



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Let's Talk About . . . Grief / Week 1

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## SERIES OVERVIEW

### SERIES SUMMARY

A conversation about how Jesus brings hope in the midst of grief.

### WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Jesus meets us in our grief.

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## SCRIPTURE

*"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die" (John 11:25-26 NIV).*

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## NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

### THINK ABOUT THIS

It's important to remember that in this phase, middle schoolers' emotions are ever-evolving, but their vocabulary to name and talk about those emotions is limited. That makes understanding and processing their grief, both for themselves and as it relates to others, difficult. It's important to encourage your students not to be afraid of what they're feeling. Even if it's uncomfortable, even if it's heavy, even if they aren't quite sure how to express it, their feelings in grief are important and deserve to be acknowledged and explored. As you lead this week, be careful not to minimize what a student is grieving. While some may have walked through incredible loss and tragedy already, others may be grieving seemingly smaller things, like a fight with a friend, not making the team, or going through a breakup. Don't weigh the experiences against one another; instead, create space for all students to express their grief in healthy, honest ways. Avoid putting a spiritual band-aid of sorts on their experiences by trying to provide answers to their complicated questions or forcing meaning on a loss or point of pain. Rather, be a listener, supporter, and leader who comforts them with your presence and points them to Jesus, who can do the same.

### NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

Grief can be extremely personal and unique to the person experiencing a loss, disappointment, or big change in their life. So, a conversation about grief can result in a lot of different reactions from your students. Check out the provided Additional Resources document to help you prepare for your talk and understand what your students may be going through and how they may react. **And don't forget the value of professional support!** Consider having a mental health professional available to your students in person or virtually for those who may need extra help navigating their feelings and experiences during your time together.

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## INTERACTIVE 1: THE MANY FEELINGS OF GRIEF

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll display the provided Feelings Wheel images to help students visualize and discover the many emotions that can accompany grief.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- The following provided digital slides:
  - Sad Feelings Wheel
  - Mad Feelings Wheel
  - Scared Feelings Wheel
  - Surprised Feelings Wheel
  - Everything Feelings Wheel
  - Numb Feelings Wheel
- A way to show the slides to your entire group

### PREP

- Using the software program of your choice, put the Feelings Wheel images in the same order in which they appear in your Teaching Script's Tension section.

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## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

- Our ministry is a safe place to talk about the real stuff middle schoolers are going through.
- Today, we're talking about something that can be difficult, but we want to help you navigate it when you experience it in your life: Grief.

### TENSION

- *[Lead students through taking a deep breath to help them prepare for the talk.]*
- Grief is that strong feeling that comes with the loss of something or someone you care about.
- Grief is complex and can happen for all kinds of reasons, like after a loss, in anticipation of a loss, or when we experience disappointment. *[Give relevant examples of each.]*
- Grief can show up in many ways and cause a lot of different feelings.
  - Grief can feel like sadness. We can feel depressed, hurt, guilty, and powerless.
  - Grief can feel like anger. We can feel mad, frustrated, and resentful.
  - Grief can feel like fear. We can feel alone, nervous, worried, and anxious.
  - Grief can be unexpected and take us by surprise. We can feel confused, thrown, and stunned.
  - Grief can take over everything, so we feel like we're experiencing every emotion at one time. We can be consumed by the loss and think about it all the time.
  - Grief can feel like nothing. It can be so difficult to process and deal with a loss that we feel numb.
- Grief is complicated, can change over time, is sometimes unpredictable, and can cause feelings that fuel a variety of behaviors. *[Give a variety of relevant examples.]*
- Grief can make us question why it happened to us, why it couldn't have been different, what we could have done to change it, and where God was in all of it.

- After a big loss, we may wonder if God is the loving, caring, and kind God we've always heard about.
- There's no quick fix for grief, but comfort can be found in knowing we aren't alone.

## TRUTH

- People thousands of years ago experienced real losses just like we do today, and we can read about their experiences that were recorded in the Bible.
- Jesus experienced grief in His life, and we get to explore His experience in a book of the Bible written by a guy named John.
- When Jesus came to Earth as a Man, He experienced all the feelings, disappointments, and struggles that we as humans experience.
- *Now, a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick" (John 11:1-3 NIV).*
- Jesus was good friends with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and Jesus loved and cared about them.
- When Lazarus got sick, Mary and Martha called Jesus for help. By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already died.
- *When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled (John 11:32-33 NIV).*
- Mary was grieving and didn't try to hide her feelings from Jesus. She even questioned where Jesus was because she believed Lazarus could have been saved if Jesus had been there.
- Jesus didn't get mad at Mary, tell her she was wrong, ignore her, or question her faith when she expressed her difficult feelings.
- In response to Lazarus' death, this is what happened: *Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" (John 11:35-36 NIV).*
- Jesus experienced deep pain, loss, and heartache for His friend.
- Jesus stayed with Martha and Mary while they were grieving the loss of their brother, and Jesus does the same for us when we experience grief in our own lives.
- Jesus meets us in our grief. We aren't alone.
- Jesus said: *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 NIV).*
- Knowing God is with us to offer comfort doesn't change the loss or hard feelings of grief.
- There's no quick fix for our grief, but in those moments, we can remember that we aren't alone and don't have to figure it out by ourselves.
- Jesus meets us in our grief.

