

# Bible Studies for Life: December 6

*Walking in Grief • Psalm 116: 1-9, 15-17*

*By Bobby McKay*



McKay

Lessons in theology are everywhere! Have you taken the time to ponder how God reveals Himself to us daily? These glimpses of the Almighty usually catch us by surprise. It could be in the pick-up line after school, waiting on the train to amble through the crossing in front of you, or perhaps hearing the voice of a loved one after an extended absence.

These moments are seldom scheduled on our calendars, yet they are always appreciated. One such example is the cartoon section of the newspaper. One day while perusing the “funny paper” as older folks used to call it, my eyes drifted toward the Peanuts strip. In some since-forgotten details, Charlie Brown was having a bad day. He threw his head back and shouted to the skies, “Good grief!” While I doubt the declaration changed the situation, it did allow Charlie to express what he was feeling at the time.

This is where we find ourselves for these next few weeks of Bible study together. I am aware many churches are still not meeting on campus for Sunday School or small group ministry, so if you’re reading this as part of your quiet time or devotion, I deeply thank you.

Over the course of the next six sessions, we will examine some basic human emotions we all face at one point or another and we will place them under a biblical lens. Hopefully, by doing this, we can better manage and respond appropriately.

The first emotion we will consider is that of grief. Perhaps more than any other emotion, grief is one of which no one is immune. Consider again the words of our guest theologian for this lesson, Charlie Brown: *Good Grief*. At first glance, those two words could not be more different.

Think about the grief you have experienced with the passing of someone you loved. As hard as it was to walk through that grief, it was indicative of something even greater and more lasting. That “something” is love. The deeper the love you give and receive, the deeper the grief will be when a season of loss comes.

Grief, in a peculiar way, reminds us of the lingering effects of devotion and care long after our loved one is gone. There are indeed steps or stages in the grieving process but I have also discovered, both as a pastor and personally, grief is messy.

Grief is unpredictable. Grief does not discriminate and really lacks in the manners department. Grief is triggered by a song, a smell, and most surprisingly, for no reason at all. Grief is a natural response but it should not have the final say in our situation.

Through it all, God is there. He may not answer all our questions. We may even have a bout of doubt or depression, but He is still there. As a Christian, you will find His presence is the most lasting and comforting aspect of your faith.

After the death of a loved one, it is customary in our area for people to express their sympathy with phone calls, cards/letters, visits, and the ever-popular casserole. There will come a day while you are still in the grieving process

that the phone does not ring, the mailbox will bear no cards, and the smell of cold leftovers permeates the kitchen. That is the moment God is with you.

When you feel forgotten or alone, He is with you. In fact, He always was and He always will be. Psalm 116 reminds us of the grace and compassion of God in times of grief and sorrow. Allow me to provide a brief teaching outline that may help you in your study of grief:

- Reach out to God (Psalm 116:1-4). When grief comes, to whom/where do you go? Only God can satisfy.
- Rest in the compassion of God (Psalm 116:5-9). The compassion of God is without error. It is adequate for peace and essential for healing and emotional strength.
- Rely on God in dark times (Psalm 116:15-17). There is a realization that comes with trusting God in hard times. We recall the countless number of times God has proven Himself to us. He is faithful. We only need to pause, remember, and give Him thanks.

We may never fully see our grief as good, but we know God is. We can relate once again to good ol' Charlie Brown when he said he believes some days are better than others. We also know because of Jesus, one day there will be no more grief, sorrow, or loss. What a great day that will be. Who knows? Maybe on that day, even Lucy will allow Charlie Brown to finally kick the football without moving it!

*McKay is pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Brookhaven.*