

The background features a sunset scene with a large sun on the right, casting a glow over the sky. The sky is filled with horizontal bands of color, transitioning from light blue at the top to yellow and orange near the horizon. Below the horizon, there are stylized blue waves. In the foreground, the silhouettes of a man and a child are shown from behind, holding hands. The man is on the left, and the child is on the right. A large palm tree silhouette is on the far left, and some smaller plants and a fallen log are visible at the bottom. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Helping Communities Heal:
**After a
Natural
Disaster**

A Crisis Response Children's Curriculum

Helping Children After a Natural Disaster

In this booklet:

Our Questions and God's Responses

Six lessons to help children and youth heal after a natural disaster

Resource Articles to guide Christian volunteers and parents as they work with hurting and frightened children

Helping Communities Heal: After a Natural Disaster

A Crisis Response Children's Curriculum

Christ-centered, age-appropriate lessons
for children

(ages 8-13)

Who can teach this course?

Christian volunteers who work with children and young teens

Christian parents helping their own children in the aftermath of a natural disaster

Dedicated to those in crisis
around the world.
May God strengthen and
strongly support you.

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transforming lives together

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About These Resources

Our Questions and God's Response

When the unimaginable happens, we cry out to God for answers and explanations. We can find help for our questions and our children's questions in God's Word. Even though we may not know the answers to the "Why?" questions, we can know for certain that God is in control. This section contains questions that people who go through devastating situations often ask. In many cases, God does not give us complete answers, but His Word does provide help and comfort. Read this section several times and be prepared to answer questions in your own words if these questions come up.

Six lessons for children and young teens

These lessons were developed to help children and young teens who survived a natural disaster or other crisis begin to heal. Many are emotionally vulnerable right now. They may have lost homes and possessions, or know people whose homes have been destroyed. They may have friends or family members who died. They may wonder if they will have enough food and water in the weeks to come. They need to know that God has not forsaken them.

Children who need these lessons most may not have access to school supplies like paper, pencils and crayons, so these lessons do not use these things. Instead they will use only supplies that are commonly available and free, such as leaves, sticks, small pebbles, or cloth.

These lessons are written for a Christian volunteer or teacher to use with a group of children. The lessons are easy to follow and teach. Christian parents can also teach these lessons to their children by following the special instructions with any group activities.

Resource Articles

These articles are written by experts who work with children who have experienced tragedy and trauma. The articles represent the best practices in these fields, but the articles are not scholarly or difficult to understand. They are written to help equip a volunteer, teacher, or a parent handle difficult issues that children may be experiencing. The articles might also be helpful to adults who are struggling with loss and death.

There are easy-to-follow clues for teaching these lessons.

Clue One

At the beginning of the first 5 lessons, you will see an outline of the lesson as a short conversation between God and a child. The sixth lesson is a prayer walk and will follow a different pattern.

Clue Two

Information just for the teacher or parents will have regular font that looks like what you see here. Directions in this font will give you information to help you guide the children through the lessons. Do not read this to your children. You will sometimes be asked to put this information into your own words.

Clue Three

Information for you to read directly to the children will be bold like this. You can read this directly to your children, or you can put the information into your own words.

Clue Four

- **Questions for you to ask the children will have a dot in front of it and be slightly indented, like you see here. The questions will be in bold type.**

Sometimes you will be given a suggested answer following the question. It will look like this. Do not share this answer unless your children are unable to answer the question. The answer is there to guide you.

Clue Five

These lessons often suggest active ways to involve your children in the lesson. Do not skip these activities! Children learn best through activity and personal involvement. When you use the activities, your children will be more likely to put what they have learned into practice.

If you are using the lessons with just 1 child in a family setting, the lesson will give you tips on how you and your child can do the activities together.

Our Questions and God's Responses:

A Scripture Guide for Teachers and Parents

*In this world you will have trouble.
But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

John 16:33b

This section will provide some guidance to Christian teachers and parents as you help those who have survived this disaster or crisis. Some you will teach may not have experienced personal loss, but are living in fear that the disaster is not over yet or that another is coming. They may be frightened that the next time they will die or be injured. This section will help you with the hard questions that come from hurting people, questions for which there are no simple answers. These questions and responses may help by providing some biblical principles.

This is not an exhaustive list of questions or of Scriptures. It will, at best, provide a starting point as you care for the children and young teens around you. May the Holy Spirit use these to speak to you! You can add other Scriptures that come to mind in the space provided.

People in crisis often ask questions that will fall into 3 main categories:

1. Who is God?

These questions ask things like: If God loves us, how could He allow this to happen? How can I believe God has not forsaken me?

2. Why did this happen?

These questions might sound like these: Why did so many people die? Why didn't God stop the earthquake? Why did this tsunami happen? Is God punishing us for something?

3. How can I go on living?

Why did God spare me? How can I go on living? Where are my family members now? What happens to children when they die?

You may be struggling with these questions, too. God encourages us to share our true feelings, questions, and doubts with Him. There is so much that we cannot understand, but we can trust that He is good and loving, and He can comfort you and the children you teach.

God's people around the world are praying for you, and all the people in your country.

1. Who is God?

Times of crisis can cause us to ask: Can we depend upon the trustworthiness of God? Can we trust that what He says about Himself in the Bible is true?

The verses in this section all relate to the character of God and to His faithfulness. As the following verses illustrate—God is totally trustworthy and good.

If God loves us, how could He allow this to happen?

Bad things like suffering, disease, and death happen in our world. God created the world to be perfect. But when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, that allowed evil and sin into the world. The world experiences the results of sin and some of that can be seen in disasters. God is so great and good, however, that He can bring good even out of terrible things. The following verses show us who God is, and how He loves us.

*For great is his love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
Praise the LORD.
Psalm 117:2*

*Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.
Psalm 62:8*

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.
His love endures forever.*
Psalm 136:1

*He who did not spare his own Son,
but gave him up for us all—
how will he not also, along with him,
graciously give us all things?
For I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,
neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God that is
in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
Romans 8:32, 38–39

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

How can I believe God has not forsaken me?

It is not uncommon to feel alone or wonder if God has deserted you when going through a crisis. But regardless of how you feel, you can trust what God says in His word.

*God has said, "Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you."
Hebrews 13:5b*

*"For I know the plans I have for you,"
declares the LORD,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11*

*For God so loved the world that
he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life.
John 3:16*

*Know therefore that the LORD your God is God;
he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love
to a thousand generations of those who love him
and keep his commandments.
Deuteronomy 7:9*

*So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*
Isaiah 41:10

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

2. WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?

Why did this happen? How do I pray?

“Why?” questions are very difficult to answer. Because we are mortal beings and God is infinite, we are not fully capable of understanding the “big picture.” Some people say it is like looking at the back of a piece of embroidered cloth or tapestry. The pattern and beauty of the front is not visible on the back. The back looks more like a mess of knots and threads than a picture. While God sees the completed beautiful picture, all we can see is the knotted, messy parts. It is a matter of perspective. We can remember that while we do not understand, we can still trust and praise God because He is good, loving, merciful, and at work.

Although some believers think that God does not welcome such questions, there are many psalms that include questions about why certain things are happening. When praying seems difficult or impossible, you can read or recite the psalms as prayers. There are many emotions expressed in the psalms, from the most joyful elation to the darkest pit of depression and fear. Here are some verses that may help you begin to pray:

*The Spirit helps us in our weakness.
We do not know what we ought to pray for,
but the Spirit himself intercedes for us
through wordless groans.*

Romans 8:26

*Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.*

Psalm 4:1

*Why, LORD, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*

*But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;
you consider their grief and take it in hand.*

*You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted;
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry.*

Psalm 10:1, 14, 17

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.
In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.
To you they cried out and were saved; in you they
trusted and were not put to shame.*

Psalm 22:1–5

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

Why did so many people die? I hate death!

There is no easy answer as to why so many were killed or injured. We can point to construction that could not withstand the extreme conditions. We could say that lack of quick response could have added to deaths. Or we could point to the isolated locations of people who could not be helped. But the spiritual answer is that death, disease, evil, and natural disasters, brought into the world by Adam and Eve's sin, is the cause. Death seems to be in control, but death will not have the last say. God will overcome death.

*[God] will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces;
he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.
The Lord has spoken.
Isaiah 25:8*

*Our natural bodies don't last forever. They must be dressed
with what does last forever. What dies must be dressed
with what does not die. In fact, that is going to happen.
What does not last will be dressed with what lasts forever.
What dies will be dressed with what does not die.
Then what is written will come true.
It says, "Death has been swallowed up. It has lost the battle."
"Death, where is the victory you thought you had?
Death, where is your sting?"
1 Corinthians 15:53–55, NIV*

*He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death or
mourning or crying or pain,
for the old order of things has passed away.
Revelation 21:4*

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

Why didn't God stop this from happening?

