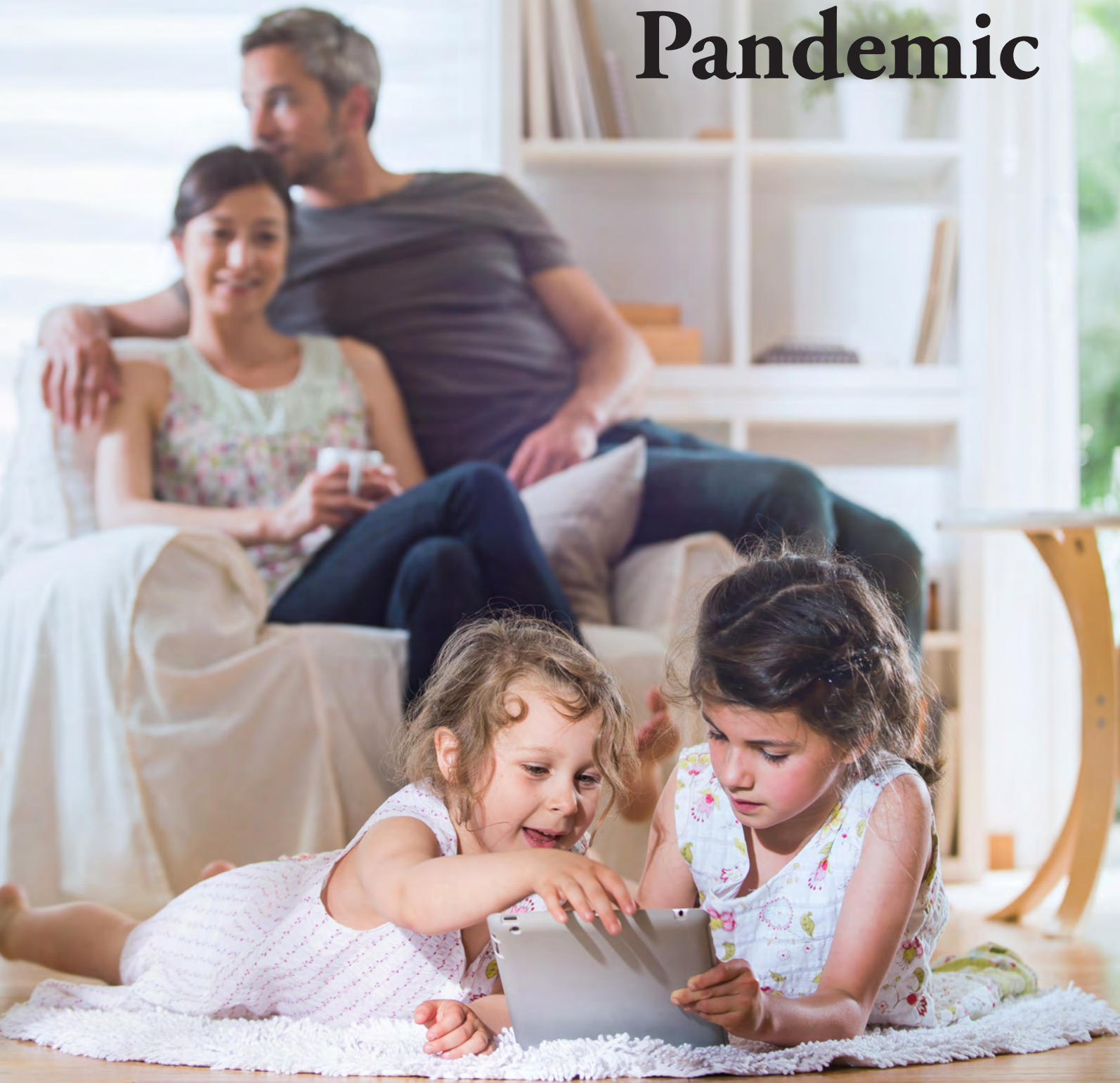


Helping Families Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic



*Lessons for Children about
Trusting God in Uncertain Times*



in partnership with



transforming lives together

Helping Communities Heal: COVID-19 Pandemic

A Crisis Response Children's Curriculum

Christ-centered, age-appropriate lessons for children ages 6–12.

Lessons for Families and Ministry Leaders during the Pandemic

In this booklet:

Five lessons to help families and ministry groups during the pandemic
Resource articles to guide parents and leaders

Lessons for Families during the Pandemic

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About This Resource

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 booklet addresses 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 booklet several times and be prepared to answer questions in your own words if these questions arise.

Six lessons for children and young teens

These lessons were developed to help children and young teens who are experiencing the effects of a global health crisis. Many may feel emotionally vulnerable right now. They may have fears and worries that result from health concerns, family financial struggles, and the rapid changes taking place in their communities. They may have friends or family members who are sick or who have died. They need to know that God has not forsaken them.

You can teach these lessons with supplies that are readily available in most homes.

These lessons are written for a Christian teacher or family member to use with a group of children. The lessons are easy to follow and teach.

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 difficult to understand. They are written to help equip a volunteer, teacher, or parent handle difficult issues that children may be experiencing. The articles might also be helpful to adults who are struggling with loss, fear, and death.

God Cares About My Worries

1. *Connecting*: Do an activity to understand how worry weighs us down.
2. *Learning*: Learn what to do with worry (Matthew 6:25–27, 34; Philippians 4:6–7).
3. *Responding*: Act out releasing worries (1 Peter 5:7).

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Clear plastic or glass bowl filled with water
- Small block of foam or a piece of cardboard
- 4–5 stones to weigh down foam in water
- Permanent marker
- Kid's Pages
- Pencils or markers

Fill a bowl with water. Ask your child to draw a smiling face on the foam or cardboard. If you are using foam, place the foam in the bowl, and place several stones on it so that it stays at the bottom. If you are using cardboard, wait until you begin the object lesson to place the cardboard in the bowl. Then put stones on top of it so that it stays at the bottom.

Note: You will see both bold and regular type. Bold type indicates things to read out loud to your children. Regular type indicates information for you, the parent/leader.

Parent/Leader Devotion

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*

Psalm 91:1

Worrying doesn't change anything. Instead, it distracts us and keeps us awake at night. It can even cause physical illness. Worrying serves no positive purpose. So why do we worry? We worry because we do not fully recognize who God is and how much He loves us. We worry because we want to have control of our lives but circumstances show us that we don't. When we fully believe that God will take care of us, then worry disappears!

Worry focuses on "what ifs" instead of what is. So, when you feel worry creeping in, read the following true statements out loud and ask God to help you believe each one: God is good. God is in control. God is trustworthy. God is faithful. God loves me. God cares for me. When you trust God and know who He is, you will find your rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

1. Connecting: Do an activity to understand how worry weighs us down.

Start by asking your children what they have heard about the coronavirus, or COVID-19. After they share their thoughts, ask how those ideas make them feel. Don't worry about addressing any wrong ideas yet, as you'll talk about them together during this activity.

