A FOUR-WEEK GUIDE FOR CHURCH CARE GROUPS

Grief Small Group Guide

For leaders who want to sit with the grieving and not hurry them

Simplify to Glorify

FOR THE LEADER

How to use this guide

This guide gives a church care group four weekly sessions on grief, each lasting about an hour. No special training is needed to lead, only a willingness to listen and to stay present.

Your role is not to fix anyone or to teach a lesson. You are there to keep the room safe and to read the words aloud. God does the comforting, and the group simply makes space for it.

A session at a glance

Welcome and opening question	10 min
Scripture read aloud	5 min
Reflection read by the leader	5 min
Discussion	25 min
Closing prayer and the small thing to carry	10 min

Setting up the room

- Set the chairs in a circle or around a table so that everyone can see each face.
- Place tissues within easy reach and keep the lighting soft so that the room feels calm.
- Bring Bibles or print the passage in large type so that everyone can follow along.
- For Week 3, have pens and index cards ready for each person in the group.

How to open

Greet each person by name as she arrives, and begin on time with a short welcome. Read the opening question aloud and let each person answer in a sentence or pass. Then read the Scripture slowly and pause for quiet before the reflection.

How to close

Read the closing prayer slowly and leave a moment of silence before the amen. Name the small thing to carry through the week, and remind the group when you will meet next. Stay a few minutes afterward, because some people speak up only at the door.

FOR THE LEADER

Gentle ground rules (read aloud in Week 1)

1. Nothing here needs to be fixed, and no one is asked to offer advice or a silver lining.
2. We set no timelines, because grief keeps its own schedule and no one is taking too long.
3. Silence is welcome, and the leader does not need to rush in to fill a quiet moment.
4. Anyone may pass on any question at any time, and no one has to give a reason.
5. What is said in the room stays in the room, unless someone is in danger.
6. Tears are welcome, and so is laughter, because both belong to honest grief.

Words to avoid

Please do not say that a loss happened for a reason or that God needed someone more. Avoid lines such as “at least” or “she is in a better place,” which leave people feeling unheard.

When to point someone to a pastor or counselor

A leader is a caring listener and not a therapist, yet some people need more care than a small group can give. Speak with a pastor or counselor soon, and invite the person to go with you, if she:

- talks about wanting to die or to harm herself
- has gone for weeks without being able to sleep or eat normally
- is using alcohol or other substances more and more to numb the pain
- has lost someone to suicide or violence and seems overwhelmed

IF SOMEONE IS IN DANGER

In the United States, anyone in crisis can call or text 988 at any hour, and in immediate danger you should call 911.

You might say, “I am glad you told me, and I want you to have more support than this group can give. May we talk with our pastor together?”

WEEK 1 OF 4

It is okay to grieve

OPENING QUESTION

Think of a time someone sat with you in sorrow, and tell us what that person did that helped.

SCRIPTURE TO READ ALOUD

A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance.

Ecclesiastes 3:4 (NASB 2020)

Jesus wept.

John 11:35 (NASB 2020)

REFLECTION FOR THE LEADER TO READ ALOUD

Many of us learned to move on quickly after a loss, yet Scripture gives grief a place. Ecclesiastes says there is a time to weep and a time to mourn, and nothing there tells us to hurry.

At the tomb of His friend, Jesus wept, and His tears show us that sorrow is not a lack of faith. They show love meeting loss, and if Jesus wept, we are free to weep as well. Tonight no one needs to explain her tears or apologize for them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn growing up about crying or showing sorrow in front of other people?
2. What does it mean to you that Jesus wept at the grave of a friend?
3. Where have you felt pressure to be further along in your grief than you really are?
4. What would it look like to give yourself permission to grieve this week?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You wept at the grave of a friend, and You do not turn away from our tears. Thank You that we may come just as we are, with no need to hide our hearts. Hold each person here in her sorrow so that she knows she is not alone. Give us gentle hearts toward one another this week, as You have been gentle with us. Amen.

ONE SMALL THING TO CARRY THROUGH THE WEEK

Choose one quiet moment this week to let yourself feel sad without correcting yourself. You might sit still for five minutes or write one sentence about the person you miss.

GROUP NOTES (OPTIONAL)

WEEK 2 OF 4

God is near the brokenhearted

OPENING QUESTION

When you are hurting, what helps you feel less alone, even for a few minutes?

