

God Cares When I Grieve

Quarter 5 • Lesson 9

Focus on Life Skills

- 1. Connecting:** Discuss different types of loss.
- 2. Teaching:** Listen to a story about grief and learn the stages of grief (John 11).
- 3. Responding:** Create a memory of something or someone who is gone.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Clay, thick mud, or play dough (enough to give each child a 3–5 cm ball)
- Basin with water for washing hands

Optional Supplies:

- *The Action Bible*, images of Peter
- Memory Verse poster
- Soap
- Towel
- *The Action Bible*, pages 604–606.
- Student Pages
- Scissors

If you are using thick mud instead of clay, mix a batch of mud before beginning this lesson. Make the mud thick enough to sculpt with.

Teacher Devotion

*My spirit, why are you so sad?
Why are you so upset deep down inside me?
Put your hope in God. Once again I will have reason to praise him.
He is my Savior and my God.
Psalm 42:11*

When someone close to you dies or leaves your life in another way, it can be devastating. While everyone loses loved ones, and loss is a natural part of life, it is not easy. When you have experienced this type of loss, how have you responded? Did you feel depressed or low in spirit? Did you feel so sad or so angry that you thought you could never overcome that feeling? All of these emotions can be part of grief.

While the emotions and frustrations associated with grief are universal, how grief is expressed and managed can vary greatly from one community to the next. But in your grief,

you can rely on God and pray for Him to heal even your deepest wounds and sorrows. When you find yourself grieving the loss of someone you care about, put your hope in God. He loves you and will carry you through even the most difficult of circumstances.

Family Connection: Encourage families to talk to their children about how they have grieved when they lost someone they loved. Ask them to talk about how the losses changed their lives.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Discuss different types of loss.

As the children come to class, select 3 children to help you with the Connecting activity. Have each of these 3 children stand in a different section of your learning space. Ask the rest of the children to sit in the middle of your teaching space.

Welcome! Today, we will talk about different types of loss and how we deal with them. To help you learn about what loss is, I will read several situations. For each situation, you will decide whether it describes the loss of a person, the loss of something important, or both.

Teacher Tip: Grief can be experienced in many situations, one of which is losing a loved one to death. It can be experienced when situations do not turn out as expected, when opportunities are lost, or when someone we are close to moves away. God cares about all types of loss in our lives!

The 3 children in these different areas represent different types of loss.

Have each child hold up the number of fingers that corresponds with her number. Point to each child as you explain what type of loss each represents:

Child 1: Loss of a person

Child 2: Loss of something important

Child 3: Loss of both a person and something important

I will read a situation to you. If you think this is the loss of a person, move to Child 1. If you think it is the loss of something important, move toward Child 2. If you think it is the loss of both a person and something important, move to Child 3. For example, if a situation describes a person who died, you would stand by Child 1.

After reading each situation, pause for 30 seconds to allow the children to move. They may choose to answer differently. This is okay. Your explanation of what has been lost will help to clarify the answers. In some situations, there is more than one type of loss, so children may stand by any of the 3 children.

Situation 1: Your father moves to another city to earn money for your family. He sends a letter with money to your family every week, but you do not get to see him. One day, your mother stops hearing from your father.

Remind the children that Child 1 represents the loss of a person, Child 2 represents the loss of something important, and Child 3 represents the loss of both a person and something important. The children should stand by Child 1. This situation describes the loss of a person.

Situation 2: Your aunt comes to visit. She asks your mother to come work on her farm. Your mother agrees to move in with your aunt. Your mother, your older brother, and you all help your aunt with the farm. You are happy to help your family, but you miss your home, school, and friends.

The children should stand by Child 3. Some children may stand by Child 1 or Child 2. The situation describes the loss of important things—home, school, familiar schedule—as well as the loss of people—friends.

Situation 3: Your house is destroyed in a storm. You stay with your cousin for a short time, but you will need to find a new place to live.

The children should stand by Child 2. This situation describes the loss of an important thing. After the activity, ask the children to sit in their usual places.

