

GONE TOO SOON

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STUFF YOU WILL NEED

- **Before the session**, contact the members of your group and ask them to bring pictures of loved ones who have died.
- pencils
- paper
- Bibles
- cloth
- flowers
- candles
- large sheets of paper
- markers

CHECKING IN

Before you meet together, take a few minutes to be still and to pray. Pray for each person in your small group. Open the session with the exercise below; then talk together about the questions that follow.

Invite group members to create an altar using a piece of cloth, fresh flowers, candles, and the pictures of their loved ones who have died. They may want to use a large sheet of paper or dry-erase board to write the names of other people who have died. Encourage youth to choose music to play in the background during the reflection time.

Invite group members to spend a few minutes in quiet reflection around the altar. Then ask them to discuss the questions below. Try not to rush; allow people to talk as much as they need.

Whose picture or name did you bring to the altar?

How did this person die? How long ago did he or she die?

How did you feel when he or she died? How are you now?

EXPLORING THE WORD

Scripture: Lamentations 3:32, Matthew 5:4, John 13:33–35, Romans 8:28

Choose one of these activities:

Option 1: Post on a large sheet of paper the scripture references and questions listed below. Ask group members to find places in the room where they can be alone and quiet. Invite them to look up the scriptures and to write brief responses to the questions. Ask people to form small groups to talk about the scripture verses or questions that were most helpful to them.

Option 2: If you have more time, ask people to form small groups. Give each group a large sheet of paper and some markers. Ask the members of each group to read the scripture passages and to discuss the questions listed below. Then invite them to create a mural that represents their grief and the comfort offered in scripture.

- Lamentations 3:32
How has God shown you compassion when you were grieving?
- Matthew 5:4
How have you been comforted? How have you comforted others?
- Romans 8:28
How has God has worked for good through death and sorrow?
- John 13:33–35
How does Jesus want us to live in the face of death?

SHARING IN PRAYER

Invite the group to pray responsively, reading the lines in boldface type:

Step into our midst, Holy God.

Step into our pain and suffering.

Walk alongside us, Lord.

Step into our midst, Holy God.

*Listen to our hurt, our feelings of loss,
and see the absence in our hearts.*

Step into our midst, Holy God.

*Weave a story that tells about
the life we have lost.*

Amen.

Encourage people to speak aloud the names of people who have died too soon or to tell a story that captures their personalities.

Then invite the group to pray again:

Into your hands, O God,

we all commit ourselves.

Into your presence, O God,

may we walk daily.

Beside us and all around us, O God.

may you be forever.

Help us to continue to tell stories

to keep memories and friendships alive forever.

Amen.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Write a note to the parent, friend, or sibling of a person who has died.