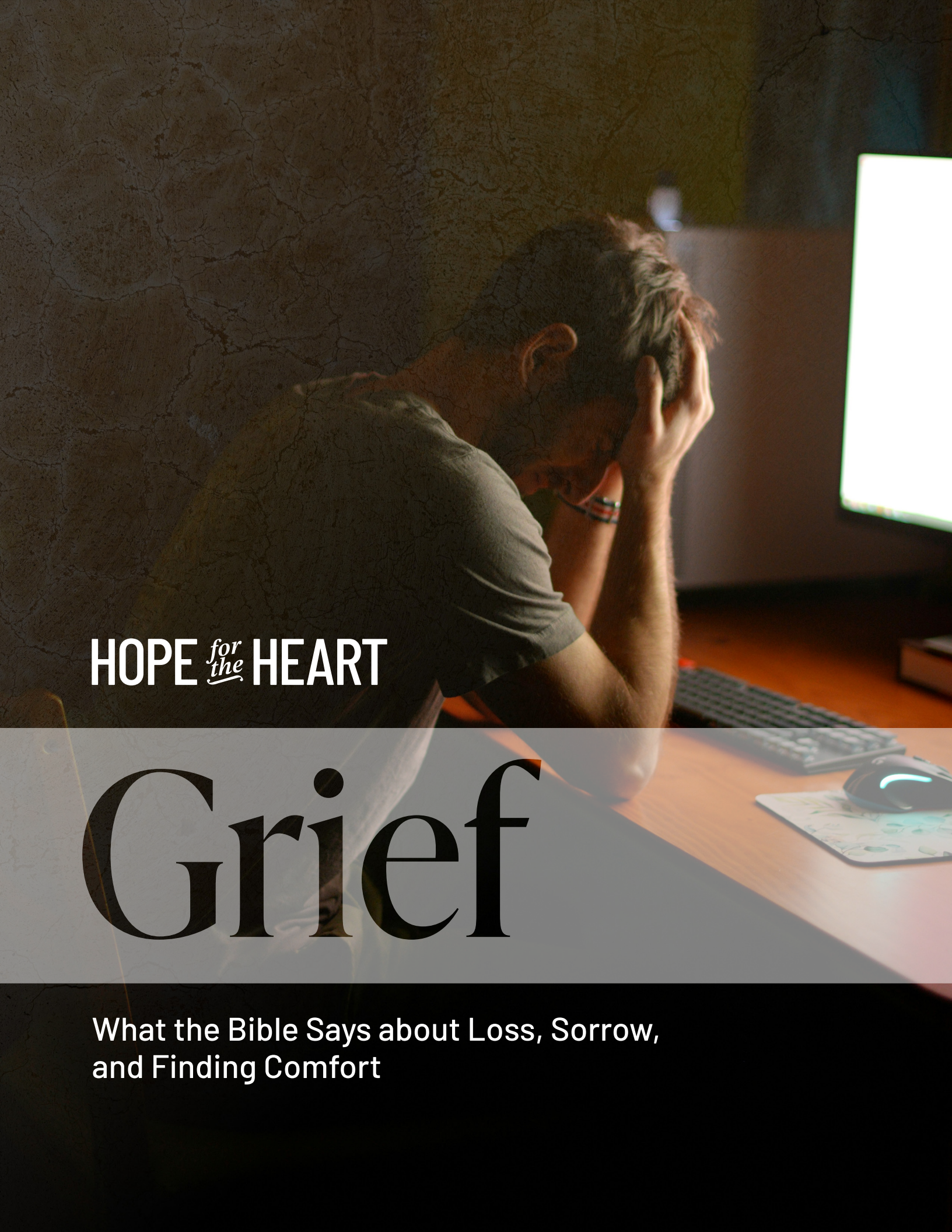

HOPE *for the* HEART

Grief

What the Bible Says about Loss, Sorrow, and Finding Comfort

HOPE *for the* HEART

Because hope means everything.

At Hope for the Heart, hope gets real.

We know life is a series of challenges. But finding help shouldn't be.

That's why we create simple, easy-to-use resources. Professionally informed, all rooted in God's Word. We provide clear answers and practical guidance on over 100 real-life issues, helping you understand and apply the Bible to your life and those you serve.

