



*Just as the caterpillar thought it was the  
end of his world....*

*He became a butterfly!!*

*I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you...because I live, you will also live. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives or I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. I go away, and I will come to you. - John 14:18-28*

## *To The Newly Bereaved Parent:*

*I deeply regret the circumstances that have brought you to read this letter. My heart aches for you. I have been in your shoes and the pain that you are experiencing right now, no parent should ever have to go through. I know at the beginning you may be in shock and experiencing many different emotions in your life. These are all normal feelings for a newly bereaved parent. Please know that the pain you now have does get easier with time. It never completely goes away, but it becomes bearable. I know Jesus as my personal savior and I believe he is the primary source of strength that has brought me through this difficult journey in my life.*

*I have compiled a packet that I pray will help comfort you through the coming days, weeks and months. These special poems and scriptures gave me comfort after I tragically lost my son Trey on March 13, 2005. That day changed my life and my family's lives forever. Though this tragic event has occurred in your life, my hope is that you will be able to find peace in the midst of the heartache to get you through the coming days. Please feel free to contact me anytime. May Peace Come.*

*Butterfly Memories,*



*Julie LePelley*

*9207 CR 4115*

*Henderson, TX 75654*

*(903)861-3749 Hm*

*(903)646-3105 Cell*

*CJLEPELLEY@AOL.COM*

*All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.*

*(2 Cor. 1:3,4)*

## A Letter from Heaven

To my dearest family, some things I'd like to say.  
But first of all, to let you know, that I arrived okay.  
I'm writing this from heaven. Here I dwell with God above.  
Here, there's no more tears of sadness; Here is just eternal love.  
Please do not be unhappy just because I'm out of sight.  
Remember that I am with you every morning, noon and night.  
That night I had to leave you when my life on earth was through.  
God picked me up and hugged me and He said, "I welcome you.  
It's good to have you back again, you were missed while you were gone.  
As for your dearest family, They'll be here later on.  
I need you here so badly, you are part of my plan.  
There is so much that we can do, to help our mortal man."  
I wish that I could tell you all that God has planned.  
If I were to tell you, you wouldn't understand.  
But one thing is for certain, though my life on earth is over.  
I'm closer to you now, than I ever was before.  
There are rocky roads ahead of you and many hills to climb:  
But together we can do it by taking one day at a time.  
And now I am contented..that my life was worthwhile.  
Knowing as I passed along the way I made somebody smile.  
When you're walking down the street and you've got me on your mind:  
I'm walking in your footsteps only half a step behind.  
And when it's time for you to go..from that body to be free.  
Remember you're not going...you're coming here to me.

Trey Boy

## HOPE



*Hope is knowing you will survive this horrible nightmare you are now living in. There will be many times when you will think there's no way you will get through this. But have Hope that you will survive, and will eventually be free from some of the pain that you are now experiencing. Our hope is knowing that someday we will be able to see our loved ones again.*

## LOVE



*Let the love you had for your child be a tribute & honor to their life. Cherish all the wonderful memories that you once shared. Even though parts of our hearts will always be broken, the realization of how precious life is helps us to be able to love again. The greatest hurt of all is losing someone you love.*

## FAITH



*It is the hope of all Christian believers that our faith will somehow take away the pain you now have. It does give us hope that we will eventually heal and cope with the loss of our loved one. With the help of faith we have to be willing to accept what we cannot see. We have to accept the unacceptable. Faith is knowing that the darkest day will always be followed by the joy and sunshine of God's Love.*

*© Lord, don't hold back your tender mercies from me! My only hope is in your love and faithfulness!*

*(Psalms 40:11)*

## When You Wish Upon A Star

Every time I am in a group of bereaved parents, I hear people say things like, “I wish my child hadn’t died” or “I wish I had him back.” Those wishes, unfortunately, can never come true. Another wish I hear is, “I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive.” This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true, if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child?

