



GRIEF GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOR REFLECTIONS FOR THE GRIEVING SOUL

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Grief Group Discussion Guide for: Reflections for the Grieving Soul

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INTRODUCTION: HOW TO USE THIS GRIEF GROUP GUIDE

Thank you.

It takes a special kind of person to step in and help others work through grief and loss. That means you are a very special person, and I'm grateful you are who you are—someone willing to “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).

This grief group discussion guide has been created specifically with you in mind, with the hope that it'll help you as you help others. You can use this booklet/PDF download to lead a small group of people through grief support meetings designed to guide them into learning how to *grieve well*. Here's what you need to know:

1. Based on *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*

This grief group discussion guide assumes that you're using Mike Nappa's book *Reflections for the Grieving Soul* as a primary resource, in addition to the Bible. Although the book may be optional to purchase for group members, you'll need a copy of Nappa's book in order to lead the sessions included here.

2. Five Meetings

There are five sessions in this grief support group guide. You're free to schedule those sessions whenever works best for your group. Some like to plan one session per week and meet for five weeks. Others prefer a more compressed, intensive schedule that meets every weeknight for five days in a row (Monday through Friday). There are those who like to meet once a month for five months (for instance, on the first Friday of each month), and those who schedule all five sessions over the course of a weekend retreat.

The way you schedule these meetings doesn't matter—all options work. What matters, though, is that you *complete all five sessions* with the people in your group. These grief-support sessions are designed to build on each other, and to lead toward a deliberate process of *grieving well*—so please be sure you take your people from beginning to end of all five sessions.

3. Plan About 90 Minutes Per Session (and Bring Refreshments)

Each meeting guide in this booklet will run around 50-65 minutes. Depending on how robust your discussions are, that timing may spill a few minutes over, or possibly a few minutes under. It's best, then, to plan for an hour and a half (90 minutes) for each meeting. This'll allow for some flexibility in discussions and also give your people a chance to mingle and chat before and after each session. With that in mind, you'll also want to provide light refreshments and invite people to linger after closing prayer.

4. Follow the Flow

Each session in here follows the same flow:

- a) Open Up. This is an introductory segment that introduces a topic through a reading from *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*.
- b) Open Book. In this portion of the meeting, you and your group members will dig into a discussion of Scripture.
- c) Open Life. This section expands the boundaries of the meeting with an activity that ties to real life and prompts deeper discussion among participants.
- d) Open Door. Here is where you prepare group members to face the week ahead, with a thoughtful closing prayer on their behalf.

5. Trust the Holy Spirit

Remember that your job in leading this group is not to “fix” people, nor is it to make them “get over” their grief. Your only role is to be someone who helps your people to *grieve well*.

This simply isn't possible in your own strength and ability; it's the Holy Spirit of Christ who makes this happen. So don't be afraid to lean heavily into his help and power, to pray for his intervention, to depend on him to bring about desired results in peoples' lives. He is the healer, and you must only be the willing tool in his hands.

OK, that's it! You're ready.

Again, thank you for being someone Christ uses to help another work through the intense sorrow of loss. Please know my prayers are with you as you serve.

With love and respect to you,

Mike Nappa
2023



SESSION 1

AFTER THE FUNERAL

“My body and soul are withering away. I am dying from grief...”

—from Psalm 31 (NLT)

Theme: Grieving Well

Scripture: Psalm 31:9-10

Preparation: You’ll need a Bible, a copy of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, and paper and a pen for everyone in the group.



OPEN UP (10-15 minutes)

Welcome everyone to the group, and spend a few moments with introductions. Encourage group members to tell *briefly* who they are and why they've come to this support group—but tell them they'll have time later to go into more detail about losing their loved ones. For now, just brief background is all that's needed.

Next, from *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, read aloud the reflection that begins on page 2 with, “This is what grief feels like...”

Afterward, invite group members to respond to this question:

- On a scale of one to 10, how accurate would you say this is, as a description of what grief feels like? Explain your answer.

Give each participant paper and a pen. Say: “Take a moment now to write your own version of this reflection, beginning with the statement, ‘This is what grief feels like...’” Allow a few moments for everyone to write their thoughts. Then have people form pairs (one trio is fine, if needed) to discuss what they wrote.

