

MOVIE: “The Lion King”

Sub Topic Theme:
Grief and Guilt

Lesson Objective:

Understanding that being faced with the death of a parent is one the most impactful and difficult things a person undergoes in life. It forces us to redefine our existence and understanding of the world. So



developing an awareness of emotions, thought processes, and our faith in Jesus Christ is crucial. Recognizing that the Lord is present with his love, peace, and purpose throughout our greatest sorrow will be definitive in experiencing healthy grief. When our faith offers us hope and goes beyond simply “dealing”, we can discover solace and strength. Helping teens embrace the value of faith in Jesus Christ, who offers unconditional love and unending support, can provide an everlasting peace and hope in the midst of our grief and guilt.

Intro to the Movie:

The Lion King

According to IMDB.com:

A lion prince, Simba, is born in Africa and the animals of the Pride Lands pay tribute. Later Simba is told by his father, King Mufasa, that when Mufasa dies, Simba will become King of the Pride Lands. Simba's Uncle Scar would have been king after Mufasa had Mufasa not had a child. Fuelled by rage, Scar plots to kill Mufasa and Simba so he is able to take over the throne. He uses the hyenas to cause a stampede through the canyon where Mufasa and Simba are, and personally ensures Mufasa falls to his death. Simba survives so Scar implies that the stampede was Simba's fault and that the pride will blame him. Simba flees the Pride Lands meaning never to return home. Simba is found, collapsed with exhaustion, by Timon the Meerkat, and Pumba the Warthog, and the trio become fast friends. Simba stays with them well into adulthood until his childhood friend, Nala, hunting beyond the Pride Lands that herds had deserted under Scar's mismanagement stumbles upon Simba's new home. Astonished to find him alive, she begs him to return to the Pride Lands, where Scar has reigned as King for years, and ruined everything. All of the animals will starve if Simba does not return. Simba eventually agrees to fight for his kingdom. Simba

battles Scar, and learns his father's death was Scar's fault, not his own. Simba prevails and takes his father's place as rightful king, mirroring "The Circle of Life."

(The 3D lenses) Look at how the grief and guilt of his father's death shapes the character of Simba. Pay attention to how he handles his sorrow and how the guilt impacts who he becomes. Also look for bigger concepts, lessons that the film presents, particularly those that relate directly to death and grief.

Discussion Group Questions:

1. If **you** were Simba in this movie, what would you do differently and why?
2. What is one way that guilt influenced Simba?
3. What are some of the beliefs or concepts that change how Simba thinks? Why do you think they made an impact?
4. There are a lot of similarities in Simba's story to any kid who has experienced the death of a parent. What do you see that parallels your story (or someone you may know)?

Group input:

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions.

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding the audience toward the main objective:

***Understanding** that being faced with the death of a parent is one of the most impactful and difficult things a person undergoes in life. It forces us to redefine our existence and understanding of the world. So **developing an awareness** of emotions, thought processes, and our faith in Jesus Christ is crucial. Recognizing that the Lord is present with his love, peace, and purpose throughout our greatest sorrow will be definitive in **experiencing healthy grief**. When our faith offers us hope and goes beyond simply "dealing", we can discover solace and strength. Helping teens **embrace** the value of faith in Jesus Christ, who offers unconditional love and unending support, can provide an everlasting peace and hope in the midst of our grief and guilt.*

Bullet Objective:

Put this summary section in your own words, but here are some ideas you can use:

The movie starts with a joyous birth, which adds to the happy family and happy kingdom. Sure there are some skirmishes that Mufasa has to handle and Simba gets into some serious trouble when he and Nala visit the elephant graveyard; but the overall state of life is peaceful and wholesome.

It all changes when the stampede happens. Scar's plotting and maliciousness brings about the most excruciating event of Simba's life. Unimaginable pain enters his existence. His father dies in front of him and he believes it is entirely his fault. That is a weight no one can bear. In that moment death gains control of Mufasa's kingdom and brings destruction to his family.

