

WHEN GOD
DOESN'T
MAKE SENSE

2. SORROW & STRUGGLE

ICEBREAKER



If this is a new group or there are new people, please take a moment to **introduce yourselves.**

To start off your small group, briefly share your response to the following question:

What is your favorite take-out or delivery restaurant?

Share with your group.

WHAT TO EXPECT



Let's get a big picture of what we'll be learning today...

At some point in our life, we are going to enter a season of some kind of loss. Whether it is a loss of a loved one through death, a loss of marriage through divorce, or a loss of a job and financial security are a few examples. When we are going through a great loss, sometimes we think that it's okay to not grieve. We may even think that to grieve is a sign of weakness. But, processing through our grief is actually a healthy choice. Today, we will take a look at the sorrow and struggle we face through the season of loss.

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: START & FINISH ON TIME. Doing this will show your small group that you value their time.

Tip: BE REAL, AUTHENTIC, & TRANSPARENT ABOUT YOUR WEAKNESSES & STRUGGLES. Some people in your group may be new to faith or new to small group often think there's a *right* way to answer discussion questions—or at least a few *wrong* things to say. So, they show up and listen in, but don't feel permission to say what's really on their minds. Set examples by sharing honest vulnerable answers. Sharing with a level of vulnerability sets the tone and gives permission for everyone—regardless of spiritual maturity—to respond authentically.

ONLINE Tip: MUTING OF MICROPHONES. Get familiar with the Zoom features on your electronic device. It is helpful for everyone to know where the mute button is located. Ask the attendees to self-mute to avoid outside noise when someone else is talking & sharing. Doing this will help with the flow of your SG discussion time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) Loss is unavoidable. We will all suffer some sort of loss at some point. The loss of a job. The loss of a loved one. The loss of health. The loss of a friendship. The loss of freedom to leave your home. Read what Solomon wrote about how everything has a time and purpose in our lives.

For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance.

(Ecclesiastes 3:1,4 - NLT)

Notice that he calls these times of loss "seasons." They aren't single moments that fade quickly, but they don't have to drag on forever either. You may never get over a loss, but you can get through them.

Maybe you've been told, "Just get over it" when you've experienced loss. Or you've given that advice to someone else. It's not always helpful, though. Why do you think our natural response to loss is to try to move on quickly?

2.) Let's look at two responses to loss in life. The first is sorrow. You can also call this grief. It is the immediate reaction to a loss. It is sadness and a sense of emptiness.

Here are three things we need to understand about sorrow.

1. Sorrow is Healthy

Just as loss is unavoidable, so is sorrow. Some people try to avoid it, pushing their emotions down, but almost every health expert will tell you that is the wrong response. It may sound strange, but processing your sadness about what you've lost can actually help you. Here's what the Bible says about it:

Sorrow is better than laughter, for when a face is sad (deep in thought) the heart may be happy [because it is growing in wisdom].

(Ecclesiastes 7:3 - AMP)

2. Sorrow Requires a Community to Heal

We can't recover from loss all on our own. And when we try, it will drag out the season God has appointed for our grief.

Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep.

(Romans 12:15 - NLT)

If you've ever felt loss, then you know how important it is to grieve with others. Sharing your grief can mean telling your own story of what you're experiencing. When someone is sharing their story of grief, remember "comparison is not comforting." In other words, it doesn't help if you try to tell others that their sorrow is not as big as yours or someone else's.

3. God is with Us in Our Sorrow

No matter who shows up to share your sorrow, know that you are never alone. God is close to you when you're hurting.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

(Psalm 34:18 - NLT)

God is not an unfeeling god who doesn't care about us. Instead, the Bible tells us exactly how He feels when He experiences loss. In John 11, when He lost His good friend Lazarus, Jesus was moved with sorrow and cried.

How does it make you feel knowing that God cares about your loss and feels the same as you do?

3.) The other response to loss is **struggle**. We all struggle with things in life. And I'm sure we can all agree that life is hard. Because of Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, the whole earth is cursed. Sin has broken everything in the world and it is the root cause of our life struggle. Genesis 3:17 says, "*Because you (sinned)...all your life you will struggle.*" Instead of being afraid to admit your struggles, the healthy thing is to face them head on.