See notes under: "Who is God?" Most natural disasters are a result of the laws of nature. For example, earthquakes happen as a result of the earth's plates shifting and building up pressure that must be released somehow. Since the fall of man back in the Garden of Eden, even creation reflects the consequences of sin on earth. Sin affects people and nature. Sin is the cause of natural disasters the same as it is the source of sickness, suffering, and death.

*For the creation waits in eager expectation for the
children of God to be revealed.*

*For the creation was subjected to frustration,
not by its own choice,*

*but by the will of the one who subjected it,
in hope that the creation itself*

*will be liberated from its bondage
to decay and brought*

into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning
as in the pains of childbirth
right up to the present time.*

Romans 8:19–22

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

Why did this happen—are we being punished for something?

While God has used natural disasters as judgments against nations in Old Testament times, it does not mean that all natural disasters are His punishment. Most are simply the earth reflecting the results of sin on creation. Humanity's fall into sin affects the natural world around us.

We must remember that everyone in all nations is a sinner and is dependent upon God's grace and mercy. There is no difference between the people in your country and people in the rest of the world. We all deserve God's punishment for our sin, but God sent His Son Jesus to take the punishment for us.

There is no one righteous, not even one.

Romans 3:10

*This righteousness is given through faith
in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

*There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,
for all have sinned and*

*fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified
freely by his grace through the redemption*

that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:22–24

*I take no pleasure in the death of anyone,
declares the Sovereign Lord.*

Ezekiel 18:32a

*[Your Father in heaven] causes his sun to rise
on the evil and the good,
and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.
Matthew 5:45b*

*For God so loved the world that he gave
his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him
shall not perish but have eternal life.
For God did not send his Son into the world to
condemn the world,
but to save the world through him.
John 3:16–17*

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

3. HOW CAN I GO ON LIVING?

Why did God spare me? How do I go on?

You may wonder if you will ever stop crying. You may be numb and think that you will never feel anything but sadness. You may feel that you cannot even pray. You may feel that there is no hope.

What you feel right now is not how you will feel forever. God can heal your heart and help you to begin to enjoy life again. This is not fast, nor easy, but God is with you and will help you. If you wonder why you were spared, it is possible that God has work for you to do, lessons for you to learn or share, or joy for you to experience.

*Weeping can stay for the night,
but joy comes in the morning.*

Psalm 30:5b, NIV

*And we know that in all things God works for the
good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.*

Romans 8:28

*I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.*

*I well remember them, and my soul is
downcast within me.*

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:

*Because of the LORD's great love
we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.*

*They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

*I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."*

Lamentations 3:19–24

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

Where are my family members who died? What happens to children when they die?

It is difficult when a loved one dies. As noted in sections above, when sin entered our world, it brought pain and death to everyone. We do know that God loves every person and made a way through Jesus for all who believe in Him to be with Him forever.

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.
He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.*

John 11:25

The Bible says that what happens after death depends on the choices we have made in this life. If we have chosen to accept God's gift of salvation through Jesus, we will be with Him forever. If not, we will be forever separated from God's love. However, God alone knows each heart, and even a last minute cry to Him can be heard.

*But the other criminal rebuked him.
“Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under
the same sentence?
We are punished justly, for we are getting
what our deeds deserve.
But this man has done nothing wrong.”
Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when
you come into your kingdom.”
Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will
be with me in paradise.”*

Luke 23:40–43

We know that God loves children and Jesus welcomed them and used them as an example of simple faith.

*He said to them, “Let the little children come to me,
and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God
belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you,
anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God
like a little child will never enter it.”
And he took the children in his arms,
placed his hands on them and blessed them.*

Mark 10:14a–16

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

A prayer for teachers and parents who will use this guide:

Holy Spirit, fill these teachers and parents so that in all they say and do, they will bring Jesus into the lives of hurting and questioning children and young teens. May the words of their mouths and the meditation of their hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, their strong Rock and their Redeemer, amen.



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My God Is Stronger than Any Natural Disaster

Lesson 1

Outline for Today

1. *I say to God:* "I am so scared of this disaster!"
2. *God says to me:* "Do not be afraid. I am here."
3. *I say to God:* "I will trust You when I go through life's storms."



SUPPLIES

- Leaves, grass, or small stones the children will gather during lesson

1. I say to God, "I am so scared of this disaster!"

As you do these lessons, it is important that you create an atmosphere of trust with your children. You may not have all the answers to their questions. You may also have fears and questions. It is okay. Together you and your children can learn to trust God through the difficulties you are experiencing.

As you begin this lesson, explain to your children that you will talk today about the disaster that happened. God is a caring God. He knows how terrible it is when a flood or an earthquake or a fire occurs. He is in control. He is much stronger than any disaster. Let them know that today you will learn a story about Jesus that shows He is with you, even when the earth shakes or the water rises. Be prepared to give the children some basic scientific

information about why this particular type of natural disaster occurs. For example, you could use this explanation of what happens during a hurricane:

Hurricanes are very large storms that begin in the ocean. They can be as big as 900 kilometers across with wind speeds between 120 and 320 kilometers per hour. Hurricanes form when warm ocean water, cold air and winds combine. This combination will create large storm clouds and wind whipping in a circular manner.

You can allow the children to stand and act out how the storm rotates :

Although the winds are strong and there is a lot of rain, the greatest danger of a hurricane occurs when it hits land. The power of the storm pushes the sea water towards the land and creates what is called a storm surge. This is a big wave of water up to 6 meters deep that floods the coastal area.

- **What happened to you and your family during the disaster?**

Allow the children a few minutes to share their stories, and then share that the Lord will be with them. Read the following verses aloud:

*Though the mountains be shaken
and the hills be removed,
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken
nor my covenant of peace be removed,"
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.
Isaiah 54:10*

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers, they will not
sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you
will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

Isaiah 43:2

*The eternal God is your refuge, and
underneath are the everlasting arms.*

Deuteronomy 33:27

2. God says to me, "Do not be afraid. I am here."

Now I will tell you a Bible story from the book of Mark. The people in this true story felt a great deal of fear. The fear was real. The people in the story could have died.

Jesus had been teaching a large crowd of people and they began to get hungry. So Jesus fed over 5,000 people using 5 loaves and 2 fish. His disciples or followers were amazed. Everyone had enough to eat and there were 12 baskets of food left over. The disciples wondered who Jesus was. He was a man, yet a man could not do what Jesus did.

Jesus told His disciples to go across the large lake. The disciples headed across the lake in a boat. Jesus was not with them. He told the disciples goodbye and went up into the hills by Himself to pray.

Late that night the disciples were in the boat in the middle of the lake. They were in serious trouble. They were rowing hard and struggling against the wind and high waves. Even though these were men who were used to being in boats, they may

have been afraid because of the waves and the wind. The boat was probably rocking violently. The disciples may have even felt as if they were going to fall out.

Now here comes the amazing part. Right in the middle of the night, Jesus came toward the boat. He was walking on the water! The disciples saw Him, and they were very, very scared. They thought He was a ghost. But Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Take courage. I am here." Jesus climbed into the boat and the wind stopped. Jesus could control the wind!

The disciples still did not understand completely who Jesus was, but they were beginning to see the truth. Only the One True God is the master of nature. Jesus could walk on water and calm the sea. He was a man, but He was much more than a man. He is God's Son.

The disciples probably felt afraid when they were fighting the wind on that lake in the middle of the night. We are afraid of disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, and fires. But Jesus can help calm our fears. Jesus is in control. Just like He told the disciples, He is with us.

3. I say to God, "I will trust You when I go through life's storms."

Jesus speaks the same words to us when we are afraid because of natural disasters and storms. He tells us, "Do not be afraid. Take courage. I am here." I am going to ask you a hard question. Think about your answer for a moment before responding.

- **Why does Jesus allow natural disasters to happen?**

Allow the children to share their thoughts. When they have finished, add to what they have said by putting the following information into your own words.

The Bible tells us that we will have troubles in this life but that Jesus is greater than this world.

*In this world you will have trouble.
But take heart!
I have overcome the world.
John 16:33b*

Back in the beginning when God first created the world, everything was perfect. There were no earthquakes or storms or diseases or deaths. The Bible tells us that death was brought into the world when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. When they sinned, it changed everything. The ground began to grow weeds. People had to struggle day after day to make a living. Because sin entered the world, everything eventually dies. Right now, especially after a disaster, death seems to be in control. But death will not have the last say. God will overcome death. The Bible says,

*The last enemy to be destroyed is death.
1 Corinthians 15:26*

The Bible tells us that everything in our world is waiting to be freed from decay and death (Romans 8:18–25). Christians look forward to the time when God will make the earth perfect again, the way it was at creation before sin changed everything. There will be no more tsunamis or floods or earthquakes! There will be no more death!

Sometimes with difficult questions like the one below, an answer will be printed following the question. Do not share this answer with your children until they have suggested answers. Then fill in ideas they have missed.

- **The Bible tells us that Jesus is with us in the storms of life. What are some ways we can feel His presence with us in troubled times?**

Verses we have memorized from the Bible come into our minds and give us comfort. Other people surround us with love and care, and we know God is using them to help us. Sometimes when we are quiet, we can hear Jesus' words in our hearts. A pastor's sermon might contain exactly the words we need to hear. Maybe God will use this lesson to calm our fears.

In our Bible story, Jesus calmed the wind that was like a storm. Not all big storms are at sea. There are different kinds of storms. Storms are hard things like disasters that hit without warning and take away everything we love. Storms are things in our lives that scare us! When we go through these storms, Jesus will be with us. He tells us, just like He told the disciples, "Do not be afraid. Take courage. I am here."

Ask the children to think about storms they have had. Give them 2 minutes to walk around outside. For every storm, ask them to pick up a small stone or leaf. Once they all have at least 1 item, tell them to get into groups of 3 and briefly share what storm each stone or leaf represents to them. After they have shared, they should lay that item on the ground in the middle of their group. When everyone has finished, ask 1 person in each group to pick everything up. Everyone should walk together to throw the items away. As they throw them away, they should whisper this prayer 3 times, "I will trust You, Jesus, when I go through life's storms."

If you are leading just 1 child through this lesson, do this activity with your child. Spend a couple of minutes sharing together about your storms. Finish by throwing away your items as you say the prayer together quietly 3 times.

God Listens to My Fears about Disasters

Lesson 2

Outline for Today

1. *I say to God:* "I am afraid another disaster will happen."
2. *God says to me:* "I care about your fears and what you are feeling."
3. *I say to God:* "I will share my feelings with You and listen for Your voice."



SUPPLIES

- None

1. I say to God, "I am afraid another disaster will happen."

Once you have experienced something like an earthquake, flood or fire, it is normal to feel frightened that another disaster might happen. Even if another big earthquake, hurricane, or tsunami does not happen, there are usually many after-effects of a disaster. The whole world has heard of what happened here and cares for the people in your country. Many other countries have sent teams to help with rescues, or to bring food, water, tents, and other supplies. Many people may need shelter, water, food, and medicine in the coming months.

- **If you heard news about relief workers who are bringing food and water and other supplies to your country, share what you learned.**

After your students have shared, read or tell a story of someone who has survived the crisis. If you do not know of a story, share the following one about a teen who survived a hurricane in Cuba.

Pablo was 15 when the hurricane hit Havana. The building he was in flooded when the hurricane hit. For 5 days he was trapped inside. All he had to live on were 2 containers of butter. Can you imagine what his thoughts were as he spent hour after hour trapped in the building?

A Cuban team was in the area searching for people who might still be alive. They called out to see if anyone trapped in one of the buildings answered.

Suddenly they heard Pablo call out to them from his place in the building, "Who is there? Brother, I am here." The rescue team used scuba gear to get inside the building. Then a man swam inside until he could see Pablo. In spite of the horrible ordeal he had faced, Pablo was very responsive. He told the rescuer his name and his address. Later when he had been pulled out of the building, he was taken to a hospital. He was dehydrated, but he was completely aware of what was going on. He was not seriously hurt. His only injuries were a few scratches.

- **What do you think Pablo thought about during those 5 days when he was trapped?**
- **We do not know if Pablo was a Christian. If he was, what do you think he was praying?**

Pablo must have worried that he would die and no one would ever find his body. Stop now and have the children pray about those who may still be worried about death because they were badly injured.

I am going to share another story from the Bible about a boy and his mother who faced death. You will hear how God was with them.

The fighting in the household began soon after Hagar found out she was going to have a baby. Here is the problem. Hagar was not the first wife to Abraham, the father of her baby. She was only a servant in the household, a foreigner. Abraham's first wife was Sarah. But Sarah was not able to have children.

At first, Sarah had thought it would be a great idea for Abraham to have a baby with Hagar. But when it actually happened, it did not seem like such a good idea anymore.

When Hagar's baby was born, she called him Ishmael, a name that means, "God hears." Ishmael enjoyed being the only son of his very old father, Abraham. But one day a miracle happened—even though Sarah was very old, God gave her a baby too. This made Sarah very happy. Because this new son, Isaac, was the son of Abraham's first wife, Ishmael did not like this new baby and he let everyone know it.

You can imagine that neither mother was very happy. Sarah complained to Abraham. She wanted Hagar and Ishmael to leave. This upset Abraham terribly. He loved Ishmael. But God told him that He would take care of Ishmael. So, Abraham packed some food and water for Hagar and Ishmael, and sent them away.

Into the desert they went. Both of them were sad. Although she did not say this to Ishmael, Hagar was sure they would die. When their water ran out, she settled Ishmael under a bush where he could at least have shade. Then she moved away from him a little because she did not want to watch him die.

There they both were, Ishmael crying under his bush, Hagar sobbing a few meters away from him. And what do you suppose happened next?

Do you remember what Ishmael's name means? It means, "God hears." If you guessed that God heard their cries, you are right!

God heard the boy crying and called to Hagar from heaven. He said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid. I have heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift him up and take him by the hand. I am going to make him into a great nation!"

Then God helped Hagar see what she had not been able to see before—a well of water! She went to it and gave Ishmael a drink. From that day on, even though they lived in the desert, God was with Ishmael. He and Hagar had enough to eat because Ishmael learned to hunt with a bow, and they had enough to drink because God had shown them the well.

God saw them. He heard them. Even before Ishmael was born, God saw him and proved that He cared for him. And He cares about you like that, too!

2. God says to me, "I care about your fears and what you are feeling."

Encourage your children to discuss the story:

- **Do you think I told you this story when we are talking about the disaster that happened?**

Hagar and Ishmael went through something really hard, but God cared about them. God was with them and they were aware of His presence. People who worry about another disaster happening want to know that God is with them too.

- **How did God show that He cared about how Hagar and Ishmael were feeling?**
- **Think of times in your past. Can you see ways that God cared about what you were feeling?**

- **Today many of us are worried about how we can ever live a normal life again. How do you know God knows and cares about these feelings of worry?**

For one thing, God gives you these lessons. This is a way God is telling you not to be sick with worry. God also sent me as your teacher (or parent). I care about you. God uses the rescuers and others who are helping to show that He cares.

3. I say to God, "I will share my feelings with You and listen for Your voice."

Now let's do something special. It is called "Listening Prayer." We know God listens to us, but today we are going to be quiet and listen to Him. I want you to close your eyes and do what I suggest.

Give the following suggestions to your children and pause between each statement so they can think and pray and listen.

Picture yourself in a room with just you and God. You imagine looking into His face and see that He cares for you. He loves you. You imagine climbing up onto His lap like a small child would with a father. (Pause.)

God cares about what is worrying you. Silently tell Him your fears about what has happened and what may happen next. (Pause.)

Listen. Is He saying something to you? What is it? (Longer pause. If needed, remind the children that whatever they hear will agree with the Bible if it is from God.)

What do you imagine the expression on His face is? (Pause.)

Do you believe He cares about you? (Pause.) How does that make you feel? (Pause.)

God wants you to give your fears to Him, because no matter what happens, He will be with you. Even if you are faced with another emergency, He will be with you. He wants you to be with Him forever and ever, on earth today and in heaven some day in the future.

Tell Him what you are feeling now. (Pause.)

Tell Him how you feel about Him. (Pause.)

Take time to listen to how much He loves you. (Longer pause.)

Close your time today by asking the children to open their eyes. If it would be comfortable for the children, walk around to each child and put your hands on the child's head or shoulders and say, "(Child's name,) God wants to take away your fears."

If you are using this lesson with just 1 child, close in the same way. If appropriate, ask the child to say the words back to you, "God wants to take away your fears."

Someone I Know Died

Lesson 3

Outline for Today

1. *I say to God:* "I am so sad. Someone I love died."
2. *God says to me:* "I will comfort you and help you heal."
3. *I say to God:* "I will tell You about others who are grieving, because I know You will help them, too."



SUPPLIES

- None

1. I say to God, "I am so sad. Someone I love died."

As you begin this third lesson, talk with your children. See how they are doing. Your expressed care is important to help them heal. Take a few minutes to play a simple game such as a clapping or singing game. Children who have gone through a traumatic experience cannot handle feeling intense emotions all the time. They need time to laugh and play. After playing for a couple of minutes, ask the children to sit in a circle.

People are beginning to try to start rebuilding life again. They may be trying to find a place to live or how to find work or food or water.

- **If you know people who are trying to get their lives back to normal after the disaster, share what they are doing.**

After several children have talked, share the following with them.

Today we are going to talk about how to heal after someone you loved has died. What happened was horrible. No one knows for sure how many people have died. A lack of food, fuel, electricity, and shelter has added to people's pain. People are grieving for those they knew and loved who have died. Some are grieving the loss of their homes and belongings.

Some of you may be grieving for someone who died. The Bible does not tell us why one person dies and another person lives. What the Bible does tell us and we know to be true is that God is good. We can remember that He loves us and understands everything that happens to us.

Only God knows why someone lives, and another dies. The Bible tells us to rejoice with those who rejoice—those who get well or are rescued—and mourn with those who mourn—those we know who have had a loved one die.

Today, we will talk about how to heal from the death of a parent, brother or sister, or good friend. We will always remember the person, but God can help us not hurt so much.

People show their emotions in different ways. It is sometimes hard to understand what they are really feeling. For example, think about anger. People usually show that they are angry by changes in their face, tightening their fists, shouting or getting excited. However some people show anger by being silent or not eating.

Suffering is even harder to understand than anger. Sometimes we do not even understand our own feelings of grief. Emotions that show grief and loss are often confusing.

When you lose someone or something important to you, it is natural to grieve. Most of us cry at first, but as time goes on, we sometimes hide our sad emotions. Unfortunately,

this does not help them go away. They just get buried deep inside us and this is bad. Others may think we are fine, so they do not try to help. Hiding our grief often ends up hurting us in the process. Why? Because we are not healing so we can be healthy today and in the future.

Divide your children into groups of 3. Explain that you are going to read statements that someone might say to them. Each has to do with dying and grieving. The groups should talk about what they would say to this person.

After 1 or 2 minutes, ask different groups to share what they decided to say. After they have shared, add the biblical view that follows each statement. The verses after each situation will help you do this. If possible, study these verses before your lesson time.

If you are working with just 1 child, talk together about what you would say. Let the child do most of the talking. Then share how the Bible helps in each situation.

I got angry with my friend's father and I wished he would die. Then he was killed in the disaster. I must be responsible for what happened to him.

Teacher's verses: "A person's days are decided before he is born; [God] you have decided the number of his months and have set limits he cannot live beyond" Job 14:5, paraphrased. Let your children know that God loves us. God alone determines the number of our days. Wishing for something bad to happen does not make it happen.

My little sister cannot be dead. Children should not die.

Teacher's verse: "Everyone will die someday," Eccl 7:2, NIRV. But it also says in Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted." It is very sad when children die. Every person will die someday, but God cares about your grief and wants to comfort you.

I am afraid another disaster will happen, and I will die like my brother did.

Teacher's verse: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" Isaiah 41:10. Whatever you face in life, God is there to help you!

God, I hate You because You made my dad die.

Teacher's verse: "Sin entered the world because one man sinned. And death came because of sin. Everyone sinned, so death came to all people" Romans 5:12, NIV. Share that the Bible tells us that death came into the world at the beginning when Adam and Eve sinned. God does not mind if you tell Him how you really feel. After you do, be quiet and listen to what He might bring to your mind. God made a way for people who believe in Jesus to live forever with Him. "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies'" John 11:25.

I miss my mother, but I know she loved Jesus. She is happy in heaven and nothing in this world can hurt her anymore, but I will always miss her.

Teacher's verse: "[The God of all comfort] comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" 2 Corinthians 1:4. Share that God comforts us when we are grieving. We can help comfort others when they experience grief because of the comfort we have received.

2. God says to me, "I will help you heal."

God made us in wonderful ways. He built into us ways to heal both physically and emotionally. Often we need emotional healing when someone we love or know dies.

Listen carefully to this section, even if you do not know anyone who has died. God may use you to help someone who is dealing with grief. These are the stages of grief that we go through when someone we know or love dies.

Before you talk about the stages of grief, let your children know:

People do not go through the stages of grief in the same amount of time. Some people take weeks, others months, and sometimes people take years.

Not everyone goes through all the stages.

People do not always go through the stages in the same order.

People may come back to a stage they have gone through and go through it all over again.

God built these stages into us emotionally so we would be able to heal.

God is with us in every stage, walking beside us and comforting us.

Now talk with the children about each stage.

DENIAL

Denial happens when a person is shocked by the loss and cannot believe it is true. The person thinks, "Other people die when disaster strikes, but not anyone I know." For example, the statement above that said, "My little sister cannot be dead. Children should not die" shows denial. People often go through denial when they are faced with an unexpected death like what happened in the disaster, or a sickness such as cancer or AIDS.

ANGER OR RESENTMENT

Anger or resentment is usually the second stage of grieving. The statement that said, "God, I hate you because You let my dad die," was in this stage. Grieving people may get angry with those they think are responsible for making the loss happen. They are feeling such emotional pain that sometimes they are angry with rescue workers, or doctors, God, or even the person who died. This is a normal stage of grief. When people are in this stage it is easy to think they have lost their faith in God. This is not true. They need to express their frustration and walk through this part of the grieving process. God understands.

BARGAINING

Bargaining is sometimes a part of the grief process. The person tries to talk God into changing the loss by promising to do something for God. "If my uncle whose back was broken gets better, I will become a Christian," is an example of someone who is bargaining.

DEPRESSION

Another stage of grieving is depression. This is a hopeless feeling. "I will never find anyone who loved me like my brother did before he died," or "I feel worthless," are examples of someone feeling depression. Depression slows us down and is a paralyzing feeling because it prevents us from doing things we want or need to do. Almost everyone who has experienced loss experiences depression. People who get through this stage of grief go on to the last stage, acceptance.

ACCEPTANCE

Remember the statement that said, "I miss my mother, but I know she loved Jesus. She is happy in heaven. Nothing in this world can hurt her anymore, but I will always miss her"? This person is in the acceptance stage. She has accepted the truth that her mother is dead and that she cannot change the loss. She is thankful for her mother's

life, and now she is ready to go on with her life. This does not mean she forgets her mother or does not miss her, but she is beginning to heal.

When we understand the grieving process, we can see that a person who is grieving has not stopped trusting in God. We will realize they are normal and just walking through their sorrow.

You may or may not want to share 2 other steps that many children experience in their grief—guilt and fear. Children often feel guilty about somehow causing the loss. Because they do not understand the causes behind the losses, they feel responsible for them. Abandonment, or being left alone, is one example. “Mother would not have left me if I had been a better person.” Obviously, the child’s reasoning is not correct.

Children may be afraid that what happened to someone else would happen to them as well. What they do not understand, they fear. For example, a child might think, “My uncle died. I am afraid my mother and I will die too when the next disaster hits.”

Ask the children if they have any questions or comments. Talk with them about the stages again if they want. Above all, be sensitive to show care for whatever the children express.

3. I say to God, “I will tell You about others who are grieving, because I know You will help them, too.”

I want you to sit quietly for a few minutes. Close your eyes and think of a person you know who is grieving, perhaps because someone they loved has died or was severely hurt. Pray quietly that God will help that person grieve in a healthy way. Use that person’s name when you talk to God. If you know more than 1 person affected by the disaster, keep praying until you run out of names.

After a few minutes, tell the children that they may know children who are grieving or they may be grieving themselves. Let them know you are available to talk with them or pray with them if they would like to speak to you alone.

Share with your children that God may give them a chance to comfort their grieving friends. If He does, suggest they share the grieving process and then pray together that God will help the friend through the grieving process.

Finally close your time together by singing a song your children might know about God's love. Try to end your time on a happy note so the children have hope that they can smile and laugh again.

God Can Heal My Emotions

Lesson 4

Outline for Today

1. *I say to God:* "I am sad and angry and feel my emotions are out of control."
2. *God says to me:* "I made your emotions—I can heal them."
3. *I say to God:* "Please help me be an emotionally healthy person who is also able to help others."



SUPPLIES

- None

1. I say to God, "I am sad and angry and feel my emotions are out of control."

Welcome your children and ask them to sit in a circle to play a quick game. The children will guess what emotion you are feeling. Cover your face with your hands and then take your hands away, and show a different expression on your face. Let the children guess what you are feeling. For example, you might smile the first time you uncover your face. The next time you might have a sad or angry look. Do not speak; just show emotion on your face. Do this for a couple of minutes. Some emotions you might show could be happy, sad, angry, scared, frustration, or any others.

God gave emotions to us. Emotions are not right or wrong. They are just a way to tell that we are feeling something

deeply. When something horrible happens, we might cry or feel sad. Expressing these emotions helps us heal. Sometimes the terrible things are so big that we just cannot stop emotionally hurting. We feel that we will never be all right again. We cannot move on with our lives. We may become depressed and overwhelmed and even physically sick. If that happens, we need to get emotional help. God wants to help us be emotionally healthy people.

- **Does it surprise you that God made your emotions—all of them? Why or why not?**
- **What emotions do you feel when you remember the disaster that took place?**

Allow the children to respond. Be sure to offer comfort if appropriate. Encourage any children who can express their emotions, but do not force anyone to share.

Let the children know that you will now read a situation out loud to them. This situation is something that could happen to someone during a natural disaster. The children should shout out what emotion they think the person in the situation might feel. There may be more than one answer.

Situation: As families find relatives who have died, they cremate them along the river. Someone sees the smoke rising and tears come into his eyes.

Situation: After an earthquake, Jose hears a report from a remote village that while very few died in the quake, many were injured. Now, because they have no medicine, people who survived the earthquake are dying.

Situation: A group of women complain that they are not being given the same relief help that other people are receiving after a disaster. "No one cares about us," they say. "Our days get worse and worse, and that is just not fair."

Situation: A church wants to help those in a village who have lost their food supply so they make a meal to take to them. But with 1.4 million people who need food assistance, Ana wonders what good this little supper will do.

Situation: A church collapsed during a hurricane and a mother and 2 sisters escaped. One sister had an ear torn off, and suffered a severe head injury. She will live, but she cannot stop crying.

Situation: A man lost all 5 of his cows when they were swept away in a flood. He made money every day selling their milk. He says, "This was my only business. It is all I know. I do not know how I can support my family without my cows."

• **What emotions did you have most often this past week?**

Be sure to offer comfort as the children express their emotions. Remind them that there are no right or wrong emotions. Let them know that how they act based on their emotions might be right or wrong, but the feeling itself is not.

• **Why do you think God gave us emotions?**

Today we are going to talk about emotional stress—what we feel when we are in difficult situations, and even long after the situation is over. I will now read some situations. Stand up if the situation would stress you a lot. Stay seated if the situation would not stress you at all. Kneel if the situation would stress you but only a bit.

1. You find out that a relative you love will lose his leg, and because of that injury, he will also lose his job.
2. Your dad tells you he does not want to talk about the war any more.
3. Your grandmother lost everything in the disaster, including her pet dog. The dog may be alive, but no one can find it.

4. A friend asks you to join a protest march because the government has been too slow in delivering aid.
5. Your family's home was flattened, and there is no money to rebuild.
6. Someone steals a picture of your brother who died. It was the only picture you had of him.
7. Your best friend tells you God has turned His back on your country.
8. Your grandmother fell during the disaster, but thought she was fine. Now she is having dizzy spells.
9. Your mother is injured in a mudslide that happened after the disaster when everyone thought the danger was over.
10. A neighbor trips over some rubble and breaks her arm.

You all did a good job showing how these situations would make you feel. Sometimes emotions are too strong for us to deal with alone. Many emotions you experience during this time will be like that. We need someone to comfort us with wise words and thoughtful actions.

- **If these situations were happening to people you know, what are some ways you think you might be able to help them emotionally?**

Read a few situations to read again. Let the children know that any way they express care is helpful. The children might suggest holding the person's hand and letting him or her cry. They might read a verse or psalm like Psalm 23 from the Bible. They might encourage the person to talk about what happened, even if they have already heard the story several times. They might suggest the person talk to your pastor or another Christian adult. They might offer to do small tasks for them.

Sometimes we are the ones who need emotional help or support. Often when others know we are struggling emotionally, they will automatically help, or at least ask if we would like their help. Other times people may not even be aware that we are having a hard time. They would be willing to help if they knew we needed it. Those are times when we need to ask for help. God has given each of us some special people who are willing to be there when we need comfort. I am one of those people. Think for a moment of people God has placed in your life who might be able to help you with difficult emotions.

God provides good comfort too. Here are some ways God begins to heal our sad and angry emotions and bring comfort:

Emotions often grow healthier when we read the Bible, especially the psalms. God will help us find comfort in a psalm. Many of the psalms let us know how much God cares.

Sometimes we find God's comfort in a song. We might sing the song over and over. We know the words are God's way of sending His comfort.

Sometimes we hear a preacher's words or even something you have heard in these classes that speaks something special to you. The person who said it may not know it, but you know it is a special message of emotional comfort from God.

2. God says to me, "I made your emotions. I can heal them."

Many of the books in the New Testament are letters written by the same man—Paul. God comforted him when he faced really difficult situations. I am going to read you a pretend letter that shares many things Paul wrote in his real letters in the Bible. Pretend he is saying these things to you and the Christians you know.

Dear friends at (name of your city or village):

Hello. I am glad I can write to you again. So much has happened! I have God to thank for seeing me through some very difficult times. No one can comfort like He does! He has all my problems figured out. You see, when I am feeling very sad or I am in trouble, He knows just what I need. He is available to help me. After He comforts me, He turns around and uses me to comfort someone else who is going through something similar. Our God is really wise.

Because Jesus suffered He knows how to comfort others who suffer. We have learned a lot because of His life. Whether I am depressed or scared, I know He is with me. When I go through emotionally difficult times, God helps me. He comforts me. Then I can help you go through difficult times. I am hopeful for you because, even though I know you will probably suffer like I have, I also know you will be comforted like I have been, too.

You need to know about the hard times my friends and I suffered when we were in Asia. We were under great pressure. I thought we might not survive. I thought we were going to die.

But one thing we learned through all this—we can depend on God. We could not do anything to help ourselves! God delivered us from death, and we believe that He will keep on saving us. Thank you for your prayers. They helped. When this difficult time is over, many people will thank God for answering their prayers for us. Keep praying for us.

Paul

Here are 2 of the hard things that Paul went through. When he was in Asia, a riot broke out (Acts 19:23–41). One of the men, a silversmith, made images of gods and goddesses and sold them for a living. Paul taught that there was only one God and He was not made with human hands. The silversmith was angry and told the other idol-makers about what Paul was

saying. They were upset that they might lose their customers and began to shout in the streets until the whole city was in an uproar. Paul could have been killed, but God protected him. He went through many other things such as beatings, snakebites, and more! Toward the end of his life, he almost drowned when a ship he was on sank during a storm, but God saved him (Acts 27:27–44).

- What emotions do you think Paul was feeling throughout these troubles?

God comforted Paul. The people in one of the cities where he had preached were praying for him. Paul knew they were concerned about him. One time they even sent someone to join him so he would not be alone. Paul experienced God's presence and protection. He believed that God would continue to take care of him.

Then, God used Paul to comfort others. When they saw what Paul was going through, and how God strengthened his faith and courage, they asked him to pray for them.

3. I say to God, "Please help me be an emotionally healthy person who is also able to help others."

An emotionally healthy person expresses emotions. He cries when something bad happens. She feels sad when someone she loves is hurt. But emotionally healthy people receive comfort and help. They allow God to comfort and help them. They look for ways each day to get a little better. They may never forget what they felt, but they do not let even a horrible thing like a natural disaster ruin the rest of their lives.

Emotionally healthy people are willing to ask someone to pray with them. They are willing to share with a trusted person what they are feeling and why. They remember that

God knows what they are going through, and He is with them. He understands their tears and heartache. They trust that He will help them get through this bad time.

Divide the children into small groups. One person at a time will share with the group something emotionally difficult he has gone through because of the disaster. Then the other children should express words of comfort. They might offer to pray with him. They might share how God helped them in a similar situation. They might suggest the person speak to a parent or you if an adult's help is needed.

