



508626 - Advice for those who are tested with loss of a loved one or relative

the question

I have suffered losses one after another, and I feel that I have lost interest in everything in life, and I fear the worst for myself.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I.

In this life, no one can be spared from losing loved ones. He may lose one of his parents or one of his children, or he could lose a spouse or a brother. The scenarios of loss may vary but they all have one thing in common: the grief that loss leaves behind, which has an impact on his life.

Loss means that something that was there is no longer there; it is more specific than the idea of something that you never had in the first place, because what you never had never existed for you.

See: *Al-Kulliyat*, 1/694.

II.

Grief is something natural

Grief is a natural emotion that Allah has created in man, so that through that emotion he can express the pain that results from separation or death, whether the shock is severe or mild. Grief is not all the same; rather it is something that varies and persists. It is a complex mixture of reactions that have an impact on a person's feelings and his mental and physical well-being; it



impacts different people in different ways. For that reason, there is nothing in the Book of Allah or the Sunnah of His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to suggest that the natural grief that a person feels when he loses one of his loved ones is forbidden; rather it is proven in the Book of Allah, may He be Exalted, that His Prophets and Messengers grieved when they lost those who were dear to them.

One of the clear examples of that is what Allah tells us about Ya`qub, the father, when he lost his son Yusuf. Allah tells us of his complaints and how he never forgot Yusuf despite their Lengthy separation and the passage of the years.

III.

As the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) then his Companions and family members are the best examples for us, it is appropriate to learn about their stories of loss, how loss impacted them and how they dealt with it.

I.Their stories of loss

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) experienced loss during his childhood. He felt the pain of losing his father when he was small, then he lost his mother, then his grandfather. And he suffered loss as an adult, when he lost his paternal uncle, and he lost the one who was the closest and dearest of people to him, his wife Khadijah.

And the Prophet continued to suffer losses, to the extent that he lost all his children during his lifetime apart from Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her). He also lost many of his companions and family members.

1.The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) lost his children. It was narrated that al-Mughirah ibn Shu`bah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The sun was eclipsed at the time of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), on the day Ibrahim [the Prophet's son] died, and the people said: The sun is eclipsed because of the death of Ibrahim. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The sun and the moon are



not eclipsed for the death or the birth of anyone. If you see that, then pray and call upon Allah.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1043.

It was narrated that Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said: We went with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to Abu Sayf the blacksmith, who was the husband of the wet-nurse of Ibrahim (peace be upon him). The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) picked Ibrahim up, kissed him and smelled him. Later on, we entered Abu Sayf’s house when Ibrahim was breathing his last, and the eyes of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) began to flow with tears. `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf said to him: Even you, O Messenger of Allah? He said: O Ibn `Awf, this is mercy. Then he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) wept some more and said: “Indeed the eye weeps and the heart grieves, but we do not say anything except that which pleases our Lord. O Ibrahim, indeed we are saddened by your departure.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1303; and Muslim, 2315.

Ibn `Abd al-Barr said: Screaming and wailing are not permissible at all after someone dies.

As for tears from the eyes and grief in the heart, the Sunnah affirms that these are permissible, and this is the view of a number of scholars.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) wept for his son Ibrahim, and said: “This is mercy” in the hadith of Jabir and the hadith of Anas. Abu Is-haq as-Subay`i narrated from `Amir ibn Sa`d al-Bajali that Abu Mas`ud al-Ansari, Thabit ibn Zayd and Qarazah ibn Ka`b said: We were granted a concession allowing us to weep for the deceased, without wailing.

End quote from *Al-Istidhkar*, 3/67.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was struck with the tragedy of losing all his children during his lifetime, apart from az-Zahra’ Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her), who was faced with the tragedy of losing him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). When his son Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was breathing his last, the eyes of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) flowed with tears at his loss. Just as he was



known for always being merciful, he always maintained calm, accepting the divine decree with patience, weeping without expressing any discontent or anger, with mercy and compassion, without screaming or wailing. Is there any better example in which the one who has lost his loved one or child can find greater comfort than the example of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and reflecting upon that example? He lost the dearest and most beloved of people to him, yet despite all that, his reaction was nothing but patience and acceptance and saying "Indeed to Allah we belong and indeed to Him we will return."

He regarded [his children] as a trust, whom Allah had created and given to His slave, then He took them back. This is the nature of this transient world of ours, and [those who die] pass from this transient realm to the realm of eternity. Indeed to Allah we belong and indeed to Him we will return.

