



WALKING THRU' THE VALLEY

Losing a loved one is an experience like no other. Grief is the experience we go through because of this loss. Grief has its phases but it does not have a schedule!

Life goes on, and then suddenly, grief overwhelms like a wave.

Many of us do not have the luxury to properly grieve as work, studies and life demand our attention.

A 'Walking Thru The Valley' Retreat seeks to provide you a safe space to grieve and to process your loss as you walk through this valley of the shadow of death.

This retreat was originally designed for an East Asian context, where grief is generally regarded as a negative emotion. Those who have lost loved ones are often told to be strong, to get over their grief and to get on with life. It is often not the "done thing" to talk about the person we have lost. Among Christians, grief is sometimes seen as a weakness or due to a lack

of faith. As such, grief is often suppressed, and those who grief struggle in silence, often wondering what is wrong with them.

This retreat is not suitable for those who recently lost loved ones – within three to six months. During this time, those in grief have other needs, and may not be ready to process their loss and grief. A good time would be at least 6 months after one's loss. It is best to do this with a spiritual companion or a spiritual director who is the retreat facilitator. You can invite a friend to attend the retreat with you or to be your spiritual companion on this journey.

“Walking Thru’ The Valley”

A Personal Retreat (3D 2N)

This is a proposed schedule for a 3D 2N personal retreat, which you can adjust and adapt as necessary

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast		
09:30 – 10:30 <u>Session 1</u> Arrival Scripture Reflection 1 <i>Jesus responds to John’s death</i> <i>Mt 14:13-25</i>	09:30 – 10:30 <u>Session 5</u> Scripture Reflection 3 <i>Jesus with Mary & Martha</i> <i>Jn 11:20-22, 28-29, 32-35</i>	09:30 – 11:45 <u>Session 7</u> CLOSING <i>The Sovereign LORD</i> <i>is with me</i> <i>Isaiah 61:1 - 3</i>
11:00 – 12:30 <u>Session 2</u> SELAH 1 Your Corner of Remembrance	11:00 – 12:30 <u>Session 6</u> SELAH 3 Your Lament to the LORD	SELAH 4 The Journey Ahead
Lunch		Check Out
15:30 – 17:30 <u>Session 3</u> Scripture Reflection 2 <i>Jesus @ Gethsemane</i> <i>Mt 26:36 – 46</i>	<u>Your Time Alone</u> To continue with SELAH 2 or SELAH 3 as needed	
Dinner		
19:30 – 21:30 <u>Session 4</u> SELAH 2 Your Journey Thru d’ Valley	<u>Your Time Alone</u> To continue with SELAH 2 or SELAH 3 as needed <i>(If you are at this retreat with someone else, this may be a good place to walk together, share some discoveries from this retreat)</i>	

“Walking Thru’ The Valley”

*“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4, ESV)*

Session 1: ARRIVAL

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION 1:

Jesus responds to news of John the Baptist’s death, Matthew 14:13 - 25

¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.

1. Read and reflect on Matthew 14:13 – 25.
Focus on Jesus and his response – to bad news, to the hungry crowd, to his disciples, to his own need to be alone with Father. What stands out for you about Jesus?

2. What was Jesus’ initial response when he heard news of John’s death? Why do you think he responded in this way? Reflect on their relationship – Jesus & John the Baptist – and why John’s death may affect Jesus significantly.

3. In what way(s) does Jesus’ story here resonate with yours in recent months as you faced the loss of a loved one?

As you spend time away and alone with Jesus, invite GOD – Father, Son and Spirit – to walk with you through this valley of the shadow of death. Tell him what you need from Him during this time.

SELAH 1: YOUR CORNER OF REMEMBRANCE

We are here because we grieve for the ones we lost / are losing.

REMEMBER => **X Forget**

X Dismember (to obliterate / cut off the parts that are too painful)

=> **Put back together again!**

=> **3 components: RECALL .. REFLECT .. RE-TELL STORY**

- RECALL the events, journey, memories
- REFLECT – meaning, impact, what God has been doing
- RE-TELL our story, seeing God's Story in mine

- Create a CORNER here to REMEMBER your 'loved one' whom you have lost
 - You may begin with what's prominent in your heart & mind as you recall your loved one
 - Or you may begin by scrolling through your phone photo gallery – pictures of times you've shared with your loved one
- What can make up this CORNER?
 - **WORDS, PHRASES** that describe your loved one.
 - .. A favourite / appropriate VERSE from the Bible (if any)
 - .. Quotation from your loved one
 - **PHOTOS, PICTURES**
 - .. Choose a photo that best capture how you remember your loved one and the relationship you have with him / her
 - .. There may be other photos / pictures you want to add along the way
 - **MOMENTO**
 - .. A favourite item
 - .. Something that speaks of his / her life
 - **MAKING / DRAWING SOMETHING** from whatever resources you have here
- Materials / Resources you may need
 - A Folder (ideally A4 size) in which you can keep your completed works
 - Papers – white / coloured, for writing / card paper
 - Glue, tape
 - Colour pens / markers / pencils / paint
- **Your journey with your loved one may not have been all smooth sailing.**
As such your corner may include symbols / pictures, etc that represents your difficult / painful times.
- You are free to add on to this corner throughout this retreat.
- **Give a NAME for this REMEMBRANCE of your loved one**

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION 2

Matthew 26:36 - 46

“Overwhelmed with sorrow, Crushed with grief”

1. Take time to read and reflect on Jesus' experience in Matthew 26:36 – 46.
Refer also to Mark 14:32-38 and Luke 22:39 – 46.

