

Grieving with Hope

Monday, 2/22/10 – Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: All of us experience losses and disappointments in life. Sometimes our losses are big -- like the death of someone dear. Sometimes they are the little things that all of us have to cope with. The Bible is very realistic about all this. It never pretends that faith will keep us from experiencing loss or from grieving. But it does insist that God will sustain us and will be with us -- and will bring us through it. ... Today's verse has sometimes been (mistakenly) interpreted to suggest that people of faith should not grieve. But a careful reading reveals that it is really saying that hope changes **the way** we grieve. We grieve with hope -- not as those who have no hope. ... What do you think? How could hope change the way you grieve?

Tuesday, 2/23/10 – Read John 11:17-37

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Maybe the first step in grieving with hope is ... to grieve -- simply to let ourselves grieve. When someone dear dies, the natural, normal, human response is to grieve. And we need to give ourselves permission to do that. The Bible shows us many examples of God's faithful people grieving. Jesus himself wept over the death of his friend Lazarus. ... Look at verse 36; notice the reaction of the people when they see Jesus' tears: "See how he loved him!" ... Grieving may display not so much a lack of faith as a depth of love. What do you think?

Wednesday, 2/24/10 – Read Jeremiah 8:18-22

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: How do you grieve? Some of us are emotionally expressive and our tears flow easily. Others of us are more reserved and express ourselves in other ways. One of the challenges all of us face is a natural resistance to grieving and a mistaken belief that we are supposed to be positive and upbeat, no matter what. The first task of grieving is actually to grieve, to feel the feelings. ... Today's reading from the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah expresses his grief. Read his words slowly and let yourself feel them. Have you ever felt like that? Can you let Jeremiah's words express a grieving that's true for you? *(Note: Gilead was a region in ancient Palestine known for producing medicinal ointments.)*

Thursday, 2/25/10 – Read Psalm 77:7-9

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: One of the things that makes grieving so hard -- and so scary -- is that we cannot see the end of it. It feels like it will go on forever! ... The greatness of the Psalms in the Bible is that they express human feelings so accurately and beautifully. The Psalm-writer **feels like** God is absent and God's love cannot be found. And it **feels like** that will go on forever! ... How about for you? When you're feeling really down or when you're grieving some loss in your life, is it hard to remember that this is temporary?

Friday, 2/26/10 – Read Psalm 23

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: What does God promise us? The Bible is pretty clear that loss and grief are part of our human condition. Everyone, sooner or later, experiences loss. Trusting

God isn't magic. It does not magically make us happy all the time. God does not promise that there will be no distress. But God does promise to be with us in the middle of the distress. Even when we walk through life's darkest valleys, God is with us. Is that your experience? When have you experienced God present in the midst of your distress?

Saturday, 2/27/10 – Read Psalm 42:3-11

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Sometimes, in the midst of grieving, we don't feel God's presence. And then it is important to **remember** how God has helped us in the past. Look at verse 6: there is no denial of the feelings of being "cast down"; so the psalm-writer **remembers** God's presence in the past. Take some time today to write down instances when God has seemed especially present to you. Then, you can **remember** these times when you aren't feeling God's presence. Faith doesn't mean that we always feel in touch with God. Faith is **remembering** God's faithfulness in the past and **trusting** that faithfulness for the future.

Sunday, 2/28/10 – Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The Apostle Paul believed that our struggles in life (our sufferings and our grieving) were not just something to get through. Our struggles in life, Paul thought, are part of the process of spiritual transformation -- so that the Risen Christ may live through us. What do you think of Paul's idea? Would it give you more hope if you thought your own struggles in life had a deeper, spiritual purpose: making the Risen Christ visible in you?

My Faith Journal, February 21, 2009

Good Grief #1

Grieving with Hope

What do I hear God saying to me today?

What action do I intend to take this week?

Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.