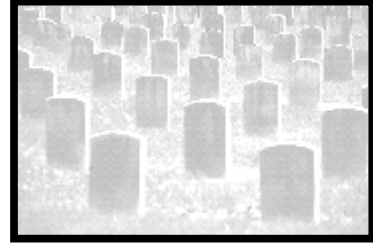


DEATH

Death is a subject that is sometimes difficult to discuss; after all, death possibly means the end of natural life whether the life pertains to a flower or to a human life. Generally, death is followed by grief - the process of accepting the loss.



On a lighter note, Charlie Brown may have coined the phrase, “Good Grief” which playfully meant that he or his friends were bemoaning a circumstance. But can grief be really good; or can acceptance of death or another unfortunate circumstance be good?

This is a tough subject – even for adults – but, perhaps this letter will have some benefit to you in the years to come when grief will most certainly find you as it does all people. Please be patient as I tread through this delicate subject but, above all, understand that grief is a good thing and enables us to cope, indeed succeed, through a bad circumstance.

When our beagle “Billy” ran-away, Matthew grieved over the matter; he was upset, then sad, then winsome, and finally accepting. Matthew went through a grieving process because the dog he cared about was gone. The positive outcome of this experience is that Matthew was able to care for something or someone and was willing to show his feelings or affection for the pet.

In some cultures today, and in American history, grief is a welcomed and public condition of post-death or loss. In times past, woman would dress in black for long periods of time signifying their grief; men would wear armbands, also black, for the same reason. Actually, dressing in black was to honor the dead or lost by making the matter visible and to invoke the sympathy of the public as well.

Whether planned, expected or actually caused by one’s lifestyle, the loss of life can cause bitterness and other unresolved conditions. Grieving enables one to achieve closure and to move forward, renewed in their faith and strengthened by the experience. Grieving allows healing through a set of steps or conditions to possibly include: denial - about the seriousness of the loss; anger about the loss; guilt about the loss or things you think you could have done to prevent it; depression or a frequent sense of sadness; loneliness or fear of isolation from others; acceptance; and finally, hope.

Grieving can be a healthy way of dealing with death or other major losses in your life. Again, this process enables you to *work-through* the loss and find hope waiting to usher you back to a place of appreciation for the time, experiences, opportunities, and blessing that we receive as gifts.

In a

WORD