

Parents in Pain

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

SESSION 2

What went wrong? (REFLECTION)

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.

It is very important to spend some time reflecting on how you and your child came to this point. The better you understand the causes, the better equipped you will be to respond appropriately and effectively. As you explore the deeper reasons, you will also be able to more specifically and intentionally pray for your child and yourself. Precisely because it is hard and because you are struggling with this situation, there is a great danger that you may overreact or that you may respond in ways that drive your child/ren further away.

Our goal in all this ought to be to *leave the door open* for your child to reconsider the Christian faith. Spend your time reflecting, praying and discussing so you can build bridges rather than creating more barriers.

reflect

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

1. How well have I modelled the Christian life for my child? My child would describe my faith experience as follows ... (in one or two sentences).
2. Was my child 'over cooked' or 'under cooked' when it came to passing on the faith? In other words, did they resent having too many demands placed on them with regard to involvement in church (were they bored to spiritual death) or did I let them have too free a rein (did I put them on a starvation diet spiritually)?



3. Did I inadvertently encourage my child to drift? The two most common temptations that can encourage drifting, that *come with parental approval*, are study and sport!
4. Did I smother them with too much love? Have the apron strings been cut? Sometimes children feel they have to reject what their parents believe in order to be free of that.
5. What else is going on? Are there other tensions at play such as: Being sexually active? Homosexuality? Drugs? Breakdown of communication between you and your child? Peer pressure? Other complicating factors? It is very important in all this to realise that how you react to these issues often is the determining factor!
6. Share - what have you learned from this time of reflection about yourself? About your child? About what you need to do differently from now on?

context

Provides a more in-depth understanding of the topic.

It is important that you have a safe place to express how you feel about what has happened. This is important because you need to work those feelings through at a time *other* than when you try to talk to your child about this (otherwise your feelings may well get in the way, making a difficult task even harder).

Do you feel:

ANGRY: Are you angry at your child? Do you feel he/she has let you down? Do you feel angry at yourself



for what you have or haven't done? Do you feel angry at the Church? Did they let you down? How? Are you angry at God? Do you feel he has let you down?

AFRAID: Are you afraid about what will happen to your child? Are you troubled by their life choices? Are you afraid for their eternal destiny?

ASHAMED: Do you feel embarrassed? Is it hard to talk about this with your Christian friends? Do you feel that you've failed as a parent?

GUILTY: Have you been beating up on yourself emotionally? Is this hard to confront? [Next session we will explore in more detail the whole issue of feeling guilty.]

DESPAIR: Does this situation feel like a crushing load pressing down on you? Does it all seem hopeless? Are you ready to give up? Do you feel like writing your child off?

read

Provides the Biblical foundation.

God's Word brings **comfort** to those who are angry and frustrated/hurting. **Isaiah 54:10**

Peace to those who are afraid. **Isaiah 41:10**

Reassurance of God's love and acceptance for those who feel ashamed. **Psalms 147:3**

Forgiveness for those who feel guilty. **1 John 1:8-9**

Hope for those in despair. **Psalms 34:18**

As great as your pain, fear, anger, despair, shame and guilt may be about what has happened - **God's love for you is even greater.** **Romans 8:38-39**

talk

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

1. Share what practical help you have taken out of today's discussion.

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, help each of us to understand what has led us to this point and to learn from it. Forgive us where we have failed. Renew our faith and help us to grow in wisdom and love. We place ourselves, and our loved ones into your care. Be merciful to us all. Amen.

bless

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

God's love for you is greater than you can imagine. May his peace rest on you.

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 8:38-39

notes