There are many different types of loss you may experience in your life. Each loss is different, but the process you go through to deal with the loss is the same.

2. Teaching: Listen to a story about grief and learn the stages of grief (John 11).

When you lose someone or something that is important to you, it is very sad and may even make you feel angry. Perhaps your friend moved away, or maybe your aunt died. Maybe your life is changing because your family migrates from one place to another each year. When you feel strong sadness after you lose someone or something, you are experiencing grief. The process of grieving can be different depending on who you are, what you have experienced, and how your family and community grieve.

Grief is a normal part of losing something or someone you care about no matter who you are or where you are from. The Bible gives many examples of what grief looks, feels, and sounds like. In a true story from the Bible, a man Jesus loves dies. Listen as I tell this story.

If you are using *The Action Bible* images, show them as you tell the story.

A man called Lazarus was very sick. Lazarus had 2 sisters—Mary and Martha. Jesus knew the man and his family. The Bible says:

Read this verse directly from your Bible.

*So the sisters sent a message to Jesus. "Lord," they told him,
"the one you love is sick."
John 11:3*

- **How do you know that Jesus cared about Lazarus?**

The verse says that Jesus loved him.

Jesus heard the news, but He waited 2 days before taking His disciples to see Lazarus. Jesus knew that Lazarus was already dead. It took several days to get to the place where Lazarus was. When they arrived, they discovered that Lazarus had already been buried in a tomb.

Allow 2–3 children to respond to each of the following questions.

- How would you feel if you could not see someone you loved before he died?
- Would you want to see that person after he had died? Why or why not?

Sometimes, when someone dies, it is helpful for us to see that person's body because it helps us to say goodbye. Sometimes, it may be helpful to know the person was not in pain when he died.

- What other things might help you to feel better after you lose someone you love?

Allow 2–3 children to share. Children's ideas will vary and may depend on their own experiences with grief and loss.

Teacher Tip: Some children may have lost loved ones. You may support these children by listening to them and encouraging them to talk to other adults they trust, such as an auntie or uncle, about what they feel. You may also refer a child's guardians to a pastor who can work with them to help the child through the grief.

Having community members, friends, and family around when you are grieving is helpful. It can show you that you are not alone while you are feeling sad and missing someone who has died.

When Jesus and the disciples came to where Mary and Martha were, they found many people there. The people had come to comfort the 2 women after the loss of their brother. Jesus went to see His friends who were grieving. Mary was crying and went out to meet Him.

Jesus saw her crying. He saw that the Jews who had come along with her were crying also. His spirit became very sad, and he was troubled.

"Where have you put him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept.

John 11:33–35

Optional: If you are using The Action Bible, read pages 604–606 to the children.

In this true story from the Bible, the people who knew Lazarus were grieving. These verses say that Jesus became very sad too. Jesus wept with the others who were crying. Jesus Himself cries and grieves. Jesus cares about you when you grieve. He understands what it is like to grieve!

Let's talk about what grief can look like. Remember, grief is different for everyone. You may experience some or all of these parts of grief. Sometimes you may feel better after a while and then months later feel some of these parts of grief again. That is normal. We will help create a motion to help us remember each part of grief.

1. Feeling sad and hopeless is one way of showing grief. Being sad, hopeless, and crying after someone dies is a normal reaction to loss. If you feel sad for many days or even years, it can turn into depression. If you feel sad for a really long time, it is important to ask an adult for help.

Teacher Tip: If any children show signs of depression, offer to help them. You can pray with and for them. If possible, you can also get them help from a medical clinic or counsellor.

Let's create motions to show what it looks like to feel sad and hopeless. My motion might be to pretend to cry. Show me what you would do.

Allow each child to create his own motion that shows sadness and hopelessness. It is okay if some of the motions look the same. Say, "I feel sad and hopeless," and allow the children to practice their motions.

2. Not wanting to believe that your loss really happened may be part of grief. When someone dies or leaves our lives, it can be difficult to believe that the person is no longer in our lives.

