

# WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT HOPE WHEN YOUR HEART BREAKS

Written from a grace-filled pastor's heart, Michael Newman has penned an essential resource for embracing hope amidst grief. Hope dims when life's storms hit, but Michael skillfully uses Scripture to ignite the torch of healing. His beautiful insights into grief tell us he's been there. He wraps God's words of hope around the grieving like a toasty blanket on a frosty night. Compassionate, crucial, Christ-centered—and critically needed. I will absorb and share this brilliant resource for years to come.

**DONNA PYLE, ARTESIAN MINISTRIES, AUTHOR, SPEAKER**

Grief is messy. Life after loss doesn't follow an ordered and predictable path, but looks more like a tangled plate of spaghetti. Navigating confusing emotions and thoughts requires a reliable guide, and you've got a friend in Michael W. Newman. Grief is messy, and Michael Newman understands messy. These short chapters explore the untidy realities of what happens after loss. *Hope When Your Heart Breaks* validates the pain of loss, offers helpful insight, and gently points to a Savior who redeems your suffering with purpose and hope. Read and gift this book. You will be comforted and the Holy Spirit will grow your faith.

**RUTH N. KOCH, MA, NCC, MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATOR**

This is a refreshing book! The Bible is absolutely unique among the sacred writings of all religions. It is the historical description of God's love influencing the lives of real people facing real situations. Michael Newman has taken this unique reality and put it to use in the daily struggles of the Christian. He offers a clear connection between biblical life situations and the reader's daily life. Through it all, he shows the intricate way that God's love is at work in the lives of His people, giving direction and hope to those struggling with difficult emotions and tough situations.

**REV. DR. DAVID J. LUDWIG, PASTOR, PROFESSOR, AUTHOR**

Michael Newman's book . . . demonstrates a personal and pastoral acquaintance with the gut-wrenching realities of the grief process from a variety of losses—death of a loved one, loss of a job, family crisis, and dramatic changes in the aging process. The issues and questions raised by each chapter strike raw emotions, thoughts, and faith struggles at various stages in the grief process. Each chapter also connects the struggle with biblical narratives and comforting Christ-centered passages, which bring hope to the situation while encouraging the ongoing work of grief. I strongly recommend this book for personal use and for giving to family and friends in need.

**REV. DR. STEPHEN J. CARTER, PASTOR, PROFESSOR,  
AND AUTHOR**

There is a reason they call it grief work. This resource honors the process of grief, as well as the value of the loss experience, the tears, the struggle, and the sadness even. It also recognizes the breadth of diversity in the grief experience for each individual. The text is artfully organized so that the readers can pick it up and look through a section that speaks to them, or read through the book as a whole. The insight into the humanity of those who have walked through loss in Scripture is unique and deeply comforting. If you are grieving, if you are walking alongside someone who is grieving, if you are in clinical practice or offer spiritual care, this book is a welcome resource for your shelf!

**HEIDI GOEHMANN, DEACONESS, WRITER, BLOGGER,  
AND SPEAKER AT I LOVE MY SHEPHERD MINISTRIES**

Grief is involved in every change in life. Michael Newman understands this and seeks to find the threads of grief that are in life experiences such as fear, anger, depression, guilt, and purposelessness. Each of the fifty-two devotional chapters is independent of the others. The meditation itself will connect with you; devotional guides follow every chapter for further spiritual work; prayer encouragement and direction end each chapter.

**BRUCE M. HARTUNG, PHD, PROFESSOR EMERITUS,  
PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

Michael Newman speaks the truth in love with empathy and acknowledgment of what happens to a person during grief and loss—emotionally, physically, chemically, spiritually, and relationally. He writes about the reality of life and brings our focus back to our Lord God through Scripture in a nonthreatening way. When one is weakened by grief, he or she can't concentrate on a whole book or a long reading, but these short chapters get right to the point. I recommend this book as a resource for parish nurses, lay ministers, Stephen Ministers, pastors, and others who walk alongside someone experiencing heartbreak.

