

SUB TOPIC THEME: Grief and Guilt

Lesson Objective:

Identifying where we are in our grief process and understanding the many ways of expressing grief. By teaching teens how to understand grief and process through it within the context of faith in Christ, we equip them to mourn while continuing to live with purpose. This is another step in building resilience. Gaining an understanding of God's love and acceptance provides security in their lives. If kids are confident that the Lord will meet them where they are, then they can begin to be real and vulnerable with him. Through communion with the Lord, they gain the best possible support, insight, and assurance during their time of extreme pain.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Straws cut at different lengths
2. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
3. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
4. A passion to see students transformed in their understanding of God's love and presence in their lives!

Instructive Prep:

The death of a parent is a military kid's worst nightmare. They are living their own personal deepest, darkest fear, and there is no escaping it. The possibility is always a reality. Understanding their unique situation and the culture a majority of them exist in is crucial to speaking with discernment into their grief. The conflicting emotions of pride and sorrow and guilt and numbness (to mention a few) are overwhelming. On top of the metaphysical paradigm shifts they are experiencing, these kids are most likely undergoing physical change as well – moving stateside, changing schools, interacting with a CAO (Casualty Assistance Officer – Army version), etc.

This session is designed to look at ways teens can openly identify some of their emotions of feeling sadness, rage, denial, etc. Leading kids toward a strategy of trusting Jesus Christ with this very real pain is the goal. Helping kids understand the Lord's love and acceptance of them is critical to teens developing the life-long

ability to process their grief and continue to live with purpose.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: *learn, feel, do and what next*. We want students to learn something new, connect at an emotional level to some degree, and participate in doing something during the study (like making a hand gesture as a tool/reminder). Finally, the *what next* focuses on a change in attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, the movement is toward spiritual and emotional transformation in kids' lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together! Have fun and lead well.

Intro:

Experiencing the death of a parent changes your whole life. There is no quick fix or getting around it. Your pain is real and cannot be ignored. We all grieve in different ways and at different paces. No one can tell you what to feel or when to move on to the next emotion. What is absolutely crucial to you, right now, in your grief and sadness, is the love of Jesus Christ. Perhaps that angers you. Maybe you have no desire to trust him with anything ever again. That's ok. He loves you and his love is not going anywhere. It will be constant. He will outlast your grief.

Intro Story:

To begin to recognize where you are in your process of grieving we are going to look at the story of Jacob's death. His son Joseph, the one with the rainbow coat, brought the family to Egypt years ago and now Jacob has grown old and, after blessing his sons and providing instructions for his burial, he dies.

Genesis 50:1-23

Joseph threw himself on his father, crying and kissing his face. ² Then Joseph gave orders to embalm his father's body. ³ It took forty days, the normal time for embalming. The Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

⁴ When the time of mourning was over, Joseph said to the king's officials, "Please take this message to the king: ⁵ 'When my father was about to die, he made me promise him that I would bury him in the tomb which he had prepared in the land of Canaan. So please let me go and bury my father, and then I will come back.'"

⁶ The king answered, "Go and bury your father, as you promised you would."

⁷ So Joseph went to bury his father. All the king's officials, the senior men of his court, and all the leading men of Egypt went with Joseph. ⁸ His family, his brothers, and the rest of his father's family all went with him. Only their small children and

their sheep, goats, and cattle stayed in the region of Goshen. ⁹ Men in chariots and men on horseback also went with him; it was a huge group.

¹⁰ When they came to the threshing place at Atad east of the Jordan, they mourned loudly for a long time, and Joseph performed mourning ceremonies for seven days.

¹¹ When the citizens of Canaan saw those people mourning at Atad, they said, “What a solemn ceremony of mourning the Egyptians are holding!” That is why the place was named Abel Mizraim.

¹² So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them; ¹³ they carried his body to Canaan and buried it in the cave at Machpelah east of Mamre in the field which Abraham had bought from Ephron the Hittite for a burial ground. ¹⁴ After Joseph had buried his father, he returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone with him for the funeral.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers

¹⁵ After the death of their father, Joseph's brothers said, “What if Joseph still hates us and plans to pay us back for all the harm we did to him?” ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph: “Before our father died, ¹⁷ he told us to ask you, ‘Please forgive the crime your brothers committed when they wronged you.’ Now please forgive us the wrong that we, the servants of your father's God, have done.” Joseph cried when he received this message.

