

This Isn't the Story I Wanted

Grieving the Life
You Lost and
Trusting the God
Who Stays

companion journal

NICOLE LANGMAN

welcome

If you and I could sit down over our favorite warm cup of goodness today, I'd invite you to let yourself linger in the truth that healing is possible.

Not because your loss wasn't devastating. Not because you'll simply get over it. But because God has a remarkable way of meeting us in the places we never wanted to go and redeeming what's been taken.

This journal is an invitation. Not to rush through grief, but to walk through it with courage and intention. And hope.

I'm sure you already know this, but healing is a growth practice that stands in the refusal to let loss define us.

Because, if we aren't careful, our loss and all we've been through can infuse us with a grief-saturated identity. We become the abandoned wife, the grieving mother, the one whose life fell apart. It can, if we don't do the healing work, consume us. And that consumption can make us bitter, angry, and emotionally reactive.

But healing is the powerful and intentional work that reshapes us too.

It's sacred work. Beautiful work.

Grief work is the heavy lifting that asks us to slow down, be honest, and to feel what we've spent so much energy trying not to feel.

It isn't work we can successfully do in the spare time of our lives, or off the side of our desk. It deserves our attention. And our courage.

So, I'm inviting you to lean in. Carve out fifteen or twenty minutes a day for this. More if you can. Find a quiet place, grab a pen, a cup of warm goodness, and open your heart to the possibility of growth and new possibilities.

Some days the words will come easily. Other days they won't. Some questions may unlock something profound. Others may not resonate much at all.

That's okay. Your journey through this is as unique as you are.

It's okay to be exactly where you are.

In this companion journal, you'll find the same kind of prompts and therapeutic questions we explored in the book. Where the book helped you name what happened, this journal gives you room to dig deeper. And then, gently, to lean closer to Jesus.

Some days you'll write with steadiness. Other days you might only manage a few words, or circle a sentence, or stop mid-thought. That counts. Healing isn't linear, and it doesn't require you to perform strength. It asks for attention—one honest moment at a time.

If you're using this journal because you purchased the book, consider it an extension of what we began together: grieving with truth, and trusting God in the ways that are real right now—however messy, however slow.

So take your pen. Let it be simple. Let it be personal. If you don't know what to say, start with whatever is most true. Jesus can handle all of you—including what you can't yet put into words.

Welcome. I'm so glad you're here.

Love, Nicole

how to use this journal

Come as you are. You don't have to “earn” the prompts by feeling better first. Write when you're ready—even if it's messy or brief.

Choose a journal prompt or come up with your own. If the one in front of you doesn't fit, simply write what's on your heart that day.

Be honest, not perfect. The goal isn't to produce the “right” answer. It's to bring the real one to God.

Try a small prayer with each page. Something like: “Jesus, meet me here.” Even one sentence counts. Or pour out all that's on your heart. He already knows, but He loves to hear from us.

Return when you can. If you miss days, you're not falling behind—grief moves differently for everyone. Come back when you can.

chapter one

sorry

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, you know all about our pain. You weep with us as we face the unthinkable and the terrible experiences never intended for your children. Thank you for your nearness and empathy. Thank you for never leaving us alone in the pain. Lord, infuse us with your presence and your hope. Give us faith to lean on you through these hard days. My friend is needing an extra reminder from you today, Father. You know her story and all she is facing. You know it's heavy and painful. Please wrap her in your arms and help her experience your comfort in new ways today. We are excited to see what you're going to do and trusting you with all of it. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What private sorrow are you carrying that you can hold up to the Lord today?

If grief could have its way, what would it take from you?

Knowing the truth that God loves you and sees your sorrow, what areas of your life do you believe will most benefit from that knowledge?

reflection

*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
(Psalm 73:26)*

You have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. (John 16:22)

journal prompt

Reflect on a time you experienced Jesus's compassion and how his empathy impacted your journey through pain. Consider the empathy and compassion shown to you by others and how it helped you in that season.

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chapter two

identity

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, thank you for the truth of who you are and who you've made us to be in you. Father, we invite you to full inform our identity so that we might rest in your peace and truth, knowing we are loved and complete in your eyes. Remove any lies or false labels that try to define us. And help us embrace the fullness of our worth in you, Jesus, secure and unshaken by the world around us. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What story have you been believing about who you are, and how does that story reflect the truth of your identity in Christ?