Point to the foam or cardboard in the water and share the following information with your children:

See the foam weighed down in the water? That is what it can feel like when you are weighed down with worries. Listen to this pretend story about a girl named Maria who was weighed down by worries, just like that foam is weighed down with stones.

When Maria worries, she gets a stomachache, bites her nails, and has trouble sleeping. She has heard about the virus that's going around the world and making lots of people sick and scared. She's heard that people who go outside their homes will get sick with the virus. Her father has to go out to do his job. Maria is worried that her father will get sick.

Maria is also worried because schools are closed, and she's afraid she won't get to go back. She loves school and doesn't want to have to stay home all the time.

Here are some other ideas Maria heard about the virus that make her very worried:

- **You have to eat lots of garlic to get rid of the virus.**
- **You can catch the virus from playing outside.**
- **You have to wear a mask and gloves all the time.**

Ask your children if they have heard things like this about COVID-19.

Some of what Maria heard about the virus was true, and some of it was false. All that she heard had caused her lots of worry, which was weighing her down like this piece of foam.

Ask your children what they think Maria could do to get rid of all the worry weighing her down. After listening to their ideas, share the following, if they haven't mentioned something similar. Remove one stone from the foam or cardboard when each worry is addressed.

- **Maria told her mom that she is worried. Her mom gave her a big hug.**
- **Maria told her mom that she was scared that her dad will get sick because he has to go to work. Her mom told her all the things that his workplace is doing to help their employees stay healthy.**
- **When Maria's mom told her she didn't have to always stay inside or always wear a mask and gloves, Maria felt better.**
- **Finally, Maria's mom prayed with her and reminded her of the truths from God's Word.**

Point out how the foam or cardboard has risen to the top of the water without the stones weighing it down.

Ask your children if they think it is possible to overcome worries.

Share that worry means thinking negative thoughts and being anxious or overly concerned about something. Let your children know that everyone worries sometimes, but God can help us to overcome our worries.

2. Learning: Learn what to do with worry (Matthew 6:25–27, 34; Philippians 4:6–7).

Read Matthew 6:25–27, 34 aloud from your Bible. The passage is also printed here:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:25–27, 34

Ask your children what stands out to them in these verses.

Share that God cares about even the smallest parts of His creation, such as the birds. He cares even more about each person. We don't need to worry because God is good and we can trust Him with our problems.

Share the following four steps your children can take when they feel worried. If you have young children, they can hold up a finger for each of the steps.

1. Recognize that you are worried. Worry and anxiety are sensations you can feel in your body as well as your mind. When you worry, you might feel lightheaded, have headaches, have stomachaches, or feel a fluttering sensation in your stomach. When you feel this way, it may be because you are worried about something.

Ask your children how they have felt worry in their bodies. Share how you feel when you are worried.

2. Identify what's worrying you. Try to name the specific problem or situation that is bothering you. Say it out loud to yourself. Then tell a trusted friend, family member, or teacher about it.

Share an example of a simple worry you or your family faced. For example, you worried that it would rain when you wanted to go to the park.

3. Replace negative "what if" thoughts with positive thoughts from God's Word. "What if" thinking usually increases our fears and worries instead of helping us to feel better. Instead of thinking those negative thoughts, think about the truth you know. For example, if you feel afraid and think, "What if I get sick and can't be around my family?" you can tell yourself the truth that God will be with you and will never leave you, even if you are sick.

Ask your children to share some truths they know from God's Word. If they can't think of any, share some that you know. You can even use some from the devotion at the beginning of this resource.

4. Give your worry to God. Pray and ask God to take your worry. When we give our worries to God in prayer, He fills us with peace. Listen to this promise:

Read Philippians 4:6–7 aloud to your children:

Don't worry about anything. Instead, tell God about everything.

Ask and pray. Give thanks to him.

*Then God's peace will watch over your hearts
and your minds because you belong to Christ Jesus.*

God's peace can never be completely understood.

Philippians 4:6–7, NIV

Share that worry often happens because we don't remember that God is in control and that He loves us. We forget that we can trust Him with our problems. The more we trust God with every part of our lives, the less we worry.

Ask your children to review the four steps with you:

1. Recognize that you are worried.
2. Identify the thing that is worrying you.
3. Replace negative thoughts with God's truth.
4. Give your worry to God.

Here are some facts you can share with your children about COVID-19:

- The virus has symptoms like a fever and a cough.
- The virus can spread when someone coughs or sneezes close to another person.
- If someone is going to get sick, he usually gets sick within 14 days of being exposed to the virus.

Then share the best ways to protect yourself from the virus:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can sing "Jesus Loves Me" to time yourself.
- When you cough or sneeze, try to use a tissue and throw it away immediately. If you can't use a tissue, cough into your elbow.
- Try not to touch your face in the "T" zone. Your eyes are the top of the T, and the downward line is your nose and mouth.
- If you are sick, tell your parents or another adult. Be sure to stay home and rest.

3. Responding: Act out releasing worries (1 Peter 5:7).

The purpose of this part of the discussion is helping your children understand how to release their worries to God. Begin by reading 1 Peter 5:7 aloud to your children:

Cast all your anxiety on [God] because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

Tell them that you will act out how to release your fears to God. You can use this activity or demonstrate the idea in a different way.

Pretend that you are carrying a worry that is very heavy. How would you walk? How would you look? Act out how you would feel.

Act as though you are carrying a heavy worry, and ask your children to do the same.

Now let's throw these worries to God. Act out throwing that worry away from you. Lift that heavy worry and throw it. Then walk around showing how you feel now that you are not carrying that heavy weight. What would you feel? How would you look now?

Act as though you are throwing your heavy worries away, and ask your children to do the same.

As you end the discussion, you can give your children time to do the Kid's Pages, which will remind them of the four steps to help with worry and teach them more about washing their hands.

Pray a blessing over your children based on Proverbs 3:5:

Blessing: Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not lean on what you can see and understand. Give Him all your problems and worries. May He fill you with His peace!

If you'd like to listen to a song about God's care in times of worry, try "[We Praise You](#)" by Matt Redman.



GOD CARES ABOUT MY WORRIES



Cast all your anxiety on [God] because he cares for you.
1 Peter 5:7

When you worry, follow these 4 steps:

- 1** Recognize that you are worried.
- 2** Say what you are worried about.
- 3** Replace negative thoughts with God's Word.
- 4** Give your worry to God.

Give your worry to God by completing the prayer.

Dear God, I am worried about _____

**Please take my worry. Help me think positive thoughts from
Your Word. Fill me with Your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Resource Article

Helping Children Cope with Worry

Carey Sturgeon

What Is Worry?

Worry is sometimes called anxiety or fear. It is any uncomfortable feeling of being tense, nervous, or panicky. Worried people often have faster heart rates, fluttering in their stomachs, sweaty palms, shaky hands, dizziness, headaches, and stomachaches. Some children and teens develop nervous habits, such as nail-biting, hair-twirling, knuckle-cracking, or fidgety legs.