If you are going through the course with your own child, do the same activity. You will share first and allow your child to offer comfort. Then your child can share while you comfort. Do this several times. Let your child know that she can share difficult emotions with you at any time.

Close the lesson in prayer together.

Father God, we thank You for Your comfort and presence in our lives, especially when we are under emotional stress. Help us to ask for help when we need it. We choose to receive Your comfort. Please make us aware of people who are hurting, and show us how we can bring comfort into their lives. In Jesus' name we ask, amen.

I Know There Is Life after Death

Lesson 5

Outline for Today

1. *I say to God:* "Without You, I am scared to die."
2. *God says to me:* "I love all people and want them to live with Me when they die."
3. *I say to God:* "I want You to be my heavenly Father forever, and I will tell others about You."



SUPPLIES

- Optional: stick

1. I say to God, "Without You, I am scared to die."

As your children come together today, ask each one to name the high point and the low point of their day so far. Give each child a "high five" clap for the good point. Give each one a "low five" for the low point by clapping the child's hand down low. Share your own good point and hard point from your day. Point out that all people can find good things even on hard days, and that there are sometimes hard things even on good days.

Explain to the children that today you will talk together about what happens when a person dies. Let them know that what they learn today is true because it says so in God's Holy Bible.

When the words “natural disaster” are mentioned, people often think of death.

- **If you could ask God a question about life after death, what would it be?**

Allow the children to respond. Do not feel that you have to correct any wrong ideas. This lesson will address them.

People are often afraid of death because none of us have experienced it. Because dead people cannot come back to tell us about it, people have come up with their own ideas. The ideas that do not come from the Bible are not true. God’s Holy Bible tells what will really happen.

Here are some ideas of what some people believe. Discuss these ideas with your children if people you know believe them. These ideas are not true. People made them up to help explain death without the help of God’s true answer. What the Bible says is what really happens.

Some people believe there is no life after death. They think that when you die, that is the end of everything. They believe there is only this earthly life. This is not true.

Some people believe in reincarnation. They believe that when people die they come back in a different form or as a different person to live another life all over again. Many of these people believe that how you behaved in this life determines what you will be in your next life. Those who believe this hope that the spirit works its way up to heaven by being better in each lifetime. If you were good, you return higher on the social scale. If you were bad, you return worse and could be an animal or a bug. They think that when the spirit becomes perfect, it returns to live with its god. This is not true.

Some people believe that dead people return as spirits who are found in forests, homes and rivers. They think these creatures come

to torment the people who do not respect them or who do things the spirits do not like. People who believe this often believe that when the spirits are unhappy, they have to give sacrifices and perform spiritual rituals like cleaning tombs and graves, so nothing bad will happen to them. This is not true.

Ask your children what other beliefs they know about. Then, share the truth from the Bible.

What the Bible teaches is true about what really happens after death to people who have God as their Heavenly Father. Those who love God and trust in Him are invited to join Him and live with Him forever. They will be part of His loving family. This is what the Bible teaches. Heaven is God's special home. It is a place of joy where people who trust in Jesus are His friends and live with joy and in peace. There is no sickness or evil or pain or death or tears there.

Jesus, God's Son, never sinned (or did wrong things). He came to earth and died to pay for our sins in our place. He conquered sin and death, and rose from the dead. Jesus died, rose from the dead, and is alive with God the Father in heaven.

For this reason, we look to Him to understand what happens after death. His body died, His body was raised back to life, and He is still alive right now with God the Father. By His example, Christians know the truth about death. They will spend forever with God, our Heavenly Father. Those who love Jesus can be absolutely certain what will happen when they die. They will be alive again and part of God's family forever.

When a Christian dies, her Christian friends know they will see her again. Jesus has promised that Christians will be with Him in heaven. Of course, friends are sad when they cannot see the person who died every day here on earth, but they know that death is not the end.

Read the following verses 3 times to your children. Then use the questions that follow the verses to talk about this more.

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.
The one who believes in me will live,
even though he dies;
and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.
John 11:25–26a*

*In my Father's house are many rooms;
if it were not so,
I would have told you. I am going there to
prepare a place for you.
And if I go and prepare a place for you,
will come back
and take you to be with me that you also
may be where I am.
John 14:2–3*

-
- **Based on what we have talked about so far and these verses, how would you explain to someone younger than you what happens after death?**
Allow several children to respond.
 - **In these verses, what does Jesus say happens to those who love Him when their physical bodies die?**
They will go to live with Him.

- **What does Jesus mean when He said, "I am the resurrection"?**

People who believe in Jesus will not die. Their bodies and spirits will be alive with Him in heaven.

- **Many people who died in the disaster were cremated. If their ashes are scattered all over the place, does this mean they cannot go to heaven?**

No! God made their bodies and spirits. He can make them whole again in heaven.

- **In the second verse, what does Jesus say He is doing for us in heaven?**

Read John 14:2-3 again if needed.

- **The Bible does not tell us all of what heaven will be like, so have fun and use your creative imagination. What do you think the home in heaven will look like?**

Have each child use a stick or a finger to draw a picture in the dirt to explain what he thinks heaven will be like.

I am going to read you a verse from a psalm twice. After you hear the verse tell me what it will be like when we make our home with Jesus.

*You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Psalm 16:11

Listen as I read 2 times what Jesus says in Revelation.

*He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death
or mourning or crying or pain,
for the old order of things has passed away.
Revelation 21:4*

- **What will not be in heaven?**

Tears, death, mourning, crying, pain.

Heaven is God's special home. Jesus was taken up to heaven after His resurrection to live with His Father. When we die, if we are Christians, we will go home to be with our Heavenly Father.

Share the following information with your children if they ask, or if you believe they have questions they do not know how to ask.

What happens to people who never asked God, the heavenly Father, to be part of His family? This is a very important question. The answer is that the Bible says that people who have accepted God will be with Him forever. People who have not accepted God and do not love Him will be separated from Him. Only God knows who has accepted Him and who has not. We do not know. Some may believe in Him and accept Him right at the end of their lives like the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43). Even though the thief did this shortly before he died, Jesus promised that man that he would be with Him in paradise. Whenever possible, we should share information about God our Heavenly Father with those we love. We want them all to be with us and with Him forever.

2. God says to me, "I love all people and want them to live with Me when they die."

Ask the children and young teens to think about God's family and how wonderful it is to be part of it. God loves everyone and wants all people to be part of His family. Share John 3:16:

*For God so loved the world that he gave
his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life.
John 3:16*

Tell your class that you want to share with them more about joining God's family. The following information will help you explain what it means to be a Christian.

Children who are ages 8–14 typically can understand the following things about joining God's family.

They can understand that God is a loving, Heavenly Father, and He is in charge.

They can understand that Jesus died on the cross for their sin so they would not have to pay for their own sin.

They have the ability to feel sorry about the bad things they have done. Choosing their own way instead of God's way has separated them from Him.

They can say with sincerity that they are sorry.

They can understand that Jesus took the punishment for their sins that they deserved.

They can understand that Jesus died for their sins. He came back to life after He died.

They can understand that Jesus is now in heaven preparing a place for those who love God the Heavenly Father and want to live with Him forever.

Encourage your children and teens to ask questions and to express God's plan in their own words. Reassure the children that Jesus has a special place in His heart for them.

If one of your children or teens clearly wants to follow Jesus, read the following truths to him, ¹at a time. (It would be great to do this alone with a child who wants to make this decision, so the child or teen feels no pressure from the group to make the decision.) If the child or teen believes the truth, he should say, "I (name) believe this is true." Tell him to answer honestly. God is listening and wants him to be part of His family. When the child has answered, pray with him.

God is a loving, Heavenly Father. He wants to be my friend. He wants to take my pain and fear.

But I have done wrong things and disobeyed Him. I deserve to be punished for what I have done.

But God loves me. He loves me so much that He sent His perfect Son, Jesus, to take the punishment for the wrong things I have done. Jesus never did anything wrong.

Jesus is wonderful. He loves children, teens, and adults. He loves poor and rich people, and people with power, and without power. He loves people who were injured in the disaster and people who escaped injury.

Jesus loves everyone. He loves me so much that He wants me to join Him in God's family. He was willing to die to make this happen.

Jesus died as the punishment for the wrong things each person on earth has done. But this is not the end of the story. Jesus came back to life! Jesus is no longer dead. He is alive today.

Jesus wants me to love Him and live in ways that please His heavenly Father. This will bring joy to me and to my Heavenly Father.

When I die I will go to heaven and live with my Heavenly Father forever.

