




WHAT DO I LIVE FOR NOW?

13 SESSION

“WHAT’S NEXT? WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?” How do I get there? What if I don’t think I’m ready?” In order for your pain to subside, you have to reengage in life and move forward. This week we’ll offer advice for moving forward in your grief in a way that honors your loved one and God.

The video, discussion time, and workbook exercises are filled with advice on how to continue moving forward. You’ll learn:

-  Why moving forward is a necessity
-  Why it’s a process
-  Why peace and pain will always coexist

VIDEO OUTLINE

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words, or questions you have while viewing the video.

MOVING FORWARD (5th goal of your grief journey)

A necessity

It’s a process

Dealing with stress & anxiety (Matthew 6:34)

“If I only ever look in the rearview mirror, I’m not going to be able to go forward” –Sandy Elder

Ask for help

Know what you need (Galatians 6:2)

Visiting a counselor

Store memories (6th goal of your grief journey)

Using stored memories

Remember & continue the legacy

A reason for hope

Peace & pain coexist (John 16:33)

"If you don't know your purpose, this is a great opportunity to begin to discover it." –Sabrina D. Black

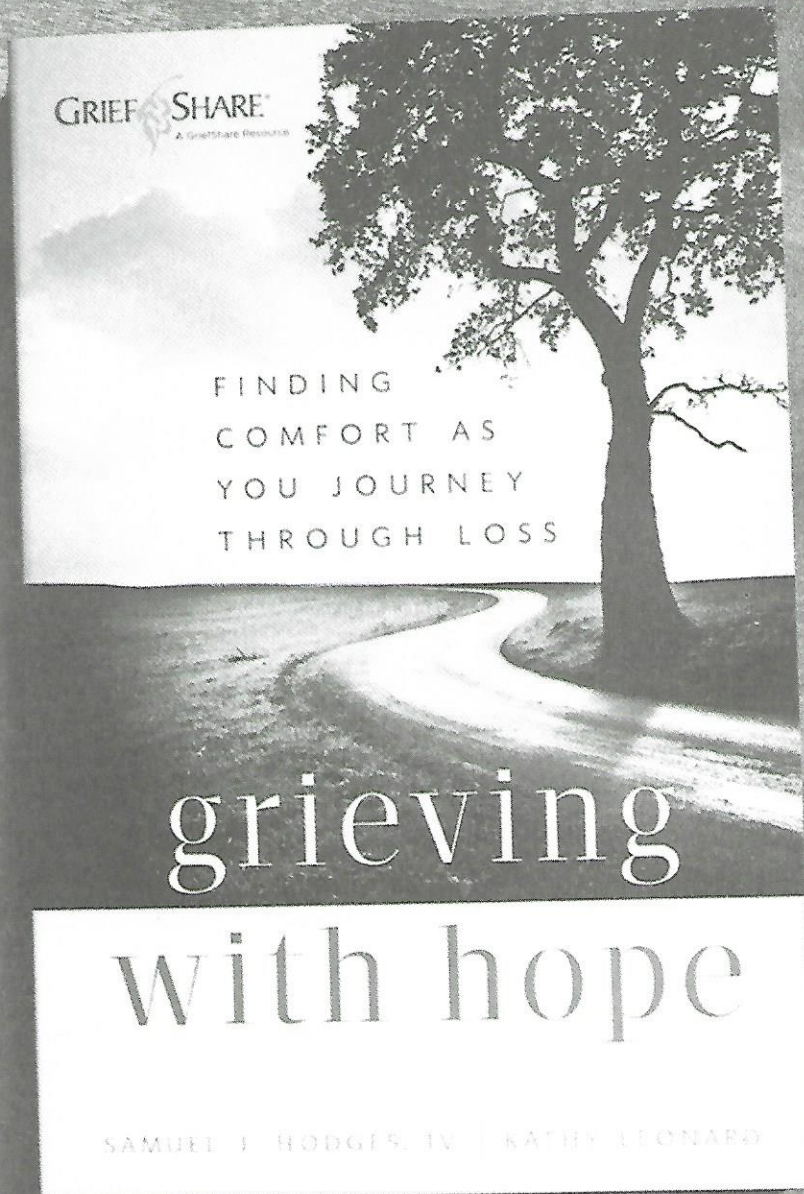


In this week's From Mourning to Joy exercises ...

