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# LIFE TEEN PARENT LETTER

*Check out our Parent Life website at [lparentlife.com](http://lparentlife.com) for resources on how to guide your teen in a faith-filled way through modern day culture!*

## **LIFE NIGHT: LITERALLY DEAD**

### **CONTENT OVERVIEW**

As humans, we are created to experience emotions. We experience happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, and surprise. Even the Church recognizes humans as emotive and teaches that Jesus also experienced these same emotions (CCC 464, 1767). Emotionally healthy human beings are in a constant pursuit of happiness. We know there are many things in life that make us happy: coffee in the morning, getting to work on time, checking off tasks on our to-do lists, spending time with our loved ones, being caught up on laundry, petting the dog, and having a glass of wine at the end of the day. On a larger scale, we also believe that many other things can and would make us happy: buying a new car, landing our dream job, taking a long overdue vacation, receiving lots of likes on a post on social media, getting a bonus at work, and paying off our credit card debt. When we do not receive these things, no matter how little or big, we tend to experience different emotions like sadness, frustration, and impatience.

Our happiness relies on specific people, places, things, and events. While we spend a great deal of time pursuing happiness, we may not realize that a relationship with Jesus is the key to true, fulfilling, and lasting happiness, as well as lasting peace and joy. Joy, unlike happiness, is internal and is not dependent on external situations, people, places, or things. Joy is an internal feeling that is rooted in Jesus. We can be people of joy, even during times we may not be experiencing happiness and even when things in life turn out differently than how we may have planned or expected.

Throughout this Life Night series, we will be talking about emotions. Our emotions are a part of who we are. It is our challenge and task to become aware of these emotions and use our emotions for good. When we realize that Jesus is the source of joy and peace, we can develop a deeper relationship with Christ. This is the key to fulfilling and lasting joy and peace, regardless of what emotions we experience throughout our lives.

### **CONVERSATION STARTERS**

1. Are you happy? What makes you happy? What keeps you from being happy?
2. Do you look to Jesus as a source of joy and peace? Why or why not?
3. Can someone be joyful even when they are not happy? How?

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## **LIFE NIGHT: LOWKEY UPSET**

### **CONTENT OVERVIEW**

Sadness is a common human emotion that is typically caused by something that is unexpected or the opposite of what we desire. We experience sadness from a very young age and continue to experience it throughout our lives to various degrees, depending on the situation that evokes sadness. Sadness can be caused by not getting our way or something we expected, such as not getting a job we wanted. Sadness can also be caused by someone else, like when someone shares hurtful and damaging words. On a deeper level, sadness can be caused by difficult experiences, such as dealing with a serious medical condition, divorce, or addiction. Our sadness can also turn to grief especially if dealing with the loss of a loved one. Sometimes, even though we experience these degrees of sadness, we run and hide from them, pretending they do not exist.

As people of faith, we must understand that even Jesus experienced the emotion of sadness in His life when confronted with the sins of others and witnessing injustice. Jesus also experienced grief due to the death of His friend, Lazarus (John 11:1-44). While Jesus knew He would eventually raise Lazarus from the dead, He was not exempt from seeing the effects of Lazarus' death on other people or from experiencing grief Himself. Jesus, in His humanity, acknowledged the emotion of sadness and used it to glorify God.

We are called to acknowledge the emotion of sadness and understand that, while it may be difficult at times, we will eventually experience happiness, as well. We are challenged to be honest with our sadness, open to understanding what exactly it is that causes our sadness, and courageous enough to embrace it, as it does not last forever. Through all of the sadness we experience in life, we continue to find joy and hope through the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is our hope!

### **CONVERSATION STARTERS**

1. Has there been a time in your life when you experienced a great amount of sadness? What events or experiences caused this sadness?
2. How do you typically deal with sadness? Do you embrace it, knowing you will also experience happiness, or do you run from it and hide it?
3. Read the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44). What emotions are present in this story from all those, including Jesus, who are involved? What does it mean to you that "Jesus wept"?