**KAREN HARDECOPF, RN, CERTIFIED LAY MINISTER—  
PARISH NURSE, STEPHEN MINISTER LEADER**

Grief hits us all at various times throughout our lives. This book gives encouragement by taking us on a journey through the lives of people in the Scriptures who grieve, yes, but with the hope that comes from trusting in the God of heaven and earth, the one who rules over life and death, who conquers grief with eternal joy. It is a book to share, but even more importantly, it is a book to read.

**REV. DR. GREGORY P. SELTZ, SPEAKER OF THE LUTHERAN HOUR**

Michael Newman provides the reader with insight, sensitivity, and encouragement. He consistently shares the love of God and assures us that Jesus understands and cares. His personal style suggests that the author also understands and cares. As a parish nurse, I will use this book with individuals and groups experiencing grief and loss. I also recommend that parish nurses and others involved in congregational health ministry read and discuss in small groups to enhance their compassionate care to the person who is grieving.

**MARCIA SCHNORR, EDD, RN-BC, CERTIFIED LAY MINISTER—  
PARISH NURSE**

When looking through a prism, light is refracted into a full spectrum of colors. Michael W. Newman accomplishes the same thing here, treating grief as a prism through which we see the full spectrum of emotions and experiences that loss brings to life. The conversational tone of his writing makes the reader feel as if he has crawled into his or her mind, truly grasping the nuances of grief as one struggles to move from brokenness to healing. Best of all, each and every chapter clearly articulates that we cannot accomplish this on our own, pointing to Jesus Christ as the true source of hope and strength. A must-have for all of us, at any stage of life.

**JANE P. WILKE, EDUCATOR, AUTHOR, SPEAKER, ENCOURAGER**

NAVIGATING GRIEF AND LOSS  
MICHAEL W. NEWMAN

Hope  
When Your  
Heart  
Breaks

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CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS

**TO CINDY:**  
Through blessing  
And challenge  
With tears  
And with joy  
We've seen the faithfulness of Jesus  
Together



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# How to Use This Book

My prayer for you is that this book can be a place of refuge and a point of reference. You're reading this because you've experienced heartbreak. Grief has entered your life. You've suffered a broken relationship, the loss of a job, a dashed hope and dream, the death of a loved one, or a unique personal experience that has crushed your spirit and caused you pain.

The design of this book lets you find what you need so you can be encouraged and embraced during your loss. Scan through the Contents page and find what speaks to you. No chapter is dependent on another. It is not necessary to read the book from cover to cover. Let the right chapter speak to you at the proper time. Let the wisdom and consolation of the God who pursues you and cares about you help you in your time of need.

Each chapter closes with a reading and some questions for personal reflection and journaling. If you choose to journey through this book with a friend or a group, you can discuss the questions together as you bear one another's burdens and offer one another insight and consolation.

May your reading be blessed. May your walk through grief be filled with welcome surprises of replenishment and restoration. As you navigate your heartbreak, may you discover what you need the most in the midst of grief: **the gift of hope.**

Michael W. Newman

# The Beginning

## WHEN GRIEF SHOWS UP

And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. (Genesis 39:20)

### INVADED

It's happened to you, hasn't it? Grief has shown up on your doorstep. This unwelcome visitor has gained access to your life. That's usually how grief appears on the scene. When you least expect it, an interloper hacks into your system, breaks into your home, and invades your life. Now you're stuck with an unwanted guest who casts a dark shadow over your heart, mind, and soul. Grief has settled in. You feel its oppressive presence, and you don't like it.

It wasn't supposed to be this way, but something broke your heart. Someone left you feeling empty and numb. A circumstance became an unpleasant and course-altering surprise. Somehow, in some way, you have experienced loss—serious and gut-wrenching loss. With the wind knocked out of you, you wonder if you can keep going. You wish it wasn't true. You hope it will go away and life will be like it once was.

### IN PRISON

Allow me to introduce you to a person named Joseph. Joseph's story unfolds in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Loss was forced upon Joseph when he was just a kid. Grief shadowed him for decades. If you're experiencing grief, Joseph—a grief expert—may be someone you need with you on your journey. His story is one of repeated and heartbreaking loss—but also one of unquenchable hope.

