

Session Four

Chapter 3: The Swim



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 3 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: Especially if any of your group are dealing with the suicide of a loved one, this chapter could cause a wave of emotions to surface that they may have been repressing. When you contact them during the week, try to encourage them if you discern they are in need of special prayer or help to walk through this one. If you have never done so, research how to help someone dealing with the suicide of a loved one. There are excellent resources out there that will help you with this. It would be advantageous to have a list of resources available to suggest for them to check out as well. (Suicidepreventionlifeline.org and Suicide.supportgroups.com)

Greet one another warmly.

This was a short chapter, but one that it is very important to deal with and face during our walk along this grief journey from trials to triumph.

Read the transparent sharing from the author:

After Jason died, it was very, very hard for me to be in my house alone. The silence was deafening. I had so many questions surrounding his death, and I still had a toddler to feed and raise while I was in my third trimester of pregnancy. Unspoken was the fact that after my husband's suicide, I was battling suicidal thoughts myself. So, I confided in my friends that I really needed someone to stay with me.

Suicidal thoughts are common in those who are grieving.

- *Don't suffer alone.*
- *Find a support system.*
- *Reach out.*
- *Don't isolate. (Suicidepreventionlifeline.org)*

Facilitator's Tip: If in your loss you battled thoughts of despair, you may want to share your own experience and how you overcame the situation. It will help those who have not yet faced it begin to constructively deal with these potentially destructive thoughts. If someone shared his or her triumph through this phase with you prior to this gathering, you may ask that person ahead of time to then share the story.

Then ask:

- *Have you experienced these feelings and thoughts?*
- *How have you dealt with them?*
- *Have you reached out to one of the suicide prevention lifelines?*

What did the author do to protect herself during this dangerous time?

How would you help someone else deal with these thoughts?

(Answer: Cry out to God. *Focus on the ones you love and actively craft your lasting legacy of hope that you want to pass on to them*).

If necessary, have you reached out to any of the suicide support groups?

Facilitator's Tip: Share what you discovered as you researched this. Tell them that there are groups specific to their personal loss or trauma situation, and these groups can be a very necessary addition to healthy grief processing. (If necessary, Suicide.supportgroups.com is recommended by the author).

Review Journey to the Sunrise

Do not be surprised when you discover areas where you can no longer answer your own needs. You need to find a place where you can be fed.

What other places have you found to help you meet your and your family's needs?

Realize that when you are overwhelmed, you need to ask for help.

Have you been willing to do this?

What areas have you requested help in?

Understand that sometimes, all you really need when you are grieving is a friend to just sit close by and not try to make everything okay.

Do you have a friend that will come and just sit with you when you need them?

Facilitator's Tip: You may want to consider having them encourage one another, connect with one another on the phone or in person during the week. If you do not feel they are able to do this, see if there are other “sponsors” or those you know who have walked through their own grief journey and are ready to be a “friend” to another and would be available by phone to help if needed. Be cautious with this and make sure they can handle dealing with someone experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Practical Suggestions for Transforming Trials into Triumph

How do you handle feelings of suicide or despair in isolation? The answer is that you don't. You have to find help. You have to find a safe support group. Don't suffer in silence like I did.

I lost years trying to tough it out on my own. I could finally exhale because I had found people who understood my journey and, in some cases, were further down my same road. I felt understood. How much better would it have been had I found this group earlier in my loss?

Ask them if they would be willing to share what they wrote in their journals during the time between sessions.

Review a couple of the author's favorite verses and ask what they mean to each member.

“I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.” Psalm 118:17 NKJV

“In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free.” Psalm 118:5 NIV

Rediscover Laughter. Laughter is healing to the soul and a great stress reliever for the body. If nothing funny is happening around you, rent some comedy movies. Find your laughter again; search for it and discover that life can still be good.

Do something that makes you happy.

Take a bike ride, work in the garden, look up something fun to do in your area with friends and family.

Intentionally craft your time, don't just let the day roll on without purpose or get constantly filled with responsibilities.

Give yourself a break. You'll be able to come back to your responsibilities with a fresh perspective.

What are some other ways we can do this?

Top Ten Tips for Getting through Grief

1. Let people help you
2. Know that this will take time
3. Take care of yourself first
4. Set a goal for yourself and go after it
5. Go on a fun adventure
6. Make the List (list three things you used to do that made you happy and three things you always wanted to try).
7. Ask your kids what they would like to do and do it with them
8. Reclaim your life
9. Do something silly
10. Try something new
11. Enjoy simple pleasures

Ask the group members to read Chapter 4 before your next gathering and remind them to journal their thoughts and feelings as they do.

Encourage them to spend time reading God's Word and filling their thoughts with positive things. Pray for them before they leave, asking God to put His loving arms around them and protect them from destructive thoughts, perhaps using Philippians 4:8 as the basis for your prayer.



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 7 Journal Entries:

This week tackles some tough stuff. I encourage you to think about your legacy. No matter how hard it is right now, your life matters to God and your loved ones! Purpose this week to honor your loss with a life well lived. You can do that by crafting a legacy of hope by your own example. ~ Mishael

Day 1: The Swim

Have you been challenged with thoughts of despair?

How would self-harm affect your children and loved ones?

The enemy of our souls comes to rob, steal, kill, and destroy. Can you purpose today not to give your legacy to despair, but to create hope?

Day 2: What do you want your legacy to be—for yourself, your children, your family and friends?

How can you honor your loss with a life well lived?

Dream a little: What does that look like in your world?

Day 3: The Coiled Secret

What strategies can you implement to insure that thoughts of despair never win?

Can you share a code word with a friend for when you really need help, and can you find a support group?

Write an anchor Bible verse here. Share what this verse means to you.

You can use this one if you like: *I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.* (Psalm 27:13-14 NASB)

Day 4: Like the Wind

What was it like going back to your faith service after loss?

If you haven't yet gone back, can you take a friend or loved one with you to join you during services?

What is the date you will go?

What is your friend's name?

Make that phone call today.

Day 5: Are there moments when the Spirit is "like the wind" that you cannot see but feel?

1 Corinthians 13: 13 says, "These three things last, faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." The love lives on. What ways can you honor your love for someone you've lost?

**Food for Thought
Week 8 Journal Entries**

Sometimes you just need to let your hair down, relax, and laugh! Don't wait for life to be perfect; intentionally craft those moments. ~ Mishael

Day 1: Dinner and a Movie

What is something you can do with friends that makes you feel normal and even laugh?

Can you call someone today to set that up?

Day 2: Who in your life honors your grief processing?

In what way do they do that?

Can you set up a time to hang out with them?

Day 3: Poodle Up

Was there a moment after your loss that really made you laugh? Share that story here.

Day 4: Rediscover Laughter

What really makes you laugh? Watch one good comedy movie today with your family!

Day 5: Can you set up something else this week to enjoy your life? Write about it.