

Widows and Widowers

Dear Facilitator: For several weeks we have been discussing how successful families communicate, support one another, and organize their lives.

Time. What do we do with every minute of every day? How many minutes does one have in a lifetime? How long is a lifetime?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3

A Time for Everything

*There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:*

² a time to be born and a time to die,

a time to plant and a time to uproot,

³ a time to kill and a time to heal,

a time to tear down and a time to build.

The season of death is a hard season, especially for those who are left to live as a widow or widower. This week we are going to focus on widows and widowers.

It might be helpful for you to know what we hope to accomplish through this lesson.

Participants will:

1. Find comfort after losing a mate.
2. Choose to be strong and positively influence the world after losing a mate.

During the past few lessons, we have made commitment statements. This week's commitment statement is: Whether single, married, divorced, or widowed, God has a plan for me in this world.


continued

Notes


We pray that God will give you direction and clarity as you prepare the lesson and activities. We hope that the families in your group will grow together in God's love and become a source of friendship and support for one another.

Blessings


Welcome *5 minutes*


 **Say:** Welcome back! I hope it's been a good week for all of you as you have been working diligently on many things that are positively influencing your family.

Last week we spent time learning how to honor God with our sexuality.

 **Ask:** Did anyone try something this past week that made a positive difference in your family that you would be willing to share?

Introduction *5 minutes*

 **Say:** Let's take a few minutes together to read out loud our Family Commitment Statements (read together out loud the previous statements).

 **Ask:** What do we do with every minute of every day? How many minutes does one have in a lifetime? How long is a lifetime?

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The season of death is a hard season, especially for those who are left to live as a widow or widower.

This week we are going to focus on widows and widowers.

Today's teaching objectives are to:

1. Find comfort after losing a mate.
2. Choose to be strong and positively influence the world after losing a mate.

This week's commitment statement is: Whether single, married, divorced, or widowed, God has a plan for me in this world.

Family & Table Talk 20 minutes

As you enjoy your meal, discuss the following question: How can you show love to the widows and widowers in your life?

After the meal, children are dismissed to their group.

Notes

40 minutes

Parent Training

Marriage

WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS

Losing one's spouse is incredibly painful. If you have lost a spouse or know someone who has lost a spouse, today's sessions will provide some questions to ask and answers to move forward. Questions and many answers come from Rabey's work (2000). Rabey was a young woman who lost her husband in a hot air balloon accident.

Share an experience from a death that impacted you.

Some wonder how long the pain will last.

Will you always hurt this deeply?

DISCUSS

"You will feel out-of-joint for a long time. That's okay. In time you will adjust. You will feel normal again, but normal won't look the same as before. It will be a new kind of normal" (p.10).

When going through grief, sometimes you feel as you are walking aimlessly with no clear direction.

Are there things you should be doing?

- Pray when facing difficulties—pray that God will give you a clear mind to resolve the situation.
- Create a memorial—include items that remind you of your spouse.
- Write down meaningful Scripture passages.
- Journal your feelings.
- Carry a legal pad or something to track what needs to be done.
- Check references on those who help you with business decisions.
- If you do not know much about budgeting or finances, attend a workshop.
- Eat well and get physically fit.

People experience a wide variety of emotions.

Should you be feeling this way?

- Ask for God's grace to handle unanswered questions like "why did this happen?"
- Be honest with your feelings and place your trust in God.
- It is okay to feel good.
- Pain will come back time after time; the pain will not always be as deep.
- Just because you cannot see God, does not mean that He is not near.
- Matthew 28:28; Ephesians 3:17-19

Finding a place or person to receive comfort from can be more difficult than you think.

Where can you find comfort?

- Allow yourself to cry.
- Remind yourself that "feelings are not an indication of the actual condition of my life" (p. 62).

For many, when one loses a spouse, the result is being a single parent.

What do I do when I am a single parent again?

- Kindness and firmness go hand in hand.
- We cannot guarantee that our children will never suffer again.
- Try not to live as your spouse would have done it.
- Be as "normal" as possible.
- Allow others to be the father or mother that is no longer alive.
- Update your will, preparing for your own death.
- Invest in the lives of your children.