When Joseph was just seventeen years old, he was threatened with death by ten of his brothers. After his oldest brother, Reuben, persuaded their angry siblings to spare his life, Joseph was sold as a slave to a passing group of traders. He was taken far away from his

home to the strange and frightening land of Egypt, where he was purchased as a house servant. Once his father's favorite son who wore a coat of many colors with boastful pride, now Joseph was lost, hurt, and alone. He was forced into a land he did not know, hearing a language he did not understand, and slaving at work he never wanted. Loss was piled upon loss.

Joseph's master was Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Potiphar's wife took a liking to young and handsome Joseph and persisted in trying to persuade him to sleep with her. When Joseph did the right thing and resisted the seductive invitations of his master's wife, he wasn't rewarded for his faithfulness. Instead, Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of making romantic advances. Unjustly accused and with reputation smeared, Joseph was thrown into prison.

There he sat. From the time he was cast into the pit by his brothers to the end of his imprisonment and shame, Joseph languished in loss for thirteen years. That's a long time to feel like you're living in a bad dream, to mourn dashed hopes, to miss what your life once was, and to have a cloud of sadness envelop you every day.

## **GOD'S PURSUIT**

You may feel like you're in a prison as you grieve. You've been unwillingly confined and unjustly held captive. You're in a dark cell with walls pressing in on you. You didn't ask for this claustrophobic darkness. You never wanted this pain. And you'd prefer not to have to endure the journey. But here you are.

Grieving is not easy. It may be the most difficult thing you'll ever do. The emotions, thoughts and feelings saturate your being. They slip out when you least expect them. They overcome you when you thought you were in the clear. As Joseph walked through his grief, there were times when he had to run out of the room to weep uncontrollably. This was a Middle Eastern man—a man who became one of the rulers of Egypt. These men did not break down in tears publicly. They did not show their emotions openly. But such is the pathway of grief.

At each step of the way, however, Joseph was not alone. The prevailing theme of Joseph's story in Genesis 37–50 is not one of crushing loss, but one of God's persistent pursuit of Joseph in his pain. That is the theme of your story too. God pursues you in the prison of your grief. He is tenaciously reaching out to you at this very moment.

At every turn, in darkness and in light, while you're occupied with other things or wrestling with your grief as you lie awake at night, God pursues you with His steadfast love and His strengthening faithfulness. As Psalm 23 articulates beautifully, God is your Good Shepherd who draws you close in order to restore your soul. In this season of loss, you have a Savior who never leaves your side. When you're crumbling in weakness, the One who crumbled in weakness on the cross and rose from the dead—defeating the looming darkness of loss—will carry you. God's promise in Isaiah 46 gets to the heart of the matter: "Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (v. 4). When a season of grief shows up, this is your lifeline. You've already seen how everything else can fail, but God's promise will never fail you. The risen Savior Jesus is proof of an unfailing promise of strength and hope.

## **SEASONS OF GRIEF**

Please be assured, this time in your life is a season. Seasons come and go. Grief doesn't happen as much in orderly stages as it does in the ebb and flow of seasons. You may experience the cold winds of grief for a short time, with a welcome thaw bringing you into a restoring springtime sooner than you ever thought. It may be, however, that the gray skies and bitter chill of grief keep coming around. When you least expect it or when you thought enough time had passed, the clouds roll in, the withered leaves drop to the ground, and a dark coldness grips you once again. Seasons come around more than once.

Grieving is that kind of journey. It can be messy, chaotic, and exhausting. You will walk through dark valleys. You will also see the sun shine its warm and hope-filled rays over the horizon. Sometimes, God will replace your weeping with gladness, and your grief will become a thing of the past. At other times, grief may keep making visits until that day when winter has gone, the leaves never fall, and the tree of life is always in bloom for the complete healing of your soul.

There's one thing you can be sure of here and now: God will pursue you every step of the way. When grief shows up, you do not have to take the journey alone. Jesus walks with you. Because of His love and grace, you can take the journey of grief with certain hope.

# WORDS FOR HEALING

## Devotion Guide for Chapter One

**READ** Psalm 30

### **REFLECT**

How do you empathize with the psalmist's words?

How does this psalm teach you to pray as you navigate grief?

What hope do these words give you for your journey of grief?

**PRAY** verses 9–12 and personalize your need for help and your request for healing.