## APPLICATION

- We can do these things when we experience grief:
  1. Acknowledge the feelings. Get real about how you feel, and don't be afraid, embarrassed, or worried about responding in a real way.
  2. Grieve however you grieve. Everyone grieves in different ways, and that's okay! *[Give relevant examples.]*
  3. Talk about your grief. Like Mary talked to Jesus about her grief, you can do the same and seek comfort, love, and peace from God. You can also talk to a trusted person like a parent, family member, friend, counselor, or small group leader to get support.

4. Remember, Jesus is with you in your grief. He understands your pain. Even if it might feel like it, you are never alone. Jesus is always with you.
- One way you can support someone who's grieving is to simply ask how you can help.

#### LANDING

- Jesus meets us in our grief.
- Your small group is a place where you can process your feelings, grieve, and offer support to those who are grieving.
- *[To close, pray that your students will find comfort and peace in knowing that Jesus meets us in our grief.]*

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## TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.

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# TEACHING SCRIPT

Let's Talk About . . . Grief / Week 1

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## BOTTOM LINE

JESUS MEETS US IN OUR GRIEF.

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## INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

Hi everybody! I'm \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm so excited to jump into a conversation in our *Let's Talk About* series today. Whether this is your first time with us ever, your first time back in a while, or you're a regular, I'm so glad you're here for this. This is a place where we can talk openly and honestly about real stuff that you or people like you deal with throughout your lives. Sometimes, that's fun, encouraging stuff that helps us live the way God calls us to live. And other times, it's more challenging, difficult-to-process stuff that makes us wonder where God is at all.

Today is one of those more difficult conversations, so I hope you'll stick with me as we dive in. We want to have a real, honest conversation that I hope will be super helpful to you now and in the future. Will it be easy? Probably not! But does it have the potential to help you navigate some pretty big parts of your life? Most definitely!

So today, **let's talk about. . . grief.**

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## TENSION

5 MINUTES

First, let's all take a deep breath before we go any further! [*Lead students in taking a breath before you go on!*] I know this may sound like a big, heavy topic. Some of you may be all too familiar with grief already, so you get it. Others of you may have heard the word "grief" but not yet experienced the feeling yourself. Either way, I'm glad you're here with us to join in this conversation.

Before we go on, let's make sure we're all on the same page. **Grief is that strong feeling that comes with the loss of something or someone you care about.** I know that's a pretty basic definition for a really complicated subject. Because the reality is grief is much more complex and can happen for all kinds of reasons.

There's the **grief that comes after a loss**, like the death of someone you love, the passing of a family pet, or the loss of someone in your community or a person you don't even know, like a celebrity or influencer.

There's the **grief that comes in anticipation of a loss or major life change**, like moving away, a family member leaving home, or the reality that someone with a chronic illness isn't going to get better.

There's even the **grief that comes with disappointment**, like not making the team, your parents getting divorced, or someone not following through on a promise to you.

### **INTERACTIVE: The Many Feelings of Grief**

*This is where you'll display the provided Feelings Wheel images to help students visualize and discover the many emotions that can accompany grief.*

Grief can show up in our lives in all kinds of ways because of all kinds of loss. And honestly, it shows up with all kinds of feelings, too. I know it's easy to think grief just feels like crying and depression. *[Display the "Sad" Feelings Wheel.]* That a person grieving just feels sadness all the time. A lot of times, that's true. But that can come with a lot of related feelings, like hurt, guilt, and powerlessness.

Sometimes, grief feels like anger. *[Display the "Mad" Feelings Wheel.]* You get so mad, so frustrated, so angry, so resentful at the loss you've experienced that you feel less like crying and more like raging.

Sometimes, grief feels like fear. *[Display the "Scared" Feelings Wheel.]* The loss you've experienced has caused you to feel alone, nervous, or worried. You have a lot of anxiety, and it's consuming so many parts of your life. It might even feel like you're completely stuck because you don't know what to do next.

For some of us, a loss is so unexpected that it can take you by surprise. *[Display the "Surprised" Feelings Wheel.]* You weren't anticipating what you're going through, and that has led to feeling super confused, thrown, and stunned.