What words / phrases stand out for you from this reading?

2. Reflect on what Jesus was going through at that time.
What words will you use to describe his experience, his feelings and his needs during that time in the Garden of Gethsemane?

3. In what ways does Jesus' experience with grief and sorrow resonate with yours?

4. Talk to Jesus about your own experience with grief and sorrow

SELAH 2: YOUR JOURNEY THRU' THE VALLEY

Retracing your journey through the valley of losing your loved one, the Lord walking back with you

1. Create a **TIMELINE / MAP** of your journey of loss / grief.
2. MARK the DATE of LOSS. NAME who / what you lost.
3. There may be **significant events BEFORE this**.
 - (a) Include these in your mapping up to 6 months or so before your loss.
 - (b) If you have been a care-giver for your loved one, include the whole period (if more than 6 months) since you started giving care.
4. Mark down **what has happened in your life SINCE then** – both the “external events” and “internal struggle with grief”.
5. **How did this loss (or the preparation of this loss) affect ..**
 - (a) you personally?
 - (b) your family / others who are close to this person?
6. **What other CHANGES happened in your life** (e.g. change of job / moved location, promotion, etc) during the past 3 – 5 years? How have you been coping with these changes “in the midst of walking through the valley of the shadow of death”?
7. Were there any **special moments / meaningful conversations** with your loved one?
Recall some of these.
8. Where have you seen **God’s presence in this journey** through the valley of the shadow of death?
Highlight these moments in your timeline.
9. “A picture is worth a thousand words”
As you look again at the map of your journey through the valley of loss & grief, think of photographs or meaningful pictures that mark your significant moments on this journey
10. Give a **NAME to this journey** of yours.
11. **Who has the LORD been for you on this journey?**

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION 3

JOHN 11: 1 - 44

“LORD, if you had been here ...”

1. Take some time to reflect on Jesus' response to news about Lazarus' death, and His response to Martha and Mary when he visited them at their home in Bethany.

What moves you / baffles (confuse) you about Jesus' response?

2. Who do you most identify with in this story? Why?

3. Both sisters, Martha and Mary seem to be very different in character, Yet, both of them said the same thing to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (11:21, 32).

What could be other questions in their hearts as you hear them voicing this to the Lord?

4. What are some questions you find yourself asking as you think about your loss?

SELAH 3: Your Lament To The LORD

LAMENT – A CRY FROM OUR HEARTS TO THE LORD

1. As you hear the lament of the psalmist in the verses below ...
 - What ECHOES do you hear from your own heart?
Write this down next to the psalmist's cry, in your own words.

My soul is in deep anguish.

How long, LORD, how long?

Psalm 6:3 (NIV)

Why, LORD, do you stand far off?

Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

Psalm 10:1 (NIV)

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

² LORD, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive

To my cry for mercy.

Psalm 130:1-2 (NIV)

⁹ All my longings lie open before you, Lord;

My sighing is not hidden from you.

¹⁰ My heart pounds, my strength fails me;

Even light has gone from my eyes.

¹¹ My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds;

My neighbors stay far away.

Psalm 38:9-11 (NIV)

2. The psalmist is able to be HONEST & OPEN to GOD about what he truly feels because he knows that GOD knows him inside and out and yet loves him.

He is UNAFRAID TO EXPRESS HIS HEART, knowing that GOD's Spirit discerns his longing in the midst of the chaos.

As you hear the psalmist's cry, what are the cries from your own heart?

Write your own LAMENT in a LETTER to GOD about your loss and grief.

These may be your questions to GOD and / or expressions of your feelings, confusion, pain, frustration, despair, regrets ...

LETTER(S) to your loved one ...

- There are often words we wished we've said / not said before our loved one passed. Express yourself in a letter as if you are speaking with him / her.
- There may be more than one letter as memories / thoughts come to you.
- You may want to write this on loose sheets of papers – some of which you want to keep or some which you want to burn in surrender to Jesus (especially where there is expression of much hurt & pain which you don't want to hold on to)
- You can pause at any point in your personal retreat if you find the need to pause and write .. to your loved one, to God or to yourself
- It may be helpful to read your letters aloud to someone whom you trust who is able to stand in the gap for you on behalf of the person you lost.

CLOSING REFLECTION

As you prepare to end your retreat, read and reflect on **Isaiah 61:1-3**

- What does Isaiah hold up about the LORD in these verses?
- What promises of the LORD stand out for you at this time?
- What does this mean for you as you think about going back work, family, routine?

SELAH 4: LOOKING AHEAD ...

Your JOURNEY through the valley .. Grief in the midst of LIFE .. the next 6 months

Grief for our loved ones will always be part of our journey. Our love for them, our missing them, our pain and lostness speaks about how much this person has been a part of our lives. We find life going back to normal of sorts yet, it's never quite the same.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months ...

1. What major events / commitment are already on your plate?
2. What PROMISES / ASSURANCE do you have from the LORD of His presence with you in the journey ahead, especially when grief catches you unexpectedly?
3. To help you live 'differently' (i.e. making space for what you need), what is one thing (or at most 2?) that you would like to include in your next 6 months
 - i. Daily?
 - ii. Weekly?
 - iii. Monthly?
 - iv. One-off?
4. What kind of support or help will you NEED as you think about your journey – navigating grief in the midst of 'normal life' - through the next 6 months?
E.g. help from the LORD (be as specific as possible); support from friends / family (how?), etc

END YOUR PERSONAL RETREAT in Worship and Prayer to your Good Shepherd Who has been walking with you through this valley of the shadow of death.