You'll learn keys to moving forward in a way that's healthy, while still cherishing your loved one's memory and legacy.

"Stay in the day. Focus on what God has brought to you today." -Julie Ganschow

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WILL LIFE RETURN TO NORMAL?

AN EXCERPT FROM *GRIEVING WITH HOPE*

Will life return to normal? Since you have lost someone who will never return to you, unfortunately, the short answer is no. But instead of longing for things to return to normal, you should prepare for a new normal.

“A new normal is sometimes starting new traditions, dropping traditions that don’t work anymore or that are too painful to enter into. A new normal is thinking about my daughter in the past tense. A new normal is trying to keep her memory active, even though she is not here.” –Doug

“A new normal is accepting the fact that I no longer have a diaper baby; I went from having a toddler to my next child, who was then four years of age. A new normal is that we no longer have five boys; we only have four. It’s hard to know how

to answer people when they ask me, ‘How many children do you have?’ A new normal is accepting the fact that things will never be the same and gradually allowing your life to find a pattern again.” –Sharon

“I remember the first time I had to fill out an application, and I checked ‘married.’ Then I looked at it and thought, ‘No, I’m not married anymore.’ It was ‘til death do us part. I didn’t want to put single, and I definitely didn’t want to put widow. If I put widow, it would just cement the fact that he was gone. But I scratched out ‘married,’ and I checked ‘widow.’

“Well, now it’s normal. It’s normal for me to check ‘widow.’ It’s normal for me to be a single mom, supporting my children.” –Rochelle



Some people are concerned that they are being disloyal to their deceased loved one by trying to move forward or “create a new normal.” Think of it more as “How can I move forward in a way that honors the memory of my loved one?” As you walk forward day by day, carry special memories of your loved one with you and share them with other people, perhaps through a photograph or memento. Consider what character lessons and insights you learned from your loved one. Live them out, and pass them on to others.

Think about how much more those actions honor your loved one than constantly referring to how bad things are without your loved one or saying, “I can’t do that new thing. My loved one and I never did it that way before.” Choosing to remain stuck in your ways will result in grief becoming your identity. That’s not what God wants for you. And if you think about it, it’s not what you really want for yourself.

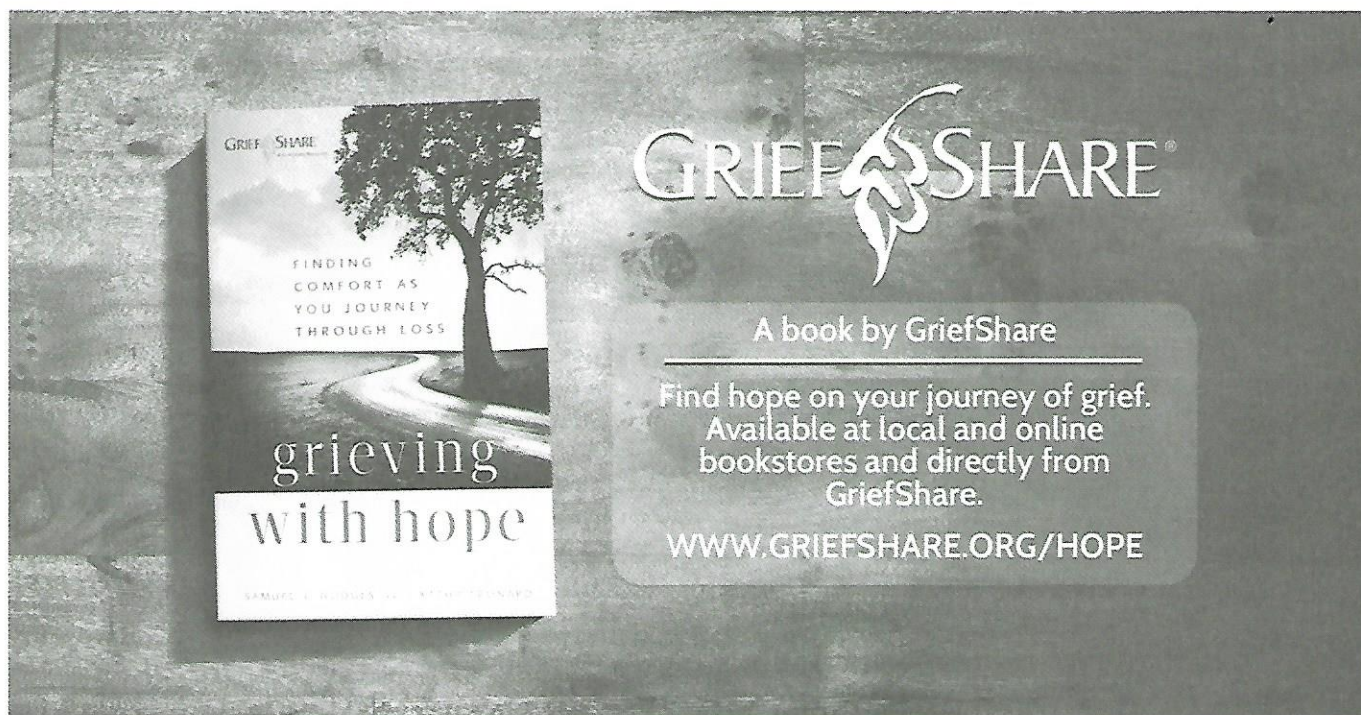
“It’s important in the grief process to recognize that you have to have a new normal because the old ‘normal’ will not return. I spent a number of years thinking, ‘Sometime I’m going to feel normal

