



# Sermon Discussion Guide

## Getting Through Life's Losses Getting Through What You're Going Through – Part 2

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*"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." Psalm 23:4 (NIV)*

Getting through life's losses often requires grieving. Among the things to know about grief are: (1) Loss is unavoidable but grief is a choice, (2) Grief is healthy, (3) God grieves with me, (4) Grief is healed in community, and (5) Grief takes time. Even Jesus was moved to grief; at Lazarus' tomb, he wept with the people grieving there. Some steps to moving forward with grief that are healthy and good can include: (1) List the losses I've never grieved, (2) Identify what I've really lost, (3) Have the courage to lament, and (4) Remember how much God loves me. God does not promise that we'll never grieve; but he does promise that he'll walk with us through even the deepest grief, as Psalm 23:4 above says.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

*"When Jesus saw that Mary and the people with her were crying, he was terribly upset....  
Jesus started crying, and the people said, "See how much he loved Lazarus." John 11:33-36 (CEV)*

1. We often refuse to grieve after we suffer a loss, even though the process of grieving is a healthy choice. When you reflect on the verses above from John 11, what did Jesus teach Lazarus' sister and those around them?
2. We tend to believe that grieving shows that we are weak. But sadness is not weakness. In fact, many of our problems result from not allowing ourselves to grieve. Discuss in your group if you've suffered a loss in the past that you have not yet grieved over. Can you identify why? Was it because you did not want to show weakness?

*"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18 (NIV)*

3. We often think we are alone in our struggles, but what does the Lord promise in Psalm 34:18 above? Rather than trying to deal with our losses all by ourselves instead of accepting God's grace, discuss in your group how a loss you have suffered can help you get closer to God.

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

4. Jesus says you will be comforted when you mourn. Is it difficult to look to Jesus for comfort? Why or why not? Is there anything you would like to do differently when you mourn life's losses – great or small?
5. Psalm 23:4 says, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."* When we're in darkness during a time of grieving, what does Psalm 23:4 say about fear? Why is it so hard for us to accept Psalm 23:4 which says we need not fear and Matthew 5:4 which says we're blessed when we mourn? Does our culture or family support these concepts? Discuss what's difficult about the command and blessing in these verses.

### Diving Deeper (optional)

*"When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow." Romans 12:15 (NLT)*

When others are grieving, we're often tempted to relate a story of how we've experienced a similar grief. However, comparing our grief with someone else's never comforts. Even if the loss was similar (e.g., the loss of a grandparent), we all experience loss differently. Describe how you would help someone in their grief if you followed Romans 12:15 above?

**REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**

## Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

### Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- **Icebreaker:** Talk about why you are grateful for the community of your small group. Name something specific you are grateful for.
- **Goals:** Our natural instincts when faced with grief are to withdraw, suppress and repress. Consider ways to move against those instincts and claim the blessing promised. Expand your understanding of God’s purpose for grief, mourning and community in our lives.
- **Prayer:** Pray for those in your group as well as others who are faced with a loss, that they be comforted in their loss and pain. Pray that they take to heart God’s encouragement and command not to fear. Pray they have the courage to grieve and experience God’s comfort in their pain and loss.

### Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

### Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.