

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

The Al Denson Show
Box 220 Grapevine, TX 76099
Toll Free 1-877-HOPE101
Email: aldenson@aol.com
Web Site: www.aldenson.com





Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as "15 minutes of fame". Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, "The Al Denson Show." "You've got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport," says Al. "This has all been so amazing. I can't imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don't have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, 'I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.' You can't ask for anything more or better than that."

Write Al at: Box 220 Grapevine, TX 76099
Email: aldenson@aol.com Web Site: www.aldenson.com

WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE DIES

When someone we love dies, the last thing we want are spiritual slogans or to have what we are experiencing minimized or simplified. That's not what this booklet is about. The purpose of this booklet is to help us understand grief a little more so we can handle it a little better. To be able to go on with life, we all must learn how to deal with grief, because at one time or the other we will all face the death of someone we love. Grieving is painful and normal, but it is something that most people don't understand.

Grief is not an easy subject to study because death is not an easy thing to face. We usually shut people out when they try to talk about grief because fear and anxiety keep us from wanting to learn about it. Grief is not something we can escape. We may want to try and run away from it, but we can't. It would simply follow us wherever we go. Grief is like a tunnel. It is something that in order to get out of we have to go through.

Most of us believe that grief is sadness caused by the death of a loved one. Sadness may be a part of grief, but it is definitely not the only emotion involved in grief. Grief is not just a response to death; it is a reaction to loss. Many good folks do a lot of emotional damage to people who are grieving by saying the wrong things, or the right things at the wrong time.

At one time or the other we will all face the death of someone we love

For instance, to tell someone that they shouldn't grieve because the person they love is "in a better place," or that they shouldn't grieve because "this was God's will," is to miss the point of grief.

Years ago when I was much younger and didn't know any better, I attempted to comfort a young teenager whose dog had been killed by assuring her that "God was in control and permitted this to happen." That provided an answer, but to the wrong question. That girl wasn't interested in the theological principle of the sovereignty

of God. She was hurting because of a loss. Telling her that God was behind this didn't fix her problem, it only created another one. Now, she had to deal with the anger she felt toward God for taking her dog and breaking her heart. I realized much later that resolved emotions, not answered questions, are the way to deal with loss.

Grief causes a battle to be waged inside of us between the reality of what has happened and the way we want things to be. The reality is that we have lost the one we love; what we want is for that person to still be with us. Often we hear it said that the intensity of grief we experience will be in proportion to the degree of love that we had for the one who died.



That is only half of grief. The intensity of the grief is also related to the complexity of the loss. We grieve the loss of what we had and also what we might have had; the loss of a future with that person.

Grief is a very complex reaction that involves all that we are. It involves our emotions and our mental processes, and it affects us socially and spiritually, as well. Because grief is so complex, the emotions and thoughts that come with it should not be ignored. If not faced and dealt with, they will simply be buried somewhere beneath the surface of our lives like a bacteria that grows and spreads until it makes our whole body sick. Unresolved emotions cause serious depression and even physical problems later on in life. Four of the most common emotional reactions to grief are anxiety, anger, guilt and depression.

Let's look briefly at each one:

Anxiety. The great Christian writer, C. S. Lewis reported when his wife died, "No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear." Sometimes it doesn't just feel like fear, it is fear. Fear of being alone or fear of not being able to cope. Death has a way of making us feel very small and frail. We can, like Job did in the Bible, fear the future. In Job 3:25 he says, "What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me." Fear can be extremely paralyzing both physically and emotionally. Because death triggers anxiety, if we don't deal honestly with those feelings, we can be left with a sense of anxiety about life in general — an uneasiness that something bad is always about to happen.

Anger. We can direct our anger in many different ways: at doctors, at other people, at the circumstances surrounding the death, or at God. Sometimes we can even be angry at the one who is dying or has died. This may be embarrassing for us and painful for others, but anger needs to be brought out in the open, and the only way to work through it is to be honest about it. Anger is not a sin, or a lack of faith. It is a response to loss. If you are one who is having anger directed at you because someone else is grieving, try not to take the bitter words or outbursts personally. Remember, Proverbs 15:11 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath."