again.’ I finally realized I’m never going to feel like I did when Jack was alive because he’s not here. That fact alone means we have to have a new normal, and if you don’t recognize that, you’re trying to do something that’s impossible to do. You can’t go back. You can’t relive the past, and if you’re striving to do that, you’re going to be continually frustrated.

“Tell yourself and tell your children, if you have children, ‘It’s never going to feel again like it felt when ___ was alive, but we’re going to have a new normal, and that’s going to be what we build the future on. Pain will be there, and it will be different, but with God’s help, we’re going to have a full life and be blessed.’” –Lois Rabey

“Grieving is never anything we ‘get over.’ We’re meant to live in it and move through it, and out of that to live and be enlarged by that relationship and those experiences. And yes, we create a new normal.” –Sandy

This excerpt is from *Grieving with Hope* by Samuel J. Hodges IV and Kathy Leonard. © 2011 by Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group. Used by permission.



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FROM MOURNING TO JOY

ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

Session Thirteen - What Do I Live for Now?



SUSAN: "YOU HAVE TO DO WHAT YOU'RE CALLED TO DO"

"If I were to die tomorrow and Jesus said, 'What have you done with the gifts and the abilities I've given you?' 'Well, I laid on the couch and protected my own being ...'

"He didn't say this was going to be an easy path. He didn't say you aren't going to have to work hard. He said, 'Follow Me,' and you have to do what you're called to do, and He will place you where you're supposed to be."

Moving forward in your grief doesn't mean forgetting your loved one, rather, it involves cherishing and enjoying the precious memories and living out that person's good legacy. Moving forward is not easy, and you'll take steps forward and steps back again. But this week's exercises will give you tools to help.

DAY
1

Handling stress and anxiety

Anxious people want control of their circumstances, thinking that being in control will eliminate their worries. Letting go of anxiety involves trust: trust that God is in control and is working to bring about what is good and best for us.

We want to trust Him, but how do we do it?

Trust is a place of surrender, of laying down what's important to our human nature and embracing God's best instead.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Cursed are those who ... rely on human strength and turn their hearts away from the LORD. They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future ...

"But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with

roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit." (Jeremiah 17:5-8 NLT)

1. According to Jeremiah 17:5-8, what will you look like if you try to handle life's troubles on your own?

2. According to today's passage, what will you look like if you trust in the Lord and make Him your hope and confidence?

"I believed in God, but I didn't have a relationship with Him." -Susan

3. In this life, with all its trials and hurts, where is the most secure place you can choose to run to, again and again?

CONSIDER THIS

Surrender means to yield control or power to someone or something else; it means to give up something in favor of another choice. Surrender enables you to let go of things you are holding too tightly and to accept an even better option. Surrender frees you to be able to hope again.