After a few minutes of discussion, call the group back together and say:

“Taking time to explore what grief feels like, individually and as a group, is the first step toward what the author of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul* calls ‘grieving well.’ That’s the aim for this group, to help us all to grieve well. Let’s explore more about what that means.”

Small Group Tip

Encourage group members to be specific in the way they answer discussion questions posed during group time. Also, invite people to feel free to wait a moment or two in silence before answering a question. This will give them an opportunity to think through their responses a bit before having to talk about them.



OPEN BOOK (15-20 minutes)

Say: “King David once wrote down what grief felt like for him. We find a glimpse of it in his prayer of Psalm 31.”

Read aloud Psalm 31:9-10 (NLT): “Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in distress. Tears blur my eyes. My body and soul are withering away. I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Sin has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within.”

Ask:

- What comes to your mind as you hear this prayer of David?
- A psalm was a song used during communal worship in ancient Israel. Why do you think David felt compelled to write these sorrow-drenched words as lyrics to that kind of worship song?
- How do you imagine God might’ve responded to David’s grieving prayer of worship, both in that moment of writing, and in the days, months, and years afterward?
- In your opinion, is David “grieving well” or not through his prayer of Psalm 31:9-10? Explain your answer.
- What typically prevents us from grieving well?

Additional Scriptures

If time allows, you can also share and discuss these additional Scripture passages with your group:

- Psalm 147:3
- Psalm 56:8-9
- Nahum 1:7



OPEN LIFE (20-25 minutes)

Say: “All right. Now, it’s time to for us to follow David’s example and grieve out loud for a bit, together as a community.”

Have participants take turns sharing about the loss of the loved one that has prompted their grief and participation in this group. If there are more than five people in your group, consider having people tell their stories to a partner (in pairs or trios) so that everyone gets a chance to share and grieve out loud.

Afterward, say: “They say that ‘Grief is the price we pay for love.’ What they don’t tell us is that grief lasts long after the funeral ends, and long after the everyone else’s life returns to normal. What they don’t tell us is that love lasts beyond death, and so grief is the price we continue to pay, in some measure, for as long as we love.”

Ask:

- How does it make you feel to know that grief continues long after the funeral? Why?
- Do you agree or disagree with this statement: “Love never ends. Therefore, though grief may wane in intensity, grief also never ends.” Defend your answer.
- What makes grief worthwhile? Explain.
- How can you and I “grieve well” in the time that passes between now and our next meeting? Let’s brainstorm ideas.

Small Group Tip

Consider the option of having group members share their “Open Life” answers with a partner instead of the whole group. This might be especially helpful if yours is a newly-formed grief support group, or a large one, or if time is running short.



OPEN DOOR (up to 5 minutes)

Ask everyone to stand and hold hands as you pray to close the session. For your closing, read aloud the author’s short prayer on page xii in *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, found at the end of the Introduction.

As you read, insert names of each group member to personalize the prayer, for instance: “May God be noticeably near to you, Shayna, Mark, and Gigi. May the promises and pains of His Word comfort you today, Fareed, Tiffany, and Demetrius...” and so on.



SESSION 2

DROWNING

*“I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.”*

—From Psalm 16 (ESV)

Theme: God knows grief

Scripture: Psalm 16:8

Preparation: You’ll need a Bible, a copy of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, and paper and a pen for everyone in the group.



OPEN UP (10-15 minutes)

Welcome everyone to the group, and spend a moment catching up.

Next, from *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, read aloud the reflection that begins on page 4 with, “I hear her voice still...”

Next, invite group members to think about this question, but not to respond to it right away:

- What’s going through your mind after hearing this reflection?

After a moment, distribute paper and a pen to each person. Instruct each participant to draw a sketch that illustrates what he or she is thinking, and to share it with a partner sitting nearby. Remind people that there are no “good” or “bad” responses, only true ones.

After group members have had time to sketch and share, call everyone back together and say:

“Losing a loved one can bring a grief response that shakes a person to the core. Yet, in some mysterious way, the nearness of God can help us not to be permanently broken by this grief. We’re going to try to discover more about that today.”