What Do Children and Teens Worry About?

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—of self and loved ones

Security—family situations, financial hardships, or concerns about health and well-being

Death

Global issues—war, terrorism, and natural disasters

When Is Worry a Problem?

You may need to seek professional help for a worrying child or teen when:

- The child or teen worries about something that is inappropriate for his age, such as an older child who has a fear of monsters, the dark, or thunder and lightning.
- The worry is so strong that it is very upsetting to the child or teen.
- The worry affects the child's or teen's relationships and daily activities.

How Can You Help Children and Teens Deal with Worry?

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

Share the facts—Sometimes children and teens worry because they do not understand something. For example, a child may be afraid of thunder. Explaining that it is only a loud noise may lower the child's worry. When children and teens have questions about big issues, such as war, provide them with correct information and calmly explain what adults are doing to help.

Share the larger perspective—When children and teens worry about small things, such as a failed test or embarrassing themselves, tell them that many problems are temporary and solvable. Tell them that they will have other opportunities to try again. Teach children and teens to be strong and hopeful.

Problem-solve—Talk through problems and help children and teens come up with solutions. Be sure that you do not solve their problems for them.

Offer comfort and reassurance—Sometimes when children or teens are worried, they need a hug, someone caring to talk to, or some time to do something fun with friends or a trusted adult.

Relax—Teach children and teens how to slow their heart rates and relax their bodies through deep breathing, imagining a favorite place or memory, or tensing and then relaxing the muscles in their arms, legs, neck, and shoulders.

Help them think in positive ways—Teach children and teens to be positive about their worries. They can tell themselves why the bad thing probably will not happen or why it is not a big deal if it does.

Face fear—Do not cater to fear or allow children or teens to avoid the things they fear. Build their confidence and encourage them to try new things.

Read the Bible and pray together—Talk about God's promises and pray for children and teens to let go of their worries and give them to God.

Be a good role model—Set a good example with your responses to problems and setbacks. Show the children and teens in your care that you are confident and trust God to help you with your problems.

Sturgeon, Carey, a clinical psychologist, has taught parole officers in sex-offender management classes and has published in the *Sexual Abuse Journal of Research and Treatment*. She has worked with both abusers and victims of abuse to help them become healthy and lead more meaningful lives. She is committed to the development of character-driven leaders and believes that, with God's help, abused children can heal and become successful adult leaders in their homes and communities. A resident of Canada, Dr. Sturgeon has collaborated with an international team to support leadership development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and throughout Africa.

God Is Stronger Than My Fear

1. *Connecting*: Talking about my fears and worries.
2. *Learning*: God is with me when I am afraid (Mark 6; John 14:27; 16:33b; Deuteronomy 33:27a).
3. *Responding*: Trusting God when I am afraid.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Leaves or small stones or other small objects
- *The Action Bible*, pages 571–572
- Kid's Pages
- Pencils or markers

Note: You will see both bold and regular type. Bold type indicates things to read out loud to your children. Regular type indicates information for you, the parent/leader.

This activity teaches children that God is bigger than their fears. You will need to choose an indoor or outdoor option for the activity in the Responding section. Read through the entire activity ahead of time, so you can prepare the supplies you need.

As you discuss this hard topic, you may not have all the answers to your children's questions. You may also have fears and questions, too. It is okay. Together you and your children can learn to trust God with your fear.

Parent/Leader Devotion

Turn to me and help me. I am lonely and hurting. Take away the troubles of my heart. Set me free from my great pain. Look at how I'm hurting! See how much I suffer! Take away all my sins. Look at how many enemies I have! See how terrible their hatred is for me! Guard my life. Save me. Don't let me be put to shame. I go to you for safety.

Psalm 25:16–20, NIRV

In these verses, David openly expresses his thoughts and feelings about all of the things that are going wrong in his life. Instead of letting his feelings of loneliness and suffering overwhelm him, David chose to put his trust in God. In the midst of his fear, he recognized that only God could save him. So he called out to the source of true peace and strength and trusted Him for safety.

Do you sometimes feel like everything is going wrong? Everyone goes through difficult times in their lives. Some situations, such as the changes caused by COVID-19, can cause us to experience unexpected anxiety and fear. But just like David, we can call out to God for help and safety. Read these verses again. What about David's lament resonates with you right now? What are the fears and worries

that surround you like enemies? Give them to God. Ask Him to take away the troubles of your heart and allow you to rest in His protection. He is your safe place, no matter what challenges you face.

1. Connecting: Talking about my fears and worries.

Have your children stand up. You will read several statements. If a statement is true for them, the children should jump up and down. Have fun and participate in this activity with your children. Before reading each new statement, have the children stop jumping to listen to the new statement:

I love to sing.

I have a brother or sister.

I have ridden a bicycle.

I have waved at someone I do not know.

I have helped my family with chores around the house.

I have seen someone I love feeling sad.

I have been sick before.

I have worried that I will not get to see my friends anymore because of COVID-19.

I have worried about getting sick with this virus.

I have been afraid that someone I love will get sick:

Sit down with your children and point out the things they had in common. Then, talk about the last few statements about things that worry them. Let your children know that while the virus is making lots of people sick, God is with us and cares for us, even when we're afraid. Remind them that God is bigger than our worries and fears, even about COVID-19.

2. Learning: God is with me when I am afraid (Mark 6; John 14:27; 16:33b; Deuteronomy 33:27a).

Tell your children this Bible story from the book of Mark. To bring the story to life, use motions and different voices for the people in the story. Invite your children to act as characters in the story too!

One day, Jesus' disciples were going across the lake in a boat. Jesus did not go with them because He was spending time praying to God.

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 men were used to being in boats, they may have been afraid of the waves and wind. The boat was probably rocking violently. The disciples may have even worried about falling out.

Now here comes the amazing part. Right in the middle of the night, they saw someone coming toward them, walking on the water. They were very scared. They thought it was a ghost!

Ask your children how they would have felt if they were one of the disciples.

The person wasn't a ghost. It was Jesus! He is so powerful that He could walk on water! Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Do not be afraid. Take courage. I am here."

Ask your children how they would have felt if they were one of the disciples.

Then Jesus climbed into the boat, and the wind stopped. Jesus is more powerful than the wind!

If you have a copy of *The Action Bible*, you can read pages 571–572 aloud to your children.

Though the Bible doesn't specifically tell us, we can imagine that the disciples probably felt afraid of the big storm in the middle of the night. But Jesus calmed their fears. The disciples learned that Jesus was more powerful than anything that scared them. Even when we're afraid of big things, such as COVID-19, Jesus can help calm our fears. He is in control and, He is always with us!

Read this verse from your Bible:

I leave my peace with you. I give my peace to you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid.

John 14:27, NIRV

Explain that this verse is a message from Jesus telling the disciples and us that we do not have to be afraid. We can trust His peace to help us in our times of fear.

Tell your children you are going to ask a hard question, but they can think about it for a moment before answering.

