

REFLECTION FOR MINISTERS (LAY AND ORDAINED)



Comforting and supporting those who are suffering can be fulfilling but can also take a strain on you as caregiver. The very word “compassion” means to “suffer with” another.

It is important to recognize that you too may experience a feeling of personal loss while you are ministering to the family and friends of a child who has passed away or received a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis. Whether the family experienced the loss recently or many years ago, when you enter into a compassionate relationship of ministry with others their pain becomes present and real to you. As a minister, it may be easy to think of your role as one of detachment, that what you experience in ministry is something that should/will not affect you personally.

Remember, ministry does not insulate you from suffering. This ministry can be difficult on many levels. Perhaps you also experienced miscarriage, stillbirth, infant loss, or a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis and this ministry to others brings up past feelings or memories.

You may feel at times you don't have the right words to offer a family or that you feel as though you may have done or said the wrong thing. You may sometimes feel a burden on your shoulders to “fix” their suffering.

Have you stopped to ask yourself, “How am I doing? How am I feeling? Are there times when I am struggling because of this ministry?”

Remember that Christ made sure to take time by himself in prayer (e.g. going off by himself after the miracle of feeding the five thousand), spending time with a small group of people for support (e.g. being with the Apostles), and always made sure to take time for joyful experiences (e.g. the wedding feast at Cana).

The ministry you are participating in is a service to God and to those who are suffering, but it is also an opportunity for you to grow closer to Christ. Take care of yourself.

Prayer

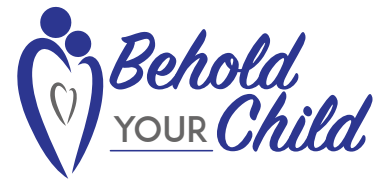
Lord Jesus,

Be with me as I participate in this important ministry. Grant me the grace to be present to those who are suffering. May I receive your wisdom, mercy, and compassion that I may serve you faithfully by serving others. Help me to recognize if the ministry ever gets to be too much for me, that I may remember time for myself in my own spiritual growth and healing. May I always be in your care as I care for others.

Amen.



REFLECTION FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS



As a medical professional you may often feel forgotten in grieving for the patients you serve. You may have been the first person that knew a couple was expecting a baby. You may have even been the one who announced the couple's pregnancy to them. Sadly, you may also have been the one who had to inform them that their baby has a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis or has passed away.

In some ways, you are connected to the unborn child in ways that even some family members may not be. You have a right to grieve as well. Your professional role in medicine does not insulate you from grief. Over your career you may be involved in many such situations where your young patient dies. You serve a role as a medical professional, often supporting and assisting the family in their grief. But have you been able to process your own experience with these losses?

Have you spent time caring for yourself throughout your career? It can be helpful to do things that help you relieve stress or allow you time for reflection. That can come in the form of prayer, socializing, working on a hobby, eating a nice meal, reading, or any number of things. It can also be helpful to talk to others about what you are experiencing, including speaking with other medical professionals.

Christ himself lived some of your own experiences. The Savior of the world encountered many sick and dying; people coming to him for healing and miracles. The burden Christ experienced with so many demanding of him to sometimes do what seemed impossible had he not been the Son of God, took no less a toll on him. He regularly went off by himself to process all that was going on around him. He needed time to himself, time to recharge.

He saw so much suffering around him and did what he could knowing that there were still more out there in need. Medical professionals face similar expectations. There are many who come to you for health care and your abilities are limited; there will always be more in need. There will always be situations that you have no control over. This may weigh on you. Look to Christ for inspiration, as a witness of ways to navigate your career, but most of all, for Grace, for mercy, and compassion that you may be healthy in your own life and that you will be strengthened, especially on difficult days in your career.

Prayer

Lord,

Help me in my daily life as I serve my patients. Grant me grace, especially in difficult times, that I may not despair. Be with all of my patients, past, present, and future and help me show them the compassion, charity and mercy that they deserve and need in their time of grief. Let me be a light to my patients, let me be your servant, that they may know you through me by my care and service to them. Please watch over all of my patients that have died and welcome them into your loving embrace.

Amen.