Guilt. Some of the guilt we are left with when someone we love dies is real, but most is false guilt. Depending on how the loved one was treated before his or her death will determine the amount of guilt that we have to deal with, but everyone will deal with a certain amount of guilt. Because we so often look for someone to blame when bad things happen, it is natural to assign at least part of the blame to ourselves. When we do that, guilt is sure to follow.

Depression. Depression and sorrow are the main grief reactions. Depression has many symptoms: sadness, desiring to die, sleeplessness, pessimism about life, helplessness, a sense of worthlessness, and physical problems. With time, depression will go away, but you have to live with it, to get through it. Depression lifts slowly as you move through the stages of grief.

When someone we love dies there are mental reactions to deal with, as well as the emotional reactions we experience. Many times a person who is immersed in deep grief will think that they are losing their mind and can't believe that what they are experiencing is normal. Loss always raises many logical questions that beg to be explained. Unbelievers will look for rational answers to spiritual questions that they probably have never thought about before. Even believers may ask questions like, "How can a good God let people suffer and die?" Or, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Christians can play a part in giving answers when asked, but grievers need small bits of biblical insight, not long sermons. Remember, nothing in life or in death will ever make sense to a person who is in darkness spiritually.

Four of the most common emotional reactions to grief are anxiety, anger, guilt and depression.



Christians too, may look for intellectual answers to explain what has happened, but reasoning will not bring resolution or peace, only waiting on God and letting grief run its course will accomplish that.

There are some social and spiritual reactions to grief that we also need to know about. Sometimes a person who is grieving will want to withdraw and be alone. That is O.K., but it is not a good idea to be left entirely alone in the beginning. Someone needs to at least be quietly by in a nearby room. At other times the one who is grieving will want company. Grieving people are often lonely people and loneliness just adds to their hurt. Either way, people in grief need people. Sometimes to be quietly giving them space, and at other times to be right there with them, but always understanding and unafraid to be with someone in pain.

The reactions that may come spiritually and emotionally are sometimes a surprise to Christians. We may have mistakenly believed that death is not supposed to cause a Christian to go to pieces, or to have doubts, or not to be able to sense God's presence. When these kinds of reactions occur, we may lose confidence in our own faith. At the time of death we need to be reminded that we are simply to trust in God, not in our faith, to get us through.

Grieving is not a place, it is a process and to effectively deal with a traumatic experience, it must be a complete process. Grief is like a long, winding road through mountains and valleys.

Around every bend is a new landscape. Some days we'll be surprised by where we are in this process, and other days the scenery will look like it is never going to change.

We can't map out grief, but there are some landmarks along the way that will help us know where we are in our journey. We may go slowly through one place and quickly through another, or we may go back and forth between places we have already visited. Most of the time, however, we won't progress to the next landmark until we have allowed ourselves to fully experience all that is there for us at our present location.

1. Numbness or Denial

Denial is choosing to ignore our true feelings or circumstances. This may be the first stop on the journey for some, and a later stop for others. At this place, the emotional pain is so great that we just refuse to let ourselves feel anything. We don't talk about what has happened, and we don't want anyone else to talk about it either, because that will only make it real. We refuse to think about it, or to feel the pain. Denying our feelings or what has happened may seem to help at first, but it won't make our painful emotions go away.

Sometimes people may use drugs, alcohol or activity at this point to try and numb their pain. We usually are gripped by a desire to escape, to run and hide. We think if we refuse delivery, we won't have to accept our pain, but that isn't true.

If a dog gets his tail slammed in a door, he will usually run for his life, thinking that he can outrun the pain. He doesn't realize that he is only taking his pain with him wherever he goes. People are like that, too. We sometimes think we can run from our pain, but we can't. Whether we try to live in denial about our feelings or try to numb them some way, sooner or later we will have to face and deal with the truth. The sooner that happens, the sooner we will be on the road to recovery and healing.

2. Pain

When we do finally allow ourselves to hurt, we may hurt so badly that we think we won't be able to stand it. We will probably feel as if we have been broken into a million pieces, and that there isn't enough glue in the world to put us back together. This is surely the most unpleasant stop along the way, but don't try a shortcut or detour.

If at this place in the process we will simply let the deep pain hurt, we will find that the pain actually helps move us on down the road and through that valley. Numbness and denial may seem like ways to avoid the pain, but they are really like running off the road and getting stuck in the mud. We never get to move on that way.

3. Anger

It is very important to find a safe environment with someone who loves and accepts us unconditionally, and can help us work through our anger. It is constructive to visit anger for a while, but it is destructive to pitch a tent and live there.

When something bad happens in our lives, anger is not the feeling we experience first. Anger is born out of fear, frustration, or hurt. It will help a great deal if we are able to be honest about our anger and call it what it really is.

*grief is like a
long, winding road
through mountains
and valleys.*

grief is a process and must be allowed to run its course in our lives

We need to decide if we are feeling angry because we are fearful, or frustrated, or hurt. Being honest about what we are really feeling, and dealing with those issues will go a long way in helping work through anger. Without this honesty, our anger can make it very difficult for others who can help us get close enough to do that. Having unresolved anger in our life is like living in a prison of our own making, and it will destroy us if we choose to let it. Anger is a normal part of the grieving process, but unresolved anger will only darken and harden our hearts.

4. Acceptance

Finally, we arrive at a place of peace and calmness. The numbness and denial, the pain and anger have been exposed and expressed. Is life ever the same again? No. That doesn't mean life is bad, just different. It is like a man who has had a leg amputated. For a long time there is a fierce and continuous pain. If treated properly, the stump where his leg was will heal. Eventually, he will regain enough strength to function with a wooden leg. He will still continue to have pain occasionally, and will have some good days and some bad days. In time, the man will be able to do almost all of the things he did before he lost his leg, but there will never be a time when things won't be different. Getting up, sitting down, bathing, dressing will all be different, because his life has been changed. The scar will remain, but health will replace the pain if the healing process is allowed to take place.

Arriving at this place called acceptance, we find a new perspective on life. Most of us live our lives going 90 miles per hour. Death has a way of putting life into slow motion, and helping us realize what is really important in life.

Grieving is very painful, but it is a forward process. Sometimes we may find that we have many mixed emotions about moving on. Yes, there is part of us that wants to get on with our lives, but there is another part that is afraid to move on. We may hate the feelings of pain and sorrow that have become all too familiar to us. But we may be afraid that if we let go of our grief we will be letting go of the person who has died — that our last link to them will be severed for good. It may seem that the only way to keep that person real to us is to grieve.

Another reason we may be reluctant to let go of our grief is because we may feel that our grief is now defining who we are; that we have become nothing more than a grieving person. The person we thought we were seems to be gone. There is no more "me," just "grieving me." Our fear may be that if we let go of our grief that there will be nothing left of us. These are both very common fears, but they are just that, understandable, but unfounded, fears. The truth is that it is only when we get on the other side of our grief that we will be able to remember our loved one more clearly, and know who we are without them.

As you are working through your loss, let me give you some things to watch for and to guard against. Death can be like finding yourself

caught in a storm out on the ocean, but instead of wind and waves, we are caught in a storm of emotions. When this happens, there will usually be three things we will be tempted to do:

1. Drift. Just like a storm can cause us to lose sight of where we are headed, death can cause us to forget our goals, values and convictions and just begin to drift through life. We allow waves of pain or anger to beat us around like waves on the ocean during a hurricane.

2. Discard. If we are out in a boat when a storm hits, the temptation is to start throwing things overboard. When death touches our life, we may also be tempted to start discarding things from our life. We feel at times like we are about to go under emotionally, so we begin throwing important things like dreams or relationships overboard.

3. Despair. When a storm has made things dark all around us, it is easy to give up hope that the sun will ever shine again. Don't despair. Morning will come no matter how dark or long the night. Where there is life, there is hope.

How long do we grieve? There are no formulas and no easy answers. We simply must give ourselves permission to grieve our loss for as long as it takes. Grief is a process of healing. We can't heal ourselves, and even though they can be a part of the healing, other people can't do that work for us either. Yes, grief is a process and must be allowed to run

its course in our lives, but it is only God who can comfort us, give us strength, direction and hope for tomorrow.

There are two common questions that people ask when someone that they love dies. These are "Why did this happen?" and "Where is God?" First, we need to remember that when God created us it was His plan that we would live forever. It was never in the heart of God for man to have grown old or to have died. He created a world that was perfect. No pain, sorrow, suffering, hate, war, violence, sickness, and especially, no death. All of these bad things came into the world, not because they were God's idea, but as a result of sin. When Adam and Eve, in spite of God's warning, chose to rebel against Him, sin and death entered the world. God hates sin and death and all the suffering it brings with it, but the fact that it is now a part of our world is not God's fault. It is ours.





God warned the man and woman not to sin, and told them that there would be terrible consequences to pay if they did. Well, Adam and Eve chose to ignore God's warning about sin. God could have washed His hands of the whole human race at that point, but He didn't. He LOVES us and He CARES about our suffering. The cross of Jesus Christ is historical evidence of God's very real involvement in our pain.

God tells us not to sin, and gives us the gift of a free will to choose, then when we make the wrong choice, God comes down to earth in the form of a man and dies in our place to pay for our wrong choices! God is a good and loving Father who wants to be involved in our lives. He knows and He understands our hurt and He cares. God will welcome us into His loving arms and comfort us, if we will only let Him.

In Proverbs 3:5, God warns us not to "lean on our own understanding." It doesn't say that we shouldn't try to understand, just that we shouldn't "lean." The word "lean" here refers to a "panicky demand for answers." It is demanding that God explain Himself. Dr. James Dobson said, "It is O.K. to ask "why" and to try and understand, but the fact is that our minds are too small and we have been given too few facts to explain all the heartache in an imperfect, fallen world. That understanding will have to await the coming of our sovereign Lord." We don't understand it all, we can't understand it all. Folks, a God who is small enough for us to understand completely, isn't big enough to be God!

For those who know Him, there is much for which to look forward. The Bible says in Revelations 21:4 that there is coming a day when God will "wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain." Is life always fair? No. Do bad things happen to good people? Yes. Does this mean that God isn't good? No. The goodness of God is not proved by an absence of problems or pain. Those are just part of the package, and come with the territory for all of us who live in this world of sin and death. The goodness of God is proven by the nearness of God — that He will never leave or forsake those who come to Him in repentance and faith.

Secondly, where is God when it hurts? Right where He has always been, closer than our heartbeat. Watching and waiting for us to run to Him with our problems and with our pain. Probably the greatest need we have when death comes is to know that somebody understands what we are going through. Jesus Christ left all the splendor and majesty of heaven to come to this earth as a baby. He came and for 33 years He walked and lived among us. He faced suffering and experienced death to earn the right to say to us, "I understand."

Helping Those Who Grieve...

You may be reading this little booklet not because someone you love has died, but because someone you love is grieving over the death of a loved one, and you would like to know how to help. Dr. Linda Mintle in her book, *Kids Killing Kids*, gives those of us who want to be able to help, some guidelines to follow:

- Be there physically.
- Use the word death; don't skirt around it.
- Don't try to force emotions that aren't there. Respect the individual's timing on where he or she is in the grieving process.
- Remain calm and comforting.
- Talk about what has happened if you are asked.
- Offer to make calls to anyone who needs to be notified.
- Ask relatives or other friends what needs to be physically done for the one who is grieving. Don't ask the griever.

- Don't offer a lot of words. A simple "I'm so sorry" and your presence will speak volumes.
- Don't say things like, "this is God's will."
- Don't talk about your personal stories or experiences.
- Give them space when they need it; be available when they need you.
- Affirm the way they are feeling. Don't try to talk them out of their feelings.
- Remember the significant dates in the deceased person's life with a card, a call or a visit.

It is also important to watch for signs of severe grief that may call for professional help:

- substance abuse;
- chronic psychosomatic complaints;
- excessive guilt;
- wanting to die and join the person who died;
- morbid preoccupation with worthlessness;
- inability to get back into a routine after a significant period of time;
- overly intense reactions when the deceased is mentioned;
- isolation from normal relationships;
- feelings of intense hostility or irritability.

If any of the physical symptoms of grief, or any of the problems listed above linger for more than two months and interfere with functioning, a grief counselor may be needed to help move a person on who is "stuck" through the grieving process.