Some children may not be ready to make this decision. That is fine. Pray with them and tell them you would like to talk about this again in the near future. Tell them you will be praying for them. Ask them to think about God who loves them and to ask Him to show them the right thing to do. Pray daily for these children. God hears your prayers and He is able to draw hearts to Himself.

3. I say to God, "I want You to be my heavenly Father forever, and I will tell others."

When you love God and know the truth about what happens when we die, you will want to tell others you love about Him.

Close your eyes, and think for a minute now about a person you would like to tell. (Pause.) Think about what you would like to say to that person. (Pause.) Think about what you would say if that person said to you, "Yes, I want to love and serve my Heavenly Father. How can I do that?" (Pause.) If that person is not ready to be part of God's family yet, you can pray for that person. God can use your prayers and love to reach that person.

Silently pray now and ask God to give you opportunities to tell others about His love.

A Prayer Walk

Lesson 6

Outline for Today

This Prayer Walk lesson does not follow the same pattern used in the previous 5 lessons.



SUPPLIES

- Optional: leaves, stones
- Stick

If you can take the Prayer Walk as described below, you do not need to prepare any supplies prior to class. If you do the optional way, you will need leaves for each child (place 1) and stones (places 2 and 5)

Prayer Walk

This last lesson is a special one. Today you will pick 5 different places to visit with your children. At each place you will do something different. Tell your children that this will be a "Prayer Walk." At each place, they will have the opportunity to talk with God. If you are teaching this lesson with only 1 child, you can still do the prayer walk.

If it is unsafe for the children to go outside, this prayer walk can be done in a house, or even in different places in a single room.

Place 1

Take your children to a place where there are trees or bushes. Ask them to pick a leaf and look at it closely. Optional: give each child a leaf.

God made each of these leaves, and each is a work of art. Look at your leaf. What makes it different from other leaves? Can you see the veins, or lines, in it? Why do you think God cared enough to make leaves so special and beautiful when many leaves grow and die without anyone ever looking at them or thinking about their beauty? Do you think God cares for you more than He cares for leaves?

If you do not have leaves, but you have supplies available, make prints of the children's fingerprints, using ink and paper or making impressions in mud or clay.

God made each one of you and gave you your very own fingerprints. Each fingerprint is a unique work of art. Look closely at one of your fingertips. Can you see the lines, ridges and swirls in it? No one else has your exact fingerprint. It is like a special signature. Why do you think God cared enough to give each person one-of-a-kind fingerprints? He must care about you very much!

You are very important to Him. He knows that going through this disaster was very scary for you. He promises to be with you even in the hard times. He wants you to know that you are much more important to Him than the leaf you are holding.

Ask the children to put their leaves in a pile and hold hands around the pile. They can pray aloud, asking God to keep them and their families safe. They can pray for the workers who are helping after the crisis.

Place 2

Ask the children to find a stone or pebble to hold. Designate to a place where they should all meet after getting a stone. (If it is not safe to go outside, can give each one a stone.) When they all have a stone, say:

Take off your sandals. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Hold your smooth stone in your hand. This is your "worry stone."

What have you been worrying about? Name the stone after that worry. Now offer your worry to God. Let God take care of whatever that worry is.

Close your eyes and ask Him to take the worry. Imagine His love pouring over you. God does not want us to worry about things we have no control over. When you start worrying about things, it is like getting a sharp stone stuck in your sandal. It bothers you every step you take. Get rid of your worry and give it to Him.

Ask the children to open their eyes and throw their stones as far away from them as possible. They are throwing away their worries and asking God to take care of them. Be sure they are throwing it away from the others so no one gets hurt. If they cannot throw the stones, ask them to place them in a pile.

Place 3

Walk for about 1 minute in a direction away from where the students threw the stones. If you are doing the prayer walk inside, walk quietly in a circle for about a minute. When you stop, explain that you are going to say some Bible verses together. These come from God's true book, the Bible. Explain that you will say 1 line, and they will repeat it after you. Go through the verses twice. The verses come from Psalm 46.

*God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging*

*The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Psalm 46:1–3, 7

After reading the verses twice, let the children close their eyes and think about what they say. They can pray quietly that God will help them remember this verse when they are scared or worried.

Place 4

Ask the children to hold hands and walk quietly with you for a little distance. After 1 or 2 minutes, stop and say to them:

In this part of the prayer walk, it does not matter where we are walking. The main thing is who is walking beside us. Imagine yourself with a good friend, with someone who loves you very much, someone who makes the journey better, and the walk easier. This “someone” is Jesus.

He is the light of the world. Close your eyes and remember how He calmed the wind, how He promises that we will be with Him forever, how He wants to help you have healthy emotions. He knows you by name. He loved you enough to give His life for you. He is all-powerful God, and He is our friend. This gives us hope for every part of life—today, even with the damage that has been done by this natural disaster. He is much stronger than any earthquake, flood or storm. Jesus is walking with us.

Share this poem with your students.

**Jesus is always with me.
Jesus loves me.
Jesus walks beside me
When I am happy, sad, or afraid.**

**Jesus will never leave me.
He loves me and wants me to trust Him.
Jesus is my friend.
He is always here when I am happy, sad, or afraid.**

Now, tell the children and young teens that you are going to read it again. This time they should dance to the words and celebrate

all Jesus has promised. If you are working with just 1 child, say the poem twice and then dance together while you read it a second time.

Place 5

Walk for about 2 minutes. As you walk, pick up a small stick. Ask the children to stand in a circle. Tell them you are going to give the stick to 1 of them. That child should hold it and say a 1-sentence prayer to God. When he is done, he gives the stick to another child. She will also say a prayer and give the stick to another. The children can ask God to help their families rebuild their home, or have enough to eat and drink, or tell God how sad they are because they know someone who died. The children can also praise Jesus because He is always with them or that He has provided these lessons. If a child does not want to pray, she can give the stick to another child. The children can pray more than once, but be sure that they all have the opportunity to pray if they want to.

If you are working with just 1 child, hand the stick back and forth, each of you saying several sentence prayers to God. When you are finished, close by praying something like this:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for loving each of us and promising to be with us always. I pray that you will keep our country safe from future disasters. Please take our fears away. I pray for those who lost friends and relatives. Give them Your peace and comfort. Strengthen those who are still recovering from injuries. Keep the workers safe. We love You. You are our Father and we are Your children. In Jesus' name, amen.

Spend a few minutes singing songs you know or doing a fun activity together.

Email us!

Please email us with the following information at GlobalResources@davidccook.org. In your email, just use the appropriate number, rather than writing out the full question. (For example, for question number 4, you might simply write 4. B.)

1. Your email address:
2. The name of the place where you live: _____
3. How many children under age 11 are in your group? ____ How many young teens over age 11 are in your group? ____
4. Which of the following statements best describes your experience?
 A. These lessons brought my children and young teens closer to God and His love.
 B. These lessons were very helpful for my children and young teens.
 C. These lessons were somewhat helpful for my children and young teens.
 D. These lessons were not helpful for my children and young teens.
5. Which lesson (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6) was most helpful to your children and young teens? _____
6. Check all that were true for your children and young teens:
 A. My children and teens were less fearful after the lessons.
 B. My children and teens learned to pray more honestly to God in these lessons.
 C. One or more of my children and teens came to love God and be part of His family.
 D. My children and teens shared what they learned with others.
 E. My children and teens are growing in their emotional health after the natural disaster.
7. Share 2–5 sentences about something that happened in your class.

Resource Articles for Volunteer Teachers and Parents

These articles have been written by experts who work with children and young teens who have experienced tragedy and trauma. What the experts have written represents the best practices in their fields. But these are not scholarly articles that are difficult to understand. They are written for volunteer teachers and parents in order to help them deal effectively with the difficult issues children and young teens are experiencing. You might also share them with adults who are struggling with loss and death.

How to Help Children and Young Teens Who Are Grieving

Children and young teens feel grief when someone they know dies or is sick or is injured. They also feel grief when they are abused or when they live through natural disasters, like an earthquake or a flood.

They go through stages of grief. Lesson 3, "Someone I Know Died in the Earthquake," explains these stages.

Short Times of Grief

Children and young teens go through short times when they feel very, very sad. In between the sad times, they may be happy and act as if the terrible thing never happened. You can never tell when they will be very sad or happy and playful. Their emotions are still developing, and they will not respond like adults do. Sometimes in the middle of a happy time, something will happen to remind children of the loss. This can be something someone says, something they remember or even something they smell, see or hear. You just never know when it is going to happen.