- **Why does Jesus allow scary things 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 we will have troubles in this life, but Jesus is greater than this world.

The Bible tells us that when God first created the world, everything was perfect. There were no diseases or deaths. But when sin entered the world, everything changed. Now sickness and death are part of our world. And in times like this, when a disease is spreading all over the world, it may seem like disease and death are in control of our world. But listen to what the Bible tells us about this:

Read the following verses aloud to your children:

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

John 16:33b

*God lives forever! You can run to him for safety.
His powerful arms are always there to carry you.*

Deuteronomy 33:27a, NIRV

Even when it feels like disease and death are in control, we can trust that Jesus is more powerful. He has overcome the world!

Discuss this question with your children. Then fill in anything they missed with the suggested answers.

- **The Bible tells us that Jesus is with us when we are afraid. What are some ways we can feel His presence with us when we are worried about COVID-19?**

Suggested answers: 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. Sometimes the hard things in our lives can feel like storms. They may make us afraid of what will happen next. Storms can be things in our lives that scare us, such as COVID-19. When we go through these storms, Jesus will be with us. He told the disciples, "Do not be afraid. Take courage. I am here." We can trust that He will be with us and help us to have courage, too!

3. Responding: Trusting Jesus when I am afraid.

Note: The next section can be done inside or outside.

Outside Option: Allow the children a few minutes to walk around outside as they think about their fears. For this option, you can use small stones or leaves as the objects.

Inside Option: Allow the children to walk in circles around a room as they as they think about their fears. For this option, you can use small items such as blocks or paperclips as the objects.

Ask the children to think about what they are afraid of. If you are comfortable, it might help if you give some examples of things you have been scared of in the past.

For every fear they think of, ask them to pick up an object. Once they all have at least two objects, ask them to share what storm each object represents to them. After they have shared, they should lay that object on the ground in front of them to show that they are trusting Jesus with that fear.

If it's safe, have the children run as they put the items away to remind them that they can run to Jesus when they are afraid. Then finish the activity by saying this prayer together three times: "Jesus, I will trust You when I am afraid."

If you want, give your children time to complete the Kid's Page, where they can draw or write something that scares them and then give their fear to Jesus.

You can close by listening to "[Firm Foundation](#)" to remember that God is stronger than our fears.

End this time by praying this blessing based on John 14:27 over your children:

Blessing: May you be filled with God's perfect peace. You do not have to be afraid. God is bigger and stronger than all your fears!

God Is Stronger Than My Fear

Write or draw something that scares you. Then, pray and ask God to hold your worry. He is stronger than your fear!

I leave my peace with you. I give my peace to you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid.

John 14:27, NIV

Resource Article

Hard Questions and Answers from God's Word

A Scripture Guide for Parents and Teachers

*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 children who have survived a disaster or crisis. Some children may not have experienced personal loss in their lives yet but are living in fear that it's coming. They may be frightened at what they are seeing or hearing around them. They may be afraid of getting sick or losing a loved one. 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. 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 three 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 pandemic? Why is this bad thing happening? 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 your children.

A prayer for you, the parents and ministry leaders: Holy Spirit, fill these parents and leaders so that in all they say and do, they will bring the presence of Jesus into the lives of children and youth who are hurting and questioning. May the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, their strong Rock and their Redeemer, amen.

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 and diseases. 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 commands.

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 in this time?

"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. 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 doesn't welcome such questions, there are many psalms that include difficult questions. When praying seems difficult or impossible, 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 you can begin to pray:

Answer me when I call to you, O 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, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless. You hear, O LORD, 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 the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you they and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.

Psalm 22:1–5

Add your thoughts and additional Scriptures here:

Why are so many people dying? I hate death!

There are no easy answers as to why so many are dying or sick during this pandemic. We can point to lack of sanitation or how easily the virus spreads. Or we could point to how no one person or country could stop the pandemic—it is so big that it is all over the world. 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 God has 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?

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 pandemics, as it is the source of natural disasters, suffering, and death.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons 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 glorious freedom 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 and diseases as judgments against nations in Old Testament times, it does not mean that all things like the pandemic are His punishment. Most are simply the earth reflecting the results of sin on creation.

We must remember that everyone in every nation is a sinner dependent upon God's grace and mercy. We all deserve God's punishment for our sin, but God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment for us. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

There is no difference, 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

For 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 When Someone I Love Died?

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

You may wonder if you'll ever stop crying. You may be numb and think that you'll never feel anything but sadness. You may feel that you can't even pray. You may feel hopeless.

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 may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalm 30:5b

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 the previous sections, 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 if we have chosen to accept God's gift of salvation through Jesus so we can with Him forever. If not, we'll be forever separated from God's love. However, God alone knows each heart, and He hears even a last-minute cry.

*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, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."
Luke 23:40–43*

We know that God loves children. Jesus welcomed them and used them as an example of 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. I tell you the truth, 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:

God Cares About My Grief and Loss

1. *Connecting*: Play a game about expressing emotions.
2. *Learning*: Learn about the healthy grieving process (Job 14:5; Psalm 34:18; 2 Corinthians 1:4).
3. *Responding*: Do an activity to help with grief.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Kid's Pages
- Pencils or markers

Note: You will see both bold and regular type. Bold type indicates things to read out loud to your children. Regular type indicates information for you, the parent/leader.

Parent/Leader Devotion

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matthew 5:4

Painful things happen to all of us in this life. During this pandemic, there is a lot of uncertainty and grief over the losses we're experiencing. Losses such as not being able to gather as a church, lost jobs, lost connections with friends and families, and even the loss of a loved one to COVID all cause some level of grief. As Christian adults, we may feel that we have to hide our grief from other people, especially our children. Yet having the joy of the Lord does not mean we must deny our pain and grief.

In this session you will introduce your children to five stages of the grieving process: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The stages leading up to acceptance may bring intense, uncomfortable emotions. Some Christians may think these stages are extreme or unnecessary. This is not the case. Each stage is a natural, even healthy, step in grieving and healing.

Think back on losses you have experienced in the past couple of months. Have you had the space and time to process your grief, or did you feel you had to hide your pain? Spend time now allowing God to comfort you. He knows what you need. He knows your thoughts and emotions, even the ones buried under the surface. And in His great love, He will bring comfort!

1. Connecting: Play a game about expressing emotions.

Ask your children about one thing in their day that was good, even though many things are different and strange because of COVID-19. Celebrate each good thing!

Tell your children that you'll take turns whispering an emotion in each other's ears and acting out the emotions. Children can use their bodies and facial expressions, but no words. Everyone else will try to

guess what emotion they're acting out. Here are some emotions to use, or you can think of others:

fear	despair	excitement
joy	anger	embarrassment
anxiety	sorrow	anticipation

Ask your children if it was always easy to guess the feelings. Have them explain why or why not. Then explain that it's not always easy to guess emotions because people express them in different ways. Our faces and body language tell a lot about what we are feeling, but they don't tell everything.

