

Parents in Pain

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

SESSION 4

Just keep loving them (HOPE)



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.

If you had your time over again as a parent, would you do anything differently? With the wisdom of hindsight, what other methods would you use to pass on your faith to your child/ren? The past cannot be undone, no matter how much we might like to change what's happened. However, it's important to remember that while we can't change the past, we can learn from it and therefore be helped to change how things are today. In other words, what you need to do is to focus on what you can do differently from now on.

Someone has characterised remorse as, 'Beating yourself up to try to make the past unhappen.' As we explored in the last session, it's important to learn from the past. What's needed is a fresh start. The Gospel message is of renewal and being set free from the mistakes of the past. It's never too late to live by grace and forgiveness!

reflect

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

1. Has the way you have related to your children helped or hindered their spiritual growth?
2. Do your attitudes, behaviour or ways of communicating need to be changed? If you start thinking about your children differently; treating them differently; and speaking to them differently, then new possibilities will open up for you, of having a

closer relationship with them, and of you being able to more effectively help them to grow closer to God.

context

Provides a more in-depth understanding of the topic.

There are no easy solutions or magic formulas when it comes to parenting. Rather than looking for a 'quick fix' we are better off focusing on getting the fundamentals right. To help your child reconnect with the Church, you first need to keep your own faith healthy.

When you are close to Jesus two important things happen:

1. You will cope better with the pain and fear of seeing your child turn away from God as you hand this over to Jesus and draw comfort from his healing love;
2. You will be able to give a clearer and more credible witness to your loved one. (You can't give to someone else what you don't have yourself!)

In practical terms this means living by grace and asking God to fill your heart with love, compassion, and acceptance. It also means turning to God for strength, wisdom and patience.

These are the basic Christian values you need to apply to your Christian parenting. In other words, the best way to encourage your child spiritually is to be committed to your own growth in discipleship: in faith, prayer, compassion, integrity, hope and joy. In this way you will show your loved one the reality and attractiveness of God's love through Jesus.



If we are to live by grace, we also need to act graciously (literally 'full of grace'). Sometimes we try to communicate the message of grace in a very ungracious manner. In all sorts of ways, we are tempted to put conditions on our own and God's unconditional love. Most of all we need to ask God to help us encourage our children spiritually without them feeling pressured or judged if they turn away. This is so hard for us to do precisely because we care so much. We can be so anxious for them to make the right decision that we can come across as being manipulative or judgmental. What we need is the gift of encouragement where our children feel both loved and free to make their own choices.

A helpful (healing) response is to step outside your own situation and support other people who are going through the same thing. God often ministers to us as we minister to others! As you allow God to use you to bring comfort, hope and healing to others, you will find that at the same time God has been comforting your own heart and helping you cope with your own fears and disappointment. Caring for others is then both a choice to be hopeful and positive and an embracing of God's comfort and hope. This also means being open to being supported by others. God does not intend for you to carry this burden on your own.

Remember:

- Just keep loving them
- Openly live by grace
- Pray for them
- Be encouraging, accepting and gracious
- Support others
- Don't give up.

read

Provides the Biblical foundation.

Read Jude's word of **encouragement** to not give up but to instead persevere in faith, under grace:

But you my friends, keep on building yourselves up on your most sacred faith. Pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and keep yourselves in the love of God, as you wait for our Lord Jesus in his mercy to give you eternal life. Jude 20-21

At the end of the day, it's all about God's grace.

We can depend on God because over and over again he has proven himself to be absolutely dependable!

We can have faith in God because **he** is always faithful (even when we are not!).

Read **2 Timothy 2:11-13**.

talk

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

1. Share what you have learned from these studies and how it has helped you in your Christian parenting.
2. How could the church help you further in 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, thank you that you love us. Help us to live in your love ourselves. Comfort us, help us and renew us so we can more effectively encourage our loved ones to turn back to you. We place ourselves into your care. Amen.

bless

As we conclude this series of studies on 'Parents in Pain,' take to heart this wonderful promise and invitation from **1 Peter 5:7** and bless each other:

Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Spend some time meditating on the following passage from **Jude 24-25**. Wrap this prayer of praise around yourself like a warm blanket, confident that God's grace will see us through:

To him who is able to keep you from falling, and to bring you faultless and joyful before his glorious presence – to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from all ages past, and now, for ever and ever! Amen.

notes



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