

THE WAY OF HOPE

GROWING CLOSE TO GOD
THROUGH LOSS

— FACILITATOR GUIDE —

by His design Publishing



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Published by *by His design*
Colorado Springs, Co 80906

This facilitator guide is to be used in conjunction with *The Way of Hope DVD* by Beth and Dave Weikel (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2016).

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SESSION 1

TESTIMONIALS ABOUT LOSSES

LESSON PLAN

LENGTH OF TIME: 90 MINUTES

THEME: “SINCE WE CAN’T ESCAPE LIVING WITH LOSS,
WHAT IS GOD’S PLAN?”

Facilitator’s primary role: To promote participants to engage with *The Way of Hope* material by means of viewing the DVD, reading assignments from the accompanying book (*The Way of Hope*), including those concepts that are not included in the tape, but give depth and breadth to this workshop, doing the exercises in their workbooks, sensitively handling discussion as it relates to the content provided, and clearly leading each meeting time with everyone’s interest in mind.

You are the one who knows the material backwards and forwards, who also keeps track of time so as to finish each session well and on time, and who sets the tone of acceptance and grace.

Before the first session, the Facilitator should have read and viewed the content for that meeting. Also, have completed the assignments so that you can understand how these concepts develop. If you anticipate any concerns, you will have contacted by His design (dave@byhisdesign.co) with these. For instance, each participant should have table space to write on with sufficient lighting, and a sense of privacy as they get used to this process of interacting with the material individually (journaling and note taking).

Note: We never insist on anyone responding to personal questions directly or listening to others do the same. They are agreeing to delve into this workshop on whatever level is comfortable and not feel intruded on.

Handling questions for discussion:

Participants should use short answers in order to allow everyone who wants to talk to do so. Be aware there could be a person(s) who wants to dominate. How do you handle this?

- Always introduce the session by reminding folks they are to have brief answers. You don't want to inhibit discussion, yet you also want to have this time flow smoothly with the whole group involved as much as possible.
- Make sure they discuss, rather than lecture the group.
- Reminder, YOU are the expert, and the leader.
- Remember to take notes. Many comments can become prayer requests at the end.
- Finally, you are in control. Interrupt, if necessary, to regain control and redirect.

Example, "That's an interesting point, John. What do the rest of you think?" or "In the interest of time, let's move on to the next question." If necessary say, "Remember, just short answers, so the rest of us can participate." Make direct, but kind statements. Be polite, yet not timid.

Introduction – Start by welcoming everyone, telling the group your name and what your role will be in the upcoming weeks, then open in prayer: "We commit this time together to the Lord who 'hears and heals.' We ask for Your presence going forward and the grace to be together in a difficult place, our brokenness. May You draw us near, hear our hearts, guide us in truth, and accept us right where we are. In Christ's name, amen."

Then, share this information as part of the "**nuts and bolts**" of the workshop procedure:

Everyone will need to bring their Bibles to each session, as well as workbooks—*The Way of Hope* book and *Hope in the Midst*. Since the DVD and the book, *The Way of Hope*, are not identical, but complementary, let them know that their follow up reading is vital to their understanding and applying

the workshop content. You will assign this at the end of each session, and often include excerpts for discussion the following session.

They should also write out any questions that come to mind to be dealt with at the end of each session. (Tell them, however, to keep in mind that these may be addressed in their follow up reading assign.) It's important to avoid interruptions and maintain focus on the lesson.

Be ready to pause when directed on the DVD, then allow a reasonable time to complete these activities—7-10 min. on average. Depending on what is included, let them know they may not finish and should revisit this at home before the next session. Journaling activities (#1-7) are not generally meant to be shared publicly. No one should be inhibited in their written responses because others will hear them.

Note: Notice that the DVD questions are numbered differently in the Facilitator's Guide and in the Workbook. This is due to the formatting you have for handling the tape pauses. (Yours starts over each time and theirs is continuous.)

When discussion is called for, ask for short responses and try to vary who answers. (Be wary, though, you could lose the group to rabbit trails). It's key to stay focused and complete each DVD session. Show appreciation for their willingness to respond to what's being asked, in any event. If a comment seems off topic, but necessary, you may suggest they meet with you after the session when you can give them more personal attention. A controlled (safe) environment contributes to the comfort level, and staying positive will keep them coming back.

