

Session Three

Chapter 2: The Howl



Facilitator Preparation: Contact all of the participants at least once during the week prior to your next gathering and remind them to read the Chapter 2 in the book before coming to the next gathering. Remind them to bring their journal, their copy of the *180 Your Life* book, and their Individual Study Guide.

Facilitator's Tip: This could be another sensitive time as they relive the memorial or funeral service for their loved one. The Bible says we are to weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn. Encourage them to express their grief openly with you. For now, you may need to be their safe person.

Greet one another warmly.

Read the author's transparent statement from this chapter:

Some cultures have a tradition of keening or grief wails when death occurs. They let loose with long, loud howls of mourning. It seems to me a logical step in the grief process, especially at first. I wanted to express how unfair all of this was, how great my pain was, how overwhelmingly *wrong* my husband's death had been, and rebuke anyone who tried to make it seem anything less than a horrible, violent injustice. As the soft music played over the speakers and people were seated and waiting for the service to start, something deep and primal rose up inside of me.

- *Did you experience a moment when something snapped and you just had to release all the pent up emotions of grief and pain?*
- *How did you feel after you allowed yourself to release them?*
- *How did those around you react to your expressions of grief?*

The Bible talks about weeping with those who weep and mourning with those who mourn. It does not say we are to try and stop their wailing and weeping.

Why do you think this is true?

Read Matthew 27:45-51.

- *Does God understand our pain and grief?*
- *Do you think He experienced grief as He experienced the loss of His Son on the cross?*

The author's friend said, "I know you're really hurting, but let me encourage you not to do anything out of fear. Move toward something, but don't run away in fear."

As you remember those first few weeks after your loss, were you tempted to do things out of fear?

Explain: *What advice would you give someone at this stage in his or her grieving journey?*

Long before the internal firestorm has passed, friends and family will return to their everyday lives. Their departure will reveal an even bigger crater than you had realized.

What kind of things did you experience after everyone left that revealed this huge crater in your life?

(walking into an empty house, going to the church you attended with your loved one, etc.)

What did you do when that happened?

What advice would you give a friend going through this?

Family memberships to area attractions are a great first step toward filling that gaping crater and a great gift for a family in the throes of grief.

If you have not done so yet, what memberships could you get to begin to fill this gaping crater?

If you have, what ones would you recommend to others like you?

Facilitator's Tip: Do your own research and come prepared with a list of possible family memberships appropriate for your group. Have phone numbers and as much information as possible printed out for them so they will not have any excuse for not pursuing this healthy step toward transforming trials into triumph.

Review Journey to the Sunrise

Have you discovered that some people, even close family members, were not comfortable with your grief?

Forgive them for their insensitivity, and forgive yourself if you respond with grief-based emotion.

Write their names here:

Close your eyes and forgive them right now in your mind.

If you need to, go to them and ask their forgiveness if you feel you responded in a way that may have hurt them.

If this is not really necessary, just let it go and move on with your life.

Realize that their response is not about you. It's not about your loss. It's about their own grief.

Often it is better to find a "closet" or "safe place" away from them to let loose.

Do you have a safe place?

A good friend came to me and said, "I know you will experience waves of grief. If you need a hug, someone to silently sit with or scream with you, just look at me and say, 'I just got a hit.' I will know what that means, and we will disappear for a few minutes together as that wave of grief washes over you."

Do you have a friend it is safe to be with in times like this?

Write their name here and remember to be thankful for them.

If you want to help a friend deal with the waves of grief that seem to hit randomly, this is one way they will really appreciate.

Understand that part of establishing camp in the aftermath of loss is deciding to stay still. Don't run, and don't make drastic changes to your setting or make major decisions if you can avoid doing so.

What kind of changes or decisions have you been tempted to make because of the pain and hurt caused by your grief?

Facilitator's Tip: Remember to intersperse your own testimony of walking this grief journey. The more transparent you can be about what you did right and especially what you did wrong, the more you will encourage others to be open about their own grief journey. If something really stood out to you as you read this chapter, have that part of your own story ready to share.

Practical Suggestions for Transforming Trials into Triumph

Go with your instincts (unless they are telling you to do destructive behavior). Grieve in a way that resonates with you. Need to guttural yell? I say, go for it. I found a good guttural yell can happen in my parked car at home. Preferably in the garage. It's enclosed and doesn't scare the neighbors. You have to express your grief, so find ways that initially resonate with you and know that those ways will evolve.

Don't make any major decisions while you are in the "Ground Zero" zone. Proceed with caution. Don't get behind the wheel of your life and do serious damage. Take your time. Let the pain lift.

Did you try to make a decision during these initial stages of grief?
Share what you learned.

Allow God to use you to help others that might be thinking of making a change before they have gotten past this stage of the grieving process.

