

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.

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