Before starting the tape, suggest an emphasis in the DVD to watch for—Session One: Exploring the implications of loss in every life—is God there? Plus, we have “choices” in our loss.

Start the DVD—then Stop the DVD when indicated and have participants complete Activity 1 (pg. 31 in the book)—List as many words as you can associated with “loss...” Afterward, take a minute to have people share the words they have thought of—short answers ONLY.

Then, respond to the following question:

“What statements in the DVD, so far, were most meaningful and cause you to want to explore in more depth? (such as, God’s broken heart, or other concepts...)”

Start the DVD and be ready to stop to complete Activity 2 (pg. 38)—Make a list of the losses you are walking with today... There are no additional questions here and no discussion.

Start the DVD—then Stop and read together (out loud) more back story to Job: pages 39-42 (stop after the first full paragraph: “We should also read the rest...experience?” Emphasize both sides of our response to loss—personal despair and reaching out to God.

Then ask: “How can we draw hope from Job’s experience with trials and multiple losses?”

End of DVD Session One: Give reading homework assignment, with activities as they appear in each chapter. We will refer to some of these concepts next session before viewing the next section of the DVD.

Homework: Follow up reading from *The Way of Hope*, pages 13-46, chapters 1-3. In addition, they should complete the “Personal Reflections” sections as they occur (pages 37-38, 43, and 44) as well as Activity 3 (pg. 45-46)—Identify your desires and dare to dream again. This will serve to fill in any gaps in the DVD they’ve viewed. The book is more comprehensive and contains appropriate examples for each concept that time prohibited from including on the tape.

Between sessions they will be “walking with” the material they’ve viewed and seeing how the Lord is using this in their lives. This is not optional, but vital to their deepening understanding and application of the content.

Give a summarizing statement for Session One and a brief preview of Session Two (write this out):

For example, “With today’s viewing (and with our reading assignment), we’ve seen how we are not alone in our losses, God’s view of loss, and handling our feelings. Before our next meeting, we’ll be prepared with a foundation to look at our dreams. It’s important to not lose sight of those God-given dreams for our lives.

Preview for next time: Gifts from God that reach our hearts and ease our way.

Close in prayer: Pray using the notes that you've taken throughout the session, especially during discussion. (Do this carefully, and don't embarrass anyone with revealing specifics or names.)

Close praying for the needs you have heard and be sure to praise the Lord—for being brought together to learn and grow, as well as for His faithfulness in teaching us and loving us in all of life's experiences.

Note: Encourage class members to sit in new places each week to get to know each other. You should also demonstrate this among participants by making the effort to connect with all, even the reticent ones.

Supplemental Material for journaling activities and follow up:

Activity I: Scriptures that can be used: Romans 8:35-39, II Samuel 18:31-33, II Samuel 12:15-23 (When emotions are triggered, is there some ingrown inhibition that prevents their release? What?)

Activity II: Scriptures that can be used: Job 40:1-6 (Have you been silent before God, and His word, so that He can speak? What have you heard from God?)

Activity III (their homework): Scriptures that can be used: 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 (What is He calling you to do?) See next session for how this may be used.

SESSION 2

FINDING BLESSINGS

LESSON PLAN

LENGTH OF TIME: 90 MINUTES

THEME: “WHO ELSE CARES?”

Each week: Welcome them back. (As the Facilitator, try to get to know their names and something about each one. This could naturally happen as they enter ahead of schedule or when you walk around the room during their “pause” activities. Discreetly offer help, if needed.) Don’t do preliminary “stuff,” but get started with the program on time.

Prayer: Ask God for open hearts and alert minds. Commit this time to the Lord who will faithfully teach us.

Read these lyrics *as part of* the prayer: “Forever All My Days”

God I look to You; I won’t be overwhelmed.

Give me vision to see things like You do.

God I look to You; You’re where my help comes from.

Give me wisdom; You know just what to do.

I will love You Lord, my Strength,
I will love You Lord, my Shield,
I will love You Lord, my Rock,
Forever, all my days, I will love You God.

Hallelujah, our God reigns
Hallelujah, our God reigns
Hallelujah, our God reigns,
Forever, all my days, Hallelujah.

(If you know the melody and it seems appropriate, sing the chorus with them.)