How do I deal with other people?

- Soak in their love.
- Realize that others have opinions and pray for discernment.
- Understand that others might not even mention the lost spouse's name.
- Grief is expressed differently.

Notes

- Find a few close relationships.
- Realize that others feel pain for your loss as well.

Time has passed, and some begin to feel the desire to move on with life.

How do you move on with your life?

- Sometimes it is good to put away photos and focus on the present and future.
- Clean out closets.

Sometimes those who have gone through a loss eventually begin to think about dating again.

What advice can you give someone about dating?

- Sexual desires are normal.
- Realize that you are lonely and vulnerable.
- Some members of the same gender feel threatened around the grieving widow or widower.
- Let go of comparisons.
- Meet a date in a neutral, public location in the daytime.
- Drive your own car.
- Meet for a short amount of time.
- Graciously decline if not interested in another meeting.
- If you have children at home, meet a date away from home.
- Move slowly.
- It takes time to get to know someone (p. 130).

What can you advise someone experiencing grief regarding the future?

- Hebrews 11:1
- Jeremiah 29:11
- 1 Peter 1:3-5
- “God is patient, and he will stay beside you as you walk from grief to joy” (p. 143).
- Romans 8:28

Today's topic is not easy. Our teaching objectives were to:

- 1 Find comfort after losing a mate.
2. Choose to be strong and positively influence the world after losing a mate.

This week's commitment statement is: Whether single, married, divorced, or widowed, God has a plan for me in this world.

To end our lesson, please answer the following:

1. Who has an insight tonight about something you've learned or want to try?
2. What will you change or improve in your role as parent this week?

Notes

Ages 4-16

40 minutes

Student Training

Marriage

WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS

Objectives

- Help children be aware of what widow and widower means.
- Help children be aware of what the Bible says about widows.
- Help children be aware of the challenges of widows and widowers.
- Help children be aware of ways they can help and encourage widows and widowers.

In earlier lessons, we learned that in Genesis 1:1-25, God created the heavens and the earth and everything in the earth, but after that, in Genesis 1:26, God's favorite part of creation happened—God created man. God loved the man He created, and God could tell it was not good for man to be alone, so God created a helper for the man—a mate who was just right for him. In Genesis 2:23, when God brought her to the man, the man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." In Genesis 2:24, the Bible goes on to say, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." That was the beginning of marriage, and God is the one who created it. Marriage is like no other relationship. It is a man and

a woman entering a covenant with God to love, honor, cherish, and care for each other in sickness and in health all their life, until death parts them.

A young couple feels that they love each other and are ready to make a lifetime commitment to each other. They decide they want to get married. They are exhilarated to begin their new life together. They are inseparable! In time, husbands and wives become best friends. They learn to trust and depend on each other. They start a new family, become parents, and raise their children together. They exhort one another and cheer each other on. They extend to each other their never-ending support. As God has planned, the husband and wife have become one. Mark 10:9 says, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

As years go by, they share so many wonderful experiences and memories. Their children are now grown and have started families of their own. The couple has been through the good times as well as the bad times, but they agree that the good times far outweigh the bad. The couple is celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary! It's hard for them to believe that they have been married 40 years. The years have brought them closer together than ever. Neither of them can imagine their life without the other, but they realize they are getting older and cannot live forever. Unfortunately, the husband or the wife will die, and the remaining spouse will end up living their elder years as a widow or a widower. When a woman's husband dies, she is then called a widow, and when a man's wife dies, he is called a widower.

Research states that each year more than a million people will join the 13.8 million widows and widowers in the United States. It is important to mention that the death of a spouse can happen to young married couples as well as older ones. And because marriage is such a unique and powerful relationship, the grief that follows the loss of a husband or wife can be extremely painful. However, it is important to mention that no two widows or widowers are the same when it comes to handling this very difficult and distressing time. Psalm 34:18 says, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." So, we know that when people experience widowhood, the LORD is right there by their side to console them and support them.

