



OVERCOMING LOSS

A Quick Guide to Small Groups





Summary

How to think biblically about loss and practical ways to come alongside others who are struggling with sadness and grief.



Small Group Commitment #1
Growing Spiritually



Five Minute Read



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Ever since Genesis 3 and God's curse on Adam and Eve, our world has been universally familiar with loss. As Christians, we're not immune from sadness or grief. We're prone to suffer and cry just like everyone else.

*At the core, loss is rooted in what it means to live in a **broken world**.*

On the surface, the world's losses are obvious. Every day we are reminded of death tolls, unemployment rates and the volatility of the stock market. These losses are real and they impact countless people.

As a church, we've experienced a wide range of loss. I know one family who lost a loved one. Imagine attending a funeral limited to only 10 family members. You can't hug anyone. No celebration. No viewing. I also know individuals who lost their jobs and were already struggling to live from paycheck to paycheck.

But there's more. Lurking behind these losses are more subtle losses or so-called "small" losses that are impacting each of us.

Some losses might not be as life-changing, but this doesn't mean they are not important. A loss is a loss. Though it's tempting to overlook these seemingly "small" losses and shrug them off because there are "bigger" and more important tragedies in the world, this doesn't replace the fact that these realities are crushing those who are affected the most. For some, it feels selfish to talk about these "small" losses.

In our church, I know of three weddings that were supposed to happen in the month of May. It's been months of planning, years waiting and memories that were supposed to last forever. *Now what?* We also have at least 15 high school seniors. Put yourself in their shoes. This means no prom. No last day of school. This month was supposed to be the culmination of 12 years of work. No goodbyes to teachers or friends. *What about graduation?*

We all know that this is temporary, but it doesn't seem that way. It feels permanent. The world is changing. From canceled vacations, to stay-at-home birthdays, to missed milestone moments. Loss has crept into every corner of life. The world is reeling in a growing sense of loss and sadly there's no return policy.

COVID-19 is different. This doesn't feel like loss. This is weirder. This feels like robbery—like a piece of our lives have been stolen.

- We've lost normalcy.
- We've lost shared experiences.
- We've lost connection with people.
- We've lost our sense of safety, like a storm is coming.
- Collectively, we are not used to this sort of grieving in the air.
- If you cough at a grocery store everyone near you will lose their mind.
- It's almost impossible to not assume the worst or anticipate the next loss.
- All of these losses are adding up. Our losses are heavy. Our losses are taking a toll.

*From small losses to worst-case scenarios, our losses are adding up and this has left some people more lost than ever. **But there's hope.***

The Bible doesn't shy away from loss. It doesn't hide or bury it. God doesn't sugar coat the hard truth that our world is *broken*.

In the midst of loss, God invites you to ask Him questions. This is deeply comforting. He isn't embarrassed, intimidated or clueless. He can handle your questions. Though God might appear slow to respond, He has not forgotten. He's not hiding from you. He's patient. When you cry out in pain or sadness, God sees you. He knows you. He hears you. And He invites you to lean in and talk with Him.



Theological Truth

Throughout Scripture, there are countless stories of pain, suffering, grief, sadness and despair. There are unthinkable acts of evil, violence, murder, warfare, exploitation, oppression and cruelty. There are even less talked about examples of miscarriage, rape, poverty, sickness and depression. For being the best-selling book of all time, rarely does a chapter ever end with "happily ever after." Through the pages of Scripture, God gives us raw stories of loss, so we know that we're not alone.

Here are 10 practical ways to help others struggling with loss:

1. **Life is fragile.** Though our culture is covered in a veneer of independence and self-sufficiency, our weaknesses are more exposed than ever before. We are not as strong and resilient as we think we are.
2. **Spare a moment.** Put yourself in the shoes of others and feel the loss of those who are closest to you. Every day you're in contact with people who are sad, grieving and discouraged. Ministry is ripe.
3. **Stock up on compassion.** Everyone has different levels of emotions as feelings of loss are manifested in different ways. Be patient, tender and gracious. It's important to assume the best in people near you.
4. **Words are clumsy.** It's hard to know what to say when people are suffering. Perhaps the best advice is to acknowledge the loss and affirm your willingness to listen to what's happening.
5. **It's okay to not feel okay.** Loss stirs up emotions of sadness, grief, pain, insecurity and loneliness. The more significant the loss, the more intense the emotions will be. Don't bury or hide your emotions.
6. **Emotions need motion.** As you experience emotions don't hold onto them and let them fester. More than identifying "what" you lost, take this a step further and share the reason "why" this is meaningful.
7. **Resist the worst-case scenarios.** Often, fear and anxiety are caused by anticipating future losses that haven't happened. Don't allow your mind to wander to the million "what-ifs". Focus on the present.
8. **Let go.** Control is an illusion and loss is inevitable. Rather than holding too tightly, trust the Lord and ask Him to help you release your grip on the things of this world. Believe that tomorrow can be better.
9. **Ask, don't accuse.** God invites you to talk with Him. In the midst of loss, cry out and run to Him. God can handle your questions. Just remember that questions aren't the same as accusations.
10. **Cling to truth.** We cannot live according to our emotions; we must be grounded in truth. Contrary to modern thinking, what we are feeling isn't always true. It might feel real, but that doesn't make it true. God's promises are truer than our perceptions. This means perception is not always reality.

*The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous
and His ears toward their cry.
When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.*
Psalm 34:15, 17-18



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