Sometimes grief feels like it takes over everything, like you're feeling every emotion at one time. *[Display the "Everything" Feelings Wheel.]* It's hard to figure out what you're feeling because it's all too much. It's like every emotion is hitting at the same time. You're so consumed by the loss that you talk about it and think about it all the time.

And then, other times, grief feels like none of this. *[Display the "Numb" Feelings Wheel.]* It just feels like nothing. In other words, it feels like you're numb. It can be so difficult to deal with and process the loss that you avoid the feelings of grief that come with it.

Grief is so much more than just sadness. It's complicated and unpredictable. It's a deep sense of loss that fuels all kinds of feelings, and from those feelings come our behaviors.

Maybe that looks like . . .

Yelling at your mom or picking a fight with your sister.

Forgetting your homework or showing up late to practice.

Sleeping all day or not sleeping at all.

Binging your favorite show on repeat.

Feeling nervous or anxious all the time.

Not being able to concentrate.  
Losing your appetite.  
Showing up for practice or hanging out with your friends like everything is fine.

You see, grief is complicated. It's personal. It looks different for different people in different stages of life. And it can change over time! One minute, you might be laughing; the next, you're weeping. One year, a holiday or birthday may be hard, and the next, it might not. It's hard to know how grief will go with us as we grow, but here's what I know for sure: **Grief will go with you.** Just because time moves on and the loss may not be as painful or fresh doesn't mean you won't still feel it. You might always have questions about what caused your grief, like...

*Why did this happen to me?*  
*Why couldn't it have been different?*  
*What could I have done to change this?*  
*Where is God in this?*

That last one is a big one, right? Especially if you've grown up hearing about how God is loving, caring, kind, and wants what's best for us. All that sounds good and all, but after you experience a big loss, chances are you'll wonder if that's really true. Because what you're experiencing probably doesn't really feel like God's love, care, kindness, or what's best for you. In fact, it just feels awful.

If that's where you're at today, let me assure you that I have no plans of offering some magical quick fix to your grief today. I'm not planning to stand here and tell you one Bible verse or truth from Scripture will fix what you're facing. Because it can't. But what I can do is offer you the encouragement to know that you're not facing this alone.

More than that, I can tell you there is an answer to that question you may be asking: **Where is God when I'm grieving?** And the answer is one that, I hope, will help you as you find your way through grief.

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## TRUTH

5 MINUTES

We aren't the first people in the world to experience grief, and we surely won't be the last! Things like loss, disappointment, and pain are part of being human. Fortunately for us, we have the real experiences of the real people who lived thousands of years ago who we read about in the Bible. And just like us, they experienced a lot of real grief and real loss.

### **One of those people was Jesus.**

Jesus is God's Son, but when He came to Earth, He came as a Man, a Human Being. That means God's very own Son experienced all the feelings, disappointments, and struggles that we as humans experience ourselves. He had real friends, real relationships, and real losses over the course of His life on Earth. The experience we'll look at today, written down by a guy named John, is one that shows us just that.

Let's jump in:

***Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume***

***on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick” (John 11:1-3 NIV).***

Here, we meet a few important people: **Lazarus, Mary, and Martha**. These weren't just random siblings who Jesus met once or twice. These were His people, His friends, the ones He loved! They experienced Jesus in real ways and saw Him do really amazing things to heal and help people during His time on Earth. So of course, when Lazarus got sick, Mary and Martha did the one thing they knew to do: call their friend Jesus for help.

Hearing that someone He loved was sick, Jesus did what most of us would do: He made the decision to go be with His friends. But by the time He arrived, the worst had already happened: Lazarus had died. Take a look at what happened next:

***When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”***

***When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled (John 11:32-33 NIV).***

Lazarus' sister, Mary, was obviously grieving. And what I love is that she wasn't trying to hide it. She didn't pretend she was okay, or convince herself Lazarus was no longer in pain, or sulk and wait for Jesus to comfort her. No, she got real about the grief she was feeling right away. She basically asked Jesus the same thing I think we ask when we face loss like this: ***Where were You?***

Because if Jesus had been there...

Maybe He could've changed something.

Maybe this wouldn't have happened.

Maybe they could understand why it did happen.

Here's what else I think is so important about this passage. When a weeping, grieving Mary got honest with Jesus in her grief, Jesus didn't get mad at her, or tell her she was wrong, or ignore her. He didn't question her trust in Him or her faith in God. Instead, He felt what she felt. He was sad, troubled, and deeply moved by their experience. So much so that this happened next:

***Jesus wept.***

***Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” (John 11:35-36 NIV).***

That is grief, right? It's so much more than crying. It's weeping. It's an experience of deep pain, deep loss, deep heartache. It's a sign of the deep love Jesus had for His friend. And I think it's important for us to remember in our own grief.

