

How to Face the Death of a Loved One



Victory Over Death (Part 15)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. Our theme all this week has been, "Victory Over Death."

Let me begin by saying thank you to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

Yesterday I dealt with a very personal and practical application of truths we have been studying. My subject was, "How to Face Death."

Today I'll be dealing with a subject that follows on naturally from yesterday's talk. My subject today will be, "How to Face the Death of a Loved One."

I want to tell you today that I am speaking from personal experience. I believe there are some things a person can only understand after experiencing them. This was true in my own case. In 1975, the Lord called home my first wife, Lydia. We had had 30 years of happy married life together. We had shared everything – poverty, riches, good times, bad times. We'd raised a family together, and we'd served the Lord together. Sometimes, after we had been ministering together in a service or a conference, people would come up to us and say something like this, "You two work together just like one person." That was the kind of unity there was between us, and when the Lord called Lydia home, it was like a part of me that was taken from me. It was the most agonizing experience of my life. Yet I want to tell you today how God turned it into a blessing and a source of fruitfulness.

After that, I began to observe others and somehow bereaved men and women were attracted to me and I was able to comfort them in a way that I had not been able to do before. And I came to realize how few people are prepared for the death of a loved one. A man and a woman can live together for 30 or 40 or 50 years and yet not be prepared when God calls one of them home. Surely, that is unrealistic because God is going to take one. Very seldom does a married couple go together. Or God may take – it may be even a brother or a sister, or some other loved relative. And remember parents, that God takes children home, too. They don't all grow up to

full age and maturity. There are caskets for all sizes; for all kinds of ages that die. I'm not being morbid when I say this, I'm being realistic. But, I discovered that we can face the death of a loved one in victory and it can prove yet another evidence of God's love and faithfulness.

On the basis of my experience I want to offer you some counsel – if and when you should be faced with this situation. I am going to suggest to you six things that you need to do.

First of all, trust God's love and wisdom. Let me say that again, "Trust God! Trust His love and wisdom." I think there is a beautiful example in the story of Job. Job's seven sons and three daughters had all been taken by death in a moment – in a single disaster. But this is what Job said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord." I don't believe that was resignation, I believe that was trust. If you can trust the Lord to give, can you not trust the Lord to take away? Can you not trust His wisdom? Doesn't God know the right way and right time to take each one of His children? I believe he does.

The second counsel I would offer you is this: yield up the loved one to God. That's not easy. I remember about an hour after my wife died, I said to the Lord, "I won't ask for her back. She was yours before she was mine." When I said that it was like something that was pulled out of my heart and it made room for the hand of God to move in and to begin healing that wound. But as long as I was holding onto her with my soulish desire, God couldn't really move on my behalf. So my second piece of counsel is: yield up the loved one.

Thirdly, reaffirm your faith. It may sound strange for a preacher to say this, but when God took my wife I had to ask myself, "Do I really believe what I've been preaching all these years? Do I really believe there will be a resurrection? Do I really believe that I will see my wife again?" And for a little while it was hard for me to answer, and then I said, "I do believe! I do believe! There will be a resurrection! We will meet again! God is faithful! The Bible is to be trusted! I haven't put my faith in something that's unreal and unsubstantial. I've put my faith in something that will stand every test – the faithfulness of God, the love of God, and the truth of Scripture." So that is my third piece of counsel to you. When you're faced with this kind of situation, reaffirm your faith. Every time you do it, your faith will be strengthened and you'll have greater victory in your soul.

I think you can understand that it's not easy for me to say what I'm saying to you today. The reason why I'm doing it is because I've seen so many people unprepared, who couldn't face this situation when it came to them. Now, I'm going to give you three more pieces of counsel.

The fourth one that follows on the three I've already given is this: Don't try to be stoical. Don't bottle your feelings up! Do you know what "stoicism" is? It's a pagan philosophy that originated in Greece. The Stoic was the one who wouldn't let anything hurt him. He was so in control of everything – he never laughed, he never cried, he never showed his emotions. That has nothing to do with the Christian faith. God knows we're human beings. The Scripture says He knows what we're made of. He knows our feelings and our thoughts. God knows that it hurts. God knows that you experience grief, and He's not angry with you for that. I've always been impressed with the fact that in the history of Israel, after the redemption from Egypt, ultimately they lost their two great leaders – Moses and Aaron. And in each case God permitted Israel thirty days of mourning for their leaders. God knew that they couldn't just get up and go on as though nothing had happened. God knew that something had been taken out of their lives that they were going to miss, and He said, "Take thirty days and express your feelings – don't bottle it up."

