

Session 4 (Faith and grief)

Additional items needed:

Video 4

For some people, this session may be a great relief. If they have been able to talk at all about how their faith is being shaped and changed by grief, they've been met with opposition ("You shouldn't think that way") or fear ("You're losing your salvation.")

For other people, it may be unsettling and they may want to push back on the idea that our faith can change. Also, people need to be given space to talk about how faith has made a difference and been important for them. The balance to keep in this session is holding a space where everyone may be where they are without feeling judged by someone who is in a different place.

Remind them that this is not a place for arguing theology. This is a space where all grieving people are welcome as we work things out. This is a place where we can speak openly about our experience, regardless of if it's an experience of comfort or challenges. Remind them of the group value of listening. **If someone wants to argue, remind them of this, and invite them to share their personal experience. What has faith meant to you?**

You may also have to remind some people who want to talk at length to keep things brief in service of everyone having the space they need to share.

Welcome everyone. Pass out name tags.

Take a breath and light the candle, offering a prayer:

In life and in death, You are with us, O God.

In light and in darkness, You are with us, O God.

In our faith and in our questions,

in our belief and in our doubt,

You are yet with us, O God.
When we feel You near,
and when we wonder where You are,
may we trust in Your love
that does not let us go.

Begin by checking with them about the previous week's session, particularly if the closing circle was a powerful experience for the group. As leaders, you may reflect on what it was like for you to be so deeply present with them.

? Ask them, What comes to mind when you think about faith in the midst of grief?

? What comes to mind when I bring up Job?

We're going to look at this issue of faith more in depth in tonight's video, including Job's story. Also, in your workbook you have examples of biblical stories of grief.

*** Share video 4**

? Ask them: What in the video rang most true for you?

What was surprising?

Where and how do you express lament?

Encourage them to write their own psalm of lament at home, as directed in the workbook.

Take a short break

Divide up into groups of 3.

(You're at the halfway point. The group process has been designed to help group members begin to make connections with each other. By dividing the group into groups of three, the conversation may now go a little deeper, if they choose.)

Invite each group member to share in their small group how their experience of loss has affected and shaped their faith. Remind them that they only have to listen to each other, not fix or problem solve.

Use your judgment on the time limit for this. Allow at least 12-15 minutes, but if groups are engaged, you may extend the time.

? When you come back together in the large group, ask them if there's anything they want to share out of the smaller groups.

Share Michelle Cassandra Johnson's quote about grief and spiritual practice on p. 36 of the workbook.

? Ask them: What are some spiritual practices that you are finding helpful? Encourage them to continue what is helpful, and to consider some practices that may be new to them that are in the workbook.

Close the group with a prayer and blow out the candle.

After the participants have left, check in with each other.