect jewelry to make the dress pop for that final boost of confidence that I desired. I soon discovered that I had a new exercise plan as I walked seemingly endless miles to find the right jewelry.

I felt like Goldilocks as I tried on necklaces, "That one's too big, that one's too small." But somehow it seemed like I never got to "That one's just right." They were too long or too short for the neckline. Or they were gold when I needed silver. Or they just weren't what I had in my head. Although I didn't even really know in my head what I wanted. Sound familiar to any of you?

I was traveling that week so I stopped at boutiques. I went through the jewelry sections at department stores. And I finally stopped at one of those huge stores that carries

nothing but jewelry.

I honed in on their display of sparkly jewelry. I found a necklace I loved, one that would give the perfect look for the dress. But when my husband fastened it around my neck and I looked into the mirror, I realized there was one big problem: the delicate chain had disappeared into the wrinkles under my turkey neck!

I was so relieved when I finally found a necklace, earrings, and bracelet that would work—and when I stood on the red carpet to interview the stars, I at least felt like I fit in with the rest of the media. Whew, mission accomplished.

But I was thinking about something today. I spent all that effort hoping to gain at least a little beauty on the outside, but how often do I put forth that much effort to attain beauty on the inside, where it really counts?

What if I'd searched His Word with as much dedication as I'd had while searching for my outfit and jewelry? What if I'd allowed the words on those pages to make something beautiful out of me so that God could be glorified?

What if I'd dressed my soul with love? Love for the unlovable, love for those who need to know about Jesus.

What if I'd spent that much time polishing my heart, wiping away imperfections, making my life shine so that others would see Jesus reflected in me?

What if I'd accessorized my life with kindness, compassion, and a willingness to help others?

Sometimes we forget that physical beauty fades but inner beauty never gets old and never goes out of style. Some of the most beautiful women I know are those who have lived so close to God that they literally sparkle for Him. They've become bling for the king. That's what I want for my life. How about

you?

Michelle Cox and John Perrodin are the authors of *God Glimpses from the Jewelry Box* and *God Glimpses from the Toolbox* (BroadStreet Publishing Group, Racine, Wisconsin). These devotional books would make perfect gifts for someone you love. Visit Michelle at [and](#) .

Experiencing Holy Spirit All the Time—Even in a Drive-Thru

It was a mistake I became aware of too late—taking the inside ordering lane at McDonald's. The people on the outside track can pull straight forward to pay at the window, but the drivers on the inside have to work to merge.

I ordered a crispy chicken snack wrap and a yogurt parfait and then waited for the other ordering car to pull forward so I could slip in behind him.

Except the car behind him ordered and came in close on that guy's bumper so that I couldn't pull in. *It's okay. It's okay. I'll pull in right after him. Patience.* I nosed my car forward a little, to communicate to the next driver that I had been waiting. But he quickly pulled in close on the bumper of the guy in front of him.

Patience over. I imploded.

In the same second that flames of anger licked at my heart, I turned my head to the left in exasperation. My intention was to mutter under my breath, but instead I saw, tucked into the corner of McDonald's, a large tree that was breathtaking in

full white bloom.

“Soft,” the Holy Spirit said to me.

“Soft,” I repeated out loud. I turned my head back to the driver in front of me and loved him. I chose to love him. God doused the anger that had roared to life inside of me. This all happened in a matter of seconds.

Before I left the house that morning, I had been meditating on this phrase from Colossians 1:27: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

My prayer had been a plea for God to reveal His glory inside of me, because I hadn’t been feeling like there was much glorious going on in my soul lately.

I wasn’t expecting to experience the glory of Christ at McDonald’s an hour later, but there it was. I watched the rude driver in front of me, as he laughed with the lady passenger in his car, and I was in awe that I had just had an incredible moment with God in my own car. Christ had softened my heart on behalf of this man, and he didn’t even know. He didn’t even know that love had happened on his behalf.

Glory is available. Maybe you just need the hope of Christ’s transforming power for yourself today?

So I pray you will choose to open your heart to Christ. As you do, I pray He will demonstrate His glory by the work He does in the hidden places of your heart. {eoa}

Christy Fitzwater is an author and pastor’s wife living in Kalispell, Montana. She is the author of *Blameless: Living A Life Free from Guilt And Shame* and *My Father’s Hands: 52 Reasons to Trust God with Your Heart*. Find her devotional writing at .