

FINDING THE LOVE OF JESUS & LOVING HIM BACK

Discipleship Essential: Knowing God

Series: Finding the Love of Jesus and Loving Him Back

Study 3: In the Valley

Find the Love of Jesus and Lovin Him Back: In the Valley (through grief, loss and sorrow)

Introduction

When navigating times of grief or sorrow, we often have questions, pain and a deep longing for hope. This study explores how Jesus meets us in the valley – not rushing our grief or leaving us behind, but drawing near with His presence, compassion and hope.

When leading this study please be mindful that sharing experiences of loss or grief may be difficult for some people. Be sure to manage discussion time to allow for prayer at the end. If it becomes evident that someone requires pastoral care support, please let your pastor or oversight know.

Recommended resources and further study:
God Will Carry You Through by Max Lucado

Read John 20:11-16 NKJV

But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”

Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher).

It had only been a few days since Mary saw Jesus endure a great deal of pain and suffering on the cross. Overcome by grief and the pain of losing her friend, Mary stood by

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the tomb weeping. Rather than rushing away, she remained at the tomb and took time to grieve.

DISCUSS: Why do you think Mary remained at the empty tomb after the others had left?

In this account of Mary at the tomb, we can see that her sorrow wasn't hurried or corrected by Jesus. He honoured her grief by allowing her to linger in sorrow a few moments before revealing Himself. He drew near and entered into her grief by asking "woman, why are you weeping?"

DISCUSS: Why do you think Jesus allowed Mary to express her sorrow before revealing himself?

Mary weeping at the tomb shows that our faith doesn't excuse us from experiencing grief or sorrow. Mary was a devoted follower of Jesus. She spent time with Him (in the flesh) and experienced His miracles for herself. Yet she still needed time to grieve before recognising that Jesus was with her in her grief. Just as He promises to be with us.

DISCUSS: How can seasons of grief affect our ability to recognise that Jesus is near?

DIGGING DEEPER: Mary came to the tomb to tend to Jesus' body and left the tomb as the very first witness of the resurrection. Jesus didn't minimise Mary's grief; He met her in it and transformed it with the hope of His resurrection. The same sorrow that kept her at the tomb, became the place where she was entrusted with hope for all mankind. Her calling to bear witness was renewed. Have you ever experienced a season of grief being redirected towards mission like Mary did?

APPLICATION: In our darkest hours we can draw nearer to Jesus to experience His love and comfort. Mary's story gives us hope that Jesus can use our time in the valley to reveal Himself to us more deeply and bring us hope. How might this passage shape the way we grieve or the way we walk alongside others in their grief?

PRAY: Take some time to pray together. You could thank God for revealing Himself to us in our grief or ask Him to comfort those currently seeking Him in the valley.