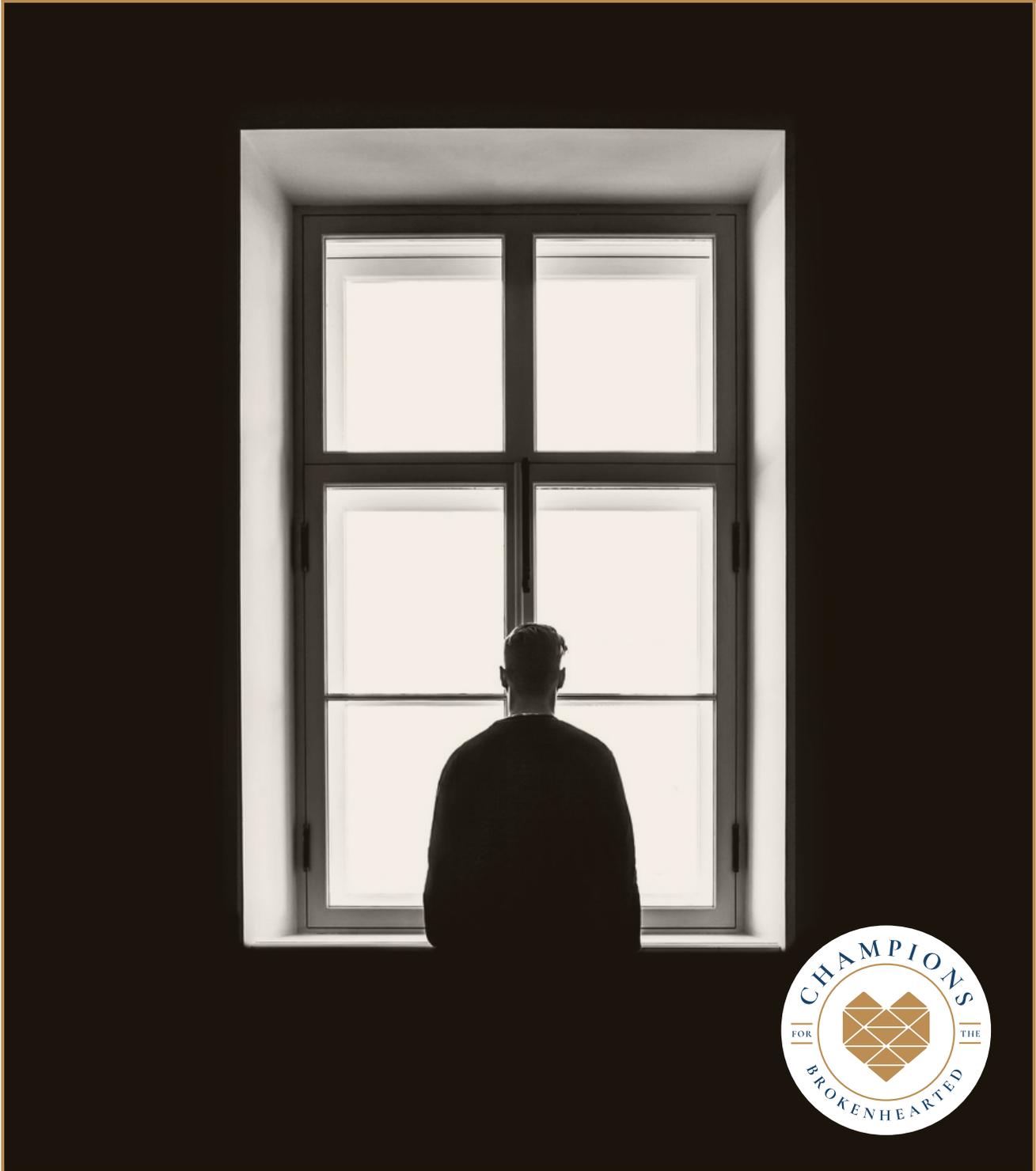




HOPE FOR THE SUICIDAL



EXCERPT FROM
KEYS FOR LIVING LIBRARY



INTRODUCTION

Dear Friend,

I was born in Melbourne, Australia without arms and legs even though three sonograms had never revealed any complications. Growing up, it wasn't easy. Throughout my childhood, I struggled with depression and loneliness. I even questioned the purpose of my life and tried to take my own life when I was ten years old.

But Jesus met me in my pain and I decided to give my life to him. Since then, I've travelled to 74 countries to share my story with millions of people just like yourself, from students and young people to business professionals and even world leaders. I want to share a special message with the world based on my own story and encounter with Jesus: there is hope.

I may not know what you're struggling with today. But like I've seen in my own life, the Bible teaches us that Jesus is not only present in our pain, but that He is the answer to our heaviest struggles. Jesus says, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have **peace**. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

I'm here to tell you today that you are special, you are loved, and that God does have an amazing plan for your life. He will never leave or forsake you. And if God can use me, a man without arms and legs, to be His hands and feet, then He will certainly use any willing heart. Throughout my life I've always held onto a special verse that says: *"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). If we give our lives to him, he promises to give us hope and a future. Now that is amazing!

Here at Life Without Limbs, we love you and we're praying for you. We're here to be your Champions and to point you back to the true Champion: Jesus. We pray that these resources will help you through whatever challenges you may be facing and bring hope for the way forward.

Thank you and God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nick Vujicic and the Life Without Limbs Team

DEPRESSION

Walking from Darkness into the Dawn

What Is God's Heart on Depression?