2. He lost his wife who was his main source of comfort. Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) was the wife of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). He loved her dearly and suffered when she died after being married to him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) for twenty-five years. It was narrated that `Urwah ibn az-Zubayr said: Khadijah died three years before the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) left for Madinah. Two years or so after that, he married `A'ishah when she was six years old and consummated the marriage with her when she was nine years old. Narrated by al-Bukhari, 3896.

Even after the Mother of the Believers Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) died, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) remained faithful to her memory. It was narrated that `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: I never felt jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) except Khadijah, even though I never met her. But the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to mention her very often, and whenever he slaughtered a sheep, he would cut it up and send some of it to the women friends of Khadijah. When I sometimes said to him: It is as if there is no woman on earth except Khadijah, he would say: "Khadijah was such-and-such and such-and-such, and from her I had children." Narrated by al-Bukhari, 3818; and Muslim, 2435.



These hadiths are indicative of the Prophet's love for her and closeness to her. Despite that, he was able to overcome the pain of that loss, and he remained patient and faithful to her memory. His faithfulness is a guidance to his followers, and shows that one should remain faithful even after the loss, and that the bond of love and companionship should remain strong.

3. Grief for his paternal uncle. After the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) lost Khadijah, he also lost his paternal uncle Abu Talib. Even though Abu Talib was the one who protected and defended the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), in the end he did not die as a Muslim. Yet despite that, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) cared for him.

Ibn Sayyid an-Nas (may Allah have mercy on him) said: When Abu Talib died, Quraysh were able to cause harm to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that they could not have hoped to do when Abu Talib was still alive, to the extent that one of the fools of Quraysh went to him and sprinkled dust on his head. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) entered his house with that dust on his head, and one of his daughters got up and started to wash the dust from him, weeping, but the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not weep, O my daughter, for indeed Allah is protecting your father." And in between that he said: "Quraysh were not able to harm me until Abu Talib died."

End quote from *Uyun al-Athar*, 1/151.

IV.

The stages of grief

1. Denial: We can reject pain or accept it. We can react to events that are unfolding around us or be resigned to them. But what we cannot do is pretend that it will never happen to us. If we love, we certainly cannot avoid grief.

We have to grieve before we can recover from the trauma we experience and rebuild ourselves. And we will change as we gain experience. We may become more mature, stronger, wiser, and



more compassionate. We will realize that we have overcome our grief and moved forward, bringing hope back to life and to ourselves.

Grief is a complex mix of physical, emotional, and mental experiences. It is not an individual mental state, but a long process that changes over time.

2.Anger: When we are overcome with grief, we are suddenly seized by overwhelming feelings of anger at the death of someone we loved, their abandonment of us, and the change in our lives forever. A person may vent this anger by rebelling against everyone, such as specialist doctors, for example, simply because they were involved in what happened. The human is very sensitive when grieving. It is essential to remember that anger is a natural and healthy emotion, and that the ability to express it protects us from depression. The British psychologist John Bowlby says: Anger is necessary to express grief and overcome it. After a person has done his best to bring back the lost person, they are finally forced to admit defeat and adapt to life without him.

3.Bargaining: If we are aware of what we feel guilty about, we may be able to rectify the situation, even indirectly, such as by making amends or reconciling with ourselves. Guilt can arise from an excessive sense of responsibility that is disproportionate to the facts or the overall picture of the issue; as a result of that, feelings of regret and guilt become intertwined, and it is important to distinguish between them.

There is a difference between regret over losing something and feeling guilty about something; guilt is a stronger feeling.

4.Depression: Grief is the most common emotion, and perhaps the most acceptable. Crying and grieving are natural reactions that diminish in intensity over time. Grief may resemble illness, but it is not illness. It is a natural and necessary process for one to regain balance. It may take time and require courage and fortitude, but the majority of people manage to recover.

5.Acceptance: Psychological clinics can be beneficial in some cases, such as when an individual lives alone or feels reluctant to impose himself on his friends more than he has done already, preferring to seek out a neutral person who will listen to him. Experience has also demonstrated



the importance of psychological counselling for families before the death of a loved one from a terminal illness. Experts unanimously agree on the necessity of seeking psychological treatment if the bereaved are experiencing grief; they may wish to speak with a psychiatrist specializing in treating grief resulting from the death of a loved one.

There are also organizations that support individuals who lose a child, friend, or loved one, or who experience national disasters. The internet has also proven to be a widespread means of communication; teenagers, in particular, find it easier to express their emotions to strangers in virtual chat rooms than to talk to someone they know.

