



portraits of
GRIEF

DAILY PRAYER:

Holy Spirit, I know that walking the path of grief is part of the human journey. Help me understand there are no rules for how I'm supposed to walk and no schedule to rush through. There's nothing I can fix, but there's much You can build in and through me. Do Your work in me. Give me courage to feel what I'm supposed to feel, learn what I'm supposed to learn and do what I'm supposed to do. Give me grace to receive and walk with those You put in my life. Give them patience to be ok when I'm not ok. Give me wisdom and courage to let them near and not push them away. Protect me from the overwhelming emotions which could drive me to unhealthy, extreme, and even sinful behaviors in a desire to escape. When it's dark, help me find hope to believe in day when I will once again taste love, joy, peace and happiness. Forgive me for the folly of believing I was ever in control. You are in control and it's into Your kind hands I place myself. In Jesus name. Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE: John 14:16-18

STEP ONE

READ John 16:33 and I Peter 4:12. We may acknowledge that everyone will suffer loss at some point in his or her life, yet we have great difficulty in believing that this means **us**... until it happens to **us**.

READ aloud the following statement: "At some point **in MY life**, I will lose something or someone I love and **I will experience profound loss.**"

Now *READ* only the emboldened words... This means you. This means me. It means my children, your children, my dearest friends and family, and yours.

- ? Why do you think God wants us to know this?
What can we gain by understanding the fact that we will experience profound loss? In what way can this affect our experience of loss? *DISCUSS* as a group.
READ Matthew 5:44-45.
What does this say about the universal nature of loss?

STEP TWO

Profound loss will transform or destroy us. Either way, we'll never be the same. This week, Paul introduced behaviors that can lead us down the path toward destruction -- a bottomless black hole:

- *Isolate yourself from people and God*
- *Designate your grief as special*
- *Escape into compulsion and addiction*
- *Deny the grief*
- *Internalize your feelings*

- ? *DISCUSS* as a group: What are some examples of each of the above behaviors *in action*? What might some of these look like in your own life? How do these behaviors affect our grief? Do these behaviors help address the grief or delay it? Has there been a time when you suffered a loss and responded with one or more of these behaviors? If so, will you be willing to share with the group?

READ Isaiah 43:1-4a.

Last week, we looked at what Sittser says in his book, *A Grace Disguised*, about choosing to walk into the darkness ("The quickest way for anyone to reach the sun and the light of day is not to run west, chasing after the setting sun, but to head east, plunging into the darkness until one comes to the sunrise...")

- ? How is this darkness different from *THE DARK HOLE* discussed this weekend?

STEP THREE

Will I grieve well?

READ through and *DISCUSS* each of the *PRINCIPLES FOR THE PATH*:

FOCUS

Grief is hard work. I will need God and the promises in Scripture. I will look to the Holy Spirit and the hope of eternal things.

READ John 14:16-18 and Romans 8:26-27.

- ? How have you felt God interceding for you?

ATTITUDE

Grief is part of the human journey I'm called to take. God is with me and I will trust Him to light my path. The path doesn't end with despair.

READ Psalm 116:1-7.

- ? Can you recall a time when God heard your cry and met your need?

REFLECTION

I will not deny my feelings. I will take the time to grieve. I will take care of myself.

READ Psalm 34:17-18 and Psalm 69:15-16.

- ? Do you feel like you can be completely honest with God about your feelings?

AWARENESS

I need other people to walk with me who are grieving and who have grieved before. I need a safe community in which to grieve.

READ 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

- ? Do you feel like you're able to give/receive comfort to/from anyone else right now? To/from whom?

GROWTH

Some growth only comes through loss.

READ Psalm 119:49-50 and Romans 5:3-5.

We don't "get over" our loss. We will never be the same and things will never be as they were before. When the light comes again, the landscape surrounding us will not be the same, but it can be good.

- ? How are you experiencing or how have you experienced God in the midst of your grief?

