

## **Questions**

Some parents have asked me or told me that their youth are asking some pretty serious questions in the reflecting on what has happened this past week. So, this is my attempt to pull together some resources and information that I have found to help your youth through.

First I want to say tell your youth that it is ok to ask the questions. As parents you don't have to have the answers. But here are some things to help guide the conversations. These are not "the right" answers. This is just some theology and information from resources.

### **How could this be God's will? Why would God let this happen?**

Scripture says that God mourns with those who mourn. I do not believe that God wants us to mourn. God does not want us to be hurt or sad. Unfortunately, we have free will. We have the free will to hurt others and ourselves. The fact of life is that accidents happen and we can learn from them.

What is now becoming a reality for these teenagers is that they have free will, the ability to make choices. Sometimes the consequences of those choices are very devastating. Some youth are not ready to realize or to hear this reality of this situation yet. But it is an opportunity to think about the choices we make each day and what the rewards and consequences might be. Youth think that awful things like this will never happen to them, they won't get caught, they won't get hurt, etc. Helping the youth see that we all make choices in life will help reconcile this difficult question.

### **Why do bad things happen to good people?**

We don't have solid answers for all these questions. But it does say in scripture that the sun shines on the good and on the bad. And the rain falls on the good and on the bad (Matt 5:45). God doesn't change the laws of the earth based on our behavior. We do not earn our salvation or our futures. Anything can happen to any of us at any time. Now that statement is scary. But our hope and faith comes in that God will guide us, that God will shine upon us, that God wants good things for us, and God will use the bad things for good for those who love God.

### **How are we as teenagers suppose to deal with this?**

-Together.

We deal with this together.

You are not alone. God is always with you.

We come together to hold each other up and support one another. It doesn't matter if you are an adult or teenagers know one knows exactly how to deal with this type of situation. It is ok to tell the youth that you are confused about this, you have questions, that you are sad. But also to reassure the youth that there is hope, they

will not feel like this forever. Tell them that we take it one day at a time and keep stepping forward and living life even though we live life with a new perspective.

### **Where is God now? Where is God for the families now?**

God is with us. God picks up every tear we shed and put into a bottle and keeps them. God knows what is like to lose a son and is grieving with us. God is with us. God is holding our hands and walking down this road with us. God is in the person who hugs us and comforts us. God is with the community that is surrounding these families providing food, money, and love. God is with us now and forever.

### **Other information found from online sources about dealing with grief:**

- Youth will either show all their feelings or none of their feelings. They will try to stay busy, and avoid their feelings. I have found that youth do not want to be alone. They are having problems sleeping at night because it is the only time they are alone and actually have to deal with their feelings. Tell them it is ok and healthy to cry, be upset, be mad, to laugh, to feel your feelings.
- Youth often trust their peers more than their parents or adults. They believe that other youth are the only ones who really understand how they feel and what they are going through. Relationships with friends are very deep and meaningful during a time like this. BUT do not assume that because the youth are gathering together they are receiving the right kinds of support and comfort. Let them know you are there too to hug, love, and listen.
- Be a good nonjudgmental listener. Let them come to you when they are ready. But tell them verbally, in a text message, in a note on their bedroom door that you are here for them. Let them know that you care in verbal ways beyond feeding them, buying them things, or giving hugs. Teens often need to be told that you love them, and that you care. Acknowledge their grief and offer your thoughts and prayers.
- Keep regular routines and habits. This will help them feel back to normal and safe. It will remind them of the firm loving foundation that is provided for them.
- No pressure but the youth and kids are watching you. Even if you are not talking about death with them they are learning how you handle death by how you are reacting.
- Don't be afraid to talk to them about death. You do not have to have all the answers. Tell them that we all find different answers about things during different stages in our lives. Coming to terms with death can be a life long process. But youth really do need adult guidance for the grief process and to learn how to cope with their feelings.
- The death of a friend or loved one shakes up their understanding of who they are and the world around them. As they go through the grief process their understanding of God also changes. Helping the youth turn to God through prayer and reading of scripture may help. Place scripture or prayers on a post-it note somewhere where they will see it.

- Sometimes religious sayings are confusing to youth. It almost sends mixed messages and makes them ask more questions. If we say “God is in control” yet this happens and it hurts all of us – that is confusing. When we say that our friends are happy and in heaven now – yet we are crying and mourn that is also confusing. So, please share some of the sadness about losing our friends, the sadness of not having their physical presence around us as well as some of those comforting sayings and beliefs. Don’t try to protect the youth from the grief that they are feeling anyway. Sharing their feelings and yours helps.
- Funerals – funerals are a way of getting closure, way of comprehending and coping, and it is part of the work of letting go that we all must do. If the youth wants to go to the funeral – let them or encourage them. But do not let them go alone. Even if they spend the entire time with their friends be in the room, or same place. This teaches everyone that we deal with death as a family and community. They have to realize that they are not alone with just their friends in their grief. Help prepare the youth for what they might see and hear at the funeral. Make sure they understand that everyone experiences grief in different ways some people may be laughing while others speechless.
- Your presence is important to the youth even if they act like it is not.

**Scripture to Help:**

Psalm 121

Psalm 23

John 14:1-3

Romans 8:26-27

Psalm 46:1-3, 10-11

Psalm 34:18

Psalm 56:8

It is taught: as one enters the world so does one depart.

One enters the world with a cry and departs with a cry.

One enters the world accompanied by weeping and departs from the world accompanied by weeping.

One enters the world amidst love and departs the world amidst love.

One enters the world with a sigh and departs the world with a sigh.

One enters the world without and knowledge and departs the world without knowledge.

**Five Stages Of Grief**

Denial and Isolation. At first, we tend to deny the loss has taken place, and may withdraw from our usual social contacts. This stage may last a few moments, or longer.

Anger. The grieving person may then be furious at the person who inflicted the hurt (even if she's dead), or at the world, for letting it happen. He may be angry with himself for letting the event take place, even if, realistically, nothing could have stopped it.

Bargaining. Now the grieving person may make bargains with God, asking, "If I do this, will you take away the loss?"

Depression. The person feels numb, although anger and sadness may remain underneath.

Acceptance. This is when the anger, sadness and mourning have tapered off. The person simply accepts the reality of the loss.

Help your family and each other recognize these stages. People do not go through the stages of grief through different ways. If you can recognize where you are and where the people are around you, you can understand

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