

a 3 point message

Rita Lihaven, Sevenoaks Alliance Church, Abbotsford, B.C.

During my years as pastor, I have experienced several heart-wrenching episodes of grief and loss to children and families. After comforting an already fragmented family through good-byes to their beloved nine year old boy, brain-dead in less than 24 hours from meningitis, I took the place of the mom as the doctor disconnected the life support.

After sitting all night with a family whose teenage daughter tried to take her life, praying desperately for her recovery, when the code blue rang through the hospital corridors, I had to prepare for the worst.

Sometimes the outcomes are miraculous as in the case of the little three year old from our church who was struck by a mini-van as they were loading the kids in the car. Still, as you wait with family and friends in little rooms designed for this kind of tragedy, one's helplessness and loss for words is extremely evident.

There are only a few feeble pieces of advice I can give from my experiences to offer comfort to grieving children and families.

1. Be there

Your presence of care and concern speaks louder than any words you can say. Your time speaks of the love Jesus needs you to share.

2. Listen

There is little you can or need to say. There is a lot you can listen to. Grief and loss are incredibly deep emotions that need to be processed – that requires a good listener who understands the need for repetition.

3. Pray

Pray with, pray for, pray out loud, pray silently, pray for your strength to help, pray for their strength to persevere. Pray comfort, pray peace, pray without ceasing. During those times when families are unable to pray for themselves, they are comforted by your prayers.

As I walked into a desperate situation in one hospital room, this friend asked, "You know what to do, don't you?", to which I replied, "There's no way you can train for this." All you can do is be there, listen and pray.



Food For All

It's all I can do to watch documentaries of hungry children. The problem seems too big, too far removed and what can I really do about it other than contribute to my local food bank?

The Christian and Missionary Alliance partners with several relief organizations to bring practical support and aid to God's work overseas. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is one such organization and they have recently developed a children's and youth curriculum to educate children on world hunger. "Food for All" is a six-part hands-on series that offers a buffet of ideas to educate our boys and girls and then provides them with food for thought on how they can be involved.

"Food for All" is available for a cost of \$10.00 through the Missions Department (416-674-7878, ext. 226).

Carol Wiebe, Unionville Alliance Church, Unionville, ON



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All of us have been touched by the tragedy of September 11, 2001 – even our children. We live in Canada and yet, our children have seen and heard of events that are frightening and difficult to comprehend. As I was on the internet, I found an article for children, "September 11, 2001 Tragedy: Q & A For Kids Only" and one for parents and educators, "Helping Children Cope with Catastrophe" that can help children understand and make sense of these changes in our world. The articles can be found on two websites: www.marymanzsimon.com www.standardpub.com

- Carol Wiebe, Unionville Alliance Church, Unionville, Ont.

Just Me and the Kids

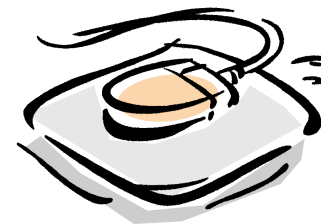
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In their mission statement, "Just Me and the Kids" has as its goal, "to assist single parent families on the journey towards healing, wholeness and hope."

"Just Me and the Kids" is a ministry designed to target single parents and their children. It includes all parents who find themselves single through separation, divorce, death or as a parent who has never married. The program is intent on helping single parent families work through their pain and discouragement and find life on the other side.

There are separate sessions for parents and for children so the whole family can benefit. The twelve-week children's curriculum helps children: acknowledge their feelings; process their pain; addresses denial, guilt, anger; helps them to regain their self-esteem, their need to be loved and gives them freedom to communicate what is going on inside while moving toward healing and wholeness. The adult material provides video and small group discussion times where parents can find mutual support as they share personal experiences, pain, frustrations and begin the healing process. Moms and Dads are given practical guidance for surviving and growing within the context of a one-parent family. Parents are also equipped to better understand their children's behavioral patterns and provide appropriate care. The program is designed to cover critical issues that single parents and their children face.

God is using this program to reach out into communities. One parent commented, "As my kids and I participated in this ministry, the thing that was the most beneficial was that we were placed in an environment where we knew we were not alone. My kids felt there were other kids just like them and I knew I wasn't the only father going through a divorce either." Kayla, a seven year old, said to her room leader, "Are you an angel sent from God to help us?"



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