What evidence do you have in your life that confirms your worth and value, especially in light of your identity in Christ?

How have your challenging experiences shaped your identity? How might understanding your identity in Christ offer a new perspective or sense of freedom in how you view your past self and who you are today?

reflection

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

journal prompt

Write about a time when you felt your identity was shaken or in question. How did you find reassurance in who God says you are, and what truths helped you reclaim your sense of self in him?

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chapter three

pits

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, you know all about the pit. You were with Joseph as he sat stunned and confused all those years ago. And you're in the pit with my sweet friend right now as she reads these words. You know the pit has the potential to move us into greater depths of faith and understanding. Help us to see your hand at work, even when we can't see your plan. We know your heart is for us, Lord. And we trust you with the details. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What words would you use to describe your pit and how it feels to be in this season of life?

What might God be wanting to teach you or draw your attention to in this season?

What words of hope do you remember from the past that can be reused and applied to this pit?

reflection

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

But you, O Lord, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! (Psalm 22:19)

journal prompt

The pit can feel endless, but Scripture reminds us that God is present even in the deepest of pits. Joseph was thrown into one, David cried out from one, and Jesus himself stepped into the deepest and most painfully important pit of all for our redemption. The pit is never the end of the story. What might God be redeeming in your pit?

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chapter four

permission

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, you know exactly what we're going through. Your eyes are on the sparrows and your heart is for us. We know this because you tell us in the Bible and because you are a good, attentive, and loving Father. I know you see my friend today. She's battling a deep wondering about whether she has the right to feel what she feels. You know her so well, Lord. Help her to feel comfortable to pour it all out to you. Give her the strength to open up and share everything she's carrying. She doesn't need to do this alone. In fact, we know you are with her in the middle of it all. Thank you, Jesus, for your unwavering, unflinching love for us. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What surprises you most about the emotions you're experiencing during this painful season?

When do you notice the deepest struggle, and how do you explain this?

If you were sitting face-to-face with Jesus and shared your feelings, what do you think his response would be?

reflection

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me. (Psalm 13)

I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

journal prompt

Spend some time focusing on who God is. Focus on all he has done for you. Picture yourself holding up your pain to him, the situation that has taken your breath away, the loss and disappointment you hate. What do you notice in your body when you hold this up to him? What does he want you to know?

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chapter five

focus

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, thank you for traveling with us to the other side. For your calm and the peace you bring to every storm. Lord, help us remember who you are. When the waves and the wind threaten us, help us fix our eyes on you. When the grief steals our breath and we feel certain we can't go on, give us an eternal perspective. Nothing happens to us that doesn't first travel through your hands. Give us confidence in your presence, Jesus. We trust you. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

How has your grief shaped the story you tell about yourself, about who you are, and about what your future holds?

What thoughts or beliefs about your loss and grief feel overwhelming or unchangeable? How might Jesus's presence and compassion challenge or reshape them?

If Jesus were physically sitting with you in your grief, what do you imagine he would say to you? How does that shift the way you see this season of suffering?

reflection

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

journal prompt

Find a quiet moment and write about what it means to be still in Jesus. What fears or doubts make stillness or peace difficult, and what truth does he speak over you in that place?

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chapter six

intruders

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, you know the strong emotions and the heaviness we carry. Lord, this just feels like way too much. God, my friend is tired. As she reads these words and looks to you for healing and help, I'm standing with her. I'm lifting her up and asking you to work a miracle today, Father. To ease the anxiety and anger. To give her a sense of connection and to ease any additional grief-related emotions she is battling. Thank you that we can turn to you and count on you. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

How would you describe the presence of unwelcome emotional intruders?

In what ways have the intruders affected how you see yourself, your relationships, or your hope for the future? If you could talk back to them, what would you say to remind them, and yourself, about the truth?

Even in the middle of all this, where and when have you noticed God's presence, his comfort, his strength, and his provision for you?

reflection

Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." (Isaiah 35:4)

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

journal prompt

Find a quiet moment and write about what it means to be still in Jesus. What fears or doubts make stillness or peace difficult, and what truth does he speak over you in that place?