"You will only find peace through surrender." –Sharon

TALKING TO GOD

God, I need Your help in making this a constant, daily practice. When I'm tempted to fear, or to hold on too tightly to my ideas of what is best, help me to surrender that to You and choose to embrace Your good promises.

**DAY
2**

Making spiritual investments

What used to be important to you before your loved one's death might not be so important anymore. What does God say to value as you move forward in life?

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."

(Matthew 6:19–21 NLT)

"Turn my eyes away from worthless things."

(Psalm 119:37a)

1. What do you treasure/value more now than you did before your loved one's death?

2. What do you place less value on now?

3. Why do you think you need to ask God to help you turn your attention from things that are worthless?

CONSIDER THIS

Sabrina D. Black shares how her values have changed since the death of her loved ones:

- *I tell people I love them more often.*
- *I make more frequent phone calls.*
- *I try to keep short accounts.*
- *I try to be present with people, not thinking about where I need to be or what I need to do next, because I realize those moments are precious.*

"If I didn't have anything, as long as I had Christ, I'd still have everything." –Jodi

TALKING TO GOD

Lord, I want to value You more. I understand now that what matters is eternity. Give me a greater understanding of Your worth. Please turn my eyes from worthless things. Help me to spend increasingly more time doing things that have eternal value.

**DAY
3**

Drenching yourself in the Word

Spend a lot of time thinking about what the Bible says. That's the key to moving forward.

"I may be hurting, but I'm so much more joyful!" –Susan

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Oh, the joys of those who ... delight in the law of the LORD [God's words in the Bible], meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do."

(Psalm 1:1-3 NLT)

1. According to Psalm 1:1-3, who experiences joy?
2. Meditating on God's Word involves an intentional, internal conversation and reflection on the truths you are reading. How often does God say we are to meditate on His Word (see Psalm 1:1-3)?
3. What is the result of meditating on God's Word (see Psalm 1:1-3)?

CONSIDER THIS

"I guarantee if you spend your time in the Word of God, and there's an attitude of yieldedness and surrender to those truths, there'll be power in your life that you never even thought was available."

—Dr. Crawford Loritts

TALKING TO GOD

God, help me to discipline myself not only to read Your Word, but also to think about it, study it, discuss it, and live it. Thank you, God, that there is power in Your Word available to strengthen and encourage me in moving forward in my new normal.

"It's easier to sit on the couch and have a relationship with the couch than to go out and have relationships with others." —Susan

DAY 4

Peace and pain can coexist

In a world filled with suffering, God wants you to learn to experience peace in the midst of difficult situations.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"LORD, how many are my foes! ... I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side." (Psalm 3:1a, 4-6)

1. Instead of focusing on his problem, his many enemies, the writer of Psalm 3 calls out to the Lord for help. When you face difficulties, are you more inclined to focus only on the details of your situation, or do you assess your situation and call out to God?
2. Notice that the psalmist was not ignorant about the details of his dilemma. He knew he had many foes. What do you learn from this example of a godly person who has a clear understanding of the challenges he's facing?
3. Notice the psalmist was able to rest in the midst of a difficult situation. Based on Psalm 3:1a, 4-6, why do you think he was able to experience peace and rest in the midst of difficulty?

CONSIDER THIS

"Not too long after Suzan died, we were in Washington for an event. One morning we had slept a little late, and as we were walking toward the elevator,

I blurted out, 'I wonder where Suzan is and what she's doing.' Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. I knew exactly where she was and what she was doing. That was one of those epiphany moments." –Zig Ziglar

TALKING TO GOD

God, I realize my goal isn't to get rid of the pain. Life on earth is painful, but life lived in You brings joy and peace. Help me understand what it looks like to have joy and peace amid my grief.

**DAY
5**

Renewing your strength

Hoping in the Lord is the basis of strength, not hoping in different circumstances. Make "hoping in the Lord" a daily practice and discipline in your life in order to renew your strength. How?

Be intentional about:

1. Turning to Him.
2. Letting go of self-reliance to rely instead on Him.
3. Trusting in what the Bible reveals about His character and what He has promised.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:29–31)

1. According to Isaiah 40:29–31, how do you know that you can't be strong all the time?
2. According to Isaiah 40:29–31, what is the result of hoping in the Lord?

3. Which part of Isaiah 40:29–31 do you find most encouraging?

CONSIDER THIS

"It was a tough journey. It was painful and hard. But with God's help, I got through it and I'm on the other side. Now I can use what I've learned that is so invaluable. I'd rather have learned it without all the pain and the hurt. But it's worth it now because I can live life more fully, and I have more assurance and peace, and I feel like I can do a whole lot more than what I ever thought I could before."

–Dr. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge

TALKING TO GOD

God, You are the source of hope. At times when I feel too weak to move forward, please remind me of who You are, what You've done for me, and how You will help me in that very moment. Refresh and renew my strength as I seek to take steps forward, following Your purposes for my life.

SUSAN: LOOKING BACK

"All these painful paths we go down, God is giving us tools to work with. We can either leave them on the path or we can pick them up and carry them with us. If we carry them with us, then we can pass them to other people and help them along the way. My [original] plan would have gotten us nowhere. I would have been happy just to be what I was. But I wasn't benefiting anybody but my family and myself, and that's not what I'm here for."

Congratulations on completing the GriefShare program! Please consider attending another thirteen-week cycle to further aid your healing. You will also be better able to help other people who have begun the grief process. Other suggestions for what you can do next are found on page 132.

"When I'm in a really hard place, I need some big promises." –Sandy Elder

MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK

Session - Thirteen

PERSONAL CHECKUP - TRACK YOUR HEALING PROGRESS

Place a check in the box identifying how you're feeling. Insert words to explain why.

	REALLY BAD	OKAY	PRETTY GOOD	GREAT
EMOTIONALLY				
PHYSICALLY				
SPIRITUALLY				
RELATIONALLY				

JOURNAL TOPICS - MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

Choose the idea below, or choose your own topic. We encourage you to use a separate notebook for your weekly journaling.



Talk to God about the fears you have about reengaging in life and moving forward. Ask for His help in surrendering those fears to Him.

MOVING FORWARD - PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD HEALING HOW TO CREATE A NEW NORMAL AND MOVE FORWARD

First, ask yourself these questions; then, prayerfully take steps to put what you've learned into practice.*

1. What things am I passionate about?
2. What has God given me a burden for?
3. What skills and talents has God given me that I could use?
4. What life experiences have I been through that God might be able to redeem or utilize?
5. How could these talents, abilities, passions, and my personality come together in the life of my local church?

* These questions were shared by GriefShare expert Brad Hambrick.

WHAT'S NEXT ?

As this thirteen-week GriefShare journey ends, you'll find you've discovered new concepts and have made precious friendships. You might be eager to put into practice what you've learned, but might also desire further teaching and continued support. Here are suggestions to help you grow and develop.

REPEAT GRIEFSHARE

By repeating another thirteen-week cycle, you will catch things you missed the first time around, and you'll be sure to gain new insights because you will be at a different level of growth. You will also continue to refine the helpful strategies that you've only recently put into practice. Additionally, you can encourage first-time group members, and you'll enjoy the continued friendships of others on their healing journey.



CONNECT WITH ANOTHER CHURCH FELLOWSHIP/STUDY GROUP

Consider joining a Bible study group or another small group sponsored by this church or your home church. Your group leaders can give you more information on what's offered here and the groups that would be most beneficial to you. You'll find that a lot of support and encouragement is available if you take the first step.

KEEP UP SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

You will also benefit from continued same-sex friendships with people in your GriefShare group. Plan family get-togethers, regularly meet for coffee, keep in touch via phone and computer. Choose people who will pray with you, encourage you, hold you accountable, and help you grow closer to the Lord—and do the same for them!



GAIN DEEPER INSIGHTS INTO SOME OF THE TOPICS YOU'VE LEARNED

Flip back to the Resource Center on page x. This page directs you to other resources that will help you go deeper as you continue your healing journey.

HELP OTHERS GRIEVING THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

Some of you might have interest in helping others in grief. If you are mature and healed, there may be an opportunity for you to become part of the leadership team of this GriefShare program. Talk with your group leaders if you are interested in exploring this idea.