Because people show their emotions in different ways, it's sometimes hard to understand what they're really feeling. Think about anger. Some people may show that they're angry when their faces get red, or they may clench their fists and shout. However, other people may show anger by being silent or not eating.

Emotions of loss can be even more difficult to understand. Sometimes we don't even understand our own feelings of grief. Grief is the sadness that comes from loss, such as not getting to see your friends because of COVID-19 or having someone you love get sick or die. Emotions like grief and loss are often some of the most difficult to identify immediately.

Explain to your children that when we lose someone or something important to us, it's natural to grieve. Most people cry at first. As time goes on, we may sometimes try to ignore our emotions, but they don't go away. Ignoring our grief and emotions is bad for us because it doesn't help us heal.

2. Learning: Learn about the healthy grieving process (Job 14:5; Psalm 34:18; 2 Corinthians 1:4).

Explain to your children that you'll talk about how to heal after a loss of something or someone. Share that while we will feel sad about loss, God can help us with our pain.

All around the world, people are grieving. Some people are grieving for loved ones who died from COVID-19. Others are grieving because churches and schools are closed, so they cannot see their friends. The Bible tells us that even when we experience loss and grief, God still loves us and He is still good.

Explain to your children that only God knows why some people get COVID-19 and die, some get sick and recover, and others stay healthy. However, the Bible does have a lot to say about grief and loss.

Parent/Leader Tip: Your children may ask what happens to people who never asked God for forgiveness and became part of His family. This is a very important question. 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 would be with Him in paradise. Whenever possible, we should share information about God with those we love. We want them all to be with us and with Him forever.

Share these biblical truths about grief with your children:

"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).

The Bible says that everyone will die someday, but it also says in Psalm 34:18, “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted.”

“[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).

The Bible says that God will be with us and comfort us when we experience grief and loss. He made us in wonderful ways to heal emotionally from grief. Often, we need emotional healing when we experience grief or loss.

Share with your children some of the information below about how people grieve differently:

There are different levels of grief and loss. Grieving about not being able to go to school and see your friends is a real loss. However, losing a loved one is a much greater grief. Different levels of loss cause people to experience different levels of grief.

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

Not everyone goes through all the stages, some people don't always go through the stages in the same order, and some people may go back and forth between the stages.

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.

Talk with your children about the different stages of grief we go through, not only when someone we care about dies, but also when we experience loss of good things in our lives.

DENIAL

When you experience loss that you didn't expect, like not getting to celebrate your birthday with friends, you might pretend like it didn't matter to you. This is called denial.

ANGER OR RESENTMENT

You may also get angry, such as getting upset that you can't go see your friends. It's normal for you to feel that way.

BARGAINING

When you ask God to change your situation by promising to do something for God, this is called bargaining. For example, you may tell God that if you get to go back to school soon, you will pray every day.

DEPRESSION

You may feel hopeless and sad when you experience loss. Sadness is a normal part of grief. When sadness continues for a long time and keeps us from doing things we want or need to do, it's called depression.

ACCEPTANCE

When you understand that you cannot change the loss, this leads to acceptance. This does not mean you are not disappointed about the loss, but acceptance helps you to heal.

Let your children know that grieving the loss of people, events, or things doesn't mean we've stopped trusting in God. Grief is a normal part of loss. Even in our grief, God still loves us.

Ask your children what kinds of losses they are feeling. You may share some losses that have made you sad. You can read the Resource Article “Grief in Children” for in-depth information about how children grieve.

3. Responding: Do an activity to help with grief.

Share this list of "Five Ways to Help When You Feel Grief" with your children. Explain that these things can help them feel better when they are grieving a loss.

Five Ways to Help When You Feel Grief:

- **Pray**
Ask God for His perfect peace and comfort as you grieve your loss.
- **Talk to a trusted adult, friend, or family member**
Talking to someone we trust about our loss can help us to heal emotionally.
- **Go for a walk**
Getting fresh air and exercise can help us feel better.
- **Create a gratitude jar**
Think of things you are grateful for, such as "I can thank God I still get to play in my backyard," or "I thank God I got to know that person." Write those things on slips of paper and place them in a jar. Every time you are sad, read the slips in the jar.
- **Do a creative memory project**
Think of a way to remember the person or thing you lost. Then, do something creative to help you remember. Maybe your grandmother always used a special cookie recipe. You can make the recipe to remember her. Maybe you did not get to celebrate your birthday with friends. You can draw a picture to remember other fun memories with your friends.

Ask your children to quietly think about something they have lost because of the pandemic. Then they can choose to do one of the activities either individually as a family. If you want, you can give your children the Kid's Page to remember that God is with them in their grief.

Lead your children in singing "[Blessed Be Your Name](#)" to remember that God is good, even in our grief. Try to end your time on a happy note so the children have hope that they can smile and laugh again.

After the song, you can pray this blessing based on 2 Corinthians 1:4 over your children:

Blessing: May you remember that God is with you when you experience loss. May you experience His comfort and healing from grief, knowing that His love for you never changes.



GRIEVING



THESE ARE THE STAGES OF GRIEF.

- DENIAL** "I cannot believe this has happened to me."
- ANGER** "I am angry with God for allowing this to happen."
- BARGAINING** "Please, God, I will do anything if You make this go away."
- DEPRESSION** "Life will never be good again."
- ACCEPTANCE** "I still hurt, but I know now that I can get through this."

He comforts us in all our troubles.

Now we can comfort others when they are in trouble. We ourselves receive comfort from God.

2 Corinthians 1:4, NIV

What a wonderful verse for when you go through difficult times!

In the verse, circle the one who comforts you.

No matter how many painful things you go through, you can be sure that He is with you in ALL of them. Talk with God now about any area where you need comfort.

Underline what you can do after you have received comfort.

Resource Article

Help for Grieving Children

Carey Sturgeon

When we have losses in our lives, we experience grief. These losses can be death, illness, injury, abuse, the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, divorce, or even moving to a new home. Different levels of loss bring different levels of grief, but it's valid to grieve for any loss. What seems like a small loss to adults, may be very large for a child.

As people grieve, they go through stages of grief, starting with denial. After denial, they move through the stages of bargaining, guilt, fear, anger, isolation, confusion, depression and sadness, and, finally, acceptance. Children may not go through all of these stages. They may complete the stages in a different order, or they may go through 1 or 2 stages several times. Grief experiences have some similarities. But each child will experience grief in a unique way, as grief is always extremely personal.

Bursts of Grief

Many children can't endure long periods of intense sadness. They are not emotionally mature enough. Therefore, they experience their grief and sadness in bursts that are often unpredictable. You can never tell when the grief will come. For example, a child appears fine and then suddenly he is sobbing. Such "sad attacks" happen when the child is reminded of the loss. That reminder can be something someone says, something the child remembers, or even something he smells.