First, we struggle with **people**. Every relationship is bound to face brokenness because of sin. What God intended to be good from the very beginning of creation has been tainted—our relationship with Him and with each other. What used to be a perfect union became divided. Our struggles are the results from misunderstandings, competition, disappointments, and conflicts. Jacob's life is a good example (*Genesis 30*). He struggled with his brother, Esau after stealing his brother's birthright. He struggled with his wives, Rachel and Leah. He struggled with his father-in-law, Laban. Even his own kids struggled with one another because of jealousy. The Bible lists many dysfunctional people who struggled.

Second, we struggle with **ourselves**. So often we find ourselves acting in a way that we don't want to. Again, that's because of the human nature at war within us. The apostle Paul describes it best in scripture.

I do not understand the things that I do. I do not do the good things that I want to do. Instead, I do the things that I hate...I do not want to do those wrong things. I know that there is nothing good in me. I am weak and human. I want to do what is good. But I am unable to do it. So, my mind tells me to obey God's rules. But my body wants to make me do something else...Sin has power over my body so that I am like a prisoner.

(Romans 7:15-18,23 - EASY)

Finally, we can struggle with **God**. Hosea 12:3 says that even Jacob struggled with God. We find ourselves in a struggle with God because He wants to work in us. He wants to exchange our skewed view of ourselves and replace it with His view of who He created us to be. He sees greatness in us. But, we don't. All we see are imperfections, fear, and insecurity. But thankfully, God is big enough to accept our struggles.

What is one area you struggle with in life? It can be in any of the three areas we just looked at. How do you feel when you are faced with that struggle?

4.) God loves us deeply and He loves to wrestle with us especially when we ask Him the hard questions. Why? Because He cares about how we feel. He sympathizes with our struggles. He is close and mindful of how we are doing. 1 Peter 5:7 says,

"Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you."

Notice that the word, CARES is used twice in this verse. That means we can hand over our worries to Him. We can share our complaints to Him. We can ask Him the hard questions especially when God doesn't make sense because He cares. God, why don't you do something? God, when are you going to answer my prayer? How long, God, is this pandemic going to last? What in the world are you doing while my marriage is falling apart? God can handle our questions and complaints. In fact the Bible calls these lamentations. When life sucks, we can complain to God about it.

Here is a form of prayer that can help guide us as we *cast our cares on Him*:

C - Complain to God

- The complaints often come in a form of a question.

A - Appeal to God's nature

- I appeal to God's character and who He is.

R - Remind God of what He said

- I remind God of His promises, His truth, what He said and His reputation.
- God loves it when we do this.

E - Express my total trust in God

- Even though I may not understand, I express my trust in Him that He is looking out for my best interest.

It's okay to tell God what you think is unfair or painful. It's simply okay to lament to God when you are angry, frustrated, fatigued, disappointed, and fearful. He can take it.

Our real struggle in life is with God. Why is it important for us to be open and real with God? How does it make you feel knowing that you can complain to God? Was there ever a time when you felt you couldn't share your true feelings to God? Why?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?



We all suffer loss at some time. You may even experience it this week, whether small or large. If you do, remember to:

- **Embrace the sorrow you feel.**
- **Be honest about the struggles you are going through.**
- **Cast my cares on Him (C.A.R.E.)**



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Take a few minutes to close your time together with prayer and to pray for each other's prayer requests. Below is a sample prayer to read if you choose to. You can also choose to write down each other's prayer requests to remember throughout the week.

Sample Prayer:

"Father, thank You so much for being close to us when we are brokenhearted. Whenever we feel the sting of loss, remind us to turn to You. Help us to grieve in a healthy way by allowing others to walk alongside us. We give You our sorrows whenever we think about our loss. We ask You for help with our struggles with people, ourselves and with You. Thank You that we can complain to You, appeal to You, remind You of Your promises and express our total trust in You. Thank You for loving us and for caring about how we feel. In Jesus' name we pray, amen."

Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 1

SCRIPTURE...

And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:19 - NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 2

SCRIPTURE...

You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.
(Genesis 50:20 - NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

*Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.
(Psalm 30:5 - NLT)*

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

*Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.
(Isaiah 35:10 - NLT)*

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop falls, and the fields lie empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights.
(Habakkuk 3:17-19 - NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...