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chapter seven

stages

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, we don't need stages of grief. We need you. Can you help us to feel less attached to the prescribed process and more attached to you and your ways? Whatever you have for us, Father, we trust you. Thank you for traveling with us through the valley and for always having a plan. Lord, my friend here needs your strength to navigate this loss. You know her story and what she's been through. And you know what she is struggling with right now. I invite you, Jesus, into her process. Help her, Father. She is hurting. And I know that matters very much to you. Please comfort her, Lord, surround her with your peace, and lead her through this season of pain into a closer relationship with you. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What are some thoughts or emotions that make it hard to trust God in this season, and how might Scripture or past experiences with God challenge those doubts?

Which stage of grief do you feel most present in right now, and how do you see God meeting you in it?

If you were to look back on this season a year from now, where would you hope to see evidence of God's healing and restoration?

reflection

*Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.
Selah (Psalm 62:8)*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

journal prompt

Reflect on how you've found God carrying you through this season and how he is transforming you through your pain.

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chapter eight

casseroles

my prayer for you

Heavenly Father, thank you that your word about us is the truth we can always stand on. Thank you for showing up when others haven't. As we move forward, please help us keep our eyes on you and not dwell on the way others have let us down. And, Lord, help us remember that if the casserole never comes and not a single card shows up, you care. You see us and all we've been through. Help us to extend grace to others when they get it wrong. And show us opportunities to offer care to those around us who need to be seen too. We accept this season as a training ground for how to be your hands and feet in the lives of those you bring to us. We crave greater dependency on you, Lord. Help us seek you as our source of comfort through this season. And thank you for never letting us down. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What people have shown up in the aftermath of your loss?

If you had been standing next to the woman in Caesarea Philippi and been witness to her healing that day, what difference would that make in your life today as you face the unwanted?

What do you see your healed, older self doing differently in the lives of others who have faced loss?

reflection

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.
(1 John 3:1)*

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

journal prompt

After all you've been through, what does Jesus say when he looks into your eyes? What does he call you when he feels you reach for him? And how would things change for you if you let yourself fully experience his care for you?

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chapter nine

sunrises

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, what a master painter you are! Thank you for being trustworthy and true and for reminding us that even in the pain and grief of what we're going through, you are making beauty. Even now, as we wonder about outcomes, you are hands-on and good. Lord, I'm lifting up my friend here today. Her heart is broken, and the pain feels like an unrelenting storm. You know the details, Lord. Better than anyone, you know. We're inviting you in. Into the storm. Into the heartache. Father, lift her head. Give her peace unlike anything she's ever experienced. Help her to focus on you and your truths. We are here with expectant hope, Lord. Speak to us and draw us extra close today. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What beauty is God drawing your attention to today?

If the storm is extra loud in your life, what Bible verses help you shift your gaze to the sunrise? Write them out and read them slowly.

What might the God of both the sunrise and the storm be teaching you in these contrasting seasons?

reflection

I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness! (Psalm 57:2-3)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)

journal prompt

Where have you seen God's goodness in the middle of the storm, and how will you shift your focus today when the grief is thick and everything feels uncertain?

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[illegible]

chapter ten

broken

my prayer for you

Dear heavenly Father, you are the master potter. Thank you that you never flinch or step back from our brokenness. Sometimes we feel too shattered and too messy to ever be beautiful or healthy again. But, God, we're trusting you with the pieces of the story we find hard to hold. And right now, Father, I'm lifting up my friend, who needs you and your healing hands on her life. You know her story, and you know the big and small pieces she's left with. God, please remind her of your capacity to exchange beauty for ashes. Help her to trust you, Lord. Infuse her with your strength. Take those pieces and make something unbelievable through them. We trust you, Lord. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

If your brokenness is part of a larger story God is telling through your life, how might he be reshaping its meaning?

How would you describe your story if restoration, not loss, were the central theme?