Here is a partial list of such wishes:

1. I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child’s name. My child loved and was important, and I need to hear his name.
2. If I cry or get emotional if we talk about my child, I wish you knew that it wasn’t because you have hurt me; the fact that my child died has caused me tears. You have allowed me to cry and thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
3. I wish you wouldn’t “kill” my child again by removing from your home his pictures, artwork, and other remembrances.
4. I will have emotional highs and lows, up and downs. I wish you wouldn’t think that if I have a good day my grief’s all over, or that if I have a bad day that I need psychiatric counseling.
5. I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is a unique tragedy and I wish you wouldn’t compare it to the loss of your parent, a spouse, or a pet.
6. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn’t shy away from me.
7. I wish you knew all of the “crazy” grief reactions that I am having are in fact very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and questioning values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.
8. I wish you wouldn’t expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be extremely traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be “cured” or a “former bereaved parent”, but will forevermore be a “recovering bereaved parent”.
9. I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses and be accident-prone, all of which may be related to my grief.
10. Our child’s birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are a terrible mess for us. I wish you would tell us that you are thinking about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking of our child and don’t try to coerce us into being cheerful.
11. It is normal and good that most of us re-examine our faith, values, and beliefs after losing a child. We will question things we have been taught all of our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.

12. I wish you wouldn't offer me drinks or drugs. These are just temporary crutches, and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.
13. I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was before my child died, and I never will be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to "get back to my old self", you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values, and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me—maybe you'll still like me.

Instead of sitting around waiting for our wishes to come true, we have a obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us, or we can sit and wait, I believe our children would want us to help the world understand.

Elaine Grier, TCF Atlanta Georgia

### **The Twenty-third Psalm**

The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the  
paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou  
art with me: thy rod and staff they comfort  
me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the  
presence of mine enemies: thou anointest  
my head with oil; my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life: and I will dwell in  
the house of the Lord for ever and ever.

AMEN



## If You Could See Where I Have Gone

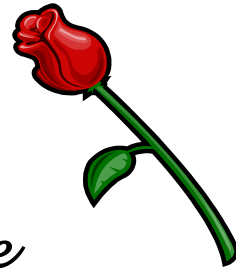
If you could see where I have gone, the beauty of this place  
And how it feels to know you're home, to see the Savior's face,  
To wake in peace and know no fear, just joy beyond compare,  
While still on earth you miss me yet, you wouldn't want me there.

If you could see where I have gone, had made the trip with me,  
You'd know I didn't go alone; the Savior came with me.  
When I awoke, He was by my side, He reached out His hand –  
Said "Hurry child, you're going home to a grand and glorious land.  
"Don't worry over those you love for I'm not just with you, I'm with them too.  
And don't you know with you at home they'll long to be here too?"

If you could see where I have gone and see what I've been shown,  
You'd never know another tear or ever feel alone.  
You'd marvel at the care of God - His hand on every life,  
And realize He really cares and bears with us each strife.  
He weeps when one is lost, His heart is filled with pain,  
But, Oh! The joy when one comes home - a child at home again!

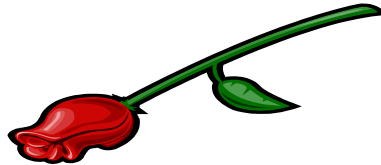
If you could see where I have gone, could stay awhile with me,  
Could share the things that God has made to grace eternity,  
But no, you could never leave, once Heaven's joy you'd known  
You couldn't bear to walk earth's paths once Heaven was your home.


If you could see where I have gone, you'd know we'll meet someday.  
And though I'm parted from you now, that I am just away.  
So thank you family, thank you friends - for living for the Lord,  
For teaching me to love Him, to trust Him and His Word,  
And now that I am home with Him, secure in every way  
I'm waiting here at Heaven's door to greet you some sweet day.



## *Love Doesn't Die*

*Give what is left of me away  
Now that I'm gone.  
Remember me with a smile and laughter  
And if you need to cry.....  
Cry for your brother and sister  
Who walk in grief beside you.  
And when you need me, put your arms  
Around anyone  
And give them what you need to give me.  
I want to leave you something....  
Something better than words or sounds.  
Look for me in the people I've known,  
Or loved, or helped in some special way,  
Let me live in your eyes as well as in your mind.  
You can love me most  
By letting love live within the circle  
Of your arms, embracing the frightened ones.  
Love doesn't die, people do.  
So when all that is left of me is love,  
Give me away as best you can. I'll see you  
At home, where I'll be waiting.*