¹⁸ Then his brothers themselves came and bowed down before him. “Here we are before you as your slaves,” they said.

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, “Don't be afraid; I can't put myself in the place of God.

²⁰ You plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good, in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened. ²¹ You have nothing to fear. I will take care of you and your children.” So he reassured them with kind words that touched their hearts.

The Death of Joseph

²² Joseph continued to live in Egypt with his father's family; he was a hundred and ten years old when he died. ²³ He lived to see Ephraim's children and grandchildren. He also lived to receive the children of Machir son of Manasseh into the family.

Personal Reflection Questions:

Cut the straws different lengths and have each teen pick. Then proceed from shortest to longest.

1. Have you found ways to express and process your grief? Identify three that you've used so far. (use Student response sheet)

2. What are some ways that Jacob's family expressed their grief? What other ways do people use?
3. How do you think God's love influences your grief? Does it matter if you talk to him and depend on him?
4. Take a minute and write or draw the part of your grief you are the most reluctant or it is the hardest to entrust to God. If you are willing, share it with your group and discuss the pros and cons of giving God the chance to support you (use Student response sheet)
5. Each of you write your own question and take turns asking and answering them together as a group:

Central Bible Passages:

Perhaps the most important thing to realize about God's presence in your grief is that he is the only one with the strength and unconditional love to completely support you. By trusting in his love and having confidence in his purpose you will find the steady hand you desperately need in the midst of your pain. Others will help you and be there for you but, as all humans are, they have limits, faults, and pain of their own. Jesus Christ will be there for you completely, totally, wholly, to the fullest extent, with no conditions, cracks, or flaws in his perfect peace and love.

Isaiah 40:28-31

"Don't you know? Haven't you heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God;
he created all the world.

He never grows tired or weary.

No one understands his thoughts.

²⁹ He strengthens those who are weak and tired.

³⁰ Even those who are young grow weak;
young people can fall exhausted.

³¹ But those who trust in the LORD for help
will find their strength renewed.

They will rise on wings like eagles;
they will run and not get weary;
they will walk and not grow weak."

1 Corinthians 9:23-27

“All this I do for the gospel's sake, in order to share in its blessings. ²⁴ Surely you know that many runners take part in a race, but only one of them wins the prize. Run, then, in such a way as to win the prize. ²⁵ Every athlete in training submits to strict discipline, in order to be crowned with a wreath that will not last; but we do it for one that will last forever. ²⁶ That is why I run straight for the finish line; that is why I am like a boxer who does not waste his punches. ²⁷ I harden my body with blows and bring it under complete control, to keep myself from being disqualified after having called others to the contest.”

Life Application:

1. List the ways that we can continue to follow God and “run the race” even while we grieve (use Student response sheet)
2. Develop your own group list of the three best ways to express devotion to God while remaining authentic to your emotions. Decide when and how to use them. (use Student response sheet)
3. Actively pray together after group members have an opportunity to talk about the grief and life situation they are dealing with. Make a commitment to pray for each other every day this week! (use Student response sheet)
4. Write your own challenge:

STUDENT RESPONSE:

1. HAVE YOU FOUND WAYS TO EXPRESS AND PROCESS YOUR GRIEF? IDENTIFY THREE THAT YOU’VE USED SO FAR.

2. TAKE A MINUTE AND WRITE OR DRAW THE PART OF YOUR GRIEF YOU ARE THE MOST RELUCTANT OR IT IS HARDEST TO ENTRUST TO GOD. IF YOU ARE WILLING, SHARE IT WITH YOUR GROUP AND DISCUSS THE PROS AND CONS OF GIVING GOD THE CHANCE TO SUPPORT YOU.

3. EACH OF YOU WRITE YOUR OWN QUESTION AND TAKE TURNS ASKING AND ANSWERING THEM TOGETHER AS A GROUP:

- It's All About God – SG*