What beliefs have you formed about yourself because of your brokenness? Are these beliefs rooted in truth, or are they shaped by pain or fear? How might God's perspective on your story challenge those thoughts?

reflection

We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (2 Corinthians 4:7)

To grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.
(Isaiah 61:3)

journal prompt

What is one piece of your story—a past hurt, failure, or loss—that you can surrender to God today? How can you begin to view this not as an ending but as something he is restoring or reframing in your life?

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chapter eleven

expectations

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, I'm lifting my friend up to you today. There have been a lot of unmet expectations on this journey through grief. Sometimes it feels overwhelming, having to navigate the unexpected emotions and the surprising reactions from others. Give us grace, Lord. Help us to remember that the only response that truly matters is yours. And every single time we can count on you to be loving, gentle, and kind. Thank you for that. Encourage my friend, Jesus. Help her feel your peace and support in the most powerful way. We love you, Jesus. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What surprises have you found during your season of loss and grief?

What expectations do you carry, and if you were to set them down for a moment, how would life feel different? How might that help your healing?

If you could ask for exactly what you feel you need, what would you say? Once you've written this out, consider turning it into a prayer to the one who is listening to your heart today.

reflection

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (John 14:27)

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:31-32)

journal prompt

What has surprised you most in your journey through grief? Consider the responses of others, the expectations placed on you, how God has met you in unexpected ways. How have these surprises shaped your understanding of yourself, others, your grief, and God?

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chapter twelve

disappointed

my prayer for you

Heavenly Father, thank you that there isn't a mountain you can't move or a child you can't rescue. Thank you that there is no disappointment so big that you can't use it. Father, I invite you into the healing of your precious child who is reading these words today. You know exactly what is needed to move through the trauma, to heal the sorrow. You understand the disappointments and letdowns she has faced. God, you know exactly what is hurting her. Can I ask you to reach into her heartache and disappointment and wrap your healing hands around her in the most profound way? We invite you to have full control, to lead as you see fit, and to guide as only you can. Thank you for your love, shown to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We believe you, Lord, and we trust you. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

How would you describe the mountain you're on today? What obstacles are you facing?

What areas of your life do you have the most difficulty handing over to God?

What is an absolute truth you know about how God feels about you and this mountain?

reflection

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah (Psalm 46:1-3)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

journal prompt

How has this disappointment you're holding affected your relationship with God? Consider how inviting him into that space might change your perspective or bring healing. What might God be revealing to you through this disappointment, and how can it be used to draw you closer to him and to help others?

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chapter thirteen

shame

my prayer for you

Thank you, Jesus, for meeting us at the very place we feel unworthy, broken, and unseen. And thank you for turning it into holy ground where healing begins and shame is replaced with your grace and unrelenting love. Lord, the woman reading this book is carrying a long history of pain. You know her so well. You know the details of her story that have never been said out loud—the words she’s never spoken. You know her because you created her. Father, as she listens for your voice, can you call her name? Can you remind her that you’re at the well waiting for her? That you died to carry this burden to the grave. For her. She needs your peace, Jesus. Please cover her in it and show her who you are in the most unique ways. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

Can you recall a time shame showed up in your life? What did you believe about yourself in that moment, and how does that belief compare to what God says about you?

If you could step outside the story of shame, what would the version of you, redeemed by Jesus, say to you in that moment?

How might your life be different if you allowed God to rewrite the story of shame by replacing it with his grace, forgiveness, and strength?

reflection

*As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
(Psalm 103:12)*

For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." (Romans 10:11)

journal prompt

When has shame tempted you to hide or shrink back from trusting God with your story? Reflect on how remembering your identity in Jesus might help you stand firm and move forward. What would it look like to give God the parts of your story that feel the heaviest with shame?

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chapter fourteen

lament

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, thank you that we don't have to hold it all together with you. Thank you for your big shoulders and the way you invite us to bring every ache and every question and every tear to you, no matter how raw. You are strong enough to carry what we cannot. I pray for my friend here, Lord. May she be honest before you, bringing her pain without fear and knowing you will meet her there. Bless her with the deep assurance that you see, you hear, and you hold her. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What are the unspoken thoughts and beliefs you hold about lament? How honest are you about these with God? What would honestly bringing your pain to God look like?

How does perceiving lament as an upward cry—rather than a cry into the void—change the way you grieve?