Typical and Not Typical Symptoms

There are some typical temporary symptoms of children who experience loss:

Loss of appetite	Restless sleep
Headaches	Stomachaches
Shock	Irritability
Apathy	Poor concentration
Poor school performance	

However, there are some symptoms that are not typical. These symptoms may arise more with larger levels of loss. Children who develop these symptoms may need professional help. They include:

An eating disorder	Nightmares
Physical aggression	A refusal to form new attachments
Anxiety	Preoccupation with further loss
Constant fear of catastrophe	Isolation
Withdrawal	Clinical depression
Total denial of the loss event	

What Grieving Children Need

Even though children may grieve differently than adults do, they are not too young to feel pain. They may worry about what will happen to them and fear being abandoned. They may want to talk about

the loss but don't know how to start. They may feel less upset when someone explains about the loss. Children need time to grieve. As they grow, important events may trigger the grieving process again.

Well-meaning adults sometimes make the grieving process more difficult for children. They try to protect children by not sharing the details of the loss or not allowing them to participate in planning about that loss. It's helpful to share age-appropriate facts about the loss. Children should be invited to participate in planning around the loss, and their questions should be answered.

What Not to Do

Sometimes adults tell children to be strong or not to feel so sad. When this happens, children may learn to distrust or hide their feelings. They may be ashamed of their feelings. This hinders their healing and stunts their emotional development. Adults may try to ease children's pain by using phrases that have no real meaning to the child, such as "At least she is not suffering now," or "At least you're still healthy even though you don't get to see your friends." Phrases like this make the pain seem unimportant and make the child feel that he shouldn't feel any grief.

When children experience loss, often they initially want others to know how badly they feel and to join them in their pain. When you acknowledge a child's loss and his or her pain, it helps the child deal with the loss in a healthy way.

Steps to Help a Grieving Child

How do you help a grieving child to heal? First, develop a good relationship with him.

Second, talk about the loss. Do this by using open-ended questions to encourage conversation. The child may not be ready to talk for some time. Be patient. It's likely that she does want to talk about the loss.

Third, when the child finally speaks about the loss, listen compassionately. Don't pass judgment about what the child is feeling. Your sympathy and letting him know that his feelings are okay. He may need to talk about the loss many times.

Fourth, encourage the young person and reassure her that things will get better. A child may be frightened and overwhelmed by her feelings. She needs to know that her experience is normal.

Fifth, share some coping strategies such as noted in the Grief family lesson. Reassure your child that it's acceptable for him to have fun and be happy.

Sixth, be prepared for the child to express thoughts of guilt and fear from time to time. Be ready to comfort and reassure him using your understanding of loss and the grieving process.

Sturgeon, Carey, a clinical psychologist, has taught parole officers in sex-offender management classes and has published in the *Sexual Abuse Journal of Research and Treatment*. She has worked with both abusers and victims of abuse to help them become healthy and lead more meaningful lives. She is committed to the development of character-driven leaders and believes that, with God's help, abused children can heal and become successful adult leaders in their homes and communities. A resident of Canada, Dr. Sturgeon has collaborated with an international team to support leadership development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and throughout Africa.

Take a Family Prayer Walk

Learning: Families will take a brief prayer walk to give their worries to God (Psalm 46:1–3, 7; Isaiah 41:10a; 1 Peter 5:7).

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Leaves (or pictures of leaves online or in a book or magazine)
- Paper, markers
- Smooth stones (1 for each child)
- Clear glass or bowl of water
- Paper (1 small piece for each child)
- Pencils or markers
- Small bowl of oil (such as olive or vegetable oil)
- Kid's Pages
- Pencils or markers

Prayer Walk

Pick out five different places for your prayer walk stations. At each place you will do a different activity. If you can't go outside, this prayer walk can be done in a house or even in different places in a single room.

This activity teaches children that they can trust God—even when their lives are difficult. You will need to prepare for this activity ahead of time, so read the whole activity before doing the activity with your children so you can prepare the supplies you need.

Note: You will see both bold and regular type. Bold type indicates things to read out loud to your children. Regular type indicates information for you, the parent/leader.

Parent/Leader Devotion

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20–21

It's easy to get so busy in our daily lives that praying becomes the last thing on our list. However, in these uncertain times, the best refuge is seeking strength, comfort, and peace in God. This health crisis is not a surprise to Him, and He will use it to bring glory to His great name!

The best way to overcome any worry you may have about the current situation is to trust in God. So try starting each day with prayer. Find a private place where you can talk with God, praise Him, and share

your requests. Ask for His wisdom as you lead your children in this prayer walk and ask Him to speak His message into their hearts—and yours.

As you pray, don't try to limit God by trying to figure out what He will do. Instead, surrender the prayer walk and your children to God. Release your own expectations and have confidence that God will work in ways beyond what you can imagine!

Preparing the Prayer Walk Stations

Parent/Leader Tip: It is important that you participate with your children in the prayer walk. You can model for them how to talk with God about all the things that concern them. Also, if you are doing this at home, you could choose to do one station per day instead of all on one day. If you choose this option, you may still want to choose a different location for each station.

Take a brief prayer walk and give worries to God (Psalm 46:1–3, 7; Isaiah 41:10a; 1 Peter 5:7).

Let your children know that you are doing a prayer walk. Start by asking them to describe a place they are familiar with, such as a mountain trail, a nearby street, or a favorite park. Encourage your children to imagine what this place looks like and pretend that they are there. Give them a minute to do that, and then remind them that God is in that place. Describe one or two more places, following the same process and reminding your child that God is in those places, too.

Explain to your children that no matter where they go, God is always with them. A prayer walk is a reminder of this. It is also a time to be thankful that God is never far away, even when we are worried or afraid.

If possible, have a Bible with you during the walk so you can read the verses directly from the Bible.

Station 1

Supplies: You will need leaves (or pictures of leaves). The optional activity uses a marker and a piece of paper.

If you can go outside, walk with your children to someplace where there are trees or bushes. Ask them to pick a leaf and look at it closely. If you can't go outside, look up a close-up image of a plant or leaf online or in a book or magazine. You want the children to be able to see lots of details, such as the veins and different colors.

Share with your children that God made each of the leaves and each is a work of art. Ask them to look at their leaves.

What makes this leaf different from other leaves? Can you see the 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?

Optional activity:

After you look at the leaves, help your children to make fingerprints using a marker and paper. Have your children color one finger with a marker until it is covered with lots of ink. Then, have them use that finger to make a fingerprint on the paper.

End of optional activity

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

God knows that what is happening in the world right now with COVID-19 can be very scary. But He loves you and promises to be with you even in the hard times. You are much more important to Him than the leaves.

Pray aloud, asking God to keep the family and their loved ones safe. When you are done with the activity, have your children put their leaves in a pile and move to the next station.

Station 2

Supplies: You will need smooth stones (1 for each child) and a clear glass or bowl filled with water.

Ask your children to take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Repeat this slow breath three times. Then ask each child to pick up a smooth stone and hold it in his or her hand.