Session Two—Refer group to the workbook. (Review questions for discussion—from their reading assignment—before viewing the DVD) Spend 15 min. or less on this.

Participants should use short answers in order to allow everyone who wants to talk to do so. Be aware there could be a person(s) who wants to dominate. How do you handle this?

- Always introduce the session by reminding folks they are to have brief answers. You don't want to inhibit discussion, yet you also want to have this time flow smoothly with the whole group involved as much as possible.
- Make sure they discuss, rather than lecture the group.
- Reminder, YOU are the expert, and the leader.
- Remember to take notes. Many comments can become prayer requests at the end.
- Finally, you are in control. Interrupt, if necessary, to regain control and redirect.

Example, "That's an interesting point, John. What do the rest of you think?" or "In the interest of time, let's move on to the next question." If necessary say, "Remember, just short answers, so the rest of us can participate." Make direct, but kind statements. Be polite, yet not timid.

Questions for discussion from their homework reading:

Notice answer section for some ideas to incorporate in your answer:

1. The reading mentioned that there is a myth you might have heard before, “time heals all wounds.” (pg. 42) Anyone believe that? Time doesn’t necessarily heal all wounds. Time helps sometimes when you get some distance from an event. But, wounds which have been yielded to God can heal. How do you yield wounds to God?

Answer: Tell him all that weighs you down and invite Him in. You absolutely extend that invitation, “Please come into this disappointment, this fear, this anxiety, this awful thing. Some of us just give up and put those things away without letting God complete the process to the wholeness that we really seek. As we come to know God better, our faith in Him sustains and moves us forward. When we read the Word and let the Word be applied, it moves us forward— in little steps, not all at once. This is that refining the Bible talks about, the dross and then the gold. Consequently, we can feel the sorrow, not deny our feelings, yet still believe. Believing the truth that is there clarifies our vision.

2. Two concepts the book wants you to keep track of are “choices” & “knowing.” Look for these throughout the material. We still have choices in loss—every day. There are big choices or small choices, but they are your choices. The other concept means what do I still know? What can I stand on regardless of my emotions and the temptation I have to run away?

Answer: Look for choices and knowing in Scripture (example: John 21—Peter, 2 Corinthians 4:7-18—surpassing power, Acts 2, 3—Holy Spirit and many come to faith in Jesus Christ.

3. ***Optional here**, because this could sabotage your time getting the DVD started. Consider doing this as part of the prayer time at the end of the meeting. They could form small groups of two or three and pray for one another’s success in this area. Remind them of the “Answer” guidelines for success:

(from the homework) Activity 3—Regardless of finances, the time I have available, the strength of the will I don’t have, lack of any developed talent, or other perceived barriers, what would I want to do about my dream?”

Answer: The key is to talk to God about these barriers and involve others by asking them to pray for us and keep us accountable for our decisions. At this point, listen to their hopes and dreams. Always ask them, though, how they're going to stay focused and allow accountability (a mate, friend, sister, or brother?).

Introduction—Each session needs a focus

Suggest an emphasis in the DVD to watch for—How do my losses affect others? And, what is God using to bless me personally?

Note: Remember to follow the same guidelines given in Session One (review if necessary).

Start the DVD

Stop the DVD when indicated. Participants will do a series of journaling activities in the allotted time (and complete them at home this week if they need more time). They do Activity 4 (pg. 48)—Try to remember the ways others have shown love to you as a result of a loss or difficulty. Who, specifically, is God using in this way?

Because this session is so content rich, no discussion happens during these pauses. It's a reflective time and a time to take in and think deeply about what they're receiving. At the end, we'll respond as a group before dismissing.

Start the DVD

Stop the DVD and do Activity 5 (pg. 52)—Think about how God is expanding your life and service as a result of loss.

Start the DVD

Stop the DVD and do Activity 6 (pg. 54)—Try to list songs/hymns that reach into your heart and give words to feelings you can't express any other way? Write some of the lyrics and phrases that speak to you.

Start the DVD

Stop the DVD for group activity: On page 70 of *Hope in the Midst of Loss*, Beth Weikel writes: “We all have our experiences with loss, some worse than others, but it’s not about us. It’s about the truth that hard times can introduce in tangible ways...As we are afforded a widening sphere of influence to help others in disastrous and dangerous circumstances, we count on the fact that He goes with us and lives within.”

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 aloud together. How do Beth Weikel’s words affirm the truth of this passage of Scripture?

Homework: Reading chapters 4-6, pgs. 47-69. Complete “Personal Reflections” as they appear (pgs, 48-49, 60-61, and 65. Then do Activity 7 (pgs. 68-69) –Pray: write out each part of your prayer.

Preview for next time: Hearing about a Recovery Plan and building a future.

Close in prayer: Pray using the notes you’ve taken throughout the session reflecting needs of the group, especially during discussion. (Be sensitive here.) *Or, if the group seems ready to trust their needs to others, use the optional Activity 3 method contained in the opening review discussion. They’ll need to be brief and specific.

Supplemental Material: Exceptional example of songs that reach into the heart—Glory (1989) 54th Infantry Pre-Battle Song “Oh, My Lord” found on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzUUFwbPaE4>

SESSION 3

A SOUL'S RECOVERY PLAN

LESSON PLAN

LENGTH OF TIME: 90 MINUTES

THEME: "HARD-WON INSIGHTS AND WISDOM FOR THE BATTLE"

Each week: Welcome them back. (As facilitator, try to get to know their names and something about each one.) Don't do preliminary "stuff," but get started with the program on time.

Prayer: Lord, settle our hearts and help us to focus on this week's material. Let us leave other concerns with you and use our time together to further our walk of faith in this season. We look to you. In Christ's name, amen.

Read this as a summarizing statement for the evening: from by His design blog:

I Will Sing to the Lord

"Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the Lord and said... 'The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God and I will extol Him. The Lord is a warrior; The Lord is His name'" (Exodus 15:1a, 2-3).

Life is a battle and I need a Warrior—on my side. Anybody with me? Lately I've been hearing from some who are winning the battle. They've been receiving answers to long-held prayers. The same is true for us right now. The tide is turning and it's time to rejoice.

Yet, often the battle is won in the arena of our hearts before we ever see something resembling the results we've been praying for. So when answers come, we sigh, smile and maybe even tear up before expressing real jubilation. Battles weary us, humble us, and sometimes our songs are bittersweet.

Moses and the children of Israel had a long way to go before they saw their Promised Land. But it's good to sing songs of praise when victories come and review the things we've learned along the way. These lessons will be needed later in other battles. For now I'll join in chorus with this ancient praise song, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation...The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is His name."

Prayer of Invitation:

Jesus, my salvation, I invite you to be my strength and fight my battles. I know these trials and desert times are preludes to songs of jubilation. Fit me for battle in the armor You design. Let me see You working wonders, never imagined.

Questions for discussion from their homework reading.

Notice answer section for some ideas to incorporate in your answer:

1. What do we know that never changes about God?

Answer: There are several (see these Scriptures in the book), but the one necessary example is that of God's sovereignty.

2. When Beth quoted Jill Briscoe, "We don't want to get life and God mixed up," how do we get these two confused?

Answer: Life hurts and has things we wish we didn't have to deal with, and then there is God. Therefore, we don't blame God because life hurts.

3. Optional ending prayer time topic in small groups (see last week's method for this): What do you need to surrender so you can stay soft?

Answer: Entitlements—when we think we deserve something, or if we don't receive what we're sure we need, we can get hard and bitter. Instead, we need to let the Holy Spirit work in our heart to trust that God knows, and cares about us.

Introduction—Each session needs a focus

Suggest an emphasis in the DVD to watch for—In the battle, what do I have control of? And, take stock of these suggestions for healthy strategies in the faith walk of loss. Which ones can I employ at this stage?

Facilitator note: Remember to follow the guidelines in Session One to manage the group. Review these as necessary.

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. What does a “Recovery Plan” mean for you?
2. How have you run from your loss?
3. When have you blamed someone or something for your loss?

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. How do you pray honestly? Have you done this? Remember, God can handle your being honest with Him.
2. Where have you avoided feeling the pain?

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. What did you learn about “focus” from the testimonies? —or from Dave’s points?
2. In the book, read together pgs. 83-84, from “Finding Your Calling...” to the 1st paragraph (on pg. 84) ending with “...prepare us for a calling that is unique.” Also, look up the I Cor. 15:10 passage and read it.
3. Where have they seen God do this for them? Or, is this a new idea?

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. How have you allowed the Good Shepherd to stay yoked with you?
2. What one suggestion in this series of building blocks resonated with you? Why?
3. When Beth asks, “Do you have a Comforter...a Guide...The Helper?” what does that mean to you? (Facilitator: If someone appears to need clarification or wants to ask Jesus into their heart and life, use the book to lead them, pages 154-158. Set up a time for this before they leave, if possible.)

Homework: Reading: chapters 7-9, pgs. 71-102 and chapter 14, pgs. 151-158 and do the “Personal Reflection (pgs. 151-152).”

Preview for next time—Be ready to spend time in the Garden, examining compost, weeds, and abiding in the Vine in all seasons.

Close in prayer: By now everyone should be able to join with another or in a group of 2-3 to pray “option 3” in the review discussion portion. Encourage them to be brief and specific. Give people permission not to pray if they don’t feel comfortable. (In that case, you can pray with them).

Then, close by praying, using the notes that you’ve taken throughout the session, especially during discussion, to incorporate needs of the participants. (Do this carefully, and don’t embarrass anyone with specifics or names.)

Supplemental Material:

Read from *The Way of Hope...* “Dance for Life” (chapter 10, pgs 72-74)

Recommended inspirational book and materials:

Authentic Christianity by Ray Stedman. The New Covenant at its core is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Jesus expresses his character through His people. It’s not about “trying.” We get tired of trying, assuming a job we were never meant to do. That’s a recipe for pressure and frustration, rather than freedom and fulfillment. www.raystedman.org/authentic-christianity

SESSION 4

GARDEN ANALOGY

LESSON PLAN

LENGTH OF TIME: 90 MINUTES

THEME: ABIDING IN THE VINE

Welcome back!

Touch base with the group before moving on by reading this portion of Psalm 46:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride...*Cease striving and know that I am God...*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold, Selah” (v. 1-3, 10a, 11).

Prayer: “Lord, as we continue to ask for Your help in our losses, take our striving, our whirling emotions, and plant Your calm. Be a Refuge, our Help in times of trouble, our Stronghold and sure Presence. Let us know, though change is constant, You are with us. Lord of all the heavenly hosts, remove any fears that arise. We give them up to You. We have no need of them. In Your mighty name we pray, amen.”

Read John 15:1-16 together (aloud) before starting the DVD.

Now read them this original psalm from John 15 for today's lesson:

Jesus the True Vine, III

Jesus, mighty, ancient vine,
wrap Yourself around me—
with Your sure and steady sustenance.
Your abiding Word and constant presence
produce joy that drips down,
sending healing to my pruned places,
ugly stumps of self-will and meager efforts.

Nurture my tender shoots of budding new life.
Train my parts to climb and grow,
as I am supported among untold neighboring
branches,
attended by the Vinedresser—loving, experienced.

Let me enjoy the fruit of Your labors,
season after season.
My all-sufficient Source,
help me understand the necessary cycles of
fruitfulness—
thorough pruning, dormancy, awakening to new life,
beautiful fresh buds, and full flowering,
thriving in the light and warmth of daily sun and
refreshing rain.

Fruit grown on steep slopes, ripe for harvest.

—From *I AM, An Unchanging God in a World of Change*

Suggest an emphasis in the DVD to watch for. There will be literal and figurative sections alternating, which include growth in adversity, how to “remain,” toxic substances and traps, our weeds, and attending to the “garden.”

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. In regard to “living matter needs to be stirred,” why does grief want to keep us stuck?
2. How is grief an opportunity?

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. “Adversity is an ideal medium for life.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
2. Tell some toxic presuppositions you think of around loss.
3. Describe our being on the “straight path” (Prov. 3:5-6).

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. How can you tell the difference between New Growth and Weeds?
2. What are you hanging onto because it’s comfortable or convenient?
3. What other barriers can you identify?
4. What steps need to be repeated seasonally?
5. When have trials ultimately yielded great value in your life?

Homework: Read chapter 10, pgs. 103-109. Be aware that as you spend time on this (read more than once), God may keep revealing things He wants to address. It's His gift to you. Pray and meditate on this passage as it relates to the material.

Preview for next time: We will see how to pack our personal toolkit with attitudes and practices that will sustain our recovery process. It will become obvious how we partner with God, much like those we read about in the Scriptures, to move into *this* new life.

