

GRIEF AND THE CHRISTIAN

2-Page Sermon Guide

LAMENT • SOVEREIGNTY • HOPE • COMFORT

BIG IDEA: Christians grieve honestly, trust God's sovereign character without pretending to know every reason, and help one another through patient presence, practical care, and resurrection hope.

FOUNDATION — GRIEF IS NOT UNBELIEF

- John 11:33–36 — Jesus wept even though He knew resurrection was coming.
- Acts 8:2; Eccl. 3:4; Psalms 13, 42, 88 — Scripture openly makes room for lament, tears, and mourning.

Faith does not eliminate grief; faith gives grief a place to go.

1. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GRIEVING LOST LOVED ONES?

- Mourning is biblical: Gen. 23:1–2; 2 Sam. 1:17–27; John 11:35; Acts 8:2.
- Christians grieve differently, not less: 1 Thess. 4:13–18 — not “without hope.”
- Lament is faith speaking honestly to God: Ps. 13; Ps. 42:5; Ps. 62:8.

What biblical grief is not: faithlessness, a timetable, identical, or hopelessness.

- Resurrection changes grief: 1 Cor. 15:20–26, 51–58; Rev. 21:1–4.

Christians grieve honestly, deeply, communally, and hopefully.

Tears are not the opposite of faith. They are the expression of image-bearers to a fallen world.

2. WHY SHOULD THE REALITY OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IMPACT THE WAY YOU GRIEVE?

- It reminds us that God is ultimately in control: Ps. 115:3; Isa. 46:9–10; Eph. 1:11.
 - It reminds us that we may never know why God ordained certain events: Deut. 29:29; Job 38–42. Sovereignty gives confidence in God, not omniscience about His purposes.
 - It reminds us that God is near and He is good: Ps. 34:18; Lam. 3:21–26; Rom. 8:28–39.
- Remember, trust and lament can occupy the same heart: Job 1:20–22; Psalm 62:8

We entrust the mystery of loss to God's wisdom and cling to God's character.

Sovereignty does not erase sorrow; it locates sorrow within the hands of a wise, good, and purposeful God.

3. HOW CAN A FELLOW BELIEVER BEST HELP SOMEONE WHO IS GRIEVING?

- Practice presence before explanation: Job 2:11–13; John 11:33–35; James 1:19.
- Share the burden of sorrow: Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26; Gal. 6:2.
- Comfort with the comfort you have received: 2 Cor. 1:3–4
- Love must become tangible: James 2:15–16; 1 John 3:18. (meals, childcare, rides, errands, funeral logistics, household help, regular texts, remembering anniversaries...).
- ***Specific help is easier to receive than “Call me if you need anything.”***
- Words that help vs. words that hurt: USE CAUTION (at least... everything happens for a reason... God needed another angel... I know exactly how you fell... Confident explanations for why God allowed the death); HELPFUL (I am so sorry... I am here... I miss them too... May I pray with you... Tell me about them...)
 - First week: Show up. Feed people. Help with urgent logistics. Pray.
 - First months: Check in when the crowds disappear. Invite without pressure. Listen.
 - First year: Remember birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, and other days of renewed grief.
- Take deep grief seriously without treating grief as a disease:
 - Normal grief can be heavy: Waves of sadness, fatigue, disrupted sleep, difficulty concentrating, and changes in appetite can accompany grief.
 - Seek more help when safety is at risk: If someone expresses intent to self-harm, cannot maintain basic safety, or is in crisis, seek immediate professional or emergency help while remaining pastorally present.

Three ministry principles: Presence over explanations • Patience over a timetable • Promise over platitudes

- Bring resurrection hope gently: 1 Thess. 4:18. Avoid minimizing statements and confident explanations God has not revealed.

Christian hope does not deny tears. It promises that God will one day wipe them away.

HELPFUL WORDS & HABITS

- Avoid: “At least...,” “Everything happens for a reason” as a conversation-stopper, or statements claiming to know exactly why God allowed the death.
- Helpful: “I am so sorry.” “I am here.” “I miss them too.” “May I pray with you?”
- Continue care after the funeral. Remember holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and the quiet months that follow.

APPLICATION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What false ideas about grief can cause Christians to feel guilty for mourning?
2. What does John 11 teach about the relationship between faith and tears?
3. What does it mean to grieve “with hope” (1 Thess. 4:13)?
4. How do the Psalms of lament help believers process grief?
5. How can we affirm God’s sovereignty without pretending to know why a death occurred?
6. Which truths about God’s character are most important when His purposes are hidden?
7. How does resurrection hope reshape Christian grief?
8. When can Romans 8:28 be true but poorly timed?
9. What does Job 2:11–13 teach about presence?
10. What words or clichés can unintentionally minimize pain?
11. What practical care can a church provide during the first year after a death?
12. How can your own experience of God’s comfort prepare you to comfort others (2 Cor. 1:3–4)?

CONCLUSION — WE GRIEVE, BUT NOT WITHOUT HOPE

1 Thessalonians 4:13 • 1 Corinthians 15:54–57 • Revelation 21:4

Christian maturity is not the absence of tears. It is learning to shed those tears in the presence of God, under the sovereignty of God, with the hope of resurrection, and within the care of God’s people.

Mourn honestly.

Trust humbly.

Love patiently.

Hope confidently.