This may be how you feel right now. Your entire life has turned on a dime and everything you know, everything normal changes in an instant. Especially in a military community, life with the surviving family members can change drastically and quickly. What you feel and think dominates your life and it's hard to see much else. Whether like Simba you have escaped to a far off place, or like Nala you remain nearby trying to salvage as much as you can, the pain is with you. It's unavoidable.

There was a time when some of Jesus' friends had a similar experience. Life was going great as they traveled around with Jesus and saw him work wonders. They had been hand picked by Jesus to follow him; they had seen people healed and watched Jesus take on the religious leaders. They learned and laughed and lived every day by Jesus' side and life was good with this preacher. Then the unthinkable happened – Jesus was arrested and killed. Crucified on a cross in front of them. The sorrow and grief was pervasive. It crippled them and dominated their lives.

The story picks up at the end of John 19 after Jesus has died:

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸ After this, Joseph, who was from the town of Arimathea, asked Pilate if he could take Jesus' body. (Joseph was a follower of Jesus, but in secret, because he was afraid of the Jewish authorities.) Pilate told him he could have the body, so Joseph went and took it away. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who at first had gone to see Jesus at night, went with Joseph, taking with him about one hundred pounds of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰ The two men took Jesus' body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the spices according to the Jewish custom of preparing a body for burial. ⁴¹ There was a garden in the place where Jesus had been put to death, and in it there was a new

tomb where no one had ever been buried. ⁴² Since it was the day before the Sabbath and because the tomb was close by, they placed Jesus' body there.

The Empty Tomb

²⁰ Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. ² She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ Then Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. ⁴ The two of them were running, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and saw the linen cloths, but he did not go in. ⁶ Behind him came Simon Peter, and he went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there ⁷ and the cloth which had been around Jesus' head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was rolled up by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. (⁹ They still did not understand the scripture which said that he must rise from death.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb ¹² and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ "Woman, why are you crying?" they asked her.

She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!"

¹⁴ Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, "If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (This means "Teacher.")

¹⁷ "Do not hold on to me," Jesus told her, "because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God."

¹⁸ So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹ It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁰ After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord.

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you."

²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive people’s sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴ One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (called the Twin), was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

Thomas said to them, “Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later the disciples were together again indoors, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting, and believe!”

²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!”

The Purpose of This Book

³⁰ In his disciples’ presence Jesus performed many other miracles which are not written down in this book. ³¹ But these have been written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life.

You may notice the many different responses to death recorded here. Joseph of Arimethea was intent on the tradition and ritual of burial and honoring Jesus. Mary Magdelene expressed her sorrow through visiting his grave and crying. His disciples, most likely numb with grief and paralyzed by fear, locked themselves away in a room and hid. All reacted differently and yet the same thing reigned over them – death. Like Scar whose nefariousness infected the kingdom around Pride Rock, bringing death and destruction to the land, so it does in our lives.

Without recognizing the distinction between natural grief and the lies of guilt, we allow death to put a strangle hold on us, as it did Simba. He was kept from fulfilling his purpose as the next leader because he did not process his grief and continue to hold firm in his purpose. In Isaiah 26:3 it says “You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.”

Jesus has conquered death and he will lead you through your time of grief. Share your sorrows with him and let him comfort and sustain you. By placing your faith in the Lord and giving him prevalence in your life, you will not be subjected to the dominance of death over you but rather be lifted up by the grace and love of God. “He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared.” Rev. 21:4

Challenge:

1. Identify a part of your grief that is dominated by death. Consider how accepting the love and support of God will impact your life. Now ask Jesus to act on your behalf and build your faith in his power and presence.
2. Decide on a way specifically to express your grief this week. Talk to a Club Beyond leader or counselor or chaplain about how you might accomplish that.
3. Write out a prayer asking Jesus to show you his compassion and provision. Pray it daily this week and feel free to share it with your family, close friends, and leaders.

Pray for God's purpose and love to put it into action and transform lives. Remind them of the online personal journey at ReZilient Life for further involvement with this topic of Grief and Guilt!