Close in prayer:

Have groups of 2 or 3 get together and pray about what they have discovered in this session. Have them think about accountability with these people for next week asking, "How did God work this week to apply some of these new concepts? What was hard, or what was a breakthrough?"

After sufficient time for this, Facilitator closes in prayer: "Father God, help us to appreciate your work in our lives and give us the perspective of this process over time. Show us how being loved, as well as being pruned and shaped, relates to abiding and bearing fruit. We open our minds and hearts to your truth. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen."

SESSION 5

A RECOVERY PLAN APPLIED

LESSON PLAN

LENGTH OF TIME: 90 MINUTES

THEME: LEARNING TO LIVE IN HOPE

Welcome them back for this portion where they will prepare for “packing their personal toolkits with attitudes and practices that will sustain their recovery process.” All that has preceded will impact this. We’ll continue to invite the Lord in to teach and guide us for this new life.

Prayer: “Heavenly Father, we praise You for Your faithfulness and Your enabling to complete our walk of faith until we see You face to face. We look forward to all You have for us and want to join You in submission, as You supply all that we need. Thank You for this group to walk with and learn with. It’s Your sovereign gift to us at this time. We trust Your goodness and depend on Your grace. We could not do this for ourselves. Be our Door, our Way, and our Life, from now until eternity. In Your great name we pray, amen.”

Suggest an emphasis in the DVD to watch for. Restoration as a lifestyle! Determining our true desire for transformation and the ability to perceive lessons in loss.

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. Beth talked about insensitive things people do and the judging that can be associated with loss, and then gave us a picture of forgiveness. What was helpful about this for you?
2. What happens when our wounds are re-opened? What reassurance did you hear the Lord give Beth? How has this happened for you?
3. Why is restoration such a gift? What does this mean to us?
4. What does the phrase Dot used, “just today,” mean as we consider living in intimacy with God? How does He prove to be enough when we come to Him?

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. Where do you struggle with “head-to-heart” communication?
2. “Lord, to whom shall we go...” Have you ever felt like asking God, like soldier Dave, “I’m still here—are You still there?” If so, what happened then?
3. How will you practice “tasting His goodness” in the small things—unplanned for, but not unrecognized? (“Oh, *that’s* from the Lord.”)
4. When “I don’t even understand it,” how do I appreciate that “He’s still in control?”

Start the DVD

Stop for responses to these questions:

1. What are some steps to “Being Still” as explained in the DVD?
2. Who are your role models? Why?
3. How has loss enabled you to “let things on earth recede?”

Homework: Reading chapters 11-13, pgs. 111-150. Take time to digest and mull over these points with their examples. Remember, the book expands on the DVD and contains additional teaching relevant to our topics.

Preview for next time: You may want to review everything you've been learning so far, since we'll be putting this all together. Expect additional insights and applications as we work through a hands-on exercise.

Close in prayer: Using a new model we learned early in the workshop (journaling activity #7, pgs. 68-69) participants will go through the 4-part model for prayer at this time. *Individually, have them focus on each phase and plug in the things God has been revealing to them about the work He is doing, personally.*

After this (10-15 min.), Facilitator closes: "Lord God, we acknowledge Your presence among us and ask You to enter into our broken places. We know You accept us "as is." Father, You are our healer and source of all life. Help us to follow You into wholeness and blessing again.

We give You our burdens, lay them at Your feet, and surrender ourselves to Your care. Teach us Your ways...help us to wait on You...as You do Your work of grace in our lives. Thank You for caring, loving us, and giving us Your strength in our weakness. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen."

SESSION 6

TAKING INVENTORY

LESSON PLAN

LENGTH OF TIME: 90 MINUTES

THEME: “CREATED FOR RENEWAL”

Welcome everyone to an exciting session where each participant will put the pieces together into a cohesive whole and walk out with their own Recovery Plan, by His design. Everything we’ve been learning and working toward will be realized in this session. Let’s ask the Lord to bless our time and meet us here:

Prayer: “Gracious Lord, we ask for Your direction and leading now. Honor our desire to walk in newness of life and authority in Your name. We want our days to count and not miss anything You have willed for us. Show us our “warrior” side, as we are led by Your Holy Spirit of promise. In Jesus, our Victorious Warrior’s name, amen.”

