

THIS IS US

Week 3 Leader Guide-Grief

THE WIN

To help small groups view grief as a natural response and an opportunity to be cared for and care for those who are overwhelmed.

***Warning:** This will be a deep discussion. If we were to imagine our lives as an iceberg, this discussion will push us under the waters to the bottom of lives that we don't normally allow people to see. Ecclesiastes 3:4 says there is a time for weeping, and as followers of Jesus, we must learn to weep and lament as our King and Savior did.

1-2
minutes

SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

SAY THIS: In this week's message we learned that grief comes to us from different sources, but in the midst of it, we can learn to keep our perspective on God, grieve in a community, and be confident that God does meet us in the broken places.

3-5
minutes

WARM UP

ASK THIS: Describe a significant loss you have experienced in your life. How has it impacted who you are today?

Say This: *Grief is deep sorrow over the loss of someone or something we love. This includes people, relationships, safety, security, identity, possessions, affections, desires and of things that haven't come, like infertility or lose dreams. Grief is a natural response to loss and is not sinful. When we grieve we can do so knowing that we stand in the loving arms of God the Father. Grief in this context is always hopeful because we know that God is making all things new. Grief outside of the gospel leaves us to cope through self-generated means and with false hope or no hope at all. Grief can become complicated when we idolize what we lost.*

30-35
minutes

THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

READ THIS: Psalm 90

ASK THIS: David, a man after God's own heart, wrote many laments, songs of grieving and struggle, to God throughout his life. In fact, he commanded God's people to sing them as part of their corporate worship experience. How does this contrast to how we typically deal with loss in our churches today?

Ask This: What do you do to deal with the losses in your life?

Say This: Whenever we grieve or experience suffering, it is easy to start to believe some of the lies the devil throws at us. For Jesus, fighting the devil is about believing truth over lies. It's about rewiring the mental maps in our mind to adjust to reality in order to better show up to reality. Lies only have power over our soul when we internalize them; therefore, this Practice will focus on uprooting the lies with belief and replanting truth, for, as Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

DO THIS: Exercise to fight lies with Truth

- Begin with a prayer exercise (Pray and sit in silence for about 5+ minutes). Each person can spread out and find a comfy space to sit in, perhaps with a notebook and pen in their hand. Then, have the Leader pray to invite the Holy Spirit to reveal certain lies about who we believe God is and who we are in the grieving process. After a few moments of quiet, spend time asking God to reveal lies you believe in the following two areas: (Pray for the first one, wait a few minutes and then ask the Holy Spirit to bring forth to your minds the second question)
 - What lies do I believe about who God is?
 - What lies do I believe about who we are or who I am?
- Work through each question listening to the Spirit, write down 1-3 lies you believe in each area.
- Split into groups of 2 or 3 people (no more), ideally of the same gender. Take time to share what the Holy Spirit brought to mind and respond to one another by speaking truth into one another's lives. This could look like:
 - Person A: "As I was praying, the Holy Spirit brought to mind that deep down I believe God is _____ (disappointed with me, cruel, a bad father, etc.)"
 - Person B: "Thanks for sharing that. Can I tell you what is true? The truth is that God is _____ (full of love towards you, a good father, says in the Scriptures, etc.)"
 - A note on why we ask: Make sure to ask to be able to share truth every-time. This seems silly, but one of the biggest mistakes we can make is being like Job's friends. Job did not invite them to speak in the midst of the pain and told them it would be better to remain silent (Job 13:5). Sometimes people are not ready to hear the truth but instead just need our loving, gracious presence.
- Go around your triad sharing and speaking truth over one another. Do this with great care. Truth statements are not meant to be a band-aid or an easy fix, but a gentle reminder of reality. And remember that speaking the truth does not necessarily uproot the lie the first time it's spoken. As the person receiving the truth, perhaps even write down the truths and meditate on them in your quiet time.

NOTE: *It is important to make sure that truth statements we speak over one another are based in the teachings of Jesus and the Scriptures, rather than in cultural norms or personal opinions.*

Take some time as a large group to talk about how this practice of fighting lies with truth went.

Read This: Romans 12:15

SAY THIS: Ann Voskamp's book, *The Broken Way*, reminds us that Jesus always moves into the places of grief and offers up the ministry of presence. She writes, "In a broken world, isn't the call always to koinonia, to communion with community that bears our burdens with us? Wasn't suffering then actually a call for us to be a community, to stand together and bear under, trusting that arms of love are always under us?"

Romans 12:15 and the example of Jesus, calls us to a "ministry of presence", a place where you do not have to be anything but available to be a wonderful tool in the hand of God. To sit, listen and empathize with those you love.

Ask This: How often do you miss participating in the "ministry of presence" because we don't know what to say, or how to "fix" things for someone?

Ask This: How could we as a small group focus more on helping others through the long-term process of grief?

Ask This: How willing are you to reach out when you need help?

What stops you?

What do you fear?

Ask This: What's one step you can take to change that?

Prayer for Grief

Father, I thank You that You are a God who hears my cries and wipes away my tears. My heart is weary and often wants to give in to despair. Give me strength and grace to believe the truth of Your character and Your Word. Increase my faith to believe Your glory is worth this momentary affliction. Forgive me for the times I want my pain to disappear more than I want to draw near to You, even when I know You are the only one who can comfort me. I know You are the only one who can heal my broken heart and bind up my wounds. Jesus, I trust You with my heart and my life because I believe in Your great love for me. Will You meet me here and walk me through this process of healing as I begin to let _____ go? Help me keep my eyes on You and Your eternal promises. (Pray and lament as you need to.) In Jesus' name, Amen.

THIS WEEKS CHALLENGE: Read these verses and take some time to summarize the character and promises of God toward our grief: **John 6:49-51, John 10:9-10; Psalm 34:18, Psalm 100; Ezekiel 37:1-6; Isaiah 40:28-31; Matthew 5:4; Colossians 3:1-2**

Say This: These verses illustrate the hope of the gospel amid our loss. We can confess and cry out to God in our suffering, and He comforts us and promises to restore all that has been lost. There is nothing earthly that we will be able to hold onto eternally, and there is nothing eternal that we can lose in Christ. It is secure. Dealing with loss through sinful ways always brings captivity, but God provides a way of dealing with loss that brings freedom.

DIGGING DEEPER

A Grief observed by C.S. Lewis

As a group, you will often encourage and comfort people suffering through afflictions and crises. Here are some steps to take in these situations:

- **Be OK with them not being OK.** *Even though it is uncomfortable and people may exhibit theologically incorrect thoughts, the moment of crisis is usually not the moment to correct their theology or try to make them feel better so you will be less uncomfortable. Let the other person process.*
- **Just show up and be present.** *Even if you do not know what to do, just being there means a lot.*
- **Listen.** *It is OK for there to be awkward silences and tears. Do not try and break that tension by talking.*
- **Speak rightly.** *Make sure your words are rooted in Scripture (truth and wisdom), focused on God (His sovereignty, Scripture, glory), exalting to Jesus (Christ as Savior, Mediator and sympathetic High Priest), empowered by the Holy Spirit (dependent on God's power to counsel and transform) and full of love (truthful, graceful, empathetic). Avoid the statement, "I completely understand what you are going through."*

CLOSING THOUGHT

Jesus cannot wipe away any tears we do not shed.

Reflection on Revelation 21:4