See: *Al-Faqd: Khulasat ad-Durus*, by Shaykh Ahmad Salim, pp. 15-17.

For more information, see: *Living Despite Loss and Pain*, by Julia Tugendhat.

V.

How to live with loss and trials

1. A common way of dealing with grief in a positive way is to turn it into a motive for helping others. For example, self-help groups were originally made up of individuals who had shared experiences of grief. The grieving person draws strength from helping others as they go through one of the stages of grief, while other grieving people raise money for medical research, hospital equipment, and treatment of rare diseases.

2. Avoid making hasty decisions; it is unwise to make life-altering choices when you are at your weakest, both physically and mentally, as your decisions during this time tend to be impulsive and driven by fear. Times of grief and hardship are not the right time to leave the country, move to a new house, sell property, or start new relationships.

3. Discovering the blessings within loss or trauma – after sufficient time has passed – is an important way of bringing meaning and purpose to events, allowing us to put them into perspective and move forward in life. While identifying these blessings can take time, doing so can open doors to avenues and opportunities that can become resources for both meaning and



fulfillment later on. Helping others experiencing similar circumstances, raising awareness about illnesses, social issues, or other dangers, writing creatively about events, and so on, can transform even significant and tragic events into opportunities for determining meaning, achieving purpose, and reaching goals. While identifying potential ways to extract blessings from tragedy can positively impact our recovery, applying these benefits in the real world is what truly leads to our psychological and emotional healing. To that end, we need to find ways to put the blessings we have recognized into practice.

4. Truth is more deserving of being followed, even in the depths of grief. It was narrated that Ibn Shihab said: Kharijah ibn Zayd ibn Thabit told me that Umm al-'Ala', a woman of the Ansar who had pledged allegiance to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), told him: The Muhajirun were divided by lot, and `Uthman ibn Maz'un was chosen for us. We lodged him in our homes, and he fell ill with the illness from which he died. When he passed away, and after he had been washed and shrouded in his clothes, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came in. I said: May Allah have mercy on you, O Abus-Sa'ib! I bear witness that Allah has honoured you! The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "How do you know that Allah has honoured him?" I replied: May my father be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah! Who else would Allah honour?" He said: "As for him, that which is certain [death] has come to him. By Allah, I hope for good for him. By Allah, I do not know, even though I am the Messenger of Allah, what will happen to me!" She said: By Allah, I will never praise anyone after him. Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 1243.

Therefore, it is not permissible for anyone, under the pain of loss, to deviate from the sacred limits set by Islam. Despite this pain, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) guided them back to the truth. The pain of loss he was experiencing did not prevent him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) from clarifying the truth and explaining what was appropriate in that situation.

5.. Next comes the essential role of society in helping the afflicted person recover from his illness and supporting him so he does not succumb to the burden of his suffering and the intensity of his



pain. It was narrated that an-Nu`man ibn Bashir (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The believers, in their mutual love, mercy, and compassion, are like a single body; if one part of it is afflicted, the whole body responds with sleeplessness and fever." Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 6011; and Muslim, 2586).

The Muslims should alleviate the suffering of those who have lost loved ones, and not compound their loss with abandonment and indifference. The stronger the bonds between them, the better it is for all of them.

See: *Al-Faqd: Khulasat ad-Durus*, p. 25-28.

VI.

Advice

Calamity (or trauma) is a test and purification for people of faith. Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani said: O my son, calamity did not come to destroy you; rather it came to test your patience and faith. O my son, the divine decree is (like) a lion, and lions do not eat dead meat.

Patience is half of faith. Ibn al-Qayyim said: Faith consists of two halves: half patience and half gratitude. More than one of the early generations said: Patience is half of faith. `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Faith is two halves: half patience and half gratitude. Hence Allah, may He be Glorified, mentions patience and gratitude together in the verse {Indeed in that are signs for everyone who is patient and grateful} [Ibrahim 14:5].

End quote from *`Iddat ad-Sabirin*, p. 205.

The decrees of Allah are full of mercy. Do you not see that if you are promised a place in which there is everything that your soul yearns for and loves of good things, does it matter to you if the only problem is that you do not like the colour of the door that leads you to that place? Such are the divine decrees that hurt us; they are no more than doors which lead us to all the good things that we hope and wish for... but sometimes we look at the door and feel distressed about how it looks, and we forget that we will only pass through it, and that the beauty of what lies on the other



side is beyond anything we can imagine.

