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WHAT  
MOVIE  
ALWAYS  
MAKES  
YOU CRY?

Dealing with Grief

The  
**POINT** >

God responds to our sorrow with grace  
and compassion.

## > PSALM 116:1-9,15-17

- <sup>1</sup> I love the LORD, because he has heard  
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
- <sup>2</sup> Because he inclined his ear to me,  
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- <sup>3</sup> The snares of death encompassed me;  
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;  
I suffered distress and anguish.
- <sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD:  
“O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”
- <sup>5</sup> Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;  
our God is merciful.
- <sup>6</sup> The LORD preserves the simple;  
when I was brought low, he saved me.
- <sup>7</sup> Return, O my soul, to your rest;  
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

- <sup>8</sup> For you have delivered my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from stumbling;

- <sup>9</sup> I will walk before the LORD  
in the land of the living.

- .....
- <sup>15</sup> Precious in the sight of the LORD  
is the death of his saints.

- <sup>16</sup> O LORD, I am your servant;  
I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.  
You have loosed my bonds.

- <sup>17</sup> I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving  
and call on the name of the LORD.



# FOR LEADERS (15 minutes)

THE POINT // GOD RESPONDS TO OUR SORROW WITH GRACE AND COMPASSION.

## LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

Because of rebellion against God, all people have been cut off from a relationship with Him, and deserve eternal death and hell, which is the punishment for sin.

## Message to Leaders

When Adam sinned, he brought the curse of sin upon creation, and we've inherited from him a sinful nature. Further, we've all actively chosen sin and disobedience. Because of these, we've been cut off relationally from God and from His blessings. Instead, we will face sorrow, suffering, and ultimately death. However, when we turn to God in repentance and faith, through Jesus there is comfort available, even in the middle of suffering. Jesus came to earth in order to be our High Priest. He suffered the consequences of our sins, and He is able to sympathize with us in our sufferings and sorrows. Though we deserve eternal punishment, Jesus has compassion and offers comfort to those who trust in Him.

## > Engage Option 1

Select three student volunteers to come up front. Show a picture of an emoji and have the students try to recreate the facial expressions. Allow the larger group to vote on their favorite after attempting a few different emojis. Say, **"As we go through life, we're going to experience many different emotions. We can trust that God is there through the good and difficult times."**

## > Engage Option 2

As students enter the room, ask them to quietly reflect on the emotions they have experienced throughout the week. Encourage them to consider how they can rely on God in those situations. Say, **"Life is full of ups and downs, but we serve a God who cares about us in the midst of our experiences."**

## > Engage Option 3

Search the Internet for "The Loss of Lament." Play the video as you begin the session. Say, **"We can expect to deal with real life emotions throughout our lives. When we experience sorrow, we should turn our eyes to God."**

**NOTE:** Always make sure you preview any video clip you show students and ensure it is appropriate for your church and ministry.

## LEADER PACK ELEMENTS

If you have the optional Leader Pack, consider the following:

**ITEM 1:** Introduce the new unit by displaying the **Unit 1 Real Life Emotions Poster**.



# THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

THE POINT // GOD RESPONDS TO OUR SORROW WITH GRACE AND COMPASSION.



I am an animal lover, and I'll admit it—I cry at dog movies. It first began when I saw *Old Yeller* as a kid. Though I rarely get emotional while watching a movie, when an animal suffers, my wife will turn to me and ask, "Are you crying?" I don't even have to answer, because the catch in my voice tells her all she needs to know. I'm on the verge of crying over a fictitious dog in a made-up story.

When we watch a movie, we're drawn into someone else's world, and we feel genuine emotions along with the characters. But our sadness disappears as soon as the movie fades to dark, and we step back into our own life stories. But here in the real world, the sadness and grief we feel doesn't fade nearly as quickly. We all experience loss, and it's natural—even healthy—to grieve. The "secret" is to find hope in Christ by placing our trust in God. What does that look like? In Psalm 116, we can find out.

## THE SETTING

The Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons are filled with joyous family celebrations, but they are also a time when we think of interruptions to our traditions due to accidents and illnesses. Sometimes we think of "empty chairs" when loved ones have died. The writer of Psalm 116 knew personal grief, though he didn't identify the specifics he faced. In his case, the Lord brought deliverance, and his promise in return was to serve God with a surrendered heart and life.