SCRIPTURE TO READ ALOUD

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18 (NASB 2020)

He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3 (NASB 2020)

REFLECTION FOR THE LEADER TO READ ALOUD

Grief can make God feel far away. Many faithful people have sat in silence and wondered where He went. Psalm 34 does not say that the brokenhearted will feel God near. It says that the LORD is near to them, whether or not they can sense Him.

Psalm 56:8 adds that God keeps account of our miseries and puts our tears in His bottle. Not one of your tears has gone unseen, and that is true even on the days when you feel nothing at all.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When has God felt far away during your loss, and what did that season look like for you?
2. What does it mean to you that the LORD is near, even when we cannot sense Him?
3. Who has shown you the nearness of God through a simple and quiet kindness?
4. Psalm 56:8 says that God keeps our tears, so how does it feel to know that none go unseen?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, You are near to the brokenhearted, and tonight we ask You to be near to us. Where we cannot feel You, hold us anyway, and bind up the wounds we carry. Be gentle with every tender place in our hearts, and let us rest in Your care. We trust You with our tears, and we thank You that You see each one. Amen.

ONE SMALL THING TO CARRY THROUGH THE WEEK

Each day this week, when sorrow rises, pray one short sentence such as “You are near,” and let that be enough for the day.

GROUP NOTES (OPTIONAL)

WEEK 3 OF 4

Lament and honest prayer

OPENING QUESTION

Is it easy or hard for you to tell God the truth about how you are really doing?

SCRIPTURE TO READ ALOUD

How long, LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long am I to feel anxious in my soul, With grief in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Psalm 13:1-2 (NASB 2020)

REFLECTION FOR THE LEADER TO READ ALOUD

Lament is prayer that tells God the truth. In only two verses, the psalmist asks "How long?" four times, and he does not tidy his words first. God kept them in Scripture, which tells us that honest cries are welcome.

Lamentations 2:19 invites us to pour out our hearts like water before the Lord. And when we have no words at all, Romans 8:26 says that the Spirit Himself prays for us with groanings too deep for words.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which line of Psalm 13 sounds the most like something you have wanted to say to God?
2. Is it hard to bring your anger or your questions to God, and what makes it feel unsafe?
3. What does it mean to you that the Spirit prays for us when we cannot find the words?
4. On an index card, write one honest sentence to God that begins with "How long" or "Why," and keep it private.

CLOSING PRAYER

God, You hear every honest cry, and You do not scold us for our questions. We bring You what is true today, even the parts we cannot yet say aloud. Receive our words and our silence alike, and thank You that Your Spirit prays when we have nothing left. Amen.

ONE SMALL THING TO CARRY THROUGH THE WEEK

Take your card home and set it where you will see it. When you are ready, pray its words to God, whether aloud or in a whisper.

GROUP NOTES (OPTIONAL)

WEEK 4 OF 4

Hope that does not hurry us

OPENING QUESTION

What has helped you the most over these four weeks, even in a small way?

SCRIPTURE TO READ ALOUD

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as indeed the rest of mankind do, who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (NASB 2020)

Those who sow in tears will reap with joyful shouting. He who goes back and forth weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Will indeed come back with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

Psalm 126:5-6 (NASB 2020)

REFLECTION FOR THE LEADER TO READ ALOUD

Paul does not tell the grieving to stop grieving. He says that we do not grieve as those who have no hope. Hope and sorrow can live in the same heart, and one does not cancel the other.

Psalm 126 pictures a sower who goes back and forth weeping, so the tears and the work go on together. The psalm speaks of joy to come, yet it names no date. Our hope rests in God, who does not hurry us and who does not leave.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is hope different from feeling better, and why might that difference matter to you?
2. Where do you notice small seeds of hope, even while the tears are still present?
3. What support do you need next, and how can this group or our church help?
4. How might we stay connected as a group after tonight, and who could help us do that?

CLOSING PRAYER

Faithful God, You are patient with us, and You never rush our sorrow. Thank You for the hope we have in You, even when joy feels far away. Keep us tender toward one another after tonight, and be near to each person on the hard days ahead. Amen.

A CLOSING BLESSING FOR THE LEADER TO READ

And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.

Revelation 21:4 (NASB 2020)

ONE SMALL THING TO CARRY THROUGH THE WEEK

Reach out to one person from this group before the month ends, with a short call or a kind message.

GROUP NOTES (OPTIONAL)

Keep going together

Grief does not end when four weeks do. Tell the group what other care your church offers, and make sure each person leaves knowing one next step.

Consider a follow-up meeting in a month or a visit from a pastor, because small, steady kindness matters more than any program. A note on the anniversary of a loss also means a great deal to the grieving.

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