There are lots of changes going on in our world right now. Schools are closed, and churches are closed. Some people don't have jobs. Maybe you have heard about COVID-19 and are afraid of getting sick. Maybe you worry about not getting to see your friends until the virus is over. Think about the things that are making you worried or afraid.

We're going to call the stone you are holding your "worry stone." Think about what has made you worried or afraid. Name that worry.

Take a moment to pray with your children, asking God to take their worries and fears.

Now let's trust God with our worries and fears. Gently place your worry stone into the water. The water is like God's love. It surrounds our worries so we can let them go. God does not want us to worry, especially about things we have no control over.

Read this verse from Isaiah 41:

*So do not be afraid. I am with you. Do not be terrified. I am your God.
I will make you strong and help you.*

Isaiah 41:10a, NIRV

When you are done with the activity, have your children move to the next station.

Station 3

Walk for about one minute to this new station. 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 read a Bible verse out loud. The children should listen the first time you read it. Then you will repeat the verse, and they will act out parts.

Read Psalm 46:1–3 aloud. The second time you read it, pause where indicated for the children to act out what it would be like for that phrase to be happening.

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way (pause)
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, (pause)
though its waters roar and foam and the mountains
quake with their surging (pause).*

Psalm 46:1–3

Sometimes it feels like the earth is shaking or that mountains may fall into the sea. But God says that He is our refuge and strength. He is always with us to help in times of trouble. So even when people are getting sick or there is no school or church because of the virus, we can trust that God is here to help us!

Now read the verses again, pausing after each line so the children can repeat the line after you. Go through the verses twice.

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. When you are done with the activity, move to the next station.

Station 4

Supplies: You will need a small piece of paper for each child and markers or pencils.

Walk with your children for a minute or so. Then share the following with your children:

Tell your children that in this part of the prayer walk, it does not matter where you are walking. The important thing is who is walking beside you. Tell the children to imagine they are walking with a good friend who loves them very much. This friend makes them happy and makes the walk easier. This "someone" is Jesus.

Ask your children to close their eyes and remember things they know about Jesus. If they can't remember anything, you can remind them of how He calmed the storm, healed the sick, and welcomed children into His arms. Remind your children that Jesus knows each of them by name.

Share the following with your children:

Jesus was there at the creation of the world. In fact, the Bible says that Jesus is like the glue that holds all things together. There is nothing more powerful than Jesus! Though He is the all-powerful Son of God, He is also our friend. That gives us hope for every part of life—today and forever. We do not need to worry about COVID-19 or be afraid of what will happen because Jesus is walking with us.

Have children listen as you read this verse twice:

Turn all your worries over to him. He cares about you.

1 Peter 5:7, NIV

Now, offer each child a sheet of paper to write a poem or prayer on it. Give them time to complete this activity. Then ask them to quietly pray the words on their cards and thank Jesus for always walking with them.

This paper is your prayer card. Keep this card with you and read it when you are feeling lonely or afraid. It will remind you that Jesus cares for you.

When you are done with the activity, move to the next station.

Station 5

Supplies: You will need some oil (such as olive or vegetable oil) in a small bowl.

As you arrive at this station, ask the children to close their eyes and use their imagination.

Imagine you are walking up the steps to a great palace. This is more beautiful than the greatest building you have ever seen. You are going to a party that the King of the universe is having for a special guest. You come into the main hall and as the King welcomes you, you realize that you are His special guest.

Jesus, the King, tells you to sit here in this place of honor. In Bible times, people honored their guests by putting a little bit of oil on them. Priests used special, beautiful-smelling oil to mark things that were chosen for God.

Have your children watch as you dip one finger in the oil and use it to draw a heart on the back of your hand. Then have the children do the same.

Explain to your children that God's presence is soothing like a wonderful fragrance. He has chosen each person in the world to be part of His family. God loves and cares for every person on the earth.

Bad things happen in this world, like COVID-19. You may feel afraid of getting sick, or you may worry about your family and friends staying healthy. But remember that God is with you. He loves you no matter what happens. Thank God for surrounding you with His love.

Say a short prayer thanking God for choosing you to be in His family. "[Great Are You Lord](#)" would be great song to finish your prayer walk.

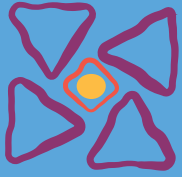
When the song is over, read the Finishing the Prayer Walk section.

Finishing the Prayer Walk

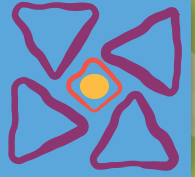
If you want, give your children the Kid's Page, which has the directions for them to take a personal prayer walk.

As you end this activity, pray this blessing based on 1 Peter 5:7 over the children:

Blessing: Jesus is with you. He walks with you every day, and you can talk to Him any time by praying. May you give your worries to Him because He cares for you. May you remember that you do not have to be afraid because Jesus is with you. Pray to Him, and He will help you and give you peace. Thank God for promising never to leave you!



PRAYER WALK



You can take your own prayer walk!

Walk for 2 minutes. Look around.
What do you see that shows God's
love for you?

**Thank God for
loving you every day.**

Walk for 2 minutes.
Close your eyes and listen.
What do you hear?

**Ask God to help you
listen to Him every day.**

Walk for 2 minutes. Remember what
you have learned about God.
Sing a song of praise to Him.

Walk for 2 minutes. Read this verse out loud:
**The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you;
he will never leave you nor forsake you.**
Deuteronomy 31:8

Celebrate that God is always with you!

I Can Help Others

1. *Connecting*: Play a game about helping others.
2. *Learning*: Hear the story of 4 friends who helped a disabled friend (Mark 2:1–12).
3. *Responding*: Choose a way to help someone this week.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- 1 spoon
- 2 bowls (1 empty; 1 filled with water)
- *The Action Bible*, pages 560–562
- Kid's Pages
- Pencils or markers

Note: You will see both bold and regular type. Bold type indicates things to read out loud to your children. Regular type indicates information for you, the parent/leader.

Parent/Leader Devotion

We love because [God] first loved us.

1 John 4:19

God first loved us. Love is His idea. He is the source of love and shows us how to love. We can only love as we stay connected to His love. When we fully receive God's unconditional love, it changes the way we treat others. His love moves us to show love to others in ways we may never have thought to do before.

So what does love do? It acts! It sees people and responds to their needs. Love is what moves us to comfort, help, encourage, correct, and support others. Love is what causes us to put forth the effort to bring others to Jesus, just as the four friends brought the paralytic to Jesus. This week ask God to fill you with all the fullness of His love. Then let it splash out of you and onto others as you look for ways to safely help others with social distancing in place.

1. **Connecting: Play a game about helping others.**

Since you'll be doing a game with water, you will want to do this game outside if possible. If that's not possible, do it in a kitchen or garage, where spilled water can easily be cleaned up. Mark a starting line and a finish line for a race. Place a spoon and a bowl full of water at the starting line and an empty bowl at the finish line.