Suggest an emphasis to focus this session. Learning to live in the aftermath of significant loss requires “Authenticity” (pgs. 129-139), and “Living Deep” (pgs. 141-150).

Review by reading together pages 129, paragraph 1, and 139, the last paragraph, about Authenticity. This is key to going before God today and listening for His direction as they complete their Recovery Plan Inventory. All the concepts in this chapter contribute to “getting real” with the Lord and receiving His help.

Then, read together pg. 141, paragraph 1 and the Isaiah passage in 61:1-3 about Living Deep. Our experiences with loss are meant to deepen our walk and open up new vistas. Living deep requires surrender, but yields abundance. It's about peace and freedom, as we connect with Christ and with others.

The Taking Inventory exercise is part of our redeeming for a greater purpose.

Procedures:

1. Have everyone turn in their books to Appendix A: by His design—A Recovery Plan (pg. 159-165). Tell them to complete all the sections thoughtfully and use their workbooks and other notes to refer to as they fill out this inventory in their book *The Way of Hope*.
2. If they don't have sufficient room for answers (write small!), they can use the extra blank page (166). If they don't have enough time to finish at this session, just like in their journaling activities, they can continue this at home. But, hopefully, most will do this in the session, even though later God could give them additional ideas.
3. The Facilitator should have an instrumental CD to play softly in the background (either classical or worship music—restful and without words). Sometimes, if these songs are so obvious, our brains will try to “sing” the words we know, which will compete with their focus on their primary task.
4. Most of all, they'll need privacy and a quiet setting. Give them 40-45 min. to work. Watch their progress and walk around unobtrusively to offer assistance. They may have questions that others don't need to hear. (Pray silently for each one as you wait for them to finish.)

Note: Make sure you (Facilitator) have evaluated each section of the personal Recovery Plan, in depth, so you can anticipate and address any problems you might encounter with your group. (You can contact us at dave@byhisdesign.co with any question or concerns before the session.) However, don't get caught up in “counseling” or let another group member do this. This part is about connecting personally with the Lord. After this we'll have the opportunity to share some ideas with one another.

5. As they finish, and before moving on, ask them to assess those points they'd like to comment on, No more than a handful.

6. Now they're ready to get together with *one* other person (if an odd number exists, you will be their partner) to share those handful of things they want prayer for. The purpose here is to encourage one another and also be accountable by admitting needs and voicing the commitment to act on them. They are *not* praying yet, only gathering information.
7. After this, the best part will be “body life.” Explain to them the final part of this process: “We will go around the room to each pair and have them take turns praying short sentence prayers before the entire group about what their partner has shared. Do this until each pair has completed this part. Again, be brief so as to include everyone.
8. Stay on track and end on time. You'll need to enlist their cooperation at every phase with this. As the Spirit enables and leads, you and they will be amazed at what can happen. Genuine needs, compassionate caring, and palpable support will be in evidence.

Preview: *Hope in the Midst of Loss, the deeper devotional*

For those who wish to extend meeting as a group, or even invite others to join in, we want to offer the next six-week study using the other book in The Way of Hope Kit. *Hope in the Midst of Loss* contains six weeks of short readings around themes looking for hope in everyday experience and in the lives of those we find in Scripture. It is story-based and inspirational reading.

Participants will be doing six days of devotionals each week and respond to the handful of questions at the end of each one before meeting with the Facilitator and their group to selectively share their insights. And everyone should expect to discover theirs, then enjoy mutual edification as a result.

This format differs significantly from the workshop setting. It's more like a book group, and a refreshing follow-up to what they've been doing to recover their lives from loss. Please encourage anyone who wants to keep going for a few more weeks. We are so pleased to be able to offer this option.

1. Finally, the Facilitator prays for the entire group and emphasizes God's provision and adequacy to continue this work in each life:

“Father, strengthen and support our desires to keep believing. And let us sing of Your ways to one another, as You revive our hearts and send encouragement our way. Let us live out our calling so that those we meet will give thanks to You. Show us (all) the way everlasting. In Jesus' name, amen.”

2. Thank them warmly (corporately and then individually) for coming and going on this journey together. Dismiss.

Note: For the Facilitator—Dave and I want to express our deepest appreciation and admiration for your servant's heart and your work of bringing God's healing into lives. We've been praying for you (all) and will continue to do so. Blessings! Beth & Dave