See: *Tasliyat Ahl al-Masa'ib*, 13.

Patience is the cause of guidance. Patience is a means of hearts being guided and of hard hearts being softened and humbled. How many heedless people have turned back to their Lord when they were struck with illness, and how many negligent people have turned to their Lord when they have been faced with the loss of a loved one? Allah, may He be Glorified, says: {No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah - He will guide his heart} [At-Taghabun 64:11].

Ibn Mas'ud and others among the early generations said: This refers to a man who is struck by calamity and realizes that it is from Allah, so he accepts it and submits. What the verse means is that whoever is struck by a calamity and realizes that it happened by the decree of Allah, so he shows patience, seeks reward with Allah and submits to His decree, Allah will guide him and compensate him for what he lost in this world with guidance and reassurance in his heart, and true and certain faith, and He may compensate him with something better than what He took from him.

See: *As-Sabr: Aqsamuhu wa Thamaratuhu*, 28.

Ibn Taymiyah said: Being patient and steadfast is obligatory according to scholarly consensus.

Superior to that is being content with the divine decree. It was said that this is obligatory, and it was said: Rather it is recommended, which is the correct view.

And superior to that is showing gratitude to Allah for the calamity, because of what he sees of Allah blessing him through it, and making it a means to expiate his sins, raise him in degree, cause him to turn to Allah and beseech Him, make him put his trust sincerely in Him, and make him put his hope in Him and not in people.

End quote from *Al-Furqan bayna Awliya' ar-Rahman wa Awliya' ash-Shaytan*, 1/73.

VII.



The requirements of patience are two:

1. Showing patience when calamity first strikes. This is in accordance with the hadith about the woman whom the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) instructed to show patience, but she did not pay heed. Then when she realized that the one who was telling her to do that was the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), she went to him to tell him that she would be patient, whereupon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to her: "Patience is only when calamity first strikes." Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1283; and Muslim, 926.

The Messenger explained to her that the patience for which a person will be rewarded and praised is patience and fortitude in the first instance, as soon as he is stricken with that which could lead to panic. Otherwise, it is inevitable that a few days later the person will find something to distract himself and forget the calamity to some degree, and try to stop thinking about it, so that he can survive.

Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Whoever does not show patience at the time of calamity as people of dignity do, will try to ignore it like animals. Imam al-Bukhari included this hadith in his *Sahih*, in a chapter entitled: Patience when calamity first strikes.

‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Two equal gifts and an additional gift are to be found in the verse:

{[Those] who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allāh, and indeed to Him we will return,

Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided}[Al-Baqarah 2:156-157];

And the verse:

{Seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, it is hard, except for the humble } [Al-Baqarah 2:45].



End quote from *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 2/83.

2.Saying “*Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji`un* (Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return)” when calamity strikes is indicative of a person’s patience at the moment he is faced with the calamity. Allah has prescribed that we should say “*Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji`un*” when calamity strikes, as He, may He be Exalted, says:

{but give good tidings to the patient,

Who, when disaster strikes them, say: Indeed we belong to Allāh, and indeed to Him we will return,

Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided } [Al-Baqarah 2:155-157].

And in *As-Sahih* it is narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he said: “There is no Muslim who is stricken with a calamity and says what Allah has enjoined – ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return. O Allah, reward me for my affliction and compensate me with something better’ – but Allah will compensate him with something better.” Narrated by Muslim, 918. Undoubtedly saying “*Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji`un*” reflects goodly patience when faced with calamity, and it is indicative of the individual’s sincere patience and contentment with the will and decree of Allah. This is what a person should do when he loses a loved one or someone who is dear to him.

See: *A`mal al-Qulub `inda Ibn Taymiyah*, 504-505.

Finally: There is nothing wrong with expressing grief at the loss of loved ones, and there is nothing wrong with weeping so long as it is not accompanied by screaming, rending one’s garment or wailing.

Tears flowed from the eyes of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) when his son died, but he said: “Indeed the eye weeps and the heart grieves, but we do not say anything except that which pleases our Lord. O Ibrahim, indeed we are saddened by your departure.”

Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1303; and Muslim, 2315.



The one who is struck by calamity should not wallow in his grief and should not look at his situation through dark lenses filled with pessimism and sorrow. Let him always hope for the grace of his Lord, let him think positively of Him, and let his hope always be that what is coming is better, in sha Allah, if one is content with the decree of Allah, bears it with patience and seeks reward with Allah for what has befallen him.

And Allah knows best.