

Grieving without losing hope this festive season

By Maureen Nakatudde

It was December 20 last year and everyone was looking forward towards Christmas. Even though we had a cancer patient at home — my brother George William Kiyingi. No one thought he would die. In spite of being on life support most of the time, we had hope that he would not die. On that day, he was fine and even had supper. Unfortunately, at around 11:00pm, things just began going wrong. The oxygen in the cylinder got finished and needed refilling. As a solution was being sought, a decision was made to drop him at a nearby clinic, but he died on the way. While they drove him to the clinic for help, Kiyingi breathed his last.

When we were informed about what had taken place, our hearts sank. The following day, friends, relatives and family members thronged his home in Seeta, Mukono. Unfortunately, they were told that they could not spend the night since the body had not arrived. The body was still at a funeral parlor and that burial arrangements would be communicated later. We had to wait for his wife and children who were in US to arrive for the burial to take place.

For a week-and-a-half, instead of drawing budgets for Christmas shopping, we were mourning for the sendoff of our brother. We did not buy food or gifts. Kiyingi was buried on December 30.

It was a weird moment, because we tried to act as if nothing had happened. We ate, drank and went to church, but at the back of everyone's mind was sadness and guilt: How can I do this when my brother, husband, friend, father or son is not yet buried?

is not only my family who has experienced grief

during the festive season. Joan Namuli says that she lost her father in November 2015. But all she remembers that festive season was full of grief and sorrow.

"You have been used to having this person pamper you, especially during the festive season," Namuli says "and then all of a sudden, he is not there."

Namuli says that Christmas, some of her siblings cried while others kept on discussing what their father would have done, had he been alive.

"With time, we have accepted that our father died and we shall never celebrate Christmas season or the New Year with him again," Namuli says.

"During Christmas season, I usually remember my aunt Bernadette, who died," says Joseph Batanda. "Though she died in the year 2000, Christmas with her was always fun. Every Christmas I would always hear her soulful voice singing the Christmas carols such as *Feliz Navidad* and *Merry Christmas*. There is no doubt if she was present today, she would still sing the same songs. Our family always remembers her during this time"

Move on

The festive season is one of the trickiest period of the year. Moods can easily swing from

the happiest to the saddest or vice-versa. In all life, there are times when things are perfect. But when you lose a loved one, you begin to sense the gap in the festivities. No matter the frenzies and the stampede around the period, sometimes the nagging feeling and the regret of your dead loved ones can wear you out. In spite of that, a person has to move on with life.

Grieve

No matter the time your loved one dies, Stephen Langa, a counsellor, urges people to allow themselves to grieve.

"Do not bottle up your emotions. You should cry when you need to and also let others know how you feel," he says.

In choosing to grieve, you are allowing yourself to heal. However, when you deny it and pretend that everything is normal, you are simply postponing your pain. Soon or later, you will break down and it will not be good.

Choose or cancel

When your loved one has just died, for instance a week, or three days to

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Christmas, there is no need for you to feel the pressure of participating in the festivities. You can choose simply to go to church and have a normal day. "It is very normal not to want to participate in the festivities," says Langa, "since you are still grieving."

Celebrate the person

Other than crying how terrible it was to lose the person, Ruth Senyonyi, a counsellor, says the family can throw a party in honour of the deceased. "Each person should speak about the good things the deceased did," she says. "This will help to lighten up the mood and keep one's spirit high."

Decorate

You can celebrate your late loved one by deciding to decorate the grave. You can dig around it, repaint and also put flowers. Senyonyi says that can help you think of your loved ones in a positive way and also a sign that you have not forgotten them.

Prayer

Prayer can seem the simplest means to get through grief yet it is the hardest. Some people tend to blame the creator for letting their beloved ones die and, therefore, cannot receive what He has in store. "For every problem,

there is always a solution," says Pastor Elios Bizimenyera of Kazzo.

"There is always solace." Bizimenyera advises people to simply have a simple chat with God and ask Him to help them deal with the pain and heartache. "God never fails and He will surely help you have a good day," she says.

The real reason

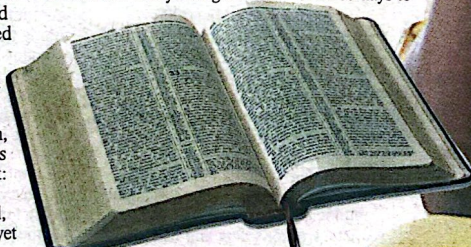
Even though people relate Christmas period with food, gifts and entertainment, Bizimenyera says we should remember what is all about. "Christmas is not about your late loved one, but it is about God becoming man. He became flesh so that we should have life," Bizimenyera says.

It is on this note that Bizimenyera encourages that since Christ became flesh and He rose again, then all those who believe in Him shall have eternal life. The Christians can, therefore, comfort each other now that they will see their beloved ones again since Christ has come.

Show love

As much as you might mourn your loved one and say how irreplaceable, he or she was, Langa says you can still choose to show love to others during this festive season. "Am sure you still have your other beloved people around," Langa says. "Tell them how much you love them and show it in action." Langa says. "When a person dies people do so much yet the most important things would have been done when they are alive."

This festive season, despite how grieve-stricken you are, you can still have hope because God has come in flesh to help you overcome your trials. Emmanuel, God is with us and He can still intervene in every situation.



One does not need to grieve themselves to the grave in case of death of a loved one during the festive season. With the help of friends and prayer, one can get over it



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