

Top Tips



Faith in
Later Life

Supporting People Bereaved in Later Life

Katy Tutt

Together
with

At a Loss

Helping bereaved people find support and wellbeing.

Rooted in Scripture: What does the Bible say?

The Bible illustrates clearly **God's provision** for bereaved older people (Ruth 4:15; Luke 7: 12-13) and calls us to respond.

It describes **authentic church** as a place where they are cared for (James 1: 27).

God promises to **hold and sustain** older people through loss (Isaiah 46: 4).

Paul teaches that **families and the church** should care for bereaved older people (1 Timothy 5: 3 – 4).

Psalm 71: 9, 18 describes a vision for older people continuing to serve and be ministered to while Psalm 92: 14 tells us that older people are meant to be **active contributors, not sidelined.**

- ✓ Reaching older people with the good news of Jesus
- ✓ Discipling older Christians to become like Jesus
- ✓ Mobilising them to be disciple-makers

Fostering Fruitfulness: What difference can this make?

When a church walks with grieving older people, it shows the heart of Jesus, who had compassion for widows and the vulnerable, and the wider community sees God's love in action. Because grief can shake faith deeply, support helps older people retain and renew faith. It strengthens intergenerational relationships: younger members learn empathy, patience and service; older adults feel valued and connected, not isolated. It prevents age-segregated "silos", builds a true family church, reduces loneliness, and keeps older people spiritually supported—present in worship and fellowship, not quietly disappearing. It also opens doors for outreach, building bridges with adult children and grandchildren and creating evangelistic opportunities, as the church becomes known as a place of hope and comfort for many families.

Tips at a glance

Be Present –
Consistently
and Gently

Offer Practical
Help Without
Taking Over

Create Safe
Spaces for
Support

Keep Them
Connected

Remember
Key Dates and
Follow Up

Faith in Later Life's Top Tips

1

Be Present – Consistently and Gently

Older adults often experience deep loneliness after a loss, especially after the initial weeks when others “move on.” Schedule regular phone calls, visits, cards. Don’t wait for them to reach out; grief often makes that hard. Be there not just in the first month, but longer-term when support usually fades. Presence communicates love more than perfect words.

2

Offer Practical Help Without Taking Over

After a bereavement, especially of a spouse, everyday tasks can feel overwhelming. Help with transport to church or appointments, provide meals or shopping, assist with admin, technology, or home tasks (only if wanted). Pair them with a dependable “support buddy” or small group. Practical support preserves independence while reducing stress and isolation.

Further Inspiration

For more on this subject, please head over to our Resources on our website at faithinlaterlife.org.

If you lead a ministry among older people in your church or Christian community, we’d love you to join our network. It’s free and you can find out more on our website.

3

Create Safe Spaces for Emotional and Spiritual Support.

Grieving people need room to talk, cry, remember, and ask spiritual questions without judgment. Offer gentle listening—not quick fixing. Train to run The Bereavement Journey® support programme, and offer spaces for quiet reflection such as Blue Christmas and All Souls’ Services. Become a Bereavement Friendly Church – see www.lossandhope.org

4

Keep Them Connected to the Church Community.

Bereavement can cause older adults to withdraw—even from lifelong church involvement. Invite (but don’t pressure) them to services, meals, or activities, providing transport if needed. Encourage involvement in roles they can manage while grieving. Celebrate their contributions and presence. Community protects against loneliness and spiritual disengagement.

5

Remember Key Dates and Follow Up

Long-Term. Grief doesn’t end after the funeral. Anniversaries and special days can be especially painful. Keep a confidential list of important dates and send a card, call, or pray with them on those days. Offer extra support around dates like birthdays and anniversaries, Christmas, Easter, Mothers’ Day/Fathers’ Day and the Season of Remembering. Long-term remembrance says, “Your loss matters, and so do you.”

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, ‘The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.’ Psalm 92: 12-15