What would it look like, and how would it help, to trust that God not only hears but also responds?

reflection

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
(Psalm 34:17-18 NIV)

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.
(Habakkuk 3:17-19)

journal prompt

Lament is an upward cry—an honest outpouring of your pain before God. It's my hope that you'll take some time today to write out your lament to God. You can use my words above if that helps, or spend time in the Psalms—I suggest reading Psalms 6, 10, 13, and 77 as a start. Then when you can, sit down with a journal and write out your heart. Don't feel confined by structure—just freewrite and see what comes out.

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write your own prayer

In your own words, tell God where you are today. There is no right way to pray. He is listening.

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chapter fifteen

solidarity

my prayer for you

Thank you, Jesus, for coming close. For leaving your perfect home and the perfect place of honor you deserve. We can never fully understand your sacrifice, but we are so grateful you made it. Lord, I'm lifting up my friend today. You know exactly what she's going through. You know about her pain and the loneliness she feels in this season of her life. God, can you reach into the brokenness today and wrap your arms around her in the most unique way? Show her your closeness, Lord. Remind her that she doesn't even take a breath without you knowing about it and standing by to see her exhale. You are with us, Jesus. Your presence has always been transformative, and today we are excited to see what you will do. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

When have you felt God's closeness during this season? In what ways?

What does it mean to you that Jesus went through suffering?

What are some ways you see God standing with you in this season?

reflection

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. (Psalm 9:9)

journal prompt

Consider how the truth of God's sovereignty shapes your understanding of grief. How does knowing the Holy Spirit lives within you, and is interceding on your behalf, change the way you experience pain and loss?

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chapter sixteen

relationships

my prayer for you

Lord, thank you for being a God of connection. For never leaving us or forsaking us. Father, we are struggling with the heaviness of grief and the loneliness of loss. Some days it all feels like too much to carry, and we want to lock ourselves away from others. Please guide us to people who can speak words of truth and life into our pain, and give us opportunities to bless others who are also in painful seasons of loss. May we reflect you, Lord, in every valley, in every park, in every place we find ourselves. We trust you, Jesus. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What messages does grief have you believing today?

Are these messages in line with what the Bible says is true?

What would happen if you leaned into community instead of isolation?

reflection

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
(1 Corinthians 12:26)

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
(Romans 12:4-5)

journal prompt

Reflect on a time when you felt drawn to isolate yourself during a difficult period. What was at the root of your desire to stay locked down? How might reaching out to someone or spending time in the Word have brought you comfort or a sense of connection?

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write your own prayer

In your own words, tell God where you are today. There is no right way to pray. He is listening.

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chapter seventeen

reach

my prayer for you

Jesus, there are so many times when we find ourselves in a place we never anticipated. We didn't see it coming. We're blindsided by the wrongdoing, hurt, disappointment, unexpected, or unwanted. But, Lord, you always see ahead. You knew this before we did. There are no surprises for you, Lord. So can you remind us today about who you are? When we're surprised, you're not. When we're broken and undone, you are whole. You offer peace and healing. Father, lift our heads and help us to reach to you. To reach for you. No matter how hard things are. You are always right there, ready to hold us. Thank you for that, Jesus. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

When you think about a time you felt lost or overwhelmed or broken, how did you reach for God, and how did that feel?

What story do you tell yourself in the struggle? And how might shifting that narrative help you feel more connected to God and his goodness?

In what ways have you experienced God's presence during times of reaching? And how might those experiences help you remember who he is during this season and any upcoming seasons of struggle?

reflection

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 NIV)

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 NIV)

journal prompt

Grief can make us retreat, but God wants us to reach. Like the woman who touched the hem of Jesus's robe, and like my dad who did the only thing he could think to do as he lay beside that Alaskan highway. What might that small but life-changing reach look like for you right now?

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chapter eighteen

gratitude

my prayer for you

Father, in every way we want to honor you in our journey. And we have so much to be grateful for—you have never failed us or forsaken us. Thank you for that. But, Lord, some days are harder than we expected. And there's a battle for our minds as we try to remember to focus on your goodness instead of the pain of our loss. I'm lifting up my friend here, Lord. You know her story, and you have not for one second left her alone in it. Can you lift her head today, Father? Can you remind her in big and small ways that you see her and that you love her? And help her to notice you, God. Help her to see you in the details and to give you honor and credit for the good things in her life. We are trusting you, Lord. Thank you for all you're already doing in and through us. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

How has your story been shaped by acts of kindness or moments of gratitude?