## *Soar High Butterfly*

*The time has come for me to release you  
Free to fly high above the world  
Where the flowers forever bloom &  
The ultimate love fills the space.*

*In my attempt to try to keep you  
I've only been able to hold the anger  
Not realizing that I have let you go  
I can't hold on.*

*I'll no more keep your pain alive,  
I won't try to hold you down.  
I'll let you fly on to higher ground.*

*My grief has left a numbness,  
As if this isn't real  
You are in my heart forever,  
But I know I have to let you free.*

*Soar high.  
Laugh as a child that feels the joy of the moment.*

*Play among the rivers flowing through the hills.  
Roam the fields of daisies.  
Fly to the top of the mountains.  
With closed eyes, I see you among the flowers,  
High above the clouds.*

*Your presence blows through me with the breeze.  
Your smile beams down on through the sun.  
The full moon brings the light of your laughter to my mind.*

*And the Butterfly in all it's splendor reminds me  
Of your beauty and freedom now.  
Leaving your love for me lingering in the world.*



## ***The Parable of the Twins***

*Once, twins were conceived. Weeks passed and they developed. As they grew, they sang for joy, "Isn't it great to be alive!"*

*Together the twins explored the womb. When they found their mother's life cord, they shouted for joy. "How great is our mother's love that she shares her very life with us."*

*As weeks passed, the twins began to change. "What does this mean?" said the one. "It means that our life in the womb is coming to an end," said the second. "But I don't want to leave the womb, I want to stay here forever," said the first.*

*"We have no choice," said the second. "Besides, maybe there is life after birth." "How can that be?" said the first. "We will shed our mother's cord, and how is life possible without it? Besides, there is evidence that there were others in the womb before us, and none of them has ever come back to tell us there is life after birth. No, this is the end."*

*And so the first twin fell into despair, saying. "If life in the womb ends in death what's its purpose? It's meaningless! Maybe we don't even have a mother. Maybe we made her up." "But we must have a mother," said the second. "How else did we get here? How else do we stay alive?"*

*And so the last days in the womb were filled with deep questioning and fear.*

*Finally, the moment of birth arrived. When the twins opened their eyes, they cried for joy. For what they saw exceeded their wildest dreams.*

***"What no one ever saw or heard.  
what no one ever thought could happen.  
is the very thing  
God prepared for those who love him"***

**(1 Cor. 2:9)**



## **IN THE BEGINNING.....**

Your child has died. As a newly bereaved parent you have experienced the most devastating life-changing event. Your whole world has been shattered and you are in a new world now. You will be relearning how to survive when at times you won't even want to survive. The only hope I can give you is that we in The Compassionate Friends have survived and we are here to help you. It won't be easy but keep in mind, if you hadn't loved so much you wouldn't hurt so much now.

"How long will it last?" is probably the first question we hear from ones like you new to grief. It is a very important question to us at the beginning. Professionals have managed to place timetables based on their studies and you will hear "two years" quoted, but those of us who have been on the road a number of years will tell you that you will not "get over" his or her death, but you will learn to live with the fact of it and rejoin life and lead a normal life again; it will just be different from before.

There is no timetable on grief. Some work through the process sooner than others but for us who are bereaved because our child died, grief is no longer and more devastating than grief from any other death in our lives. We operate on our individual timetable; we cannot judge our progress or lack of it by anyone else.

Grief is a process, a moving through. Sometimes we go forward, but sometimes backward, and sometimes we get "stuck" for a while, but keep in mind it is a process and eventually you will move through it. Within this process there are "stages". We're told those stages are shock, denial, anger, bargaining, and acceptance. They don't necessarily come in that order.

Most of us do experience shock and denial or disbelief first. We can't believe it has happened! There must be a mistake! This happens to other people...not us! The shock is so tremendous that it affects us physically as well as psychologically. It is marked by a lowering of blood pressure, coldness of the skin, rapid heartbeat and an acute sense of terror. That shock insulates us and allows us to go through our duties and do things at this time that we never could have done otherwise. I praise that shock because it keeps us from dying too. That shock allows some of us to carry on with grace and skill during the days surrounding the death and the funeral. That same shock knocks some of us into merciful oblivion and we don't remember a thing during that time. We are all individuals and we react differently during grief, but there are common reactions we all share. This is why you will find very quickly that the only one who really understands what you are going through is another bereaved parent.

