



Collegiate Quarterly

## Teacher's Guide

# Times of Loss

## Surveying the Source

Matt. 5:4

## Plotting the Course

### The students will:

- ▶ Understand that we all experience losses but we do not have to go through those experiences alone.
- ▶ Realize that while we cannot prevent loss we can find purpose and meaning in sorrow to stimulate personal growth.

▶ Learn about the glorious future that Christ has promised when every tear is finally wiped away.

## Preparing to Lead

The first time a child attends a funeral there is usually little comprehension as to what is occurring. Children, much like Adam and Eve as they were in the Garden of Eden, possess an innocence about life that makes it hard for them to under-

stand and process loss. Even as we become more experienced with pain, the pathway of grief remains difficult and largely lonely. Thankfully, God has not left us without comfort or the hope of a better life in the world to come.

## Getting Started

**A.** Janusz Korczak, a famous children's storybook author, was the director of an orphanage in the Jewish Warsaw Ghetto during World War II. When German officers ordered his children to be transported to the Treblinka killing center, Janusz refused to leave them. In order to comfort the children as best as he could, Janusz went with the children on the transport and shared their fate in the gas chamber. Much like Janusz Korczak, Jesus longs to give us comfort and be with us. He stands true to His promise in Deut. 31:6 that "He will never leave you nor forsake you" (ESV).

**B.** The archetype of loss and suffering in the Bible is Job. Not only did Job lose everything he owned, but his wife counseled him to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9) instead of encouraging him to remain faithful. Job experienced both profound loss and profound loneliness. However, in spite of this, Job found comfort in God. In Job 16:20 he said: "My friends scorn me; my eye pours out tears to God" (ESV). Job understood that he did not need to bear his grief alone. Encourage the class to discuss whether they have reacted to losses like Job or like his wife.

## Materials

Reproducible Activity, Bibles, two small stones: one rough and one smooth

## Delving Into the Word

**A.** As a class, read 1 Thess. 4:13 and Matt. 5:4. The Bible teaches us that there is both hope and comfort for the Christian when facing loss. In contrast to the despairing grief typical of pagans in the ancient world, Paul explained that the grief of a Christian is characterized by a joyful expectation of the future. Note the use of the word “sleep” when describing death. Sleep is a temporary state, and so, too, is death for the faithful. The word “sleep” invites us to look forward with hopefulness to the resurrection when all who have died in Christ will be awakened to everlasting life. In contrast to the distant hope of the resurrection, Matt. 5:4 highlights the immediate comfort that Christ promises to make available to us when we grieve. Scripture points both to the future with hope and to the present with evidences of God’s compassion.

**B.** A profound opportunity is available to those who have experienced pain and loss. Have the class read 2 Cor. 1:3–7 and discuss the impact of suffering on our ability to empathize and respond to the pain of others. A cursory read through the book of Job will reveal that his supposed “friends” had little ability to relate to what he was going through. Subsequently, they reacted to his pain with a combination of pity, judgment, and moralizing. Similarly, in the New Testament, the spiritual leaders exhibited a deep lack of kindness and consideration for others. As a class, compare 2 Cor. 1:3–7 with James 1:27 and consider how loss can ultimately become a tool to develop Christian character.

## Discussing the Ideas

1. Which biblical characters demonstrated personal spiritual growth as a direct result of loss and how did they demonstrate that growth?
2. Many individuals struggle spiritually when they experience loss. Job’s wife is one example. What are some reasons that could contribute to or cause that struggle?
3. How does hope in a future expectation help us process grief in the present?
4. Is it ever appropriate to express

doubt in God’s goodness while going through the grieving process?

5. There are many promises in Scripture that promise God’s continual presence. How should we relate to these promises when feeling forsaken and alone?

6. Grief and loss are integral to the human experience. Are grief and loss necessary to overcome sin or simply a by-product of sin after the fall?

## Closing the Activity

Distribute the two small stones as described in the Reproducible Activity. James 1:2–4 discusses a process through which trials and difficult experiences actually benefit the Christian so much that we are told to rejoice because of them.

*Ask:* “What are some positive ways in which loss and pain have shaped who you are as a person?”

Encourage the class to look for opportunities for personal growth in the losses and hardship they are currently facing.

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Obtain two small stones: one with rough edges and another that has been smoothed.

Pass the first stone around and ask the members of your class to describe how it feels. Then pass around the polished stone and ask the class members to explain why this stone is smoother than the first one.

Explain that grief and loss wear away on a person in a similar way to how the tumbler wore down the rough edges of the stone. However, the pain is capable of producing something new and beautiful just as God is capable of producing new and beautiful things out of our painful experiences.

Note the beautiful ruby stone starts out as a rough stone.