Small Group Tip

Encourage group members to be specific in the way they answer discussion questions posed during group time. Also, invite people to feel free to wait a moment or two in silence before answering a question. This will give an opportunity for them to think through their responses a bit before having to talk about them.



OPEN BOOK (15-20 minutes)

Say: “The author of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul* says that Psalm 16:8 was his wife’s favorite Scripture, both before and after cancer. I’d like to read it aloud again for us, emphasizing a different word or phrase each time. As I read, will you close your eyes and listen with your heart?”

Read aloud Psalm 16:8 (ESV) three times, emphasizing the boldfaced words each time:

- “I have set the Lord **ALWAYS** before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.”
- “I have set the Lord always before me; because **HE IS** at my right hand, **I SHALL** not be shaken.”
- “I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall **NOT** be shaken.”

Ask:

- Which of the three reading variations spoke most clearly to you? Why?
- This verse seems a bit esoteric in light of the fact that death has already claimed the one we love. So, in a practical sense, how does the nearness of God actually make a difference?
- What do you think it means to “not be shaken”? Describe it.

Read aloud Isaiah 53:3-4 from your own Bible, reminding group members that these verses prophetically refer to Jesus.

Ask:

- In your experience, what does it mean to be a “man (or woman) of sorrows” and “acquainted with grief”?
- Is it important to you right now that Jesus himself knows sorrow so intimately? Why or why not?
- Jesus suffered grief, yet was not shaken by it. What do you see in his example that might be helpful for us today?

Additional Scriptures

If time allows, you can also share and discuss these additional Scripture passages with your group:

- Psalm 91:2
- Matthew 5:4
- Romans 8:26



OPEN LIFE (20-25 minutes)

Say: “In *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, the author tells of a dream in which his wife appeared to give him one last message. Take a moment now to imagine what it might be like if your lost loved one appeared to you in a dream. Where might the two of you be? What words might be said? What last messages might be shared?”

Give people a moment to imagine, and then have participants take turns sharing about their imaginary dreams with the group. If there are more than five people, consider having people tell their dreams to a partner (in pairs or trios) so that everyone gets a chance to share.

Afterward, affirm the imaginative expressions given by members of your group.

Then say, “This kind of imaginative dreaming is an exercise in ‘closure.’”

Ask:

- Why is closure important as a tool for grieving well?
- What advice would you give to someone for whom closure seems difficult?
- How does the nearness of Jesus help to facilitate closure?
- What might we do between now and our next meeting to help each of us “set the Lord always before me,” and to rely on his strength to help us “not be shaken” by grief? Let’s brainstorm a list.

Small Group Tip

Consider the option of having group members share their “Open Life” answers with a partner instead of the whole group. This might be especially helpful if yours is a newly-formed grief support group, or a large one, or if time is running short.



OPEN DOOR (up to 5 minutes)

Ask everyone to stand and hold hands as you pray to close the session.

For your closing, invite everyone to take turns repeating aloud the Prayer for Today found on page 5 of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*. Yes, the repetition from person to person may feel odd at first, but that kind of repetition is an effective method of helping people internalize and remember the hope and intimacy of this prayer for themselves!



SESSION 3

KICKING

“In panic I cried out, ‘I am cut off from the Lord...’”

—From Psalm 31 (NLT)

Theme: Anger with God

Scripture: Psalm 31:22

Preparation: You’ll need a Bible, a copy of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, a square(ish) sheet of aluminum wrap for everyone in the group, as well as paper and pens for all group members. You’ll also want a roll of cellophane tape.



OPEN UP (10-15 minutes)

Welcome everyone to the group, and spend a moment or two catching up.

Next, from *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, read aloud the reflection that begins on page 38 with “My doctor has recommended...”

Afterward, invite group members to respond to this question:

- What are your thoughts after hearing this reflection on grief? Explain.

Distribute one square of aluminum wrap to each participant. Instruct everyone to take a moment to think of an object that might symbolize the status of their current relationship with God. When they're ready, have group members shape their aluminum into that object and then explain it to a partner sitting nearby.

