The Tenets of Companioning the Bereaved

Theory of Bereavement Care

By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Tenet One
Companionship is about being present to another person’s pain; it is not about taking away the pain.

Tenet Two
Companionship is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding a way out.

Tenet Three
Companionship is about honoring the spirit; it is not about focusing on the intellect.

Tenet Four
Companionship is about listening with the heart; it is not about analyzing with the head.

Tenet Five
Companionship is about bearing witness to the struggles of others; it is not about judging or directing these struggles.

Tenet Six
Companionship is about walking alongside; it is not about leading or being led.

Tenet Seven
Companionship means discovering the gifts of sacred silence; it does not mean filling up every moment with words.

Tenet Eight
Companionship is about being still; it is not about frantic movement forward.

Tenet Nine
Companionship is about respecting disorder and confusion: it is not about imposing order and logic.

Tenet Ten
Companionship is about learning from others; it is not about teaching them.

Tenet Eleven
Companionship is about curiosity; it is not about expertise.