Allow each child to create a motion that shows disbelief. Say, "I cannot believe it," and allow the children to practice their motions.

3. Anger is another part of grief. We may feel angry with the person who left us or because of the reason the person is no longer with us. For example, I may feel angry that my mother died and left me. Or I may feel angry that a storm destroyed our home.

Allow each child to create a motion that shows anger. Say, "I feel angry," and allow the children to practice their motions.

4. Asking questions of "Why?" and "What if?" may be part of grief. It is normal for someone who is grieving to look for reasons why the person they loved is gone. It is also normal to think about what they or others might have done differently to prevent the death or loss from happening.

Allow each child to create a motion that shows that wondering "Why?" and "What if?" are normal parts of grief. Say, "I ask why and what if," and allow the children to practice their motions.

5. Another part of grief is accepting the loss. While it can be very difficult to live without someone we love, it is possible to still live a happy life after someone dies. Accepting that the person is gone and will not come back is an important part of grief. When we accept the loss, we are able to live more peaceful lives. This does not mean that we forget about the people we have loved and lost. This simply means that we are able to understand that these people are gone and we can learn to be happy again.

Allow each child to create a motion that shows acceptance. Say, "I accept the loss," and allow the children to practice their motions.

Let's review the different parts of grief. When I name a part, show me the motion you created.

Pause for 15–20 seconds after you say each part of grief to allow children to show their motions.

I feel sad and hopeless.

I cannot believe what happened.

I feel angry.

I ask why and what if.

I accept the loss.

Grief is a difficult process to go through. Grief is painful and it can cause us to feel hopeless. Jesus came to bring hope and new life to the people of the world. In the Bible, Jesus tells us about the promise of new life He brings.

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.
Anyone who believes in me will live, even if they die."
John 11:25*

When you believe in Jesus, your body will still die, but you can live a new life in heaven with Him. Jesus gives us hope that death is not the end. This can bring hope for other types of loss as well. The end of one thing can be the beginning of another. It is still difficult to experience loss, but we can have hope that death and loss are not the end of the story!

3. Responding: Create a memory of something or someone who is gone.

When you experience loss, it is important to think about what has happened and allow yourself to go through the different parts of grief. One way to help you grieve is to think about the person or thing you have lost.

In a moment, I will give each of you a small ball of clay or mud. You will use the clay to create a memory of someone or something you have lost. For example, if you liked to sit and talk to the person you lost, you may choose to make a small chair. If you have not lost anything or anyone, you can create something that you think might comfort someone who is grieving. For example, I might make a flower or a butterfly because I know these things are pretty and would make me feel better.

Give each child a small ball of clay or thick mud. Allow 5 minutes for the children to sculpt. While the children work on their sculptures, have them pair up with a child nearby.

You made some very nice sculptures. Please tell your partner what you made and why you made that thing.

Give the children 2 minutes to talk with their partners about their sculptures. Then have the children use the basin of water, and soap and towel if available, to wash their hands.

Optional: If you are using Student Pages, allow the children 3 minutes to create their grief journals. The children may keep their journals to write or draw in when they grieve.

Show the Memory Verse poster if you are using it.

It is okay to grieve. God wants to help you when you grieve. Today's memory verse says:

*My spirit, why are you so sad? Why are you so upset deep down inside me? Put your hope in God. Once again I will have reason to praise him.
He is my Savior and my God.
Psalm 42:11*

My spirit, why are you so sad?—Motion to yourself. Then frown.

Why are you so upset deep down inside me?—Shrug your shoulders. Then pull your arms toward your heart.

Read the first part of this verse again. Repeat the motions 3 times with the children. End class by saying this blessing, based on John 11:33–34 and John 11:25, over the children.

Blessing: May you be comforted in knowing that you are not alone when you grieve. May you find peace in knowing that death can bring new life to those who believe in Jesus.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"Great Are You Lord" by All Sons and Daughter: <https://youtu.be/vQLMnPYoR9k>