

Parents in Pain

Coping with the heartache of having loved ones turn from the Christian faith

SESSION 1

You are not alone (COMFORT)



story

This is used to capture the essence of the topic. It may take the form of a testimony or a reflection. This allows participants to begin thinking about the main topic of discussion.

Being a parent is one of the toughest jobs on the planet! Children don't come with instruction manuals and even if they did, we'd probably continue to make the same mistakes in raising our kids. Parenting is not an exact science and in the end the best we can do, is to do our best (and hope it's enough).

One particular burden Christian parents face is the fear that their children will turn away from their faith and/or stop coming to church. Any threat of that happening will be both frightening and extremely painful. Sometimes this fear and pain paralyses Christian parents when their children choose to stop attending worship. Sometimes this fear and pain can cause parents to come down heavy with the law, or nag or respond in ways that just make matters worse.

The point in all this is that you need to confront your fear and pain and learn how to overcome them, otherwise you may end up doing what you want least of all – driving them further away!

reflect

Choose from the selection of questions provided to allow participants to get to know one another and share their thoughts.

1. How has your pain and fear over your loved one turning away from Jesus affected your behaviour?
2. What have been the consequences of this?
3. What could you do differently?

context

Provides a more in-depth understanding of the topic.

Even the best parents have wayward kids. God did! Hear the absolute anguish and hurting love in Jesus' tears over Jerusalem in **Luke 13:34**.

You are not alone in this. In fact, as painful as this experience is, it offers a unique opportunity to fathom the depth of God's love for sinners like us who had turned away from him. Draw comfort from God who shares your pain. Pray to him as one who truly understands. You are not in this alone!

St Paul agonised over his fellow Jews who had rejected Jesus. (Read **Romans 9:1-3** and **Romans 10:1**.) In an age of growing secularism and unbelief the Church is doing it tough. We are caught up in a cultural trend away from the Church. This is a burden and a challenge for our entire congregation. You are not alone in this.

Philip Yancey in his book, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Zondervan, 1997) says,

"Theologian Karl Barth, after writing thousands of pages in his *Church Dogmatics*, arrived at this simple definition of God: 'the One who loves.' ... I think of Jesus' depiction of the Waiting Father, heartsick, abused, yet wanting above all else to forgive and begin anew". (pages 55 - 56)

You are not alone in this and you are not in this alone.



read

Provides the Biblical foundation.

Read the story of the **lost son** in **Luke 15:11-24**.

talk

Questions and conversation starters to discuss and dig into the topic and the Bible readings.

1. Put yourself in the story. Imagine yourself as the prodigal son.
2. Imagine yourself as the waiting (lovesick) father.
3. How did you feel in both cases?
4. What have you learnt from this?

pray

In the Pray and Bless sections we provide some starter prayers or prayer points for you. We provide a blessing you can bless each other with as you depart.

Lord Jesus, you know the pain we feel. Comfort our hearts. Help us to draw closer to you and find healing and hope in your forgiving, life-changing love. We place our loved ones into your care. Be merciful to us all. Amen.

bless

Bless each other with these words or make up your own.

May God comfort you in your pain and bring you peace.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

Share God's pain and allow him to share yours. You are not in this alone.

Who could be your support through this?

Do you need a prayer partner?

Who could you pray for?

Whom could you support and encourage?

Read **Romans 12:12** and **Romans 12:21**.

notes
