

Lesson Three  
*Our Christian Response to Blessings and Challenges*

## **When a Loved One Dies Suddenly**

### **Goals**

- To better understand the emotions and pain that accompany the sudden death of a loved one.
- To learn one method of using Scripture to comfort the bereaved by pointing them to the context, the key comforting message, and the point of application of each Scripture passage.

### **Introduction**

1. For many people, the sudden death of a loved one seems more traumatic than the gradual loss of a loved one due to a terminal illness. Why do you think that is true?
  
2. In what ways is the sudden loss of a loved one less difficult than when a loved one dies following a long illness?

### **Life example**

Robert owned and operated a successful funeral home. Married for 42 years, he and his wife had three children. They both enjoyed good health, and they looked forward to retirement in a few years. Three days after Christmas, Darla received a phone call from a police officer, telling her that Robert had been taken to a local hospital after being involved in a car accident. At the hospital Darla was met by a doctor who explained that Robert had suffered massive injuries and had died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.

### **Reflections of faith**

What might be Darla's immediate reaction, upon hearing the news of Robert's death?

### **Light from the Word**

**Read Job 1:21.**

1. Give the background (context) of this statement by Job.
  
2. Identify the key message of comfort in the passage, which explains how Job could praise God in spite of his loss.

3. Comfort Darla by leading her to compare herself to Job. In what ways is she much like Job?
4. Read **John 11:25,26**. Identify the context and key message of comfort you would use as you comfort Darla.

## Breakout/discussion

In another lesson, When Someone We Love Is Afflicted with a Terminal Illness, we discussed Elizabeth Kübler-Ross' stages of grief. To a degree, both Christians and non-Christians follow the pattern of grieving described in the following illustration. (The normal progression would be from the bottom of the chart to the top.)

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul encourages us not to grieve like other people when a loved one has fallen asleep (died). Compare and contrast the difference between the grieving of a believer and an unbeliever. (Look at the context and the key message of comfort as you formulate your answer.)

## Life example

Darla struggled through the funeral. In a constant daze, she wept almost continuously. Nothing her children and grandchildren did or said seemed to offer her any help or comfort. Even though the funeral service seemed very comforting, and even though her pastor visited Darla six times during the three weeks after the funeral, Darla still acts as if she is in a daze.

## Light from the Word

Read Psalm 23:1-6.

1. Think of this psalm in the context of the life of King David, the psalm writer. He had walked through the valley of the shadow of death many times. Identify some of those times.
2. As you read Psalm 23, identify the many reasons David gives for finding comfort in the guidance of the heavenly Shepherd.

3. How would you use the words of Psalm 23 to comfort Darla?

## Life example

Two months have passed since Robert died. Darla has to make a lot of decisions in the next month because of the funeral home business, but she can't seem to make even simple decisions about going shopping or washing clothes. Her children live in different states and are not much help. To make matters worse, Darla doesn't want to see her family or you. But you refuse to let her isolate herself from her friends.

## Reflections of faith

1. Compare Darla's disposition to the stages-of-grief chart. What do you think is going on with her?
2. How can you help?

## Light from the Word

1. Read **Hebrews 13:5,6**. How would you use this passage to comfort Darla? (To help you, first determine the context of the passage and the message of comfort.)
2. Read **1 Corinthians 15:55-57**. Show how you would use this passage to encourage and comfort Darla.

## Breakout/discussion

What additional challenges trouble those who suffer the sudden death of a small child?

## Let's think about the lesson

List some of your highest priorities. Do they reflect an understanding that death can come suddenly?

What things can you do:

- To be prepared for your own death?
- To help loved ones in the event you would die suddenly?