### FACT:

In the movie, *The Sandlot*, an English Mastiff named Hercules terrorizes the misfit baseball buddies. As it turns out, the villain canine belonged to the ultimate villain—Darth Vader himself, James Earl Jones.<sup>1</sup>



# IMPART (30 minutes)

THE POINT // GOD RESPONDS TO OUR SORROW WITH GRACE AND COMPASSION.

## PSALM 116:1-4

*I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!"* **PSALM 116:1-4**

The psalmist was looking back to a past time when he'd experienced great trouble. In this psalm, he gives a public testimony: Let me tell you what God has done! The psalmist was anything but subtle, and began by proclaiming, "I love the LORD." And he had good reason to love God.

As believers, we know that God always hears our prayers, but the biblical idea of hearing goes much further than just listening. It also implies responding to what is heard. For example, in His promise to Abraham, God said, "And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command" (Gen. 22:18). The word translated as "obeyed" is the same word in Psalm 116 as "heard." Real hearing also involves action.

God hears our prayers—and He responds! The psalmist's trust-filled psalm shows us that God heard and responded when he was in a terribly difficult situation. Here's how the psalmist described his situation: "The ropes of death were wrapped around me, and the torments of Sheol overcame me." In the Old Testament, Sheol was the place of the dead. Some think of Sheol as similar to the New Testament description of hell because certain passages refer to the wicked going to Sheol (Num. 16:30; Ps. 9:17). However, more generally, Sheol refers to the place where all people go when they die (Gen. 37:35; Ps. 16:10). We all die and go to the grave, and the psalmist was at death's door.

In that moment, the psalmist called upon the Lord to save him. He didn't try to overcome his situation through his own efforts or resources. He didn't look to worldly wisdom or even to other people. He cried out to God. He referred to God by His covenant name: Yahweh (LORD). God's people knew Him by this name because He'd revealed Himself to them and invited them into a relationship. This psalmist was not calling out to some unknown, far-away deity. He was calling to the Almighty God who loves us, who hears us, and responds.

When we experience real grief, it can be overwhelming. When we experience loss—whether a friend moves away, we get cut from the team, or a loved one passes away—we might wonder how we will survive. In these times, no amount of positive thinking will really make the difference we need. In times of deep sorrow, loss, and trouble, the only solution is to call on God—He is the One who hears and responds in His love.

### DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 6)

- 1** What is your typical response to sad news?
- 2** What might keep us from turning to God when we face difficult times?



# IMPART

THE POINT // GOD RESPONDS TO OUR SORROW WITH GRACE AND COMPASSION.

## PSALM 116:5-9

*Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful. The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* **PSALM 116:5-9**

The psalmist knew he could call on God to rescue him because he knew the character of the One he called on.

- **God is gracious:** Unfortunately, we often think the Old Testament is all about works and the law, and grace is limited to the New Testament. Certainly, grace is a strong message in the New Testament—through the death of Jesus, we experience God’s grace. But we also see grace in the Old Testament. God was gracious to His people, showing them favor even when they did not deserve it.
- **God is righteous:** In the Bible, righteous means specifically to be in line with God’s standards. Whereas people, even those who love God, will not always live according to what we know is right, God always lives in line with His standards because He is just and right.
- **God is compassionate:** In the Bible, compassion refers to deep love—the kind that a parent feels for a child, specifically when they hurt. Parents certainly love their children, but God’s love and compassion for His people far exceeds any human parent’s affections.

When we trust in God to rescue us because of His gracious care and compassion, we don’t need to worry. And even when we go through difficult times, we can experience rest knowing that God loves us and will take care of us. The psalmist’s attitude wasn’t simply wishful thinking. He knew firsthand how the Lord had rescued him from all the trouble he experienced. When we feel overwhelmed by grief, we would be wise to remember the testimony of this psalmist. It is God who:

- **Rescues from death.**
- **Keeps my eyes from tears.**
- **Protects my feet from stumbling.**

No one should discount the depth of grief any person feels. Grief is a powerful emotion, and in our lives, we all experience grief in real ways. It’s also important to understand that grief is not a sin. After all, even Jesus grieved (Matt. 26:38-39). However, when we feel overwhelmed in our grief, it may be a sign that we aren’t trusting in God. God is with us, and we don’t grieve alone. He walks with us in His grace and compassion, and we can look to Him in hope.

*It’s important to understand that grief is not a sin. After all, even Jesus grieved. However, when we feel overwhelmed in our grief, it may be a sign that we aren’t trusting in God. #BSFLEmotions*



### DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 7)

- 3** Who is helpful to have around when you are sad?
- 4** What helps you rest in God even when you experience grief?
- 5** How can a better understanding of God’s character help us move through grief?



## PSALM 116:15-17

*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.*

### PSALM 116:15-17

At first glance, verse 15 may seem contradictory to other passages in the Bible. God told Ezekiel, “For I take no pleasure in anyone’s death” (Ezek. 18:32). Second Peter 3:9 teaches that God does not want “any to perish.” Yet we read in this psalm, “the death of his faithful ones is valuable in the LORD’s sight.”

The contexts of the passages in Ezekiel and 2 Peter point to God’s desire for all to come to Him in repentance and not die without being in a right relationship with Him. The psalmist, however, was talking about the death of God’s children—“his faithful ones.”

One way to interpret “valuable” in this verse is costly. In other words, it is costly and grievous to God that the lives of His children are ended through death. Therefore, He steps in and rescues them. However, it is more likely that we should read the verse as valuable. God highly values His children, even in death. God sees death differently than we do—we tend to focus on the here-and-now life on this earth, but God has an eternal perspective. He knows that death is not the end. In fact, believers are never more alive than when we enter Christ’s presence for eternity! Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, death is not a tragedy for His followers. It is a triumph!

In life or death, the psalmist knew he was loved by God. Therefore, he would continue to serve Him. The Lord had loosened his bonds, and he was once again free to serve Him. As God’s servant, the psalmist would offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.

It can certainly be difficult to feel thankful in the midst of circumstances that cause us pain and grief, but it’s in those very moments that we need to remember God and all He has done for us. When life is painful, this is when our character comes through, and we should choose to make the difficult choice to praise God. He is worthy, no matter what we’re going through. Through the cross, Jesus saved us from a life of hopelessness, and when we look forward to our eternity with Him, we can worship, even in difficult times. This is what Jesus did, even when He was on the cross.

### DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 7)

**6** What helps you trust God during difficult circumstances?

**7** How have times of sorrow and grief refined your faith in God?

**8** What are some benefits of trusting and thanking God during times of grief?



# LIVE IT OUT (10 minutes)

THE POINT // GOD RESPONDS TO OUR SORROW WITH GRACE AND COMPASSION.



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

**SALVATION**

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY  
& WORLD

## LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

*Because of rebellion against God, all people have been cut off from a relationship with Him, and deserve eternal death and hell, which is the punishment for sin.*

When Adam sinned, he brought the curse of sin upon creation, and we've inherited from him a sinful nature. Further, we've all actively chosen sin and disobedience. Because of these, we've been cut off relationally from God and from His blessings. Instead, we will face sorrow, suffering, and ultimately death. However, when we turn to God in repentance and faith, through Jesus there is comfort available, even in the middle of suffering. Jesus came to earth in order to be our High Priest. He suffered the consequences of our sins, and He is able to sympathize with us in our sufferings and sorrows. Though we deserve eternal punishment, Jesus has compassion and offers comfort to those who trust in Him.

## > CHRIST

Many times, we may be tempted to think that, when we live for Him, God will bless us in ways that lead to an easy, comfortable life. However, this isn't the case. Jesus suffered in the worst ways, and we should be prepared and willing to face the same things in order to bring glory to God. Thankfully, Jesus can sympathize with us and will help us endure (Heb. 4:15-16).

### 9 What do these verses say about Jesus' experiencing real emotions?

> Matthew 26:38

> Luke 22:44

> Mark 3:5

> John 11:35

> Mark 10:14

> John 12:27

> Luke 19:41

### 10 How does it encourage you to know that Jesus experienced the same things we do and sympathizes with our struggles?



# LIVE IT OUT

THE POINT // GOD RESPONDS TO OUR SORROW WITH GRACE AND COMPASSION.

## > COMMUNITY

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Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. God offers us comfort so that we can comfort others in return.

**11** How has God comforted you in times of sorrow or suffering? What did you learn through those experiences?

**12** Who do you know who is facing sorrow? What will you do this week to offer them comfort and encouragement?



## > CULTURE

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We live in a world which is under the curse of sin, and there is brokenness all around. We are to love and serve not only those who are a part of our church family, but lost friends, family, and neighbors, as well.

**13** Where do you see sorrow and suffering in your community?

**14** What will you do this week to offer comfort as a way of reflecting the hope found in Jesus?