It's all life-giving counsel that's key to living whole and free. For God's heart is to see you live abundantly and share the hope you have in Christ.

So that whatever you're facing—or whoever comes to you—you have every reason for hope, for every challenge in life.

Because hope means everything.

"For everything that was written
in the past was written to teach us,
so that through the endurance
taught in the Scriptures and
the encouragement they provide
we might have hope."
(Romans 15:4)

www.hopefortheheart.org

GRIEF

Living at Peace with Loss

What Is God's Heart on Grief?

Grief is common in our broken world. When we face a significant loss in our lives, it is natural to feel heartache and to mourn. But in our grief, God is near. He sees our pain, understands it, and walks with us every day. God's Word shows that we don't grieve without purpose or without His presence.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."
(Psalm 46:1)

God empathizes with your grief because He has experienced grief Himself.

"He [Jesus] *was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief"* (Isaiah 53:3 NLT).

> "In our grief, God is near. He sees our pain, understands it, and walks with us every day."

God is with you in your grief.

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

God sees your grief and suffering.

"You, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand" (Psalm 10:14).

God hears your cries and listens to you in your pain.

"The LORD has heard my weeping" (Psalm 6:8).

God wants you to process your grief with Him.

"Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken" (Psalm 55:22).

God wants you to have hope even in your grief.

"Dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13 NLT).

God wants to give you joy even in your grief.

"You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy" (Psalm 30:11 NLT).

God wants to comfort you with His presence.

"I, yes I, am the one who comforts you" (Isaiah 51:12 NLT).

God wants to comfort you through others.

"God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (2 Corinthians 7:6).

God wants to comfort you with His Word.

"I have suffered much; preserve my life, LORD, according to your word" (Psalm 119:107).

God wants to use your grief to comfort others.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

God will one day wipe away your tears—and there will be no more death or mourning or grief.

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever" (Revelation 21:4 NLT).

What Complicates the Grieving Process?

What makes grieving difficult is not just the loss of a loved one but all the changes that accompany the loss. Depending on the type of loss, there are numerous and often significant changes that can occur. These changes can extend or intensify your grief.

When you experience loss and all the changes that come about as a result of it, remember that God is your *constant* companion.

"The LORD your God will personally go ahead of you.
He will neither fail you nor abandon you."
(Deuteronomy 31:6 NLT)

The following issues can affect the grieving process:

Logistics—dealing with immediate concerns surrounding a loss (phone calls; funeral plans; writing an obituary; notifying insurance; processing a will/probate; coordinating meetings, work schedule, childcare, meal planning)

Housing/property/finances—dividing assets; cleaning out a home; having to relocate; dealing with insurance payments or status, hospital bills, funeral expenses, taxes, debts, adjustments to change in income

Busyness—being consumed by daily life and responsibilities to the extent that you do not have adequate time to process your thoughts and emotions

Support system/remaining family—not having people who can comfort you and be there for you; adjusting to new family dynamics; handling conflicts

Circumstances surrounding the loss or death—not recognizing how the unique circumstances of the loss or cause of death will impact survivors (for example: grieving over a miscarriage, suicide, drug overdose, terminal illness, violent death, sudden or accidental death, losing multiple people at once)

Length/type of relationship—not understanding how the duration or type of relationship can intensify the grief (parent/child, spouse, grandparent, friend, church member, coworker/boss, pet, student/teacher)

Memories—being confronted with memories of your loved one (often in unexpected ways or at unexpected times) through various people, places, songs, meals, smells, etc.

Emotional complexity/inexperience with grief—not knowing what to do with the depth and range of emotions or what to expect or how to cope

Spiritual needs—not having a spiritual foundation or community to understand and process grief

Physical needs—neglecting physical needs (sleeping, eating, exercising, etc.)

Regret/guilt—wishing you had said or done something differently before the loss; feeling responsible for wrongdoing toward the person you've lost

Denial/refusal—living as if the loss has not occurred; choosing to ignore the loss

"The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge."
(Psalm 18:2)

Key Verses to Memorize

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,
who comforts us in all our troubles,
so that we can comfort those in any trouble
with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."
(2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

Key Passage to Read

Lamentations 3:19–26

"I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
[20] *I well remember them, and my soul*
is downcast within me.
[21] *Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:*
[22] *Because of the LORD's great love*
we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.
[23] *They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*
[24] *I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion;*
therefore I will wait for him.'
[25] *The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,*
to the one who seeks him;
[26] *it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD."*

My Personalized Plan

Acknowledge my feelings

— I will remember that God welcomes my lament, tears, and sorrow—so I do not need to hide or minimize my feelings.

— I will express my feelings to God, to other trusted people, and consider journaling as an outlet to express my emotions.

"Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (Psalm 62:8).

Receive God's comfort

— I will read God's Word and meditate on His promises to find comfort and peace.

— I will remember that God often uses people to comfort me.

"My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life (Psalm 119:50).

Give myself time and grace

— I will remember that grieving is a process, and I may experience feelings of grief months or years after the loss.

— I will take things one day at a time, remembering the Lord is always with me in my grief.

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven . . . a time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4 NLT).

Honor my loved one

— I will find ways to honor my loved one's memory, being mindful of important anniversaries, and consider how these days might affect me.

— I will acknowledge that healing and moving forward does not mean I am dishonoring or forgetting my loved one.

"I thank my God every time I remember you" (Philippians 1:3).

Remember God's promises

— I will rejoice in the promise that I will see my brothers and sisters in Christ in heaven.

— I will remember that one day God will wipe away all my tears.

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever" (Revelation 21:4 NLT).

Reach out to others

— I will prayerfully consider how God can use me to comfort others.

— I will reach out to others who are grieving and find ways to support and comfort them.

"The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort . . . comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

Move forward with hope

— I will learn to be grateful for the past and the time I had with my loved one.

— I will acknowledge my present new reality and establish new patterns and habits, while maintaining hope for the future.

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say" (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 NLT).

How to Apply Dos and Don'ts of Healthy Grieving

Throughout the psalms, David shows us what to do with our grief and other difficult feelings. He brings his raw, honest feelings to God. He cries out to God. He questions God. He tells God how his grief and suffering affects him physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As David processes his grief before God, he often recalls God's faithfulness to him. He remembers God's promises. By the end of many psalms, David expresses a renewed trust in God.

David shows us that instead of running away from God in our grief, we can run to God. That's a mark of healthy grieving. There are other steps to take—and things to avoid—that will help you in the grieving process.

"Commit everything you do to the Lord.
Trust him, and he will help you."
(Psalm 37:5 NLT)

Don't let self-pity dominate your thoughts.

Do seek peace through contentment.

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Philippians 4:11).

Don't become consumed with regret.

Do learn from and accept the past.

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance" (Proverbs 1:5).

Don't ignore memories and feelings—both positive and negative.

Do allow yourself to feel your emotions and to reflect on your memories.

"I thank my God every time I remember you" (Philippians 1:3).

Don't isolate yourself.

Do seek the support of others and look to the Lord to meet your needs.

"Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you" (Isaiah 46:4).

Don't compare your circumstances to the circumstances of others.

Do focus on what God wants you to do in *your* situation.

"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground" (Psalm 143:10).

Don't busy yourself with distractions in an effort to avoid your grief.

Do set aside time to process your grief through prayer, journaling, conversations, etc.

"The Lord said to her, 'My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:41–42 NLT).

Don't make major decisions while grieving.

Do establish priorities and seek wise counsel.

"The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways" (Proverbs 14:8).

Don't define yourself by your grief.

Do find your identity in Christ.

"Listen to the LORD who created you. . . . The one who formed you says, 'Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine'" (Isaiah 43:1 NLT).

How to Help the Grieving

Your words can build up and comfort the grieving, and your actions can show your love and care. When someone is grieving, they may be too overwhelmed to deal with everyday responsibilities in addition to the emotional impact of the loss. Acknowledge their loss immediately and let them know as soon as possible that you are available for them. Because they often won't ask for help, find helpful things to do without being asked. They will usually appreciate small acts of kindness and support.

"Let's not merely say that we love each other;
let us show the truth by our actions."
(1 John 3:18 NLT)

Consider these practical suggestions for reaching out to others with the compassion of Christ:

Pray. Remind yourself to pray regularly *for* the grieving and, as appropriate, pray *with* them.

Be there. Don't feel the need to fill the silence. Sometimes the most meaningful way to show compassion is simply to be present. Offer a hug when appropriate.

Listen. Give the one grieving opportunities to talk about the loss. Expect tears and emotional extremes. Accept emotional or verbal responses without judgment.

Offer to help with phone calls. Depending on the loss, there may be a lot of phone calls to make. Offer to help answer phone calls and relay information, if needed.

Bring a meal. Cook a warm meal and deliver it to the one grieving. Use disposable containers if possible. Be aware of any dietary needs/restrictions or allergies.

Run an errand. Offer to go to the grocery store, post office, dry cleaners, etc.

Send gift cards. Buy them a gift card for a restaurant, grocery store, movie theater, online store, etc.

Send a card or flowers. Immediately following the loss, send a card or flowers to let them know you're thinking of them. Stay in touch by writing a letter or sharing a story or memory.

Encourage a change of scenery. Take them out to lunch, dinner, shopping, or just for a walk.

Travel with them. Offer to drive them somewhere or join them in running errands so they are not alone.

Help around the house. Offer to clean, mow the lawn, do laundry, etc.

Offer to house-sit, babysit, take care of pets. This can help the grieving person get some rest or attend to errands or personal responsibilities.

Gather information and identify help network. Depending on the loss, you can help find available jobs, houses, or services. Reach out to others who may be able to help the grieving individual or family as well.

Show hospitality. Depending on the loss and your availability, open up your home as a place for people to meet, have a meal, or spend a night.

"When God's people are in need, be ready to help them.
Always be eager to practice hospitality."
(Romans 12:13 NLT)

4 POINTS OF GOD'S PLAN

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, *there is hope*. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will accept His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

"'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD*,*
'plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.'"
(JEREMIAH 29:11)

1. God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

— What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (John 3:16–17).

— What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10).

2. The Problem: *Sin*

— What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway"* (Romans 7:18–19 NLT).

— What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *"Your iniquities* [sins] *have separated you from your God"* (Isaiah 59:2). Scripture also says, *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

3. God's Provision for You: *The Savior*

— Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

— What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). The Bible says, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . ."* (Acts 16:31).

4. Your Part: *Surrender*

— Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"* (Matthew 16:24–26).

— Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your "good works" as a means of earning God's approval. The Bible says, *"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you've humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

"God, I want a real relationship with you.
I admit that many times I've chosen to go my own way instead of your way.
Please forgive me for my sins.
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins.
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.
Change me from the inside out and make me
the person you created me to be.
In your holy name I pray. Amen."

What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . ."* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

"Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."
(John 5:24)

The information in this resource is intended as guidelines for healthy living. Please consult qualified medical, legal, pastoral, and psychological professionals regarding individual concerns.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

God gives us His Word not just for information but for transformation. The Lord wants you to "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Romans 12:2). This isn't something you do alone, but something God does in you by His Spirit.

The following questions are designed to help you reflect on the biblical truths in this resource. Take a moment to pray and ask God to settle your mind and quiet your spirit as you reflect on His truth.

"Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this."
(2 Timothy 2:7)

What are two key truths, Bible verses, or "takeaways" from this resource that you found helpful—or that you simply needed to be reminded of?

In relation to this topic, what behavior(s) do you need to *begin*, *change*, or *stop* in order to help you grow into the person God created you to be?

In relation to this topic, what is the biggest obstacle you need to overcome in order to move forward?

What might your life look like a few years from now if you do *not* make changes regarding this issue? How might your life be different if you *do* make changes?

Is there anyone in your life who needs help with this topic/issue? How can you pray for them, and what is one thing you can do to encourage them?

What can you give thanks to God for today?

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself
and God our Father, who loved us
and by his grace gave us eternal comfort
and a wonderful hope,
comfort you and strengthen you
in every good thing you do and say."
(2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 NLT)

The Complete System of Care

Designed with the whole person in mind, Hope for the Heart's *Complete System of Care* provides a comprehensive library of resources and training tools that are all professionally informed, rooted in God's Word. Centered around our 100+ topic *Keys for Living Library*, these practical, biblical resources ensure you have everything you need when getting to the heart of common life issues.

Whether for personal help or training purposes, it's all key to being completely equipped for effective care and counsel. From practical guidance in our books to deeper insights through courses, events, and media, these tools work together to help you experience freedom and transformation in Christ—and equip you to share that hope with others.

Explore our resources today and get the tools you need to take better care of yourself and others.

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