Tell your children that you will have a race. Your family members will line up at the starting line. Give the first person a spoon and explain that they'll fill their spoon with water from the bowl. Then they will walk quickly to pour the water into the empty bowl. After they empty the spoon, they will hop

or jump back to the starting line and give the spoon to the next person. The other family members should cheer for the person who is walking the water to the bowl. If you are playing inside, be sure to wipe up any spilled water so the children won't fall. See how quickly your family can fill the bowl at the finish line with water. If you want, play the game again and see if you can beat your time from the first round. If possible, do the race with your children. Playing with your children builds great memories!

After the game, tell the children that helping each other as they did in the game is similar to a Bible story they may know. Ask them to try to guess what the story is.

2. Learning: Hear the story of 4 friends who helped a disabled friend (Mark 2:1–12).

Read aloud Jesus' words from John 15:12:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 15:12

Ask your children what Jesus tells us to do in this verse. Once they've had the chance to answer, share with them that Jesus wants us to love each other just as He loves us. Sometimes that's easy to do, and sometimes it can be hard to do. One way we can love others is by helping them.

Next, tell your children you will read them a story. Explain that there are several places where you will pause and read three different ways that the story might continue. The correct answer for each question is underlined for your quick reference. Your children will get pick what they think really happened by doing an action.

If they think the answer is the first option, they should jump up. If they think the answer is the second option, they should clap their hands. If they think the answers is the third option, they should stomp their feet. Take a moment to allow your children to practice these responses before you begin.

Explain that this Bible story is about four friends who showed love to a friend by helping him in a very important way.

Jesus was teaching in someone's house. The house was crowded with people because everyone was eager to hear Jesus. There were four friends who wanted to bring their friend who could not walk to see Jesus, but they couldn't get in.

- **What do you think the friends did?**

1. They gave up and decided to come back the next day.
2. They put the man in the doorway so Jesus would stumble over him when He came out.
3. They dug a hole in the roof and lowered the man on the mat down to Jesus.

If needed, read the choices again. Then ask them to do the motion for the number they think really happened. Repeat this process for each question during the story.

After your children have chosen an answer, share that the friends dug a hole in the roof and lowered the man down to Jesus.

When the man was placed right in front of Jesus, He looked at the paralyzed man on the mat. Jesus cared about this man's physical disability. He also cared about the man's heart.

- **What do you think Jesus did?**

1. Jesus touched the man and healed him without saying a word.
2. Jesus reminded the man's friends to fix the hole in the roof before they left.
3. Jesus said to the man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus knew that while the man needed healing physically, he had a greater need for forgiveness. Every person is a sinner who needs God's forgiveness. Jesus forgave the paralytic because He was concerned about his physical sickness as well as his heart sickness.

Share with your children that Jesus cares about our health and our hearts! He cares about our physical sickness, and He also wants our hearts to know God and His love.

- **Jesus then asked the religious leaders a question. What do you think He asked them?**

1. What is easier to say: "Your sins are forgiven" or "Stand up and walk?"
2. You religious leaders are always questioning me. Why don't you stop it?
3. If you have something to say, why can't you say it directly to Me?

After your children have chosen an answer, share that Jesus asked them if it was easier to forgive the man's sins or tell the man to stand up and walk.

Jesus forgave the man's sins because He cared about the man's heart, but He did not stop there. He also cared about the man's health. Everyone in the room was listening to see what Jesus would do.

- **What did Jesus say to the man?**

1. "I am sorry, but I won't heal you until your friends fix the hole in the roof."
2. "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home."
3. "Your sins are forgiven, but you'll remain paralyzed."

After your children have chosen an answer, ask if they can imagine how the man felt when Jesus told him to pick up his mat and go home. Ask them to imagine how they would have felt if they had seen this miracle. Right before their eyes, they would have seen the man get up and grab his mat when just moments before, he had been paralyzed and unable to walk!

- **What do you think the people said?**

1. "Wow! Jesus certainly is a great doctor."
2. "I wish I had brought my sick friend."
3. "We've never seen anything like this before!"

The people had never seen anything like that before. Jesus forgave the man's sins, and He healed his body. Jesus showed care for the man's heart and his health. What an amazing thing they witnessed, and it started when four friends decided to help a friend who needed help!

If you have a copy of *The Action Bible*, you can read your children the story on pages 560–562.

Talk with your children using the following questions as a guide:

- **Who was the most loving in this story?**

After the children share their answer, point out that Jesus is the most loving if they don't mention it. He healed the man's heart as well as his body.

- **How did the friends show they loved their friend who could not walk?**

- **Who did not show love in this story?**

- **What do you think the man's life was like after his friends took him to Jesus?**

- **How do you think the paralyzed man felt about his friends after he was healed?**

- **Share a time when someone did something loving to help you.**

- **Share a time when you did something loving to help someone else.**

3. Responding: Choose a way to help someone.

Read John 15:12 to your children and invite them to say it with you. Repeat it in a whisper, and then shout it out.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 15:12

Share with your children that Jesus wants us to love others because we have received His love.

Think about how much Jesus loves you. He loves you when you are having happy days and when you are experiencing difficulties. He wants to fill you up with His love. Now think about ways we can obey Jesus' command and love others as He loves us, even with social distancing in place.

Share these ideas of ways to safely help others during COVID-19:

- Use technology to check on family or neighbors.
- Play a game with a friend or relative online.
- Make and send notes or cards to healthcare workers.
- Make encouraging signs to post on windows or fences.
- Pray for others.
- Paint rocks with encouraging messages or pictures and leave around your neighborhood.
- Draw encouraging notes on your sidewalk with chalk.

Talk with your children about people your family can show love to by helping them.

- **What is one thing we can safely do to help someone else?**

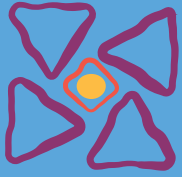
Make plans as a family to do at least one of these ideas in the next week.

Give your children the Kid's Page, where they can draw pictures of the people they want to help and what they will do to help.

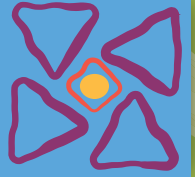
Listen to the song "[I Will Follow](#)," remembering that we can follow Jesus and help those around us.

Close by praying this blessing based on 1 John 4:19 over your children:

Blessing: We love others because Jesus first loved us! May you be filled up with Jesus' love so you can show His love by helping others this week!



SHOW LOVE BY HELPING OTHERS



My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12

Fill in the name of the person you want to help this week. In the space on the mat, how you can help that person this week.

This week I want to help _____ by ...



Additional Resources

For more information about COVID-19, here are some helpful resources:

COVID-19 (an information sheet from Johns Hopkins University provided through Attendance Works):

https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FB_IMG_15.jpg

Talking to Children About COVID-19: A Parent Resource (from the National Association of School Psychologists): [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

COVID-19 Information for Families and Ministries (provided by David C Cook's Ministry Spark):

www.ministryspark.com

For more information about Life on Life and the David Caleb Cook Foundation, please visit our websites at:

www.davidcalebcook.org

www.lifeonlifeproject.com



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