The pressures and stresses of life often weigh us down. When our hearts are heavy and our heads are low, the clouds of depression seem to block out any ray of hope. But even in our depression, God walks with us, carries our burdens, and shines the light of His Word on our despair.

*"The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us."
(PSALM 118:27)*

God is with us in our depression.

"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 our pain and suffering.

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

God hears our cries and listens to us in our pain.

". . . the LORD has heard my weeping" (PSALM 6:8).

God wants to give us light in our darkness.

"It is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness" (PSALM 18:28 ESV).

God wants to lift us up when we're feeling down.

"The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down" (PSALM 145:14).

God wants us to talk to Him when we're depressed.

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

God wants to comfort us.

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

God wants to give us peace.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (JOHN 14:27).

God wants to give us hope.

"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).

God wants us to trust Him.

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me” (PSALM 28:7).

God wants us to comfort others who are depressed.

“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).

God will one day wipe away all our tears—and there will be no more sorrow or suffering.

“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).

Symptoms of Depression

The American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (DSM-5) lists nine key symptoms of depression. It says that a person must have at least five of the following symptoms, lasting two weeks or longer, to be considered a major depressive episode. At least one of the five symptoms must be either persistent sadness or loss of interest.

- Persistent feelings of sadness, anxiousness, or “emptiness” most or all of the time
- Complete or near complete loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyable
- Significant change in appetite or weight
- Difficulty sleeping most nights or sleeping too much
- Agitated thoughts and movements (i.e., fidgeting, pacing, tapping fingers or feet) or slowed responses (i.e., pausing more when talking; speaking slower, more quietly, or infrequently; moving slowly)
- Chronically fatigued, easily decreased energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or disappointment in oneself
- Lack of concentration, focus, memory retention, or inability to make decisions
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts

Instead of diagnosing yourself with depression, first consult a mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed professional counselor) who can give you an educated assessment after conducting a detailed analysis of your situation and symptoms. There is no shame in reaching out for help.

The psalmist, by his own admission, reminds us just how necessary it is to admit our need for help—first to God . . . then also to others.

*“Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.
My soul also is greatly troubled.
But you, O LORD—how long?
Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.”
(PSALM 6:2–4 ESV)*

Key Verse to Memorize

*“Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil within me?
Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him,
my Savior and my God.”*
(PSALM 42:5 HCSB)

Key Passage to Read

Lamentations 3:19–26 (NLT)

*“The thought of my suffering . . . is bitter beyond words.
²⁰ I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss.
²¹ Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:
²² The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease.
²³ Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.
²⁴ I say to myself, ‘The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!’
²⁵ The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him.
²⁶ So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD.”*

My Personalized Plan to Manage Depression and Live with Hope

Depression can hide the light of day from my view and leave me in the darkness of despair. A sense of hopelessness lingers. But amidst the heaviness and dark clouds of depression, God wants to lift my heavy heart and show me there is hope.

*“There is surely a future hope for you,
and your hope will not be cut off.”*
(PROVERBS 23:18)

Because depression can impact every area of my life, I must address it from multiple angles. As I walk through the darkness of depression into the light of dawn, **I will . . .**

Recognize that my depression is real.

- I will acknowledge my feelings of sadness, anger, hopelessness, and other overwhelming emotions.
- I will not live in denial about my depression but will educate myself about depression and seek help to move forward.

“I am suffering and in pain. Rescue me, O God, by your saving power” (PSALM 69:29 NLT).

Remember that my pain is temporary.

- I will put my pain in perspective and acknowledge that God can help me.
- I will remember that God will one day put an end to all pain and suffering.

“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).

Reaffirm the importance of caring for my physical needs.

- I will talk with my doctor about my depression and get regular medical check-ups.
- I will eat nutritious meals, get adequate sleep each night, and exercise regularly.

“Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 TIMOTHY 4:8).

Restrict the amount of stress in my life.

- I will identify the environmental or situational factors related to my depression, such as difficult life events, losses I’ve experienced, and the various sources of stress in my life.
- I will seek to adjust to stressful life events and deal with my losses in a healthy, productive manner.

“Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer” (PSALM 4:1).

Reveal my emotional needs.

- I will talk with a trusted friend or family member, counselor, and especially with God about my emotions.
- I will honestly confront my feelings and process them with God’s help.

“I call to you, LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you” (PSALM 88:9).

Restrain negative thought patterns.

- I will acknowledge negative self-talk and lies I believe about myself or my situation.
- I will replace negative thoughts with God’s truth by meditating on His Word.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (PHILIPPIANS 4:8).

Renew my commitment to get my spiritual needs met.

- I will cultivate my relationship with God through reflective prayer and Bible reading.
- I will attend church regularly to receive encouragement from God’s Word and to be with other believers.

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer” (ACTS 2:42 NLT).

How to Help a Depressed Loved One

When you have depressed loved ones in your life, you want to do something that will make a difference, but the question is *what?*

First and foremost, *do not avoid them*. Because of the tendency to withdraw and isolate, help them get involved in activities whenever they are open to doing so. Encourage them to find a new hobby. Realize, you may be their only lifeline of hope, and they need to stay connected. Do what you wish someone would do for you if you were struggling with depression.

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”
(LUKE 6:31)

12 Things You Can Do to Help

Learn all you can about depression.

Read books, watch videos, attend conferences, visit websites such as the National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov).

“Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge” (PROVERBS 23:12).

Be an accountability partner.

Communicate both with words and actions, “I’m with you in this, and I won’t abandon you.”