When a couple has been married and one flesh, the death of a spouse is like losing a part of themselves. The person left behind will begin a very different lifestyle than they were used to. The person is forced to learn how to get by without a spouse. In many cases, widows end up with less money in their budget for the things that they need. Widows are also more apt to stay at home and avoid socializing with others. This can bring on a spirit of lingering sadness and depression. Widows report



Scripture SUPPORT

Genesis 1:1-25

This is the story of creation.

Genesis 2:23

The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”

Genesis 2:24

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Mark 10:9

Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

Psalms 34:18

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

experiencing a higher level of fear, loneliness, and anxiety. It can be of comfort to the widow to read Isaiah 54:5 where it says, “For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.”

God is the great Comforter, and He knows that widowhood is a deep grief to bear. That’s why, in the Bible, God lets us know that the welfare and care of widows is important to Him. In James 1:27 it says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” And even though God doesn’t specifically mention widowers, as Christians, He tells us to love one another, so we know that He wants us to show love for them too. John 13:34 says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

So, let us look at some ways to demonstrate God’s love and concern to any widow or widower God has placed in your life. You can draw them a beautiful picture or make them an encouraging card. You could call them on the phone to chat or sit with them as they watch a favorite television program. You could play a fun board game with them. You could help them tidy up their living space or run an errand for them. And remember, the things that brighten up their day the most are your hugs, kisses, and your beautiful smile. These are just a few of the ways you can be a blessing to a widow or widower family member or friend and help them feel loved. Romans 12:13 says, “Share with the LORD’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” When you take the time to comfort and care for widows and widowers, you are practicing that verse, and that makes God smile!

DISCUSS

- Lead children in a discussion about what widow and widower means.
- Lead children in a discussion about the challenges of widows and widowers.
- Lead children in a discussion about what the Bible says about widows.
- Lead children in a discussion about the ways they can demonstrate God's love to widows and widowers.



Activities

Activities are age appropriate. One is focused on ages 4-11, and the second is for older children ages 12-16.

AGES 4-11

Materials

“Ideas for Helping Widows and Widowers” worksheet

Pencils, crayons, or markers

Easel or whiteboard for discussion (Optional)

Have children view YouTube:

videos: https://youtu.be/woon9_417os and/or <https://youtu.be/dtNZyFV9n40> (If not possible, do exercise without video.)

- After viewing video/videos, as a group, discuss briefly ways children could help widows and widowers.
- To get them started, write suggestions on the easel or whiteboard.
- Then have the children write more suggestions on their “Ideas for Helping Widows and Widowers” worksheet.



Scripture SUPPORT

Isaiah 54:5

For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

James 1:27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

John 13:34

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Romans 12:13

Share with the LORD's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

AGES 12-16

Materials

“Ideas for Helping Widows and Widowers” worksheet
Pencils, crayons, or markers

Have children view YouTube:

videos: https://youtu.be/wooN9_417os and/or
<https://youtu.be/dtNZyFV9n40> (If not possible, do
exercise without video.)

- After viewing video/videos, discuss briefly ways children could help widows and widowers.
- Then have children fill out “Ideas for Helping Widows and Widowers” worksheet.
- Have children work in small groups to come up with ideas to write on their sheets. (Each person should fill out their own individual sheet.)
- When finished, have everyone return to the large group and share the ideas each group wrote on their sheets.




CHALLENGE QUESTION

AM I DOING ANYTHING TO HELP WIDOWS
OR WIDOWERS IN MY LIFE?

CHALLENGE COMMITMENT

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO WORK ON THE
CHALLENGE QUESTION?

	AFFIRMATION <i>Have children repeat</i>
	<i>God is pleased that I pray for widows and widowers.</i>

IDEAS FOR HELPING
WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS

God instructs us in James 1:27 to care for widows.

Ideas for Caring for Widows and Widowers

How can I:

Be a friend? _____

Be thoughtful? _____

Be generous? _____

Be prayerful? _____

Resources & Materials

- Marta Felber. (2000). *Finding Your Way After Your Spouse Dies*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria
- Rabey, Lois Mowday. (2000). *When Your Soul Aches: Hope and Help for Women Who Have Lost Their Husbands*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook.
- Roper, Gayle. (2015). *A Widow's Journey: Reflections on Walking Alone*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House.