Since Jesus is God's Son, Jesus is a living, breathing example of what God is like. And because of Jesus, we don't have to wonder where God is in our grief. Jesus showed us exactly where God is when we're grieving: right beside us, weeping with us.



### **Jesus meets us in our grief.**

He showed up for Mary and Martha. He wept with them over the loss of their brother, His friend. He didn't turn away or leave them to deal with it on their own. He stayed right there with them, weeping right alongside them.

And I believe He does the same for us.

When we're disappointed,  
When we're hurting,  
When we know hard times are ahead,  
When we're walking through unexpected, unimaginable loss . . .

### **Jesus meets us in our grief.**

Jesus actually said something else that I think can help us understand grief differently. In one of His most famous sermons, Jesus told His followers this:

***“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4 NIV).***

When we lose something or someone we love, we struggle through the loss. We mourn. We weep. We grieve. But with that, we have the gift of knowing that we will be comforted. That we aren't alone. That God is with us. That **Jesus meets us in our grief.**

Again, let me just say this: I know that some of you have suffered great loss already in your lives. And knowing God is there to be with you and comfort you doesn't change the loss or the feelings that go along with it. It may not change much for you at all! And honestly, it's not meant to! Because the pain of what you've experienced is very real. I wouldn't ever pretend one Bible verse, one message, one prayer, or one visit to church could fix that.

But I can tell you that you're not alone. You're not abandoned. You don't have to figure it out by yourself. Instead, you can hold on to something and Someone who promises to comfort you in your deepest grief and weep with you as you walk through it.

Because **Jesus meets us in our grief.**

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## APPLICATION

3 MINUTES

Since grief is a real part of life, it means we're all going to face it at some point. So, what can we do to help us when we get there? Here are a few ideas:

1. **Acknowledge the feelings.** What you're feeling is real, and it's okay to feel it. You don't have to try to move on or move out of it quickly. In fact, one of the best things you can do is get real about what you feel in your grief. Don't be scared of those feelings. Don't rush through them. Be honest about them. Remember, Jesus wept in His grief, which was a very real response to a very real

feeling. So, as you grieve, don't be afraid, embarrassed, or worried about responding in a real way.

- 2. Grieve however you grieve.** Remember, we said grief is personal. That means how you grieve may be different than how I grieve. So, give yourself permission to grieve however you need to. Maybe you need a good cry, a quick workout, or time with friends. Maybe you need to scream, and yell, or be alone in silence. Maybe you need to journal, or pray, or sleep. Whatever grief looks like for you, that's okay! As long as you're not hurting yourself or someone else, grieve the way you need to grieve.
- 3. Talk about your grief.** When Mary experienced the loss of her brother, she opened up and talked to Jesus about her grief. When you go through your own grief, it's important for you to do the same. First, talk to God and seek God's comfort, love, and peace. But remember, God also puts people in your life to support you when you grieve. So, when you're ready, take a step to share your loss, pain, and feelings with those who can support and comfort you, like a parent, family member, friend, counselor, or small group leader. Don't keep your grief bottled up.
- 4. Remember that Jesus is with you in your grief.** While this alone won't fix it, it can give us comfort. Somebody cares. Somebody is with us. Somebody understands. That somebody is Jesus, weeping alongside us. As you grieve, maybe you can say a simple prayer to remind yourself of this truth, something like: "*Jesus, show me You're with me.*" Look for His presence with you in things you find comforting, in truth you find helpful, in people He puts in your life every day.

Remember, grief looks and feels different to everyone. This isn't a one-size-fits all approach. If you have a friend or someone in your life grieving right now, a great question to ask is simply this: "*How can I help?*" This might feel awkward. You may not know exactly what to say. But showing up will mean a whole lot to them. Sometimes help looks like prayer and encouragement. Other times it looks like an invitation to watch a movie or play video games together. Sometimes it looks like showing up and listening to what they're feeling. Other times it looks like simply sitting in silence and being there for them so they're not alone. Whatever it is, remember that God can work through you to comfort those who are grieving.

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## LANDING

2 MINUTES

Remember, **Jesus meets us in our grief.**

We're about to head to small groups. There you'll be surrounded by people who care about you and want to help you navigate what you may be processing or grieving. Part of the way Jesus meets us in our grief is through each other! We can stand in grief with our friends the way Jesus does with us. So, I hope you'll do that today.

As we close, I'd like to end in prayer. [*Pray that your students will find comfort and peace in knowing that Jesus meets us in our grief.*]



## TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS