

A prayer

Creator of all, whose wisdom is
beyond human imagination:
we cannot understand
why our child has gone from us,
even as (s)he was entering
the threshold of earthly life.
We grieve over the loss
of one so young, and struggle
to understand its purpose.

Ease the turmoil of our hearts,
and remind us that one day
we shall be reunited, and share
eternal life with our child;
for we are assured
by the death and resurrection
of Jesus that (s)he is alive
and continues to grow
in beauty and understanding
in your heavenly kingdom.

Amen

You may be helped by a book of prayers
and resources entitled *Not out of Mind*
by Althea Hayton
(published by Arthur James, 1998;
ISBN 0-85305-441-X)

Helpful Organisations

The Compassionate Friends

Tel: 0345 123 2304
www.tcf.org.uk

Cruse/Bereavement Care

Tel: 0808 808 1677
www.cruse.org.uk

Stillbirth and Neonatal Deaths Society (SANDS)

Tel: 0808 164 3332
www.sands.org.uk

Miscarriage Association

Tel: 01924 200799
www.misscarriageassociation.org.uk

The Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies

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The Churches' Fellowship

for Psychical and Spiritual Studies



Occasional Leaflet 2

The Death of Your Baby— Giving Words to Sorrow

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*You are looking for Jesus who was crucified.
He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.*

(Mark 16.6)

Give words to your sorrow

Counsellors tell us to *give words to sorrow*, and this is good advice: but the death of a baby is so overwhelming that we cannot find words to express the depths of our despair. We were looking forward to holding, nurturing, and protecting our child; and so sudden and cruel a departure leaves only pain, black thoughts, and unanswered questions instead of the joy of parenthood. We feel robbed, confused, and bitter.

So, how can we cope?

Firstly: with great difficulty.

Secondly: by not blaming ourselves. However many 'if onlys' we keep on saying to ourselves, we have loved this child and done our very best.

Thirdly: by realising that this dreadful situation is not without hope and meaning. Whether baby lived only in the womb, or for a short time in the outside world, that life was not unfulfilled. It was a sufficient preparation for entry into the next stage of eternal life.

What is death?

Medical scientists do not regard death as a 'point of no return', but as a process which begins soon after conception and continues throughout life. We know that when a baby leaves the womb at childbirth, it is dying to its former life and entering an entirely new world. There, it is separated from the placenta that nourished it in the womb, just as the soul is released from the physical body at the moment of death.

Death is not the end. It is a new beginning.

How can we be sure that this is true?

Absolute certainty is not possible. In any situation doubts can always arise; but there is evidence to support the universal belief that life continues after death.

What is the evidence?

All world religions teach that death is not the end of life, and for Christians there is the assurance of the resurrection of Jesus. Further evidence is provided by studies on out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, and bereavement. Most of this work has been done since the 1960s.

Out-of-the-body experiences

About 10% of people have had experiences of being outside the body and consciously independent of it. This supports the teaching that the essence of the human person is not the body but the soul or spirit within it.

Near-death experiences

There are many people living today who would have died but for cardiac resuscitation. Some of them have given clear accounts of their experiences. These reports indicate very clearly that life persists after death and that the passage from one state to the other is pain-free and liberating. Some say they regret being brought back to life because their vision of the hereafter was so wonderful.

Bereavement experiences

Since the 1970s, bereaved people have become much more open about their experiences. Many of them describe events similar to those recorded in the Bible, when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his death and burial. Jesus' resurrection has universal significance, and the reports now provided by people of unsought meetings with their dead relatives gives continuing support to the view that death does not separate us permanently from those we have loved.

How can we help our child?

We all flourish in an atmosphere of love. This applies to those who have left this earth, just as much as to those still with us. When you think of those you have lost, send them love. This may not be easy, but it speaks to their need. Regard it as spiritual nourishment for them, something which enhances their spiritual growth. It can be done at any time and in any place. Whenever your child comes to mind, whenever you are reminded in any way of them, send them the love of your heart. Eventually you will find this eases your own grief.

Remember; God made your child, God loves your child — even more than you do — and God will care for your child. So, every day, mentally place your child in God's loving care as (s)he continues to grow in the life of the world to come.