After a few minutes, call the group back together and say:

“The psychologist that the author talked about was right—it is normal to question your faith or be angry at God after the death of a loved one. So that’s what we’re going to talk about today.”

Small Group Tip

Encourage group members to be specific in the way they answer discussion questions posed during group time. Also, invite people to feel free to wait a moment or two in silence before answering a question. This will give an opportunity for them to think through their responses a bit before having to talk about them.



OPEN BOOK (15-20 minutes)

Say: “Let’s start our discussion time by reading from Psalm 31.”

Read aloud Psalm 31:22 (NLT): “In panic I cried out, ‘I am cut off from the Lord!’ But you heard my cry for mercy and answered my call for help.”

Ask:

- When do you feel like you've been cut off from the Lord? Why?
- In what ways does anger toward the Lord cut us off from his help? And how might expressing that anger actually draw us closer to him?
- When have you felt like the Lord heard your cry for mercy, and answered your call for help?

Read aloud Psalm 62:5-7 (CEB): “Oh, I must find rest in God only, because my hope comes from him! Only God is my rock and my salvation— my stronghold!— I will not be shaken. My deliverance and glory depend on God. God is my strong rock. My refuge is in God.”

- What does it take to believe this Scripture is true? Why?
- In days of grief and anger, what does rest in God look like? What about hope in God? Describe them.
- To the Psalmist, God is pictured as a rock and a refuge. What is God to you right now?

Additional Scriptures

If time allows, you can also share and discuss these additional Scripture passages with your group:

- Psalm 38:21-22
- Isaiah 40:29
- Psalm 34:18-19



OPEN LIFE (20-25 minutes)

Ask each person to use his or her cell phone to take a “selfie” picture. (If some don't have cell phones, it's OK for them to skip the selfie—but most, if not all, will be carrying a cell phone.) Also, if Bibles are not available to your group members, take a moment to write out the text of Psalm 31:22 and 62:5-7 where everyone can see them.

Distribute paper and pens to all participants, and say:

“All right. Now we're going to speak to our future selves. Keep your selfie open and nearby, and take

your paper and pen to write a note to yourself that begins this way: ‘Dear Me, here’s what I want you to remember next time you feel anger and grief beginning to overwhelm you...’ Finish your letter by paraphrasing Psalm 31:22 and 62:5-7 for yourself, or by highlighting insights from those Scriptures, or even by simply quoting those verses to yourself. Remember to keep your selfie visible so you can see the ‘you’ to whom you want to speak.”

Allow participants several minutes to write their letters. When everyone seems ready, invite people to read their letters aloud for the group, and to respond to others’ letters. If there are more than five people, consider having people read their letters to a partner (in pairs or trios) so that everyone gets a chance to share.

Afterward, ask:

- Why do you suppose the author of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul* chose to meditate on these verses in Psalms when he was dealing with anger toward God?
- Do you agree or disagree with this statement: “Anger is rooted in distrust.” Defend your answer.
- What’s the best advice you’ve heard so far about dealing with anger toward God?

Give each group member a piece of cellophane tape, and instruct them to use it to attach their letters to the foil figures they made at the beginning of the session. (Some may need more than one piece of tape!)

Say: “Take your letter and foil figure home with you and, for the next several days, read the letter to yourself when you first wake up. Let it be a morning meditation to help you to grieve well through each new day.”

Small Group Tip

Consider the option of having group members share their “Open Life” answers with a partner instead of the whole group. This might be especially helpful if yours is a newly-formed grief support group, or a large one, or if time is running short.



OPEN DOOR (up to 5 minutes)

Ask everyone to stand and hold hands as you pray to close the session.

For your closing, read aloud this personalization of Psalm 34:18-19 (below), followed by the Prayer for Today from page 52 of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul* (adapted and reprinted here for ease of use):

Lord you are close to the brokenhearted;
You rescue us, whose spirits are crushed.
Each of us faces many troubles, but
You, Lord Jesus, come to our rescue each time.

And Christ Jesus, if You're close to the brokenhearted, then You must be near to each of us now. Help our spirits to recognize Yours each new day, so we can be rescued by Your love.

