



# Encouraging Words

with DARLENE SALA

## Comfort in Grief

When a friend loses a family member, perhaps tragically, most of us usually dread doing to visit. We think, “What will I say?”

Take a look at the life of Job for some ideas of what to say—and what not to say. Job, known for his great patience in suffering, lost all his livestock, servants, and all ten of his children in an extremely short time. Then on top of that, he broke out in sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

Job had three friends who heard about his troubles and decided to visit him. The Bible says, “They sat on the ground with him... No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was” (Job 2:13). That’s the very best thing they could have done—just be there.

But unfortunately they decided they should help him get out of his despondency, and it was all downhill from there. They talked too much. They tried to explain to Job why he was suffering, and they gave him unsolicited counsel.

What did Job really need? Two things. The first is encouragement. Job said, “Will your long-winded speeches never end? ...If you were in my place...my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief” (Job 16:3-6). Job needed support and hope, not philosophical answers.

The second thing Job wanted was to be listened to. He said, “Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me” (Job 21:2). One grieving father said, “It always helped me to be able to talk about my children after they died, and the people who were the biggest help were those who let me and who didn’t feel awkward because they couldn’t “fix it” for me.”

Listen to your grieving friend with undivided attention. Then think of one kind act of encouragement—an errand you can run or phone calls you can make. With a heart of love, you can make a difference.