



# pointing kids to the cross

LEARNING GOD'S PROMISE OF  
HEALING & COMFORT THROUGH LOSS  
BY TRACEY RUSSELL

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY  
WILL BE COMFORTED."

MATTHEW 5:4 (NIV)

Last year, my family was hit with the tragic death of my precious ten year old nephew. While trying to heal as a family, my beautiful mother died five months later. This deeply complicated our grief.

As a parent, I wanted to shelter my children from grief and the process of mourning the loss of a loved one. The Bible teaches that blessed people mourn or actively participate with the grief process, even children.

In mourning and expressing our pain, our precious Savior promises we will find his healing and comfort. As a friend recently told me, "You have to feel to truly heal!"

#### **MOURNING WITH TEARS**

Letting children cry or not cry is a healthy part of the mourning process and not something to be dreaded.

I learned it was better to hold my child when they cried instead of trying to talk them out of being sad. I now look at tears as a sign of honor for the person you loved and have lost.

#### **MOURNING WITH HOPE**

I will never be able to give my children back their loved one, but I can give them the hope of heaven. Verbalizing the biblical promises of eternal life gave

my children the hope of seeing that loved one again.

Our best moments as a family were sharing how amazing heaven is for our loved ones. My children especially enjoyed thinking of all the fun things their cousin and grandma might be doing together.

#### **MOURNING WITH HELP**

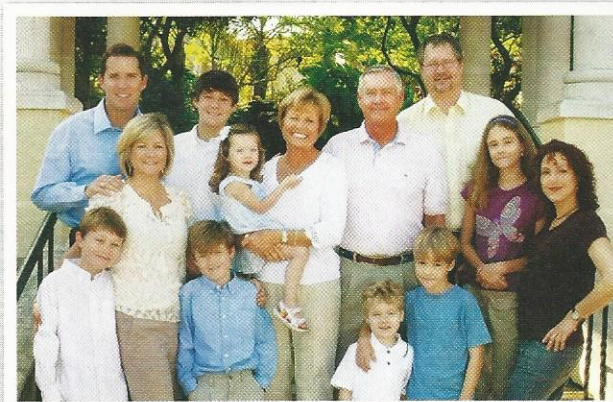
Getting help with mourning is a sign of strength not weakness. Every child mourns differently.

I watched as my children's behaviors changed, grades fell, attitudes flared, attention-spans diminished, and nothing seemed normal.

According to Allyson Moskowitz, director of the Bethany Center for Grieving Children, children need to be given permission and grace to struggle through loss just like adults.

One of the key concepts of grief counseling we learned is to "dose" the pain of mourning with a "dose" of fun. We would "dose" a family trip to the beach after a day of sadness.

Mourning the loss of a loved one is a long journey, but God can use the hurt of tragedy to reveal unexpected treasures in our hearts.



*Tracey Russell, pictured at left with members of her extended family, lives in Lakeland with her husband Mark and their children Chase, Holt, Trey, and Faith. She has written articles for Proverbs 31 Magazine and Parent Life. She attends First Baptist Church at the Mall in Lakeland. In addition, she has led three mission trips to Guatemala and is currently working on raising funds for Orphan's Heart through in-home coffee events. She dedicates this article to the memory of her nephew Phillip Gompf and to other families who have lost a child.*

## Help for the Grief Process

Be proactive. Contact your local hospice agency to find out about free grief counseling services.

Be honest about what you need when people ask if they can help.

Be ready to find support. Reach out to supportive friends for you and your child.

Be an advocate for your child, and tell teachers and caregivers about your child's situation.

Be realistic about the grief process and expectations. It takes lots of time to heal, and it can be difficult.

Be willing to take grief in "doses" and don't forget a "dose" of family fun.