



A Ministry to Bereaved Parents and Their Families

*Inviting Hope to Heal Broken Hearts*

## **The Forgotten Ones: Grieving Siblings**

***I am always afraid that my child in Heaven will be forgotten.***

I'm afraid that as time passes, things change and lives move forward, his place in hearts will be squeezed smaller and smaller until only a speck remains.

*Not in my heart, of course.*

Or in the hearts of those closest to him, but in general-he will become less relevant.

***But he is not the only one who can be forgotten. I am just as fearful that my living children will be forgotten.***

Not in the same way-they are **HERE**.

They are participating in life and making new memories, new connections and strengthening old ones.

***I'm afraid their grief will be overlooked, unacknowledged-swept under the giant rug of life and busyness that seems to cover everything unpleasant or undervalued.***

If the course of a bereaved parent's grief is marked by initial outpouring of concern, comfort and care followed by the falling away of friends, family and faithful companionship then that of a bereaved sibling is doubly so.

Surviving children often try to lessen a grieving parent's burden by acting as if "everything is OK".

***But it's not-it is definitely NOT.***

*"Missing someone isn't about how long it has been since you've seen them or the amount of time since you've talked. It's about that very moment when you find yourself doing something and wishing they were right there by your side"*

~Unknown



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Their world has been irrevocably altered. *They have come face-to-face with mortality, with deep pain, with an understanding that bad things happen-**happen to people they love**-without warning and without remedy.*

They are forced to rethink their family, their faith and their future without a life-long friend and companion.

**Part of their history is gone.**

*"Our surviving children not only lost a sibling, but they've also lost the mother and father they once knew. Everything is different now."*

*~Unknown*

If surviving children are young, it can be so, so easy to mistake the natural enthusiasm and excitement of youth for complete healing. They are often busy with events, education, work and life and the grief they still feel may go unnoticed-even by themselves.

*But they need safe, consistent and compassionate care while they navigate grief and the enduring impacts of sibling loss.* School counselors, grief counselors or mature and emotionally stable adult friends can be very helpful during this process.

It's important to be alert to danger signals. Behavioral impacts may present in many ways:

- Anxiety (situational, tests, generalized)
- Risk taking
- Isolation
- Inability to enjoy previously enjoyable activities
- Withdrawal from family or friends
- Depression
- Self-harming behavior
- Drug or alcohol abuse



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- Poor grades (may have given up or may not be able to concentrate)
- Extreme concern for other family members and their safety

**If you observe any of these changes, get help.** A grieving parent is rarely able to be the sole source of intensive counsel for a bereaved child-someone outside the grief circle may be a better choice.

Adult children-even those married and with kids of their own-are also changed forever by saying “good-bye” to a brother or sister. *Addiction, depression and physical health issues can surface in the wake of loss.*

It’s not always easy to connect the dots back to grief since life is full of stress and strain and they may need help.

***My children have been blessed to have friends and loved ones who give them a safe place to go when grief overwhelms them or when other stressors on top of grief make life really hard.***

If you know a bereaved sibling:

- Reach out.
- Be an encourager.
- Don’t assume that because time has gone by, they are all better.
- They may not want to talk about it and that’s OK. But if they do, listen. Without platitudes, without judgement-just be a safe place.
- And if you notice something that’s just not “quite right” try to get them the help they may need to make it through this hard place.

Bereaved families are often doing the best they can, *but they can’t do it alone.*

***When you bless my earthly children, you bless me. When you give them space to grieve, you give me space to breathe. When you encourage them, you encourage my heart too.***

*Don’t forget them.*

**Please.**

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