



# Avoiding the G Word

LifeCare Memos® Messages of Compassion

Several years ago a Hospice Chaplain shared a poem written by an anonymous poet entitled “Letting Go”:

*The angels gathered near your bed, so very close to you.  
For they knew of all the things that you were going through.  
I thought about so many things, I tightly held your hand,  
Oh, how I wished that you were strong and healthy once again.*

*But your eyes were looking homeward to a place beyond the sky.  
Where God will hold you always, it was time to say goodbye.  
I struggled with my selfish thoughts—for I wanted you to stay  
So we could walk and talk again, like we did—just yesterday.*

*But God still knows what’s best and I knew God loved you so.  
So I gave to you life’s greatest gift: The gift of letting go.*

## **Resisting One Word**

As I have shared this poem with families at the bedside of a loved one nearing the end of their earthly journey, I have found that it provides a great source of comfort and encouragement. However, when I was walking with my mother through the final stages of her 86 years of life, I found myself resisting one word in that poem – a word that I have come to refer to as the “G” word. The poem refers to a “time to say goodbye.” For me, the word “goodbye” suddenly sounded so final, I found myself choking up. The thought occurred to me that for my mom, who had committed her life in faith to Christ in 1951, it was not “goodbye” that I needed to say but “see you later!” The more I said, “See you later!” to her, the more I felt peace about “letting go!”

Since her homegoing, I have altered the poem when sharing it with Christian families. I have encouraged them with the fact that they can and should avoid the “G” word and simply say to their loved one who has trusted Christ as their Savior, “See you later!”

The Apostle Paul wanted his friends in Thessalonica to avoid the “G” word as they processed the death of their loved ones who had died “in the **LORD**.” After giving a detailed description of the **LORD**’s second coming, he wrote,

*“After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them....”* (I Thessalonians 4:17a)

This is an obvious reference by Paul to our loved ones and friends who have died in the **LORD**. Yes, death is the great separator for a time...but Jesus Christ is the great “uniter”. Paul does not reveal all the details of this glorious time when the **LORD** will have the joyous mission of reconnecting families and friendships. But as the **LORD** tenderly delivered the widow’s son from the dead to his mother, so I believe the **LORD** will tenderly bring us together for a grand and glorious reunion!

As great as all that sounds, there is more: “...to meet the **LORD in the air**” (I Thessalonians 4:17b). The Greek word translated “meet” was a technical term for the formal reception of a visiting dignitary. A delegation of citizens or city officials would go out to meet a guest on his way to the city and escort him back into town with appropriate pomp and circumstance. The implication of Paul’s use of this word is that the resurrected dead and raptured living--TOGETHER will meet the descending **LORD** “in the air.”

One author imagines this future reunion this way:

*I remember family reunions past and I wonder about that great Family Reunion in the future. That will be when all the blood-bought relatives of the Lord Jesus gather around His table for the marriage feast of the Lamb. Loved ones will greet one another after years of separation. Long overdue visiting will be resumed. Anticipation will again become reality. But there will be a difference at that reunion. There will be no bossy aunt to give orders. No one will feel shy or awkward. All will be dressed in clean white robes. No smart aleck cousins will show up. No boisterous uncle to monopolize the conversation. There will be no disappointment over this grand reunion. Everyone there will be awestruck. Then great and small, old and young, will rejoice together, giving glory to the only One who deserves attention: to Jesus Himself.*

Paul goes on to write,

**“And so we will be with the **LORD forever**”** (I Thessalonians 4:17b).

In other words, ALL believers in Jesus, whether dead or alive at the time of His coming, “will be with the Lord forever.” That is, death—the one thing that some Thessalonians thought would be an insurmountable barrier, preventing those followers of Jesus who died before the **LORD**’s second coming from experiencing the presence of Jesus—is in reality NO BARRIER AT ALL. Here is the real antidote to grief—the real reason why, even though we sorrow in the face of death, we do not sorrow as those who have no hope!

Is it any wonder that Paul concludes this paragraph on the **LORD**’s Second Coming by writing to his readers then and now:

**“Therefore encourage each other with these words”** (I Thessalonians 4:18).

## ***Hope in Sorrow***

When—not if, but when—we grieve over the loss of a loved one or friend who has died in the **LORD**, we need to be encouraged with these truths so that our sorrow will be permeated with hope not despair. It's not **goodbye**, it's **see you later!** Our hope for seeing our loved ones later is grounded in our **LORD's** resurrection and in our **LORD's** second coming.

In this text, Paul pictures the condition of those who die in Christ – filled with hope and holding the promise of being reunited with loved ones. He also pictures the undesirable position of those who die outside of Christ. This he does in two ominous words—NO HOPE! In that case, it's not “See you later!”, it's a final “Goodbye!” As you approach the end of your earthly journey, help your loved ones know that they will **see you later** as fellow believers.

If you have questions or fears about saying **goodbye**, please contact your chaplain for more information.

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## ***LifeCare Memos***<sup>®</sup>

When experiencing the stresses of life, people need support. The Psalmist needed that support and found it when he turned to **GOD**. He said, *“Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one **cares for my life**. I cry to You, O **LORD**; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living’”* (Psalm 142:4-5).

***LifeCare Memos*** are designed as messages of compassion that integrate biblical guidelines for emotional and spiritual well-being. Topics focus on various life-care issues and address them from the perspective of Scripture.