

# Issue 35 — Helping Children Walk Through Loss: Don't Shield, Shepherd

## Messy Story of the Week

The question came quietly, but it landed heavy.

“Do I have to look at her?”

A parent paused, unsure how much to say. Unsure how much their child should see. Unsure if bringing them at all had been the right decision.

Around them, people moved through the familiar rhythms of a funeral—soft conversations, shared memories, the weight of something sacred and final.

The child stayed close, watching everything.

Not with fear.

With curiosity.

“What happens next?”

“Why is everyone crying?”

“Where is she now?”

None of the questions were complicated.

But the answers felt like they carried more than words.

There's a quiet instinct many parents feel in moments like this—to protect their children from the weight of grief. To soften it. To delay it. To keep them just a little removed from the reality of death.

But standing there, in the middle of it, something else becomes clear:

Children are already noticing.

Already asking.

Already trying to make sense of what they see.

The question isn't whether they will experience grief.

The question is whether they will have someone to guide them through it.

## Faithful God Then and Now

**“There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.” — Ecclesiastes 3:4**

God does not separate sorrow from the rhythms of life.

He includes it.

There is a time to weep.

A time to mourn.

Not as interruptions.

Not as detours.

But as part of what it means to live in a world where love is real—and so is loss.

Children are not outside of this reality.

They are growing into it.

And part of our role as parents is not to keep them from these moments...  
but to walk with them through them.

To show them that grief is not something to fear.

That questions are welcome.

That sadness and hope can exist in the same space.

Because the same God who meets us in our grief...  
meets them too.

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## What We Can Learn

- **Children don't need to be shielded from grief—they need guidance through it.** Avoiding the topic doesn't protect them; it leaves them to make sense of it alone.
- **Exposure builds understanding before a crisis hits.** Experiencing funerals and loss in a supported environment helps prepare them for future grief.
- **Kids process grief differently than adults.** They may ask questions, then go play, then return with more questions later. This is normal.
- **Simple, honest answers build trust.** You don't need perfect words—just truthful, age-appropriate ones.
- **Participation helps children engage with reality.** Giving them a small role (drawing a picture, bringing a flower, writing a note) helps them process what is happening.

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## Behind the Curtain

In coaching, I often see parents wrestling with a deep tension when it comes to their children and grief.

They want to protect them.

From pain.

From fear.

From experiencing something too heavy, too soon.

And that instinct makes sense.

But what I've seen over time is that children are far more capable of engaging hard realities than we often expect—especially when they are not left alone in it.

What tends to create more difficulty is not exposure to grief...  
but confusion about it.

When children sense that something is wrong but no one is talking about it...

When they are given vague or conflicting answers...

When they are quietly removed from important moments without explanation...

They don't feel protected.

They feel unsure.

Children don't need full explanations or adult-level understanding.

But they do need clarity.

They need to know what is happening.

They need permission to ask questions.

They need to see that sadness is something that can be expressed—not avoided.

And just like adults, they don't process everything at once.

They revisit it.

A question today.

Another one next week.

A new layer months later.

That's not a sign that something is wrong.

It's how they grow in their understanding.

Your role is not to control how they experience grief.

It's to stay close enough to guide them as they do.

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## **Faithful Family Tools**

If you're navigating hard conversations or uncertain moments with your children, you don't have to figure it out on your own:

### **On Facebook:**

Faithful Families | Christian Marriage and Parenting Help | Facebook

### **Work with me:**

Start the application process

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## **Faith Step for the Week**

This week, create space for one honest conversation.

Instead of avoiding the topic, gently ask:

“What questions do you have?”

Then listen—without rushing to correct or close the conversation.

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## **Bible Passage**

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1–8**

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## **2-Minute Practice**

Think about your own experience with grief growing up.

- What were you told about death?
- What was clear... and what was confusing?
- What do you wish someone had explained to you?

Then ask:

“How can I offer my child more clarity than I had?”

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## Prayer

Lord,

You see our desire to protect our children.

You know the tension we feel when we want to shield them from pain, but also prepare them for the realities of life.

Give us wisdom to know when to step in and when to stay present.  
Help us speak with honesty and gentleness, without fear of saying the wrong thing.

Teach us how to guide our children through grief in a way that builds trust, not confusion.

And remind us that You are with them too—  
in their questions, their emotions, and their growing understanding.

Amen.

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## Coming Next

Next week, we’re going to talk about something many of us feel unsure about—how to support someone who is grieving.

What do you say?  
What do you do?  
What actually helps?

We’ll walk through simple, meaningful ways to show up—without pressure to fix, and without fear of getting it wrong.

Because loving someone in grief isn’t about having the right words...  
it’s about being willing to stay.

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One more to go. Want me to roll straight into **Issue #4** so you’ve got the full set ready?