

Nancy Guthrie, *What Grieving People Wish You Knew* (Crossway, 2016)

For a helpful video intro and overview by the author, see <https://vimeo.com/167483885>

Excerpts from Gospel Coalition blog: Some of the most awkward social interactions happen at funerals. What do you say? How can you make the grieving feel better? We all want to be the person who says the perfect thing. On the flip side, we *don't* want to be the person who says the wrong thing. Trying to find the right words or actions to console someone who's lost a loved one seems so elusive. Or maybe you know what it's like to be the mourner. You've cringed at the sappy, pseudo-spiritual jargon someone has tried to comfort you with. You've noticed how people try to avoid you because of the awkwardness caused by grief. You just wish they'd be there for you and know how to comfort you well.

Nancy Guthrie has written a timely book to help us to do just that. *What Grieving People Wish You Knew: About What Really Helps (And What Really Hurts)* ... We all know someone struggling with grief over the death of a loved one, and we all know what it's like to want to help but not know what to say or do... Guthrie—a Bible teacher who with her husband, David, cohost the *GriefShare* video series—recounts how she used to be among the ignorant when it came to consoling grieving friends, until death struck her own family ... Guthrie was on the receiving end of both helpful and hurtful—though all well-meaning—family members and friends who wanted to console her. She then realized the need to develop some type of resource that would aid those who sought to comfort ... to help us know how to engage the grieving in a helpful rather than hurtful way. One doesn't need a counseling background or an advanced education in order to understand and apply the principles ... Our goal in speaking isn't to remove the pain or grief, but to enter into the grievers' pain and assure them they're not alone.

Guthrie not only outlines the dos and don'ts of speaking, but she also provides usable guidelines on specific words and actions that have proven beneficial to mourners ... Just show up, listen more than talk, don't assume anything ... she includes a chapter on how to use social media properly to reach out to the grieving ... These guidelines aren't just for the immediate aftermath of the death, but for the weeks, months, and even years following. Guthrie reminds the reader that grief is a long process and that the grieving will always sense the loss in one way or another, no matter how much time has passed ... One of the most helpful resources is the final chapter, which covers common questions ranging from depression to anger toward God. It even includes some of the Scripture passages mourners say have been most meaningful in their grief. For Christians who want to learn how to better serve and love those in their community who are grieving, Guthrie's book is an insightful resource. She not only provides needed guidelines, but she also gives us an insider's look into the heart and mind of those walking through the trenches of sadness. I commend *What Grieving People Wish You Knew* to every believer, especially those in leadership positions. Applying the truths and principles outlined in the book will further equip us to selflessly love like Jesus, and to mourn with those who mourn.

Chapter 1 excerpts: 'the first and most important thing ... is this: It matters less what you say than that you say *something* ... Your purpose in saying something is to enter into the hurt with them and let them know they are not alone ... Really, you just have to show up and say very little ... that you will be willing to hurt with them. That's what makes a great friend in the midst of grief! He or she comes alongside and is willing, at least for awhile, to agree that this is terrible ... Not suggesting you should be grateful ... at least not yet ... what you might say when the time comes? *It depends on the nature of your relationship ... It depends on where that person is in the process of grief ... Let the grieving person take the lead ... Don't ask potentially painful questions out of curiosity ... Don't assume ... Don't compare ... Don't make it about you* ("Well, I ..." or "When I ..." or "I remember..." or "My...") ... *Don't feel the need to fix ... Don't be in a hurry ... Listen more than you talk ... Don't tell them what to do ... Esteem their grief* (don't dismiss or minimize it) ... *Don't be put off by tears* (Romans 12:15 says "weep with those who weep") ...'