Most Children and Young Teens in Grief Will Experience These Things:

- They do not want to eat.
- They do not sleep enough, often waking up several times at night.
- They have headaches and stomachaches.
- Nothing pleases them.
- They have difficulty paying attention.
- School grades go down.

Some Children and Young Teens in Grief, But Not All, Will Experience These Things:

- They will eat too much or vomit what they do eat.
- They will have nightmares.
- They will be angry and want to fight.
- They will not make new friends.
- They worry that more bad things will happen.
- They will not believe that the bad thing happened.

Children and young teens with these symptoms may need to see a doctor or counselor.

What Grieving Children and Young Teens Need

Grieving children and young teens want you to know that just because they experience grief differently than adults does not mean they are too young to feel hurt. They are worried about what is going to happen to them, and they fear being left alone. They want to talk about loss, but they do not know how to start. They feel less upset when someone explains what has happened and what is going to happen. As they grow up, they may experience grief again at important events, such as a school graduation or their own wedding.

Sometimes adults want to make grieving easier for children and young teens, so they do not share the details of what happened. For example, when a friend dies, the child is not invited to say goodbye to the loved one. This does not help a grieving child. Children and young teens are helped when they are told the truth about a death. They are helped when they can be part of the funeral or a church service that honors the death of the person they knew—if they want to be a part of the event, and if they can do so safely. Answer the questions they ask, and answer as honestly as possible.

What Not to Do

Adults sometimes tell children and young teens to be strong and not to feel sad. Do not do this. They will learn to not trust their feelings. They will learn to hide their feelings. They may even be ashamed of their feelings. This can stop them from healing. Adults sometimes say things that do not mean anything to children. For example, “At least she is not suffering now.” Or, “He is in a better place.” This makes children feel like they are wrong to feel pain and sadness.

When our children and young teens experience loss, they want others to know how bad they feel. They want adults to share their sadness, too. This sharing can help them begin to heal.

Six Steps to Help a Grieving Child

What is the best way to help a child or young teen who has had a terrible loss and is grieving? First, build a friendship with that child.

Second, talk about what happened. Ask questions and listen when she answers. The child or young teen may not be ready to talk for some time, so you will need to be patient. Know that she really does want to talk about what happened.

Third, when the child or young teen is ready to talk, listen. Do not stop your child by asking questions or correcting a wrong detail. Let the child talk. You cannot say anything that will make the pain

go away, but listening helps. Let the child or young teen know that her feelings are okay. She may need to tell her story many times.

Fourth, let the child or teen know that she will survive. A child may be frightened and not know what to do with the feelings inside her. Tell her over and over that soon she will begin to feel better, even though she will never completely forget her loss.

Fifth, you might suggest some ways a child or young teen can hurt less. For example, the teen could write a letter to the person who died. Or the child might make a memory book or plant a tree or flowers for a loved one who died. She might build a memorial out of rocks and branches. Every time she sees it, she will remember how wonderful the person was. Tell the child or young teen that there is nothing wrong with having fun and being happy.

Sixth, be ready for the child or young teen to feel guilty and fearful from time to time. Be ready to comfort and reassure him that you are there for him and God is, too.

Helping Children and Young Teens Cope with Worry

Worry is sometimes called anxiety or fear. It consists of uncomfortable feelings like being tense, nervous, or panicky. Bodily signs of worry include increased heart rate, an upset stomach, sweaty palms, shaky hands, dizziness, and headaches. Some children develop nervous habits such as nail-biting, hair twirling, knuckle cracking, or fidgety legs.

Common Worries:

- World events like the Nepal earthquake, war, terrorism, and disease
- Performance—how they are doing at school or as part of a team
- Appearance—how they look
- Social problems—making and keeping friends, being bullied, or feeling left out
- Safety for self and loved ones
- Death

When Worry Is a Problem:

- When worry is age-inappropriate (for example when children or teens fear monsters, the dark, thunder and lightning, or other normal activities)
- When worry is so strong that it is very upsetting to the child or teen
- When worry interferes with relationships and daily activities such as school or playtime

Re-living a traumatic experience, being easily startled or frightened, or avoiding situations that are reminders of a trauma may be signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This needs professional help.

How You Can Help:

Listen with empathy. Your children's worries are very real to them, even if they seem trivial to adults. Before they can tackle their worries, they need to feel supported and understood.

Share the facts. Sometimes children and teens worry because of misinformation or a lack of understanding. When they have questions about big issues such as the future or missing relatives, provide them accurate information and calmly explain what adults are doing to help.

Share the "big picture" perspective. When children and young teens worry about small things, point out that many problems are temporary and solvable, and they will have other opportunities to try again. Teach them to be strong and hopeful.

If your child or young teen does not improve by talking about her fears and getting information, it may be necessary to take her to a counselor or health care worker. However, most children and teens walk through their grief and their fears by talking about their concerns with a caring adult.

Help them problem solve. Talk through problems and help your children and young teens come up with solutions, but do not solve their problems for them.

Offer comfort and reassurance. Sometimes when children are worried, they need a hug, a talk, or time together doing something fun or positive. The prayer walk in Lesson 6 is an example.

Teach them to relax. Teach young people how to slow their heart rates and relax their bodies by deep breathing, imagining their favorite place or memory, or tensing then relaxing muscles in their arms, legs, neck and shoulders.

Help them to think in positive ways. Teach children and teens how to talk back to their worries. They can tell themselves why their

lives are in God's hands. Even a devastating natural disaster can never separate them from His love.

Help them face fear. This course does not teach children or young teens to ignore the truth about the bad things that happened. Instead, it encourages them to face those fears by putting their confidence in God.

Read the Bible and pray together. This course is filled from beginning to end with prayer and God's promises. Children and young teens can give their worries to God.

Be a good role model. Set a good example by your response to the disaster. Show your children and young teens that you are confident and trust God to help you.

Creating Safety for the Traumatized Child and Young Teen

Children and young teens who have experienced a disaster are hurting. They are victims of an event they could not have predicted or avoided. Their world has not been safe, and it may still not be safe. So how do you create safety for a child or young teen who believes he will never feel safe again?

Step 1: Understand trauma

Children and young teens who have been through trauma may feel overwhelmed and helpless. They may have an overactive alarm system that is easily triggered. When something happens to make them feel unsafe again, they choose to do 1 of 3 things. They may fight. This may happen when they are in an unsafe personal relationship. They may take flight—run away from the situation, even when that is dangerous. Or, they may freeze and be unable to make any response. They may not be able to think clearly.

Feeling safe is what calms their trauma response.

Step 2: Understand your children and teens

Work hard at knowing what your children and teens do well and what they struggle with. Identify their strengths and weaknesses. This can help you predict what their response will be when they feel unsafe.

Step 3: The safe environment—consistency

Be as consistent as possible in your relationship with the child or teen. They thrive with consistent responses from you. Children and young teens feel safe when they know what to expect from the adults they are with—teachers and parents. This includes knowing what the rules for behavior are and how discipline is handled. Trauma is triggered by the unknown and unexpected. Consistency creates predictability.

Children and teens feel safe when they can predict what will happen in their day. When things need to change, give children plenty of information about when and why the change will happen. This will help them deal with it.

Provide transition warnings. For many families, the disaster changed everything. Let the child or teen know what the new routine will be and why. Traumatized people need to have a sense of control. Suddenly being pushed from 1 activity and moved quickly to something else without giving the child or teen time to adjust can trigger explosive behavior.

Step 4: The safe environment—relationships

Children and teens heal when they have safe and trusting relationships. Be there, be consistent, and know what the children are feeling. Spend time playing and getting to know the child or teen.

If the child or teen resists the relationship you want to build, move slowly, and do not push too hard. Eventually, he will see that you are a safe adult. Then the relationship can blossom.

Step 5: Prevention

All of these steps will help children and young teens feel safer after a traumatizing event, but sometimes you need to do more to create safety. If you know what triggers a child or teen, or what activities and transitions are the most challenging, think about what you can do to prevent negative reactions. For example, a child may become triggered (scared or even angry) when it is time to come inside the house. This may happen because her house collapsed just before the family had to leave the country. Sometimes doing something simple works beautifully. This can be walking beside her when she enters the house or asking her to help you call the rest of the family inside. Be creative, and you will find that creating safety is a very powerful tool in the lives of children, young teens—and even adults—who have gone through trauma.

Notes



Helping Children After a Natural Disaster

In this booklet:

Our questions and
God's answers

Six lessons to help young
children and adolescents
heal after a natural disaster

Resource articles to help
Christian volunteers and parents
while working with distressed
and frightened children

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