Amen.



SESSION 4

SCREAMING

“God has not given us a spirit of fear...”

—From 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

Theme: Grief Anxiety

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:7

Preparation: You’ll need a Bible, a copy of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, and paper and a pen for everyone in the group.



OPEN UP (10-15 minutes)

Welcome everyone to the group, and spend a moment or two catching up.

Next, from *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, read aloud the reflection that begins on page 80 with “Amy was not a large person...”

Afterward, invite group members to respond to this question:

- Do you agree with the psychological assessment that anxiety is a “normal side effect of grief response”? Why or why not?

Say: “What’s interesting about anxiety is that it shows its face in many different ways, with emotions that we don’t often recognize as anxiety. So let’s try an activity now to see if we can identify some of those anxiety-based emotions.”

Ask for a volunteer to act out a facial expression that depicts one of the “faces” of anxiety listed below, and see if others in the group can guess correctly the emotion being acted out. Whisper the chosen emotion privately to your volunteer—don’t reveal which emotion is being acted out until the group has had a chance to guess! Continue with a new volunteer until all of the emotions have been acted, or until time is running short for this section of the session.

- Worry
- Surprise
- Nervousness
- Sadness
- Panic
- Frustration
- Hopelessness
- Fright

Say: “Grief anxiety—in all of its emotional expressions—is something that’s often dismissed or overlooked. So that’s what we’re going to talk about today.”

Small Group Tip

Encourage group members to be specific in the way they answer discussion questions posed during group time. Also, invite people to feel free to wait a moment or two in silence before answering a question. This will give an opportunity for them to think through their responses a bit before having to talk about them.



OPEN BOOK (15-20 minutes)

Say: “Anxiety is kind of the dirty little secret of the grieving soul. But ignoring it, or hiding it, accomplishes nothing. So let’s address it head on right now, first by reading 2 Timothy 1:7.”

Read aloud 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV): “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

Ask:

- What does this Scripture mean to you? Explain.
- Why does the psychological phenomenon of grief anxiety sometimes make it difficult to believe 2 Timothy 1:7?

Read aloud Psalm 56:3-4 (NKJV) and John 14:1 (NCV) below:

“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?”

And...

“Jesus said, ‘Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me.’”

Ask:

- Why do you suppose the Psalmist said, “*Whenever* I am afraid” instead of “*If* I am afraid”? Explain.
- What common themes do you hear in the words of the Psalmist and the words of Christ?
- Why don’t these Scriptures promise that God will always remove the cause of fear?

- What does it look like today, in our time and in our expressions of grief, to trust God in the face of fear?

Additional Scriptures

If time allows, you can also share and discuss these additional Scripture passages with your group:

- Hebrews 13:5-6
- Isaiah 41:13
- Psalm 91:4-5



OPEN LIFE (20-25 minutes)

Say: “All right, this is now the ‘vulnerable’ part of our session—which is why we’ve waited until our second-to-last meeting to attempt it! Hopefully, by now, we are all comfortable and feel safe enough to speak honestly. Regardless, please be patient with each other, and also be aware that you need only share that which you are comfortable sharing. You can decide for yourself what that means.”

Have group members form pairs for discussion.

Invite everyone to reflect on the time since they lost their loved one until now, and with that in mind, to tell a partner about one experience when grief prompted some kind of anxiety in them. For example, some may feel anxious in crowds, or when alone, or leaving home, or coming home to an empty house, or upon hearing a certain song, or ordering dinner for one, or asking for help from a friend, or even coming to this grief support group. Instruct partners to listen without giving advice, just to be someone who hears with sympathy for a few precious moments.

After everyone has had a chance to share, call the group back together and say:

“We’ve got more to talk about, but right now—after hearing the stories we’ve just heard—let’s pause. I’m going to measure a moment of silence, and in that silence, please ask Jesus how you might pray for your discussion partner.”

Let group members sit in complete silence for about 60-90 seconds. This may, at first, feel like a long time to you—but it’s necessary and helpful, so measure the time to make sure you don’t cut it short.