Anger, another stage, may come at any time. It is very natural, normal reaction; don't be afraid or ashamed of it. Know it is okay, you won't always feel this way, there is nothing wrong with you for feeling this way – most of us feel some anger toward something, even at God, even the child in some instances. You have been hurt beyond your wildest imaginings. I have described my own anger as rage. Society frowns on anger so don't

expect always to be treated kindly when you display it, but remember you have a right to be angry. Anger is often unfocused and we sometimes take it out on innocent people. Medical personnel are often the first to receive this anger and funeral directors are next in line. Later that anger can attack anyone who crosses our paths. It is good to recognize anger and try to focus it, learn to use it as a tool. Take up social issues, find healthy outlets for it. It is important to do something physical about anger. Hard work and sports are ways, and we've heard many stories of chopping wood, breaking dishes at garage sales and breaking them when we need an outlet. Scream in the shower, in your speed boat or closed up in your car, but get it out. Anger turned inwards becomes depression.

With the death of our child everything we ever believed in is shattered. In my own case I had to struggle for a long time to even figure out what I did believe in; I was so confused. Our egos, our beliefs in ourselves were badly shaken because, as parents, we truly believed we could protect our child from anything. We were careful, good parents, and now our child is dead. WE HAVE FAILED TO KEEP OUR CHILD ALIVE and our ego tells us we are a failure! This devastates us; we can no longer believe in ourselves; we feel that obviously we are incapable of doing anything right. We have no self-confidence, no longer any self-esteem: These are all natural, normal responses to the horror of your child's death. Given time and care these feelings will pass. We will achieve a balance in our personal life again.

Remind yourself to be patient, to be kind to yourself. You are not a failure, you did the very best you could, and you would surely have given your own life to save your child's. You did not fail; life just isn't always fair. These feelings, and others as bizarre, may cause you to think you are going crazy. Ask any bereaved parent of some years and they will all tell you they thought the same thing at some time. You are a changed person now; you will never again be the same as you were before your child died. Someday you will accept that fact. Out of the ashes of grief you can grow, if and when you choose to do so. Look around you to the other bereaved parents; you will find role models and hope in them. There will be many tears, allow them, they are healing and necessary to survival and recovery.

Many of us suffer from the lack of ability to concentrate. It is a common complaint. We can't think, we can't remember from one minute till the next and we have no idea what we've read when we finish a page. Be patient...given time and some effort you will return to normal.

Hang on to any shred of your sense of humor that you can, even a small chuckle now and then can break your tension and give some relief. It may be a while in coming but one day you will laugh again. I know you can't believe it now but you will.

You will have a strong need to talk. You will find that you can talk more than one person can listen, so seek out several good friends who will let you talk to them. You will find some of the Compassionate Friends meetings. You will need to tell your child's story over and over again. You will need to talk about the whole life and death and what you

are going through now. Talking is therapeutic. Talk and talk, and talk, until your story is told.

At night you may go over the events again and again and again, night after night. This is called obsessional review. Sleep disturbances are not unusual. We either can't sleep or sleep too much.

We suffer guilt real and imagined. We recall punishments and in turn punish ourselves with them when at the time the punishment was probably fair. We through the "if onlys." If only we had or hadn't....

Beware of isolation. WE need to be with people, not alone. When we isolate ourselves with no one to talk to about our feelings, we become depressed; and isolation plus depression equals suicidal feelings and that spells real trouble.

We are fatigued, lack motivation, we suffer numerous physical complaints, headaches, stomach disorders, we are either nervous or feel dead inside....many and sundry are our complaints, most of which are normal and to be expected in this time of enormous stress and always we ask ourselves and others, "Why?" "Why me?" "Why my child?" Simply because life isn't always fair, my friend.....