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## **LIFE NIGHT: CLAP BACK**

### **CONTENT OVERVIEW**

Have you ever lost your temper and reacted in a way that was hurtful to a situation or, more specifically, another person? We have all had situations play out differently than we originally expected, and there are times when we responded in anger and rage. Maybe this happens to you while driving down the street, when someone cuts you off and forces you to slam on your breaks. It might happen at work when someone in the office, or perhaps a customer, says something that was uncalled for, unexpected, or rude. Perhaps this happens when you receive less than expected service at a restaurant or any other place of business. Whatever the cause, an angry response is often automatic when we perceive an injustice or potential harm.

Like happiness and sadness, we all experience anger. Anger itself is not a negative emotion; however, out of control anger can lead to behavior with negative and even sinful effects. When anger is not managed properly, it causes harm to ourselves, others, or both.

Jesus experienced anger, but He used His anger for good (John 2:13-17). Jesus was able to experience anger and respond with righteous behavior to an injustice. Jesus geared His anger towards love, and we are called to do the same.

We must be willing to share and talk about our anger. The more we are open and honest about our anger, identifying the triggers that make us angry, the more we can have the ability to control our anger in certain situations. Through our baptism, we are given a universal call to love as Jesus loved. Ultimately, in any emotional situation, this is the goal. Jesus, out of love, was able to express anger. We are called, out of love, to recognize that which makes us angry and respond with love, not rage and hate.

### **CONVERSATION STARTERS**

1. Have you ever lost your temper or experienced an emotional hijack? What was the effect or outcome of the expression of your anger?
2. Have you ever expressed your anger for good, speaking out against injustice or potential harm?
3. Why is it important for us to recognize the things that make us angry? How can discussing our anger help us make better decisions in the future?

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## LIFE NIGHT: STAN

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

If you were to do a Google search for popular songs about love, you would discover thousands of results and countless lists. Though the genre of music may differ, each song was written to capture the emotion of love. The same would be true if you were to search for the best love movies of all time. Whether songs, movies, poems, art, books, or blogs, the topic of love has been written about, sung about, and expressed more than any other emotion. Unfortunately, we have used the word love interchangeably with things we find immense enjoyment in, such as the “love” of tacos, dogs, or coffee in the morning. True love, however, goes beyond an emotional response... especially when we speak of the love we share with our spouses, children, family, and friends. Love is not just feelings or emotions; love is something that we do.

Simply put, love is to will the good of the other. This definition may be slightly different than our cultural definition of love. While our culture focuses on “what is in it for me” when it comes to love, our Christian definition reminds us that love is an outward expression, centered on the wellbeing of another person. Love is generous, as it gives to the other in response to their needs. True love, then, is always focused on good. It is focused on asking what is best for the person whom we love. No matter who the person is — our parents, friends, or classmates — what is best for them is always the same. Love points others toward heaven, not just toward happiness.

Jesus was the ultimate example of love. Jesus walked with people, seeing them for who God created them to be. He met people where they were, treated them with dignity and respect, provided for their needs, and called them to repentance regardless of their ethnic background or social status. Walking with people eventually leads Jesus to lay His life down by taking up the cross and dying for all of us. Jesus shows us what true, sacrificial love is about. When we look at the cross, we see the ultimate symbol of love and selfless sacrifice.

Jesus loves each of us with a deep, sacrificial love, and we are called to love the people He placed in our lives in the same way. This is the final challenge of this Life Night series: to love as Jesus loved, constantly willing the good of others in small ways, and even laying down our lives for someone, if necessary. We can never underestimate how our love for other people is on display through our actions, both big and small. The small, daily tasks we do for other people may be tedious or repetitive, but they can be signs of love for others. The larger things we experience and do are also incredible signs of our love. We are called to reach out to others, willing good for them, loving them, and sharing the love of Jesus with them each day.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. How do you define love? What songs or movies depict true love?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. How is this definition of love different than our cultural definition of love? Is this how you would define love?
3. What has been the biggest challenge for you throughout this Life Night series?