After you have outlined your boundaries, make the setting safe. Recognize the potential dangers and work to weaken them. Clear enough space so that you can perform the necessary everyday activities. Guard your process as well as your routines, and respect your emotional needs. Rather than struggle to appear brave, allow those tears to flow.

- *Do you feel you need to appear brave before family and friends?*
- *How much energy does that drain from you?*
- *How can you better allow the tears to flow and still perform your everyday activities?*
- *What have you found that works and does not work?*

Facilitator's Tip: Have some suggestions ready from your own experience. Many times, if you give one or two examples, it will inspire others to share theirs. One suggestion might be to spend some time with God at the beginning of the day. Be honest about your feelings with Him even if they are angry ones. Remind group members that journaling at the end of the day may also help them release those emotions they have felt they needed to keep under control during the day.

Read the Top Ten Grief Mistakes.

Ask them to put a check mark next to any they have made.

- 1. Thinking that this will last forever.**
- 2. Thinking that you will never laugh, love, live a happy life again. You will if you want to.**

- ❑ **3. Isolating yourself and your family. Seek counseling.**
- ❑ **4. Thinking that the best part of your life is in the past. There was beauty in the past, and there will be beauty in the future.**
- ❑ **5. Thinking that healing will just happen. It won't. You have to be proactive and decide to claim your healing through discipline.**
- ❑ **6. Dulling the pain with substance abuse, excessive screen time, or overeating. The sooner you confront the pain and let it pass through you, the sooner you will have mastery over it.**
- ❑ **7. Trying to make yourself believe the platitudes in hopes it will speed the healing process without taking action.**
- ❑ **8. Thinking you can handle this all on your own. Grief is like an emotional amputation. You have to re-learn your life. Seek and accept help during this process.**
- ❑ **9. Living your deceased spouse's life through your current life. You will do that for a time. Just be open to what you want for your life. That is a valid and important question. Dream a little.**
- ❑ **10. Making big decisions quickly, like moving or changing a job. Grief is transformative. Your new life will emerge in time. Stay where you are if you can for a few years. The pain will be excruciating, but you will also give yourself time to figure out what you want and need in the upcoming chapters of your new life.**

Ask them to go back and write how they will rectify this mistake now that they have more understanding concerning the grief journey.

Ask the group members to read Chapter 3 before your next gathering.

Pray with them, asking God to reveal His great love for them and that He does truly know the depth of the grief they are experiencing. Ask Him to be their comfort, confidant, and guide as they walk further along this path toward transforming these trials into triumph.



**Speak Life: Empower Your Ground Zero
(Read Out Loud Together)**

*I will not lie down in the Desert of Grief. That is not my destiny. I am on a quest.
Though the grasses have browned, the ground has cracked, and the night is full of the unknown,
I sense a presence. I ask God to show me the way to the flood lands of the soul.
I rise, taking one step and then another, moving forward into the night, pressing on
toward the waters of renewal and the light of day.*



Journal questions offered for this session:

**Food for Thought
Week 5 Journal Entries:**

I appreciate your hard work! Okay, I'm going to ask you to dig deep this week and find your inner Roar! Here we go! ~ Mishael

Day 1: Honor Your Spirit

Was there a moment when you expressed your grief in a way that resonates with who you are?

Day 2: Your Roar

What productive way can you use to express your loss? (Do you need to scream or roar? I suggest doing so in your parked car in your garage, which doesn't scare the neighbors or your children.)

Day 3: The Eulogy

Take a moment and write how you feel about your loved one.

Day 4: Express Your Heart

Was there something you needed to say but didn't get the chance to do so? Go ahead and express those thoughts here and now.

Day 5: Grief Crazy

Are you or your family making big decisions that might wait? Are they a way of running from the pain or running toward a goal?

Food for Thought
Week 6 Journal Entries

Grief is life changing, sometimes creating a large pause in your existence. That's okay. Embrace the pause. You have the opportunity to craft your life in a new way; let's make some positive steps this week. I know it can be hard. Your feelings will follow your decisions. You can do it! ~ Mishael

Collateral Damage

Day 1: Are you making any decisions based in fear?

What are those decisions?

How can you purpose to create peace and order in your current circumstances?

Day 2: Survival Strategies

What does your "new normal" look like today?

Is there one positive step you can take this week to make it better?

Day 3: Can you find a membership to one area attraction and invite some friends to go with you and your family?

Day 4: Are you avoiding any areas where you used to go with your loved one? Don't go it alone! Can you take a friend to reclaim those spaces?

Day 5: Follow Your Instincts

What messages are you receiving, if any, about how you should process your loss?

Take time for a walk, and think about what your gut is telling you.

What can you do this week to honor your transformational journey of grief?