Your world is topsy-turvy now, nothing makes sense, nothing fits...family balance is upset, the numbers are all wrong, there is one too empty chairs at the table now, so you choke on your food and think of the empty chair. Grocery shopping is a nightmare because your child's favorite food greets you from the shelves of every aisle; you don't dare think of holidays because you know you'll never survive them without your child. Your child's birthday and the memory of all the joy of that day looms like a mountain far too high to climb...some days all you want is for the pain to stop. Some days you just can't get out of bed. Some days you work hard and fast like something has possessed you. Every day you cry. You find you are very lonely even in the midst of a crowded shopping mall. You want to scream at the busy, happy people, "don't you know my child is dead?" How can they go on as if nothing has happened?" No matter how many people you are with, you are lonely.

Compassionate Friends understand; each one of us has had at least one child die. We know what you are going through. We don't pretend to have all the answers, but we want to share this time of your life with you. We want you to know you are not alone.

Fay Harden TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

## **Bereavement Guidelines For Loss of a Child**

If you think you are going insane, THAT'S NORMAL

If all you can do is cry, THAT'S NORMAL

If you have trouble with the most minor decisions, THAT'S NORMAL

If you can't taste your food or have any semblance of an appetite, THAT'S NORMAL

If you have feelings of rage, denial, and depression, THAT'S NORMAL

If you find yourself enjoying a funny moment and immediately feeling guilty, THAT'S  
NORMAL

If your friends dwindle away and you feel like you have the plague, THAT'S NORMAL

If your blood boils and your nose curls when someone tells you "It was God's will" ,  
THAT'S NORMAL

If you can't talk about it, but can smash dishes, shred old phone books, or kick the  
garbage can (preferably empty) down the lane, THAT'S NORMAL

If you can share your story and your feelings with an understanding listener???...  
Another bereaved parent, THAT'S A BEGGINNING

If you can get a glimmer of your child's life, instead of his or her death, THAT'S  
WONDERFUL

If you can remember your child's name with a smile, THAT'S HEALING

If you find your mirrors have become windows and you are able to reach out to other  
bereaved parents, THAT'S GROWING



## *When You Are Bereaved...*

*When you are bereaved,  
It is all right to:  
Scream in the shower, yell in the car,  
Cry anywhere you like.  
Misplace your glasses, the car keys and the car.  
Put milk in the cupboard, toilet paper in the  
Refrigerator, and icecream in the oven.  
Beat up on the pillow, stomp on the ground,  
And throw stones in the lake.  
Change grocery stores if it hurts.  
Wear one black shoe and one navy,  
Have tear stains on your tie.  
Write him a letter, bake him a cake, smell his clothes  
Talk to your pets; they understand.  
Leave his room the way it is for as long as you want  
Say his name, talk about him.  
Tell others what you need.  
Say no when you feel like it.  
Cancel plans.  
Have a bad day.  
It's all right to hurt.  
And one day when you're ready,  
It's all right to:  
Laugh again.  
Dance and feel pretty, have a good time.  
Look forward to tomorrow.  
Sing in the shower, smile at a friend's new baby.  
Wear make-up once more.  
Go a day, a week, and even a month without crying.  
Celebrate the holidays, forgive those who failed you.  
Learn something new.  
Look at his pictures and  
Remember with happiness not pain.  
Cherish the memories.  
And one day when it's time,  
It's all right.....to love again.*

*Vicki Tushingam - Griefnet*

***Recommended Books:***

***I Will Not Leave You Desolate***  
by: Martha Whitmore Hickman

***Roses in December***  
by: Marilyn Willett Heavilin

***90 Minutes in Heaven***  
by: Don Piper

***The Purpose Driven Live***  
by: Rick Warren

***Heaven Is Real***  
by: Ron & Glenda Pettey

***Streams in the Desert Devotional***  
by: L. B. Cowman

***Encouraging Music:***

***Selah – Press On***

***Helpful Websites:***

[www.journeyofhearts.org/jofh](http://www.journeyofhearts.org/jofh)  
[www.pomc.com](http://www.pomc.com) (for parents of murdered children)

***Organizations:***

***Compassionate Friends of Tyler***  
PO Box 9714  
707 W. Houston St.  
Tyler, TX 75711  
Monthly Group Mtg – Third Tuesday each month  
[www.TylerTCF.org](http://www.TylerTCF.org)



*In loving memory of  
Trey LePelley  
“Our Heavenly Butterfly”  
June 10, 1982 – March 13, 2005*

*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. (Phillipians 1:3)*