

Youth Culture Lesson  
November 10

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**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
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**Precious Letters**  
Dying Child Leaves Notes for Her Family

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**What Happened:**

In 2006, Elena Desserich, 5, was diagnosed with brain cancer.

During the next 256 days, she fought the disease as her family watched her struggle. The cancer slowly robbed her ability to walk, speak and write. In 2007, Elena died, leaving behind parents, grandparents, a sister and a pet Chihuahua.

Shortly after her death, Elena's parents began finding notes all around the house: in sock drawers, CD cases and bookshelves. There were dozens of them, and they were hidden so cleverly that months sometimes went by before they found another one.

They family members still are finding them.

Many of them, scrawled in Elena's kindergarten print, simply say, "I Love You." Others, probably written after the cancer robbed Elena's ability to write, are colorful pictures.

One was written to Elena's beloved Chihuahua.

For Elena's parents, the notes have been the deepest blessing imaginable – so much so they've become the basis for a Web site ([notesleftbehind.com](http://notesleftbehind.com)), and soon a book – the proceeds of which will go to further cancer research. They believe Elena left the notes to remind them of her and how much she loved them.

"Around the holidays, we went to the mall and saw everyone walking around buying things...every last item on their list," said Keith Desserich, Elena's father. "But they were not thinking about the holiday season. We were walking around with Elena, knowing the true meaning of the holiday."

**Talk About It:**

It sometimes can be hard to tell the folks closest to you how much you care about them. How do you let your family members know how much they mean to you? Your friends?

Have you ever suffered the loss of a loved one? How did you get through your grief?  
What do you miss the most about the person? What do you remember the most?

**What the Bible Says:**

I am weary with my moaning  
Every night I flood my bed with tears;  
I drench my couch with my weeping.  
My eye wastes away because of grief.  
(Ps. 6:7)

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;  
My eye is wasted from grief;  
My soul and my body also.  
For my life is spent with sorrow,  
And my years with sighing.  
(Ps. 31:9-10)

Can a woman forget her nursing child,  
That she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?  
Even these may forget,  
Yet I will not forget you.  
(Isa. 49:15)

You will forget your misery;  
You will remember it as waters that have passed away.  
(Job 11:16)