After 60-90 seconds, say: “OK, I’m going to measure another period of silence, and this time, without speaking aloud, please pray for your partner in the way you feel is best.” Suggest that some may want to stand, or sit, or hold hands, or place a hand on a shoulder, or stretch out an arm toward another, or kneel, or cover the face, or some other expression of prayer. Then measure out another moment or two that allows people to pray for each other in silence.

Afterward, say: “Thank you, and Amen.”

Call attention back to you, and ask:

- What are you feeling after this time of silent prayer, and why do you think you’re feeling that way?
- Scriptures like Romans 8:26-27, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, and others indicate that Jesus himself also silently prays for us—even though we can’t hear him. What are your thoughts about that?
- Why does prayer seem to help with feelings of anxiety? Let’s brainstorm a list of reasons.
- Complete this prayer with your thoughts: “Jesus, when I struggle with grief anxiety this week...”

Small Group Tip

Consider the option of having group members share their “Open Life” answers with a partner instead of the whole group. This might be especially helpful if yours is a newly-formed grief support group, or a large one, or if time is running short.



OPEN DOOR (up to 5 minutes)

Ask everyone to stand and hold hands as you pray to close the session.

For your closing, read this adapted prayer from *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, page 82. Have everyone follow the parenthetical instructions as you do.

“This week, Christ, we want to experience anew:

- (have everyone breathe in, deeply) Your Spirit of power (exhale)
- (breathe in deeply) Your Spirit of love (exhale),

- (breathe in deeply) Your Spirit of a sound mind (exhale).

Would You help us with that, please Lord?

Amen.



SESSION 5

HOPING

“...your days of sorrow will end.”

—From Isaiah 60:20 (NIV)

Theme: Hope

Scripture: Isaiah 60:20

Preparation: You’ll need a Bible, a copy of *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, an image of Jesus, and a way to measure 60 seconds (such as the clock on your cell phone, or a watch with a second hand). As usual, you’ll also want paper and a pen for everyone in the group.

(Note: If you’re unable to secure an image of Jesus to use, or if iconography goes against your religious practice, it’s OK to substitute a Bible instead.)



OPEN UP (10-15 minutes)

Welcome everyone to the group, and take a moment to catch up a bit.

Next, from *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, read aloud the reflection that begins on page 126 with “I’ve discovered that the things you really miss...”

Afterward, invite group members to respond to these questions:

- In this reflection, the author speaks of “the salvation of little obligations.” What’s your perspective on that idea and how it affects the grieving process?
- The author also says that he hopes he’ll someday have hope again. What’s your perspective on that idea?

Distribute paper and pens to group members. Instruct everyone to draw a line down the center of their papers to create two columns. Have them label the left column, “I Miss...” and the right column, “I Hope...”

Ask participants to spend a few moments jotting down the little things they miss about their lost loved one, like texting to say they arrived safely or seeing their smile when they walk into a room. Next, have everyone jot down one hope they have that corresponds with each thing they miss. If there’s time, allow group members to pair up and share their lists with a partner.

When it’s time to move on, call the group back together and say:

“We can’t escape the sorrow of missing a loved one, but we can learn how to keep hope alive within that kind of sorrow. Let’s discover more about that now.”

Small Group Tip

Encourage group members to be specific in the way they answer discussion questions posed during group time. Also, invite people to feel free to wait a moment or two in silence before answering a question. This will give an opportunity for them to think through their responses a bit before having to talk about them.



OPEN BOOK (15-20 minutes)

Say: “The Bible records many, many promises of hope in the midst of sorrow. For the sake of time, though, we’ll read only three of them today, but I encourage you to search out and explore more on your own. You can find many of them as part of the Scripture meditations in *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*. For now, let’s start in the book of Isaiah.”

Read aloud Isaiah 60:20 (NIV): “The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end.”

Ask:

- What goes through your mind after hearing this promise from Scripture?
- Why do you suppose Isaiah associated light with an end to days of sorrow? What does that mean to you?

Read aloud Psalm 40:1-2 (NLT): “I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.”

- What would it look like if this Scripture came true in your life? Describe it.
- What keeps us from believing that God will actually lift us “out of the pit despair”? And what can we do about that?