“I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare” (PHILIPPIANS 2:20 NLT).

Initiate regular dialogue.

Send frequent text messages and phone calls. Make intentional contact and encourage them sincerely and often.

“Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them” (EPHESIANS 4:29 NLT).

Listen to their pain.

Take time to hear their story and let them share their feelings without fear of judgment. Listening affirms their value and helps them process their emotions and circumstances.

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (JAMES 1:19).

Talk about depression

Talking about depression helps remove the stigma of it.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver” (PROVERBS 25:11 ESV).

Help them find a support group.

There is strength in numbers. Inquire at a nearby hospital, local church, or search the web for listings of support groups in the community dealing with depression or mental illness.

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10 NLT).

Realize the power of touch.

As appropriate, a hand on the shoulder or a hug can be a great comfort.

“Greet one another with a kiss of love” (1 PETER 5:14).

Play inspirational music when you’re with them.

Music is therapeutic and can lift their spirit.

“... speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit” (EPHESIANS 5:19).

Bring laughter into their lives.

Share funny cards, pictures, stories, videos, or movies.

“A cheerful heart is good medicine” (PROVERBS 17:22).

Work with them to set small, daily goals.

Encourage them to set and achieve small goals that require minimal effort. Check on their progress regularly.

“The desires of the diligent are fully satisfied” (PROVERBS 13:4).

Enlist help from other family and friends.

Be specific about your concerns and engage others in caring for the one depressed.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (GALATIANS 6:2).

Take all threats of suicide seriously.

If suicide is a concern, ask, “Are you thinking about hurting yourself or taking your life?” While asking this may create some discomfort, awkwardness, or make them initially upset—it is worth the risk. Don’t shy away from the hard questions, but always ask them in a kind and gentle way.

“A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions” (PROVERBS 27:12 NLT).

How to Respond to Suicidal Thoughts or Threats

If you, or a depressed loved one, are having suicidal thoughts or planning to harm yourself, it is important to talk with someone immediately. You will find information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line below. These free and confidential services are available 24/7 to provide emotional support and helpful resources for those facing distress and having suicidal thoughts. When you contact them, you will be connected with a real person who is trained to provide guidance and support. You are *not* alone.

*“Be strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid or terrified . . .
for the LORD your God goes with you;
he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*
(DEUTERONOMY 31:6)

NOTE: If you are ever in imminent danger, call 911 immediately.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

- 988
- For Deaf or Hard of Hearing (For TTY Users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.)
- Ayuda disponible en Español
- 988lifeline.org (Live chat available)

Crisis Text Line

- Text HOME to 741741 (United States)
- Text HOME to 686868 (Canada)
- Text HOME to 85258 (United Kingdom)
- www.CrisisTextLine.org

Don't hesitate to call or text these hotlines if you're thinking of harming yourself. Remember, no matter what you're feeling or how bad things seem . . .

“There is surely a future hope for you.”
(PROVERBS 23:18)

ANXIETY

Calming the Fearful Heart

What Is God's Heart on Anxiety?

Anxiety inaccurately judges reality. It forgets the past and fears the future. It fails to remember how you've made it through past difficulties and focuses instead on potential threats in the future. Anxiety leaves you with a fight or flight response in the present, vigilantly preparing for possible outcomes or avoiding fearful situations altogether.

The Lord, however, sees all things clearly. He says, *"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please'"* (Isaiah 46:10). God has brought you through the past and holds your future in His hands. And in your present struggle with anxiety, He is with you. The Lord is at work in your life—your anxiety is not without purpose. God longs to be your refuge and help you walk through your fears and troubles.

*"God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble."*

(PSALM 46:1)

10 Biblical Truths When You Become Anxious

God wants you to remember that He is good and gracious—and compassionately cares about you.

"The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made" (PSALM 145:8–9).

God wants you to remember He is with you when you're fearful.

"So 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 wants you to pray and experience His peace when you're feeling anxious.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7).

God wants you to look to Him and His Word when you're filled with anxiety.

"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy" (PSALM 94:19).

God wants you to align your thoughts with His truth when you feel anxious.

"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (PHILIPPIANS 4:8).

God wants you to trust Him when you're anxious—to have faith and not fear.

“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (PSALM 56:3).

God wants you to talk to Him about all that causes you to feel anxious.

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 PETER 5:7).

God wants you to talk to others about your fears and anxieties.

“Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory” (PROVERBS 11:14 NASB).

God wants you to take care of yourself physically and spiritually.

“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 TIMOTHY 4:8).

God wants you to encourage others who struggle with anxiety.

“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up” (PROVERBS 12:25).

Key Verse to Memorize

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”
(1 PETER 5:7)

Key Passage to Read

Philippians 4:4–9

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me— put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

My Personalized Plan to Manage Anxiety

For those who wrestle with anxiety, the future can feel bleak—void of hope and joy but full of fear and misfortune. But God always offers hope for the future and help for today. He comes alongside you and says, “*Do not fear, for I am with you*” (Isaiah 41:10). To the fearful heart, the Bible says, “*With his love, he will calm all your fears*” (Zephaniah 3:17 NLT). With God’s help, you can move forward today and have hope for tomorrow.

“There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.”
(PROVERBS 23:18)

As I seek God’s help with my anxiety, I will . . .

Remember God’s character

When I’m anxious, I’m tempted to think that God doesn’t care about me, He’s not in control, or He’s not powerful enough to change anything. This can lead me to believe that I have to hold everything together. I need to realize, that my view of God amidst anxiety can either make matters seem worse or help me remain calm and see things clearly.

- I will seek to know God’s character by reading His Word and praying for Him to continually reveal Himself to me.
- I will believe that God is good, that He is with me, and that He will help me—and trust that He is in control and has my best interests at heart.

“The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. . . . The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does” (PSALM 145:8–9, 13).

Address physical issues

Anxiety is not just emotional or cognitive but also physical. It can be caused by or result in physical changes, so it is therefore important to address any physical issues that may be contributing to my anxiety.

- I will talk with a doctor about the symptoms I am experiencing and seek treatment.
- I will seek to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating well, exercising regularly, getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated, avoiding harmful substances, and learning relaxation techniques to manage stress and anxiety.

“I discipline my body and keep it under control” (1 CORINTHIANS 9:27 ESV).

Talk with others

Anxiety can consume my thoughts and emotions and impair my ability to work and go about my daily life. Given the impact it can have on me, sharing my struggles with others and receiving guidance can help me process my experiences and move forward.

- I will seek the help of a professional counselor, supportive group of people in my church or community, and/or talk with trusted friends and family members.
- I will be honest about how I’m feeling and what I’m experiencing.

“Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory” (PROVERBS 11:14 NASB).

Reorient my thoughts

Much of the experience of anxiety occurs in the mind. It can cloud my judgment and hinder my decision making. Anxiety can cause difficulty concentrating and lead me to believe the future is grim. Addressing my thoughts and thought patterns is critical to managing and even overcoming anxiety.

- I will keep a journal and write down my honest thoughts.
- I will seek to align my thoughts with God’s Word, identifying thoughts that are based on lies and replacing them with God’s truth.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (PHILIPPIANS 4:8).

Be in community

Anxiety leads many people like me to avoid social interactions. Taken to an extreme, I can become isolated and alone. But God made me to be in relationships with others. Having supportive friendships and relationships can go a long way toward helping me gain a sense of wholeness, wellness, and normalcy amidst anxiety.

- I will regularly meet with friends and family members to talk, share a meal, or go out together.
- I will look into joining a local church, small group, Bible study, or community support group.

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10 NLT).

Stay active spiritually

God clearly states in His Word that He cares about me. When I’m anxious, He wants to hear from me. He provides help for me through His Word, His people, and most of all, His constant presence.

- I will maintain an active spiritual life by praying, reading God’s Word, and meeting with other believers to help me grow.
- I will constantly seek to grow in my relationship with Christ, who loves me and gives me grace each day.

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 PETER 3:18).

Hang on to hope

It’s been said that a person can live weeks without food, days without water, seconds without air, but not a moment without hope. Anxiety leads me to focus on the future, and often not a bright future. How important it is to maintain a hopeful outlook on life.

- I will remember that true, lasting hope is found not in my circumstances but in God and His Word.
- I will mediate on God’s promises in the Bible, remembering that I can always have hope.

“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).

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Hope When Life Seems Hopeless

NOTE: If you are having suicidal thoughts and intend to harm yourself, call 911 immediately. You can also call or text one of the following suicide prevention hotlines anytime. These free, confidential services are available 24/7 and exist to help and support you. Remember, you're not alone. Help is available—and there is hope.

Call **988**

(Suicide & Crisis Lifeline formerly known as
the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)

Text **741741**

(Crisis Text Line)

What Is God's Heart on Suicide Prevention?

If you struggle with suicidal thoughts . . . if you feel trapped in a storm and see no hope for a brighter tomorrow . . . know that God is extending you a lifeline of hope. He loves you. He cares about you. He wants to help you—and other people will too.

Remember, God is full of grace and compassion for you.

*"The LORD is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion. . . .
when I was brought low, he saved me."
(PSALM 116:5–6)*

God wants you to know it's never too late to find hope.

"Anyone who is among the living has hope" (ECCLESIASTES 9:4).

God wants you to know there is hope for you.

"There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off" (PROVERBS 23:18).

God wants you to know He is with you and can help you get through difficult times.

"So 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 wants you to know you are loved and valued.

“You are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you” (ISAIAH 43:4 NLT).

God wants you to know you have purpose.

“The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands” (PSALM 138:8 ESV).

God wants you to know your pain and suffering are not meaningless.

“We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead” (2 CORINTHIANS 1:8–9 NLT).

God wants you to talk to someone and find help if you’re having suicidal thoughts.

“In an abundance of counselors there is safety” (PROVERBS 11:14 ESV).

God wants you to come to Him for refuge and help.

“The LORD is a shelter . . . a refuge in times of trouble” (PSALM 9:9 NLT).

God wants you to know He will not reject you when you come to Him.

“Whoever comes to me [Jesus] I will never drive away” (JOHN 6:37).

God wants you to know He can heal your broken heart and the painful wounds of your past.

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (PSALM 147:3).

God wants you to receive His free gift of salvation.

“For 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” (JOHN 3:16).

God wants you to have hope and rest in safety and security.

“You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety” (JOB 11:18).

Key Verse to Memorize

*“There is surely a future hope for you
and your hope will not be cut off.”
(PROVERBS 23:18)*

Key Passage to Read

Lamentations 3:19–26

My Personalized Plan

When I feel hopeless and suicidal thoughts occur, it's important to have a plan to find immediate help and ongoing support. I will remember that I am not alone. The Lord promises to be with me, to guide me, and to watch over me. . . .

*“I will instruct you and teach you
in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my
loving eye on you.”
(PSALM 32:8)*

When I'm in despair and struggling with suicidal thoughts, **I will ...**

Talk to someone

- I will reach out to a friend, family member, pastor, counselor, or someone I trust and honestly tell them what I'm thinking about doing.
- I will call the **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** at **988**, text the **Crisis Text Line** at **741741**, or call 911 when I'm in danger of harming myself.

“In an abundance of counselors there is safety” (PROVERBS 11:14 ESV).

Seek to be safe

- I will remove any harmful or lethal objects from my possession/home—any guns, knives, ropes, drugs, pills, or other harmful objects that I am able to easily access.
- I will identify the safe people and places I can go to when I'm struggling with thoughts of self-harm.

“But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge” (PSALM 73:28).

Hold on to hope

- I will try to put things in perspective and remember that no matter what I'm feeling or thinking, I can have hope.
- I will read God's Word to find true, lasting hope and read stories of survivors to remind me hope is a solid anchor. (**Note:** You can find “Stories of Hope and Recovery” on the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline website at 988lifeline.org/stories.)

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (HEBREWS 6:19).

Address physical issues

- I will get a medical check-up and talk with a doctor to see if any physical issues may be contributing to my suicidal thoughts (or depression) and consider any recommended treatments to help me.
- I will take care of myself physically and try to live a healthy lifestyle by eating well, getting adequate sleep each night, exercising as I'm able, and avoiding harmful substances such as drugs and alcohol.

“I discipline my body and keep it under control” (1 CORINTHIANS 9:27 ESV).

Take care of my emotional needs

- I will avoid unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drinking alcohol, using drugs, or self-harming behaviors.
- I will consider new, healthy ways of managing my emotions such as talking with others, journaling, drawing/painting, praying, meditating, or exercising.

“In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help” (PSALM 18:6).

Replace negative thoughts

- I will acknowledge negative thoughts and lies I believe about myself and my situation.
- I will replace negative thoughts by meditating on the truth of God’s Word.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (PHILIPPIANS 4:8).

Acknowledge that pain is temporary

- I will put my pain in perspective and acknowledge that the pain I feel is temporary—it won’t last forever.
- I will remember that God promises to one day put an end to all pain and suffering.

“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).

Be in community

- I will remember I’m not alone—that many other people have been in my place and found help.
- I will seek the support of others and consider joining a community support group, a local church, or other helpful groups.

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10 NLT).

Look to God for help

- I will regularly pray and search God’s Word to find help, hope, strength, peace, and guidance.
- I will remember that God loves me, cares about me, and that He is always with me.

“The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety” (PSALM 18:2 NLT).

Stay connected

- I will remember that even when I’m not in a crisis or having suicidal thoughts, it’s important to stay connected with others.
- I will regularly check in with others (counselor, doctor, pastor, trusted individual, etc.) to evaluate my suicide risk and get help as needed.

“Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another” (HEBREWS 10:25 NLT).

My Contract of Hope

The following is a solemn binding contract. This contract cannot be declared null and void without the written agreement of both parties.

I promise that if I should consider harming myself, I will talk with you before I do anything destructive.

I sign my name as a pledge of my integrity.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

“Anyone who is among the living has hope.”

(ECCLESIASTES 9:4)

What Are Some Misconceptions about Suicide?

Misconceptions abound on the topic of suicide. There are many common myths about suicidal behavior . . . why it happens, when it happens, who is at risk, and what can be done about it. There are also misconceptions about suicide and faith. We need discernment to determine facts from myths, truth from falsehood, so we can rightly and wisely respond to suicidal behavior.

“Give discernment to me, your servant.”

(PSALM 119:125 NLT)

12 Common Misconceptions about Suicide

Misconception #1: “People who talk about suicide won’t really do it.”

Truth: An estimated 80% of people who die by suicide gave clues or warnings to friends or family. Therefore, you must take any threat of suicide seriously. Someone who talks about suicide gives others the opportunity to intervene.

Misconception #2: “You should never talk about suicide with depressed people—it could give them ideas.”

Truth: Talking about suicide doesn’t create suicidal thoughts. For a struggler, having someone to talk with can be a powerful preventative. Asking direct questions and discussing suicide is one of the most helpful things you can do to prevent suicide.

Misconception #3: “Everyone who dies by suicide is mentally ill.”

Truth: No, not everyone. Roughly 90% who die by suicide are afflicted with a diagnosable psychiatric disorder. However, suicide can occur for reasons unrelated to mental illness. External factors such as the loss of a loved one, job loss, divorce, or physical factors such as chronic illness can increase the risk of suicidal behavior.

Misconception #4: “People who are depressed are suicidal.”

Truth: People can be depressed without having suicidal thoughts. Having depression does not automatically mean someone is suicidal. And yet, people who are depressed are at a higher risk of suicide.

Misconception #5: “More suicides occur during the winter holidays.”

Truth: This is a long-standing myth. The opposite is actually true. Suicide rates peak in the spring and summer, and the rates are lower in the winter months.

Misconception #6: “Suicide only affects specific groups of people.”

Truth: While certain demographics show higher rates of suicide, people of all backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic levels attempt and/or die by suicide each year.

Misconception #7: “Most suicides happen suddenly without warning.”

Truth: The majority of those who die by suicide give some hint, clue, or warning. That’s why it’s important to know the warning signs of suicide and always take any suicidal thoughts, statements, or behaviors seriously.

Misconception #8: “Suicide is genetic.”

Truth: No one is destined to die by suicide. Just because one or more family members die by suicide doesn’t mean that other family members will do the same. However, those who have lost family members to suicide are at an increased risk for suicidal behavior.

Misconception #9: “Talking about the method of someone’s suicide with all the details and the emotional impact on loved ones will help prevent others from attempting suicide.”

Truth: Presenting precise details of a suicide can lead to copycat suicides. People in the media and school officials have learned that suicide can be contagious, so to speak. Therefore, they curtail details of *what* happened and instead focus on *why* it happened and what can be done to prevent further suicides.

Misconception #10: “If someone is determined to die, nothing can be done to prevent a suicide.”

Truth: Many people who struggle with suicidal thoughts, even the most severe strugglers, still have a desire to live. They often just want the pain to stop. There is always help and hope for every person who has suicidal thoughts. Suicide *can* be prevented.

Misconception #11: “Once someone is suicidal, they will always be suicidal and unable to face difficulties.”

Truth: In the context of a person’s entire life, a true suicidal crisis usually lasts only a brief time. Struggling with suicidal thoughts is temporary; it does not last a lifetime. Many people find help, get answers, and learn how to handle the issues that underlie suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Misconception #12: “When a suicide crisis is over and the person has improved, there is no longer a risk for suicide.”

Truth: The time following a suicidal crisis is critical as many suicide deaths occur within a few months after the initial crisis. Even when people improve and find help, regular, ongoing follow-up and evaluation is needed and beneficial.

Misconceptions about Suicide and Faith

Misconception #1: “A deeply committed believer would never consider suicide.”

Truth: Sincere believers can and do struggle with suicidal thoughts, and tragically, some die by suicide each year—even ministry leaders. Many pastors face tremendous stress and are at an increased risk for burnout, depression, and suicidal behavior. The godly prophet Jeremiah once lamented, “*Cursed be the day I was born!*” (Jeremiah 20:14). Job, the most righteous man of his day said in his suffering, “*Let the day of my birth be erased, and the night I was conceived*” (Job 3:3 NLT).

Misconception #2: “Suicide is the unpardonable sin.”

Truth: Nowhere in the Bible is suicide presented as the unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin is the unwillingness to yield to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit—the refusal to receive salvation through Jesus Christ. In other words, it is rejecting the very means of forgiveness—Jesus Christ.

Misconception #3: “Christians who take their own lives lose their salvation.”

Truth: No. According to the Word of God, once you have believed in and accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the Spirit of God is the promised guarantee that you will inherit heaven and live eternally in the presence of God. The Bible says, “*You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession*” (Ephesians 1:13–14).

In all matters, especially in matters of life and death, our thoughts and actions must be based on truth and the reality that there is always hope.

*“Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.”
(PSALM 25:5)*

What Are the Risk Factors of Suicide?

Risk factors indicate the likelihood of suicidal behavior—not the cause of suicidal behavior. Having a particular risk factor does not mean that a person is destined to become suicidal. The risk factors simply mean that there is a greater likelihood of suicidal behavior if a person has one or more of these factors.

“I am suffering and in pain. Rescue me, O God, by your saving power.”

(PSALM 69:29 NLT)

Risk Factors of Suicide

Personal Factors

- Depression, anxiety, a mental disorder, or substance abuse disorder
- Prior suicide attempt(s)
- History of trauma
- Medical illness, including chronic pain
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or being isolated
- The belief that suicide is a legitimate or noble solution to a personal crisis or dilemma

Familial Factors

- Family history of suicide
- Family history of a mental health disorder
- Family history of an alcohol or drug abuse disorder
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse

Social and Situational Factors

- Stressful life event (job loss, financial problems, trouble at school, being bullied, loss of a loved one, end of a relationship, war, trauma, isolation, etc.)
- Difficulty getting access to health care (especially mental health and substance abuse treatment)
- Lack of social support; isolation
- Local clusters of suicide
- Exposure to suicidal behavior of others (peers, relatives, etc.)
- Recent release from jail or prison
- Access to lethal means (firearms in the home; pills, etc.)

Knowing these factors can help you determine when someone is at risk for suicide and take appropriate precautions. The Bible says . . .

“A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions.”

(PROVERBS 27:12)

What Are the Warning Signs of Suicide?

Warning signs of suicide are different than the risk factors of suicide. Risk factors of suicide indicate an increased likelihood of suicidal behavior. The warning signs of suicide, however, indicate an immediate danger of suicidal behavior. Knowing these warning signs can help save a life.

“Save me and rescue me . . . Turn your ear to listen to me, and set me free.”

(PSALM 71:2 NLT)

Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking** about wanting to die or wanting to kill oneself
- Talking** about being a burden to others
- Being** preoccupied with death, dying, or violence
- Buying** a gun, stockpiling pills, looking for a way to kill oneself
- Making** a plan to kill oneself (searching online, etc.)
- Feeling** empty, hopeless, or like there is no reason to live
- Feeling** trapped or in unbearable pain
- Increasing** the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting** anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Displaying** extreme mood swings
- Showing** rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Sleeping** too little or too much
- Withdrawing** from family or friends or feeling isolated
- Saying** good-bye to loved ones, putting affairs in order, giving away belongings.

If you or someone you know is displaying any of these warning signs, seek help immediately. Call the **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** at **988** or text the **Crisis Text Line** at **741741**.

*“Rescue me . . . don’t let me sink any deeper!
Save me . . . and pull me from these deep waters.”*

(PSALM 69:14 NLT)

How to Assess Suicide Risk

The assessment questions below are based on the Columbia Protocol or the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS). This professional tool helps identify risk and prevent suicide. It is used in many settings: healthcare facilities, first responders (police and firefighters), military bases, colleges and schools, correctional facilities (prisons, jails), athletics and sports, support groups, employment settings, and more. Spouses and parents use it as well. It is an effective, evidence-based tool that has saved many lives.

“Save me, O God.”
(PSALM 69:1)

Suicide Assessment Questions

1. In the past month, have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?
2. In the past month, have you actually had thoughts about killing yourself?
3. In the past month, have you thought about how you might do this?
4. In the past month, have you had any intention of acting on these thoughts of killing yourself (as opposed to having the thoughts but definitely not acting on them)?
5. In the past month, have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?
6. In the past three months, have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life? (Examples: collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, held a gun but changed your mind, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, etc.)

If you answered *Yes* to any of these questions, you should seek a behavioral health referral and contact the crisis numbers listed below.

If you answered *Yes* to questions 4, 5, or 6—you are at high risk of suicide and should seek immediate help:

Call 911

Call **988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline)**

Text **741741 (Crisis Text Line)**

Go to the emergency room

Note: If you are with someone who answered *Yes* to any of these questions—especially questions 4, 5, and 6—*stay with them* until they can be evaluated. Remove any potentially dangerous objects if necessary. Get help immediately through one of the numbers listed above.

“The LORD helps them . . . He saves them, and they find shelter in him.”
(PSALM 37:40 NLT)

How to Help Someone Struggling with Suicidal Thoughts

At some point, God may use you to be a lifeline of hope to someone struggling with suicidal thoughts. God can use you to encourage those in despair, comfort the downcast, and give hope to the hopeless.

*“But God, who comforts the downcast,
comforted us by the coming of Titus.”
(2 CORINTHIANS 7:6)*

Learn the warning signs and risk factors. Review the risk factors and warning signs in this resource. Identify which warning signs and risk factors they may have.

Assess risk. Use the Suicide Assessment Questions in this resource to help you determine the level of crisis and identify appropriate next steps. Keep them safe. Remove any access to lethal means (guns, pills, etc.). Stay with them in a crisis. Help them find a safe place to stay when they are in danger of harming themselves.

Be present and available. Call, visit, and check in on them regularly. Invite them to join you in activities (going for a walk, running errands, etc.). Your presence and consistent encouragement can show them they are loved and valued.

Listen with compassion. Don't feel like you have to say something to “fix it.” When Job's friends saw his suffering, the Bible says, *“Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words”* (Job 2:13 NLT). Listen to their story and their feelings. Express concern and empathy. Acknowledge the reality of deep pain and suffering.

Talk about suicide with the person. Contrary to common belief, talking about suicide does not plant the idea in someone's head. Rather, it offers them an opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Ask direct questions regarding the existence of a plan. Ask how, when, and where in order to gain valuable information to help prevent an attempt. Do not promise confidentiality if this is the case.

Ask for a signed contract that obligates the suicidal person to talk with you or with someone else before taking harmful action. You could ask something like: “Will you promise that you will first call me if you are considering harming/killing yourself?” Write the words out like a contract and then both of you sign and date it. (See the “My Contract of Hope” in this resource.)

Suggest helpful activities that can serve as self-coping strategies when suicidal thoughts occur, such as:

- Keeping a journal to write down their thoughts throughout the day.
- Exercising, painting, or playing a game to distract them and take their mind off things.
- Going out often with friends and family, even if they have to push themselves to do so.
- Memorize encouraging passages from God's Word such as Psalm 46:1, Psalm 145:8–9; Isaiah 41:10, Jeremiah 29:11; 1 John 3:1.

Help them build a support system. Don't think you (as a caring party) can "do it all." Help them build a support system of family, friends, church members, community support groups, suicide hotlines as well as a pastor and/or counselor. Assist them in gathering emergency contact names and numbers so they have a list of people and places to call when they need help.

Know your limits. You may begin to feel stressed and overwhelmed when helping a person who is suicidal. Recognize when you need to refer the suicidal person to someone better equipped to care for them. Take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Ask others for help when needed.

Encourage them to pursue professional help such as medical treatment and professional counseling. Help them find a local counselor or clinic. Keep a list of numbers you will need to call in case there is an emergency. Direct them to emergency services such as the **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** at **988**, the **Crisis Text Line** at **741741**, the police, or local emergency room.

Follow up. Stay connected with them. Check in with them regularly in person or by phone or text. Ask how they are doing and how you can help them.

For someone struggling in the darkness, you can be a light of hope as you help, pray for, and provide support.

*"Help those in trouble.
Then your light will shine out
from the darkness,
and the darkness around you
will be as bright as noon."
(ISAIAH 58:10 NLT)*

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).

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)*

My Personalized Plan to Process My Grief

As the Lord uses this period of grief to produce the character of Christ in me, **I will . . .**

Recognize my grief

- Know the stages of grief
- Share my pain with another
- Openly express my emotions

“I am exhausted and completely crushed. My groans come from an anguished heart. You know what I long for, LORD; you hear my every sigh” (PSALM 38:8–9 NLT).

Realize my insufficiency

- Acknowledge my grief and pain to God
- Admit I am powerless to carry the grief alone
- Ask God to help me experience His strength in my weakness

“But he [Jesus] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I [Paul] will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 CORINTHIANS 12:9–10).

