

Women-2-pray: How to pray for someone who has lost a parent

Death is always traumatic and even more so when you lose one of your parents. Most people experience a deep sense of loss and much pain. How do I pray for people who lost a parent? The following are some guidelines.

1. **Check your own heart first.** It is important that they will not feel you coming across wiser than they are, or that you know how to handle it and are above their pain and sense of loss. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with godly compassion for the person that needs to deal with such loss.
2. **Listen.** Let your words be few when you talk with people suffering the loss of a loved one. Do not preach to them or try to make them cut short the time they need to mourn the loss of their parent, or put an end to the mourning period too soon. Mourning the loss of a loved one takes time and it is important for someone to complete the whole process of grief, allowing them the time they need. We do not really help them by suggesting that when they just believe everything is fine the pain will go away. Coming to terms with death and healing takes time.
3. **Be sincere.** When you pray with the person, make your prayers short and do not turn your prayers into a sermon. Be sincere and pray for their felt needs and circumstances they have to face after the death of especially a parent.
4. **Fearfully minister God's love.** Wait in God's presence before you pray. Ask Him what you should pray. Let Him guide you. In times of sorrow and bereavement people are open to think again about the totality of life, their own values, priorities, sins, attitude towards life, their activities and the things that are precious to them. In times like these God often reveals Himself to a person who has lost a parent. This is why you have to listen carefully to the voice of the Holy Spirit, keeping in mind that each individual's circumstances are different. Sometimes people might be so devastated that they cannot see beyond the death of their parents. Pray with a heart full of compassion, care and love and without judgment.
5. **The salvation issue.** It is very difficult for people who have lost a parent if they suspect that their father or mother didn't know the Lord Jesus. Pray that those who lost a parent will be able to put this uncertainty into God's hands and entrust the whole situation to Him; trust His judgment and wisdom in all things. There are no easy answers here, and therefore we have to ask the Father that He will send the Holy Spirit to minister to them.
6. **Questions to be answered.** In times where people experience the reality of death close to them, they ask many questions. There is often bitterness towards God and people will blame God for lacking love and mercy, etc. Pray that they will understand God's wisdom in the midst of this situation, and also that God is too wise to make a mistake and too kind to be cruel.
7. **Step by step.** According to psychological research, most people go through roughly 5 stages in the grieving process:
 - First they may deny that the parent died. Pray for the emotional strength at this point to accept the fact of their parent's death.
 - Secondly they may try bargaining with God, asking Him to bring the person back to life. Pray for the person to trust God's character at this point and not to act irresponsibly and that they will accept that Jesus is the One who holds the keys of life and death (**Rev.1:18**).
 - Thirdly they might become angry. There is anger towards God, perhaps anger towards the doctor and blaming him that he made a wrong diagnosis, or anger toward the person who caused the accident in which the father or mother died. Pray for the bereaved to understand that no aspect of their life is outside of God's absolute sovereignty and control – that God is always in control. Circumstances and the Evil One cannot outsmart God.
 - Depression can set in at the realisation that nothing can be done about the situation. The person who died is not coming back ever again. Pray for the bereaved as they work through their emotions. Pray that they will

understand what is really going on in their hearts and that they will be able to release all their doubts, pain, emptiness and sorrow to God.

Acceptance and restoration

Try to determine what stage of the process the person you are praying for is in. Pray with them and for them through each stage. Ask God to fill you with love for them, make you sensitive to their needs and help you understand what they are going through. Not all the stages will take the same time to work through. Often people will get stuck in one of these stages or they may even skip some of them.

8. **Mixed feelings.** Especially when a person's parent had cancer or something similar and suffered a long sickbed, they might feel a sense of thankfulness and or relief at the person's death (mostly for the sake of the person who died). Many will feel guilty that they are relieved. Pray about those false guilt feelings. Also pray that in their sorrow they will understand that death is the end of suffering and that they must rejoice in that fact because the parent who died is free from pain and suffering.
9. **Pillar of strength.** When a father dies, it is as if the canopy of protection over the family is suddenly gone. There is no-one to 'protect' and take care of them. Pray for a renewed realisation that God is their Father and that they can move in under the permanent canopy of protection and security of their heavenly Father. Pray also that those who are left behind will understand their own responsibility to be that canopy of protection, that they will take authority over life in their surroundings and area of influence and include their whole family. Sometimes this is quite a difficult process as many people will feel they are not up to it.
10. **Pillar of comfort.** For many people it is something totally different when a mother dies. Suddenly the one that carried you in her womb, fed and clothed you, kissed, prayed and cried for you, is gone. For many people this is a more emotional experience than the death of a father. Pray that the persons left behind will be able to express their feelings. Do not judge them for that or try to stop them when they speak about it, or if the time of grieving continues for a longer period than what you think is 'necessary'. We are emotional beings and emotions need time to heal.
11. **Life goes on.** We do find people who are able to handle death on a rational level, but struggle to bring their emotions in line with the truths of the Word and their rational understanding and acceptance of the situation. Pray about this with and for them. Pray that they will not only be able to understand that there is still meaning in life but also realise that the fact that their father or mother died, is not the end of their own lives. It is also important for them to reach a point where they can enjoy life again, be free from sorrow and that they do not need to feel guilty if they sometimes forget about the one that died. Pray that they will grow into a deeper emotional maturity in enjoying and appreciating life.
12. **Pray Scripture.** Here are a few Scripture references to use when praying for someone who has lost a parent: **Psalm 23:4; John 14:2-3; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Revelation 21:4-7.**