What would life look like, and how would it feel different, if you embraced gratitude?

What evidence reminds you that good things can still come from difficult times?

reflection

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

journal prompt

Writing your own psalm is a beautiful way to express your heart to God—your gratitude, your struggles, your hopes, and your trust in him. Go ahead and write it out. Start with where you are and pour out your heart to God. Acknowledge his presence in your story and finish with a declaration of trust and faith in him.

[illegible]

write your own prayer

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chapter nineteen

forgiveness

my prayer for you

Dear Jesus, thank you for the life-changing work of the cross. For forgiving us for the wrongs against you and others. We want to be more like you, Lord. Forgiveness is hard, especially when the wounds are deep. We need your help. Help to forgive those who have hurt us, as you've forgiven us. Give us the wisdom and strength to own what's ours to own, to seek forgiveness when we've been wrong, and to offer forgiveness to others—even if they don't ask for it. Thank you for loving us enough to come for us, die for us, and forgive us. Help us to honor you as we follow your lead. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

How do you feel when you hold on to unforgiveness, and how do those feelings align with God's call for us to forgive?

What thoughts about negative situations or difficult interactions with people might influence your feelings, and how could you reframe them to align more closely with God's truth?

If the story of your life included a chapter of forgiveness, what would it look like?

reflection

If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
(Matthew 6:14-15)

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (Mark 11:25)

journal prompt

Reflect on the weight of unforgiveness and the impact it has on your life. How does holding on to anger or resentment affect you, your relationships, and your peace? What would your life look like if you chose to release your burden and trust God to heal your wounds?

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chapter twenty

freedom

my prayer for you

Father, it is for freedom that you set us free. I didn't understand this for a long time. It sounded redundant and odd. But it's the most direct way you could tell us. You want us to be free, but we feel anything but free when we are bound by the chains of sorrow. Help us, Lord. Give us the understanding we need and the perseverance to pursue you even in the confusion and heaviness of this season. We want that freedom. We know you offer it. We are ready to receive it, Lord. In your name. Amen.

therapeutic questions

What chapter of your life has been shaped by loss and pain, and how would you like to rewrite it with freedom as the central theme?

Can you identify moments when you felt God's presence bringing you closer to freedom? What would it look like to lean into those moments as you move forward?

What thoughts or beliefs keep you tied to your pain or fear, and how might you challenge them with God's truth?

reflection

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. (Romans 6:22)

journal prompt

As you reflect on the Israelites' forty years in the wilderness, what do you think you would say to them about accepting freedom and trusting God's plan? How can you apply those lessons to your journey toward freedom in Jesus?

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write your own prayer

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a final word

It matters very much that you did this work. If I could, I'd hug you with a knowing hug. I understand the heavy lifting of grief and the incredibly beautiful work of healing what you never wanted. You and I are on this journey together. But we're not done yet. Let's keep this important and transformational momentum going.

If you haven't already followed along on social media, please consider joining me in my little neck of the social media world on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#), and [sign up for my monthly devotional](#) to receive reminders of God's faithfulness and therapeutic prompts to incorporate into your journey.

And keep your eyes on the YouVersion Bible app for a new devotional to assist you in your ongoing work.

I'd love to hear from you. If you need prayer or have a testimony of God's faithfulness through this work you're doing, please email me at hope@nicolelangman.com.

I hope we get to meet one day, but if, on this side of Heaven, our paths don't cross, thank you for allowing me to be part of your journey in this way. It's a privilege I never take lightly. In the meantime, may you experience the fullness of God's peace and love as you navigate these days. Always knowing with certainty that you have an attentive Heavenly Father who is closer than your breath and more steadfast than every fear, more present than every worry, and more loving than you can ever imagine.

Until we meet here or at the Throne, I'm shoulder to shoulder with you. It's an honor to walk with you.

Nicole