Engage: Phone
Participant Questions

This study is drawn from 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14.

Have you ever received a telephone call in the middle of the night? Share the first thoughts that came to mind as the telephone rang.

It’s been said that all the losses in our lives are simply “dress rehearsals” for the death of one we hold dear. Discuss this statement and whether or not you agree or disagree.

We grieve for many reasons: job loss, the death of a loved one, a breakup or divorce, or even the rejection of an idea we had “put a lot of heartbeats into.” What losses are you grieving right now?

The death of a friend or loved one always leaves a deep emotional wound. Talk about a time when you experienced such a loss and how God granted you peace to accept this life-changing event. Perhaps you even said “thank you” as the man in our video did.

God does not leave us without hope when grief strikes. First Thessalonians 4:13–14 is one example of how God comes to us in our time of grief. What hope is found in these words? Talk about how you might use these words from 1 Thessalonians to bring comfort to the grieving.

Prayer: Close your time together by reading Psalm 34:18–22 as a prayer.
Engage: Phone
Leader Guide

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.
For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.
(1 Thessalonians 4:13–14)

Participant Question and Answer Guide:

ASK: Have you ever received a telephone call in the middle of the night? Share the first thoughts that came to mind as the telephone rang.

Think about: While many in your group may have received such a “middle of the night” experience, there may be some who have not. Allow those who have share their experiences with such phone calls. Usually the first thoughts that come to mind are such things as wondering what bad news awaits the answering of the telephone. As leader, you may want to have an example in mind as a discussion starter.

SAY: It’s been said that all the losses in our lives are simply “dress rehearsals” for the death of one we hold dear. Discuss this statement and whether or not you agree or disagree.

Think about: Life is indeed filled with losses; some more tragic than others. There is truth in the above saying. Our losses prepare us to face the heartache that accompanies the loss of a loved one. In each loss in our own life we learn not to put our trust in others or in things (“false gods”) but in the one true God who brings comfort and hope in all situations.

SAY: We grieve for many reasons: job loss, the death of a loved one, a breakup or divorce, or even the rejection of an idea we had “put a lot of heartbeats into.” What losses are you grieving right now?

Think about: Answers will vary. Some in your group may have recently experienced a reason for grieving. For others, the grieving may be part of a distant past brought to light again by this topic. Allow all participants the opportunity to share, if they so desire. Not everyone will want to share. If you bring an example into the discussion time, you may find it helpful if others are reluctant to share. Examples you might choose from your own life may be such things as what grief you experienced at the death of a loved one, or the grief you felt at the loss of a job.

Talk about how this grieve affected your relationship with others. In instances of the death of a spouse, for example, the friends of the couple may no longer invite the widowed spouse to join in their activities. How friends reacted to your loss is another good discussion topic. What words of comfort did they bring to you? How did their attempts to comfort you bring unintended pain instead?

SAY: The death of a friend or loved one always leaves a deep emotional wound. Talk about a time when you experienced such a loss and how God granted you peace to accept this life-changing event. Perhaps you even said “thank you” as the man in our video did.
Think about: Talk about how God’s Spirit instills faith within us that enables us to cope with grief. It is this faith that puts what has been described as a “scab” over this deep emotional wound. We know that this wound never really heals, and on anniversary dates or important life milestones, this scab will be torn off again. Foundationally, it is important for us to remember that in all instances of grief, God is the cure-giver; we are not. The book Don’t Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart by Stephen Ministry founder Kenneth C. Haugk provides an excellent resource for those ministering to the grieving. So, too, does C.S. Lewis’ A Grief Observed. Some congregations provide aid to the grieving through Grief Share.

SAY: God does not leave us without hope when grief strikes. First Thessalonians 4: 13–14 is one example of how God comes to us in our time of grief. What hope is found in these words? Talk about how you might use these words from 1 Thessalonians to bring comfort to the grieving.

Think about: Our first inclination when attempting to comfort the grieving is to make remarks like, “God didn’t mean for this to happen, but when sin entered the world, everything went haywire.” Theologically, we know that our grief is the consequence of sin, but still this offers little comfort to those left to grieve. Often, the best thing we can do is simply be there and listen to those who are hurting. At the same time, here are some words to consider during your discussion. In this example, a family has just learned the tragic test results—their daughter of twenty-one is dying of cancer. To bring comfort, we might say:

“Our desire is most certainly that Sarah might survive her battle with cancer, yet none of us here knows the mind of God. None of us here is guaranteed a tomorrow. We must let God be God. What we do know is that Sarah believes in Jesus Christ. We know she places her faith in God and gives a bold witness on His behalf. We know that Jesus Christ paid the price of Sarah’s sins on the cross. He took those sins upon Himself and died for them. We know that on Easter He rose from the dead and promised eternal life to those who believe in Him. We also know that one day we will be reunited with fellow believers (a paraphrase of 1 Thessalonians 4: 13–14). All these things we know. That means that whether God allows Sarah to remain with us a while longer or if He chooses to take her to be with Him . . . Sarah wins.”

Prayer: Close your time together by reading Psalm 34:18–22 as a prayer.

Think about: In times of grief, God does not leave us without hope. As this psalm relates, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit” (v. 18). Through the power of His Holy Spirit God leads us to put our faith and trust in Him. He alone provides the comfort in our time of grief. He also uses you and me as His hands and feet to minister to the brokenhearted.