

What If???

January 2010

How can a SmallGroup care for person that has had a severe loss in their life?

Unfortunately, severe loss occurs in life. We are now living before the coming of the new heaven and the new earth. All creation groans and sometimes we need to groan the loudest – Rom 8:22-25. We all may shed pools of tears during this life. Fortunately, our hope is that there is an age coming when there will be no more death or tears – Rev 21:4.

Tonight we will explore together how to care as a SmallGroup for someone who has a severe loss in their life. The type of loss that we will consider is when death has occurred. Fortunately, Jesus will conquer death – 1 Cor 15:26, but until then, He uses it as an opportunity for us to demonstrate earnest love for one another – Jn 13:34-35. Many of the values, principles, and actions that we will discover together will also be appropriate in other painful losses such as when poor health occurs, employment ends, divorce happens, there is a loss of relationship due to an unresolved conflict, etc.

Let's consider the following questions together.

1. “When you encounter people who are grieving, you will be tempted to talk about everything but their loss – the one thing most on their heart and mind. You will feel like you are walking on eggshells. People in mourning are often crying out for others to acknowledge their pain. Even those who seriously suppress their pain secretly wish for someone to help them acknowledge it.” (*Did I Say the Right Thing: Responding Well to Those Who Grieve* By Mitch A. Schultz, pg. 1)

What could we possibly say to or ask a grieving person?

2. “During our experience with our son, many people said they did not want to bother us, particularly in the days just before and after his death. Similarly, when my wife returned home after brain surgery, many were curious to know how she was doing, but they never called for fear they might be imposing on our family. Whenever people express these kinds of thoughts to me, my quick response has been, “Bother us! Of course, we don't want you to camp out in our living room, and I appreciate your respect for our privacy, but this is the time we need companionship the most.” The aftermath of loss, particularly a tragic loss, can leave a family in deep loneliness. Very rarely will such a family not appreciate being bothered.” (Ibid. pg. 5)

How could we lovingly bother a grieving person or family?

3. “Regret for not doing more to minister to a grieving person is a common frustration. Regret may even be what you are experiencing now. It is never too late to care for people who have suffered loss.” (Ibid. pg. 9)

How can we express care as the months pass after a loss?

4. “When Elaine was recovering from her surgery, and particularly when she remained in a coma for a month, I received hundreds of e-mails from people all over the world. One day after Travis had an important test, I found one hundred and forty e-mails from well-wishers. Many of those included Bible verses. At first I did not want to expend the energy reading all of them. Initially they seemed trite and meaningless, until God reminded me that this was His Word. I made the decision to read each Bible verse sent to me as though I had received an e-mail from God Himself. Those scriptures became a great source of encouragement to me. Let me encourage you to use scripture, not lightly, but purposefully. Don’t throw out a Bible verse just for the sake of throwing out a Bible verse. Prayerfully consider the impact a verse could have on the person who is hurting, and ask God to use it to lift the person up.” (Ibid. pg. 31)

What verse do we each have in our heart to use at the proper time that points to our God for hope and/or comfort?

Additional resources for your consideration and use:

1. *Did I Say the Right Thing: Responding Well to Those Who Grieve* By Mitch A. Schultz.
2. *Grief: Finding Hope Again* by Paul Tripp.
3. *Through Tears to Triumph: God’s Gracious Help Through Grief and Sorrow* by John Spethenson.
4. *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss* by Gerald Sittser.