



MINISTERING TO GRIEVING TEENS

A tragic mistake is made when adults assume children and teens will adjust and bounce back after a death occurs. Too many teens simply begin an unhealthy pattern of learning to avoid emotions or stuff them. Just like adults, teens need to walk through the journey of grief. They too must learn all they can about what they are experiencing mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually so they are equipped to later come alongside others (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

Pray and see if others in your church have the same heart for teens in grief. Make sure those on the teen team have met your church's youth worker screening policy. With some creativity, you can make a safe place for teens to share and discuss. They need to hear what is normal just as adults do. They need people who will pray with them, listen to them, remind them of God's promises, and explain the reason they can grieve with hope is because of Christ.

Currently there are few materials for grieving teens that are biblical and Christ-centered. As you choose resources for use in a teen grief group, pray for guidance, wisdom, and discernment. Below you will find examples of what some churches have done to minister to teens in grief.

Some churches utilize the GriefShare DVDs and workbook with teens. The important difference is that after viewing the DVD video, the teens break out into a discussion group of their own. Leaders adjust and gear the discussion questions to the teens' maturity level.

Other groups have used the thirteen GriefShare topics as a framework and then added additional teen resources that contain information on those topics. To maintain the biblical, Christ-centered focus, the use of the GriefShare workbook is included, which provides a daily Bible study on the thirteen topics. Teens learn what is normal about their grief, do hands-on activities relevant to grief issues, have a discussion time, and use the My Weekly Grief Work, journaling, and From Mourning to Joy Bible study for personal reflection. (See the LeaderZone Library article: "Object Lessons," www.griefshare.org/leaderzone.)

A good choice is to use GriefShare's *Grieving with Hope* by Samuel Hodges and Kathy Leonard for reading and discussion. This book has short, topical chapters that correlate with the teaching and the experts found in the GriefShare video series.

Another idea is to incorporate the *Through a Season of Grief* devotional book by Bill Dunn and Kathy Leonard (www.griefshare.org/devotional). The book is divided into twelve sections that contain information on grief-related topics, short daily Scriptures, prayer, personal testimonies, and expert insights. A few devotions could be chosen for each session for discussion and journaling.

The books listed next are from the "Books and Recommended Resources" article found in the LeaderZone Library and can be appropriate to use with teens.

Traveling Through Grief by Drs. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge & Robert DeVries
Experiencing Grief by H. Norman Wright
Glorious Ruin by Tullian Tchividjian

Also on the “Books and Recommended Resources” list is a section called “Children’s Books.” Many of these can be helpful to youth as well. Most of the titles that are for parents to read contain information on understanding teen grief.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Here are other Christian resources for you and your church leadership to explore and review before deciding to use.

“TalkSheets” by David Lynn (Zondervan Publishing) are discussion guides on various topics for high schoolers and junior high. Available in book format or as a CD ROM version. Find these at local or online bookstores.

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled: Comfort & Encouragement for the Bereaved by Rev. Thomas Ray. Booklet that answers questions about death and heaven. <http://www.thereapers.com/reapers-evangelistic-literature.html>

Saying Goodbye: When You Don’t Want To: Teens Dealing with Loss by Martha Bolton. This book contains short testimonies relating to various types of losses written by teens and young adults. Some address secondary grief issues that might occur when a teen is grieving the death of a loved one, such as a move, loss of friends, change of school, etc. The questions at the end of each chapter help to foster discussion or journaling ideas.

www.lamplighterpublishing.com/griefcare.asp – Biblical and Christ-centered stories containing the topics of death and eternal life.

Encouragement for Brokenhearted Homes: On the Journey Through Grief by Leslie Barner. A title for families to read together or that youth can read themselves.