I think also of the testimony of David in Psalm 30:11-12:

> "Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing; Thou has loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness that my soul may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever." (NAS)

What I like about the Bible is it's so honest, it's so realistic. David didn't say, "I didn't mourn," he said, "I did mourn." He said, "I know what mourning is." But he said, "My mourning has turned into dancing." I don't believe that David would ever have danced if he hadn't mourned. There is a dancing that comes only out of mourning.

I can tell you from my own personal experience, that actually happened in my case. God literally turned my mourning into dancing, but I had to mourn first. I had to be honest. I had to be realistic. I had to say, "I'm grieving; it hurts." But God heals that hurt when we expose it to him by honesty. If you try to bottle that feeling up, it will just go inward, it will fester and one day you'll have some kind of emotional problem. Today I feel that mentally and emotionally I'm a healthier and a stronger person than I was before I went through this experience.

My fifth piece of counsel is lean on the Body. Lean on your fellow

believers. In 1 Thessalonians 4:18, Paul says:

> "Therefore comfort one another with these words." (NAS)

We need comfort from our fellow believers. One thing I will never forget is the love that was taken shown me by countless members of my fellowship when my wife was taken home. Something that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Also, it made a tremendous impact upon others round about. I look back and I thank God that I was part of a Body. That I was part of a committed group of believers who stood by me. Believe me, friend, when that hour comes you're going to need people to comfort you. Isn't it beautiful that the Scripture calls God, "The God of all comfort"? But He comforts us through our fellow believers. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says this:

> "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up." (NAS)

Remember, there is going to be a time when you're going to need committed believers that will stand by you.

My sixth and final piece of counsel is this: Continue to serve Christ as faithfully as you can. Don't let anything hold you back from your own personal obligation to the Lord to serve Him and to fulfill the ministry He's given you. Paul says this in Philippians 3:13-14:

> "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (NAS)

One of the secrets of successful Christian living is to be able to forget what lies behind – reach on to what lies ahead. There's a prize ahead! Press toward it! I think of two words to sum up Paul's attitude: Onward and upward! That's how you have to go. Don't be held back! Don't be turned back! Press onward and upward. As I look back on that experience, for me, it has become yet another proof in my own life and experience of God's love and God's faithfulness.

Well, our time is up for today, but I'll be back with you again next week at this time Monday through Friday.

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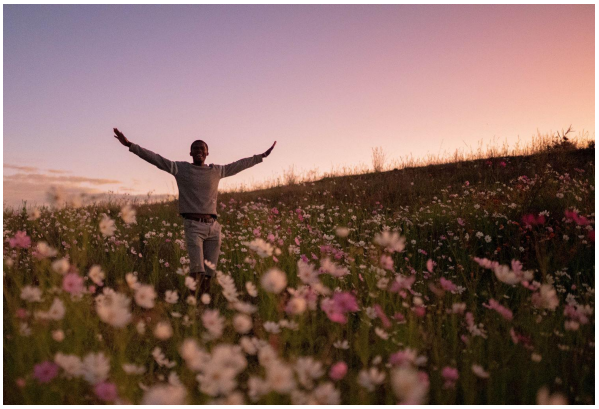

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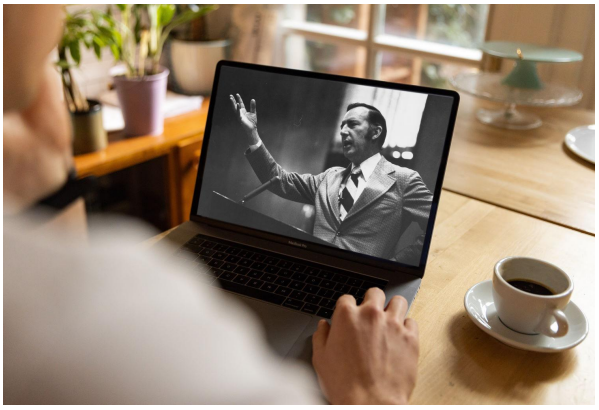

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