SHIFT

• During the years since we began offering GriefShare, our program for grieving adults, we’ve identified a largely unmet need: Addressing the grief children experience through biblically-focused, Christ-centered ministry.

• In the fall of 2015, we launched Shift, a curriculum written by several Watermark members, all of whom have experience either with loss or childhood and teenage development. It serves kids grades 3 through 12 and will eventually be expanded to minister to children K through 2.

Why Shift?

• The name refers to the upheaval – similar to a seismic shift – that kids typically experience when death has claimed a loved one.

• Statistics show that one in five children will lose a loved one or friend before the age of 18.

• Over the years we have found that widows and widowers with children will hold off seeking help for their own grief because they are hoping to find a solution that will meet the needs of the whole family. The alternatives thus are secular programs or Christian counseling, which for some can be cost-prohibitive.

• Many children have difficulty opening up to peers or school counselors because loss makes them feel different at a time in their lives when they desperately want to fit in.

How does Shift work?

• Each session begins with a family dinner for Shift kids and their parents/caregivers (many of whom are enrolled in GriefShare). Different volunteers prepare the meal each week and provide it at no charge. This enables families to transition easily from the busy day into ministry time. Both Shift and GriefShare begin once dinner is over.

• The kids meet with peers – 3rd - 5th graders together, 6th - 9th graders together, and 10th - 12th graders together. The class material is adapted to each age group.
Each two-hour session features small-group discussion time, play time, craft time, game time, and teaching time.

Each week the kids receive a short lesson to guide them through some insight on grief from Scripture and some questions for reflection to discuss the following week.

At pick-up, parents receive a summary of the material their child covered that evening and some ideas for initiating dialogue during the week between sessions.

The feedback from the first two semesters has been very positive. Parents have said that their kids actually look forward to Tuesday nights because being around peers who relate to them makes them feel less conspicuous. The kids have reported that they feel safe when they’re at Shift to talk honestly about how they’re feeling.

Is a curriculum available?

For now we are still refining the content but we hope to be able to make it available to other churches and ministries in the future.

If you have any questions about Shift or would like to be notified when the curriculum is finalized, please get in touch with us at Shift@Watermark.org.