



God Is With Us



**When
Someone
We Love
Dies**



God Is With Us: When Someone We Love Dies

Main Idea

The Holy Spirit is our comforter and helps us when someone we love dies.

BIBLE CONNECTIONS

John 14:26

The Companion, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you.

BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

As difficult as it might feel, talking to children about dying, death, loss, and grief can provide them with the tools they need to navigate this hard part of life. Through these conversations, we can find out what kids know or misconceptions they might have, and provide comfort, trust, and understanding.

We can take cues from children's questions, body language, and other emotional indicators to present these conversations in a way that is developmentally and emotionally helpful. Younger children don't understand that death is permanent. For them, phrases like *passed away*, *at rest*, or *with God*, aren't helpful. Instead, using the words *death*, *dead*, and *died* will be more concrete. Be prepared for this younger learner to possibly need repeated explanation of what has happened to their loved one. Elementary-aged children understand death a bit more, and may experience anxiety about their own mortality or the possibility of losing other loved ones. Honest conversation and space for emotional expression can help alleviate these worries.

GATHERING ACTIVITY

Ask: Can anyone tell us what a *life cycle* is?

Say: Every living thing has a beginning and an end, a birth and a death. The process from birth to death is called a *life cycle*. Today we're going to learn about one creature's life cycle: the butterfly.

Ask: Does anyone know how the life of a butterfly begins?

Say: Butterflies start out as little bitty eggs, then hatch into caterpillars. As caterpillars, these creatures eat and grow, then form a chrysalis. In the chrysalis, the caterpillar goes through a transformation called a metamorphosis. The caterpillar transforms into a butterfly and emerges from its chrysalis.

Give each learner a paper plate, a green marker, a pencil, and one each of the following: pony bead, chenille stem piece, cotton ball, and tissue paper rectangle.

Invite each learner to draw two intersecting lines across the plate, dividing it into four areas. Then have them draw a green leaf in each of the four areas. Have them use glue to stick a bead to one of the leaves for the egg, a piece of chenille stem on the next leaf as the caterpillar, a cotton ball as the chrysalis, and finally tissue paper that has been pinched together in the center as the butterfly.



Supplies:

- Paper plates
- Pencils
- Green markers
- Glue
- Pony beads
- Chenille stems cut into one-inch pieces
- Cotton ball
- Tissue paper cut into 1-by-2 rectangles

Say: Butterflies change a lot, don't they? Over their lives, they go through many different stages, each one interesting and beautiful, before they die, the final stage of the life cycle.

STORY CONNECTION

Say: If someone you care about has died, you might miss them a lot. We know that death is part of our life cycle, but that doesn't make it less hard and sad.

Say: It can be hard not to have that person here with you, and you want to remember them. God understands this well.

Say: When Jesus, God's Son, was on earth, living and working in Palestine, he did some really amazing things. He healed sick people, challenged religious rules, and included people that were the most unpopular and needed a friend the most. But many people did not like what he was doing. It was causing problems and challenging what they thought of as "normal." Jesus was arrested, put on trial, and killed.

Say: When Jesus knew what was about to happen and that he was going to die, he sat down and had a special meal with his friends. He loved his friends so much, and wanted them to be okay even when they grieved his death.

TIP: Telling the story in a calm, smooth voice will draw the children into the story.

Say: So God sent the Holy Spirit, who Jesus calls the “Comforter” or the “Companion,” to be with his friends. The Holy Spirit helped them to be brave, know that their sadness or questions were okay, and remember Jesus.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Ask: What do you think someone who is a comforter does? What does a companion do?

Say: Just like the Holy Spirit encourages us and helps us to remember Jesus, what he taught about, and how he healed people, the Holy Spirit can help us remember the people we love who have died. We can hold them in our hearts and love them even when they have died.

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

Experiencing and Being Comfort

Say: One way that we can show love for others is by writing them a letter or creating a picture for them. If someone you love has died, you can draw a picture or write a letter to them.

Say: Maybe you haven’t had the experience of death and loss, but you know someone who has. You can write a letter or draw a picture for them, letting your friend know that you love them and are caring for them in this sad time. It’s okay if you don’t know exactly the right words to say. Just saying, “I love you” and “I’m here,” is a big comfort when you’re sad.

Expressing Our Grief

Say: Job 1 tells the story of a man whose children died. When he heard the news, he “tore his clothes, shaved his head, fell to the ground, and worshipped” (1:20). In his culture, people grieved and expressed sadness with their bodies.

Ask: When you’re sad, whether because someone you love has died or for other reasons, what does your body feel like?

Say: Today we are going to make our own plans, either through drawing pictures or writing a list, of things we can do to express sadness with our bodies. We might cry, go for a walk, ask for a hug, snuggle our pet. You can add these ideas to your plan and come up with your own ideas.

Send home the “Practice and Reflection at Home” sheet on page 4 with each child. This will help engage the whole family in this spiritual practice together.

Supplies:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Markers

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION AT HOME

Today your child learned about and reflected on how God is with us when someone we love dies. This is one of life's toughest situations, one that is even difficult to navigate for adults. Before you continue to reflect at home, take a minute to check in with yourself. What are some of the emotions that come up when you think about losing someone you care about? Try writing down a word or two about what you are feeling or what the word *death* might make you think of. Ask your child these questions too. What feelings or association do they have? What worries or questions do they have about death and grief? It's okay if you don't have an answer for them. The invitation to talk with a trusted adult about these questions is a tremendous gift to your child.

If your child is struggling after the death of someone they love, don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it. Trusted ministers and counselors can help children and adults make sense of hard times and express our grief in healthy ways.

FURTHER READING

Death is a hard part of life. This week check out Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, a beautiful poem about the different seasons of our lives: some good and some bad, some happy and some sad.