**Honest to God: Praying Through the Stages of Grief and Loss**

Using the traditional You-Who-Do-Through formula for prayer, it is possible for people going through the pain of separation, loss and grieving to pray honestly and openly to God, like the Psalmists did. The prayers can be as long and as short as you wish; the phrases in each of the steps can be added to, changed, adapted: they are only starters for your own words, your own feelings. I have added one step to the template mentioned above: a series of statements about how one might be feeling when coming before God during a time of grieving. This step has eight sections which are representative of the stages of grief and loss some suggest we go through (Shock, Denial; Yearning and searching; Loss, emptiness, sadness; Anger, Anxiety, Guilt, blame and bargaining; Acceptance and reconciliation to change). They can be simplified for children. The choices are done this way, not to suggest we necessarily need to pray through these stages, or even identify them, but rather to reassure that these feelings and responses are absolutely normal during phases of grief and loss and that it is perfectly ok to express these feelings to God, who knows how we are going anyway! Perhaps in some way, it may also help to know that in most cases, the pain and anguish will ease with time, even though the memory remains. There are thousands of prayers below: so get praying, even when the going gets tough!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **You****Step 1: Choose one of these or create your own** | Loving God; Gentle and gracious God; God of Surprises; All -powerful God; All-knowing God; God of all life; Protector God; Jesus my brother; Jesus, my friend; Gentle Spirit of God; Life giving Spirit; Creator of the universe; God of the suffering Jesus; Mothering God; Mysterious God; Compassionate God; Companion God; God my friend; Absent God; Hey, God; God, wherever and whoever you are; God of the lost; Spirit of God; Spirit of peace;  |
| **Who****Step 2: Choose one or more of these, or add your own** | everything that happens is known to you; you watch over us always; you care for each one of us; you know each of us by name; you have always been there for me; you seem so distant from me at present; you promise to walk with us at all times; you comfort your people when they cry to you;  |
| **“I”****Step 3: Choose one or more of these phrases.****They can be from one section, or reflect a variety of feelings from a number of sections.** **Create your own if you prefer.** | I am stunned by this loss; my head is spinning in confusion; I am too numb to respond; I don’t know what to do or say; How did this happen? this is too sudden, I’m not ready for this; I have no words;  |
| I can’t believe this has happened to me; this news is too awful; this can’t be true; it hasn’t been confirmed; I’m still hopeful; this doesn’t happen to good people; you wouldn’t let this happen to me; you wouldn’t take .... away from me; No, No! this can’t be happening! I don’t want to face this right now;  |
|  | where is ……..? I cannot sense …. anymore; where are they? where has my loved one gone? I reach out, but no one is there; I long for his/her touch once more; I thought I would feel ….. still with me, but I can’t; How can I keep their memory safe?; I move from room to room, hoping to sense them; I long to see that face once more |
| I am so sad, my heart is torn in two; my life is so empty; this ache of emptiness hurts so much; I am overwhelmed by grief; I cannot stop crying; I am absolutely gutted; I am lost and don’t know what to do; the absence is so overwhelming; |
| I am so angry with you; I am so angry it frightens me; Why did you do this to me? Do you even care? Are you even there? How could a good God allow this to happen? I thought you looked after people who served you; where is your compassion? ; Why have you abandoned me? |
| I am frightened; I am worried; I am terrified of what will happen; I don’t know if I can cope with this; what am I going to do? this is destroying me; I am paralysed with worry; what is to become of me? Will I survive this pain? I just don’t know |
| Is this my fault? Are you punishing me because I...; If only I hadn’t said...; this all happened because of me; if I were a better person...; I promise that if ...; I am so sorry that...; if we can get through this, I will...; things can be different; if I had another chance |
| I know that he/she is gone; your will be done; I accept things could not go on as they were; I realise this is for the best; I understand this had to happen; I know that everyone...; though it is hard, I am beginning to accept that...; I am emerging from the fog of loss; I now realise...; I can now believe...; I now feel that...; I thank you for walking this journey with me; I know I am not alone; I realise I must change; I can now accept that my life is changed; I believe that... is now with you forever; I believe .... and I will meet again; I know that my pain will lessen with time; I accept that.... will not be back; thank you for the support of friends and family at this time; I know that I am loved and supported in my grieving; I am ready to go on |
| **Do****Step 4: Choose one or more of these verbs and phrases. Create your own if you prefer.** | Help me in my grief; walk with me in my suffering; do not abandon me in my time of need; let me know that you are with me in this; give me courage to face what is to come; strengthen my faith so that I can cope with this; heal my pain; soothe my anger; reassure me that all will be well; help me to believe; hear my cries; take away this fear and pain; help me to forgive myself; please answer my call for help; let me know I am not facing this alone; give me a sign that...; help me to keep....in my heart; give me the strength to change; guide me in my new life; help me to find new ways to remember...; let me never forget...; Lord, make haste to help me!; thank you for giving me the strength to persevere; stay with me in the loneliness to come |
| **Through****Step 5: Finish your prayer with one of these phrases or create your own.** | I make this prayer through Jesus, who knew grief and suffering; I ask this in Jesus’ name; I ask this, knowing the power of your Spirit; for you alone are my God, now and forever; hear and answer me, my loving God; I place myself in your loving care; I ask this through Christ, my Lord. |