Relinquish control

- Recognize God’s rightful, sovereign control over my life
- Give my dreams and desires to God
- Trust God’s plans for me

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (PROVERBS 3:5–6).

Respond to God’s grace

- Spend time in God’s Word
- Allow the Lord to meet my emotional needs
- Recognize that God loves me and has not deserted me

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze” (ISAIAH 43:2).

Rebuild my life

- Acknowledge the “new normal” in my life
- Stay active in church and be involved in the lives of others
- Recognize that God wants to use me in new ways

“The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 PETER 5:10).

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)*

HOPE

The Anchor for Your Soul

What Is God's Heart on Hope?

The world cries out for hope. From individuals and families to cities and nations, the cries for justice, for peace, for *hope* ring out around the world. We cry out for answers, for guidance, for comfort . . . to make it through one more season, to overcome one more tragedy, to persevere one more day.

But there is only one hope that will satisfy our longings and our cries, one hope that will anchor us during the storms of life—the hope of Jesus Christ.

From His first cry as a baby to His last cry on the cross, Jesus Christ came to give us hope. The Bible says of Jesus:

“In his name the nations will put their hope.”
(MATTHEW 12:21)

God is the God of hope.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (ROMANS 15:13).

God is the only lasting hope for everyone.

“You are the hope of everyone on earth, even those who sail on distant seas” (PSALM 65:5 NLT).

God wants your hope to be in Him.

“O Lord, you alone are my hope” (PSALM 71:5 NLT).

God wants His Word and His promises to be your source of hope.

“You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my source of hope” (PSALM 119:114 NLT).

God does not want you to put your hope in people or leaders.

“It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes” (PSALM 118:8–9).

God does not want your hope to be in money or wealth.

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 TIMOTHY 6:17).

God has a plan for your life that is filled with hope.

“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).

God wants you to have hope all day—every day.

“Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long” (PSALM 25:5).

God gives you hope during times of trouble and suffering.

“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (PSALM 42:5).

God strengthens you with His hope.

“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 40:31).

God keeps you anchored with His hope.

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (HEBREWS 6:19).

God wants you to know that no matter what happens—there is always hope.

“There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off” (PROVERBS 23:18).

Key Verse to Memorize

*“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)*

My Personalized Plan to Stay Anchored in Hope

True hope comes from knowing Jesus Christ, resting in Him and His plan for both my todays and my tomorrows. Therefore, when unexpected sorrows and hardships come, I will remember God’s promises to me found in the Bible.

*“I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him.
I have put my hope in his word.”
(PSALM 130:5 NLT)*

As I focus on renewing my mind with God's Word and deepening my hope in Christ, **I will . . .**

Remember that true hope is anchored in God.

- I will remember that true hope is found in God, who doesn't change—not in people, who do change.
- I will remember that true hope is found in God's unchanging Word, not in shifting circumstances or cultural opinions.
- I will remember that true hope is found in God's Son, who loves me and secured my eternity through His death and resurrection.

"And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you" (PSALM 39:7 NLT).

Recognize that when I feel hopeless, God calls me to trust Him.

- I will accept that in this broken world, I will inevitably face painful circumstances.
- I will accept that even believers can experience sorrow, loneliness, depression, and periods of desperation.
- I will accept that in dark times, God is with me and He desires to give me His love and hope.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (ROMANS 15:13).

Realize that there is always hope and God will help me overcome the obstacles in my life.

- I will trust that God is always with me, guarding and guiding me, fulfilling His purposes for me.
- I will trust that God is in control of the circumstances of my life, and I can learn and grow during both good and bad circumstances.
- I will trust that God can use me to be an encouragement to others who are facing their own obstacles.

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; . . . The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever" (PSALM 138:7–8 ESV).

Rely on the Lord and others for support and help when I feel hopeless.

- I will remember that I don't have to suffer alone or in silence, and I will acknowledge my need for help.
- I will seek the support of a counselor, friend, or pastor when I feel unable to handle my situation or emotions.
- I will seek God in prayer, trusting Him to give me victory and use my trials for my good and His glory.

"Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory" (PROVERBS 11:14 NASB).

Recount my blessings, thanking God for them.

- I will thank God for all the good things in my life—for family and friends, work and play, clothes and food, rest and inspiration.
- I will do at least one thing a day that brings me joy and focuses my attention on Jesus.
- I will remember all the things God has brought me through in the past and trust Him for my future.

"Put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption" (PSALM 130:7).

Reach out to others and share the hope of Christ.

- I will pray for those in my life who do not know the Lord—that God will save them.
- I will look for opportunities to share the hope of Christ with the lost.
- I will encourage others who are suffering or facing a trial with God's truth.

"Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 THESSALONIANS 5:11).

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)

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).

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).

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).

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)

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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 these topics, 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 these topics, 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 these issues? How might your life be different if you *do* make changes?

Is there anyone in your life who needs help with these topics/issues? 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)*

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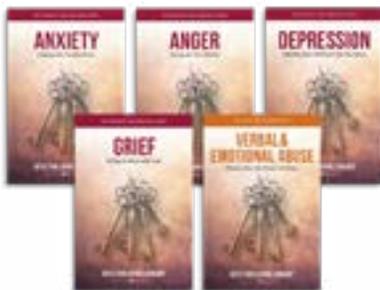
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Special thanks to author, broadcaster, and biblical counselor June Hunt, founder of Hope for the Heart, for her years of research, writing, editing, and guidance in developing the *Keys for Living Library*.



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