Read aloud Revelation 21:4-5 (NLT): “‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.’ And the one sitting on the throne said, ‘Look, I am making everything new!’ And then he said to me, ‘Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.’”

- How does this future promise make you feel today?
- Why do you suppose Jesus felt it was necessary not only to make this promise, but to emphasize it by adding, “what I tell you is trustworthy and true”?

Additional Scriptures

If time allows, you can also share and discuss these additional Scripture passages with your group:

- Psalm 27:13-14
- 1 Peter 5:10
- Lamentations 3:31-33
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 18



OPEN LIFE (20-25 minutes)

Say: “All right. Since this is our last meeting, we’re going to do a little exercise to help us remember what’s most important as we continue our journey toward ‘grieving well.’”

Have everyone (who is able) to stand. If there are those in your group who are unable to stand, tell them it’s OK for them to observe the exercise instead of participating. Say: “On my signal, close your eyes tightly and balance on one foot for as long as you can. Let’s see if we can all stay upright on one foot for 60 seconds. Ready, go.”

It’s highly unlikely that anyone will last more than 10 to 20 seconds trying to balance on one foot with their eyes closed, but go ahead and time the full 60 seconds anyway, just for emphasis. If someone does manage to last 60 seconds, congratulate that person and then move on to the next part of the activity.

Display the image of Jesus where everyone can see it. Say: “OK, let’s try that again, but this time instead of closing your eyes, I want you to focus your gaze on this picture of Jesus while balancing on one foot. Ready? Go.”

Time out 60 seconds again. This time, it’s very likely that everyone will be able to balance much longer, and most will probably make it through the full 60 seconds. Afterward, have group members applaud themselves and return to their seats.

Explain: “Here’s why it was easier to balance on one foot the second time. Your senses work best when they work together, so being able to use visual markers improves your physical performance. Balancing requires three senses to coordinate perfectly within you: 1) physical sensation (from your feet), 2) movement sensations of your inner ear, and 3) visual cues. So, being able to visually focus on a stable

point in the distance provides a steadying influence on the human balance system within the brain.”

Ask:

- With that in mind, why do you suppose I chose to use a picture of Jesus as your visual cue?
- When grief makes you feel emotionally off-balance, how might focusing on Jesus help you regain equilibrium?
- What are practical ways to focus on Jesus in times of intensified grief? Let’s brainstorm a list.

Say: “Now we must deal with one last thing before we finish out this final session of our group.”

Read aloud the section from *Reflections for the Grieving Soul* titled, “2. About Sorrow and Joy.” This is found on page 170 of the book, in the Afterword, and begins with the phrase, “I also want you to know something I was surprised to discover...”

Next, ask:

- Why is this an important concept to remember?
- What will you do when you leave here today that’ll help you to remember it’s OK to mix sorrow and joy within your days, weeks, months, and years ahead?

Small Group Tip

Consider the option of having group members share their “Open Life” answers with a partner instead of the whole group. This might be especially helpful if yours is a newly-formed grief support group, or a large one, or if time is running short.



OPEN DOOR (up to 5 minutes)

Ask everyone to stand and hold hands as you prepare to close the session with prayer.

Say: “Our time together is now finished, but our purpose remains: To become a people who grieve well the losses we’ve experienced. To that end, our closing prayer today is the same one that ended our first session together. So let me pray for you now.”

To close, read aloud the author's short prayer on page xii in *Reflections for the Grieving Soul*, found at the end of the Introduction.

As you read, insert names of each group member to personalize the prayer, for instance: "May God be noticeably near to you, Shayna, Mark, and Gigi. May the promises and pains of His Word comfort you today, Fareed, Tiffany, and Demetrius..." and so on.



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Hard Way Home by Mike Nappa (Harvest House Publishers, 2019)

A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis (HarperOne, 1961, 2015)

Like a River by Granger Smith (Thomas Nelson, 2023)

Beyond the Valley by Dave Branon (Our Daily Bread Publishing, 2020)

GriefShare (<https://www.griefshare.org/>)

National Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-8255)

Crisis Text Hotline (text “Hello” to 741741)

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (dial or text 988)