

WHAT CANNOT BE LOST

Individual Study Guide

Chapter 1: The Process of Losing

Additional Reading

Genesis 3; Psalm 23

Questions

1. How do you feel about engaging with your grief instead of rationalizing or rushing it away?
2. As Melissa describes her series of losses and struggles, which ones resonate most with you?
3. Why do you think Louisa chose to “go first” and tell a realistic story of life and loss? How have stories like hers helped you?
4. Melissa writes, “God doesn’t want us to be the best, he just wants us to be his.” How do the Bible passages she mentions reinforce this?

Personal Reflection Activities

Write out Psalm 23, reflecting as you write. If you have the time and resources, try hand-lettering the psalm using a calligraphy pen.

Chapter 2: The Chaos and the Fight and the Fog

Additional Reading

1 Peter 4:19; 5:7

Questions

1. Think of a few people in your life that are very important to you. What has made them so special? What do you miss most about loved ones who have died?
2. Melissa writes, “grief isn’t linear.” Do you agree? What are your thoughts on processing grief?
3. Which stories of hurting people in the Bible resonate with you the most?

Personal Reflection Activities

Play a song that is sweet in your memories or an important reminder of the Lord’s presence in your life. Write your memories of the song or copy some lyrics that stand out to you.

Chapter 3: The Glory Is at the Ground Level

Additional Reading

Matthew 6: 5-15; James 2:14-26

Questions

1. Reflecting on the start of some of your most significant relationships, what memories stand out to you?
2. How does Melissa's focus on the glory of the ordinary strike you?
3. What do you think of Louisa's shift away from desiring fame? Has grief taught you anything similar?
4. Do you struggle with reading Scripture in context? How might keeping context in mind help you keep a clear perspective?

Personal Reflection Activities

Write out a prayer to the Lord thanking him for something ordinary in your life that he has blessed you with.

Chapter 4: The Valley of the Shadow

Additional Reading

John 20:24-29

Questions

1. Have you had times of living with more questions than answers? What questions were you facing? Have you received answers over time?
2. Melissa writes, "There is no guidebook for walking your loved one to the end of their life." What do you think she means by this? Do you agree?
3. Does Louisa's description of being "made better" by the time she spent with Lizzie resonate with you? Why?
4. How does Jesus' willingness to meet us in our pain and to not shy away from our pain and suffering comfort you?

Personal Reflection Activities

Spend some time in nature and reflect on the ways God reveals himself in creation. As you go, maybe collect things that draw your attention or remind you of his goodness.

Chapter 5: Eternity's Shore

Additional Reading

Genesis 1

Questions

1. What feelings or events have you had a hard time reconciling in experiencing loss?
2. Melissa writes that death makes it feel like, "You're grasping for what you know is there, but somehow you just can't seem to get a hold of it." How have you experienced this?
3. Louisa talks about grief leading us to lead two lives. How would you describe the two lives you have led through grief?
4. What Bible passages do you come back to again and again, anchoring you?

Personal Reflection Activities

Choose a verse you would like to have hidden in your heart and begin to work on memorizing it.

Chapter 6: Lifting Up Our Arms

Additional Reading

1 Kings 8; John 16

Questions

1. Have you felt like you are spinning your wheels in a season of grief?
2. Can you think of examples of people "lifting up your arms" as Melissa describes friends doing for her?
3. Like Lizzie left gaps in her family, how has your experience of loss revealed ways certain people were integral to your life?
4. The Bible is full of commands to love and help one another. How do the Bible stories Melissa references encourage you to receive help from others?

Personal Reflection Activities

Go to a place that is significant to you in your story of grief. Leave a penny and pray.

Chapter 7: Finding Our Footing

Additional Reading

John 6:60-69

Questions

1. What kinds of emotions have you felt as you've experienced loss? Are there any you have a hard time admitting?
2. Melissa writes: "God's purpose in healing is not that we should just be the same as before. It's that we continue with a new perspective that allows us to know the heart of our suffering Jesus." Does that resonate with you? Why or why not?
3. Reflecting on Louisa's experience with war and sickness, how would you describe the way your experience of loss has changed you?
4. Can you think of examples of God addressing honest struggles in the Bible? What honest struggles do you need to bring to Him?

Personal Reflection Activities

Find or make something that reminds you of God's faithfulness and put it in a place that you will see everyday.

Chapter 8: Empty Hands

Additional Reading

Psalms 38, 2 Chronicles 6

Questions

1. What does community look like in your life? How have people shown up or not shown up as you've grieved?
2. Do Melissa's descriptions of losing patience with people and of feeling you have to handle the hard on your own resonate with you? Can you think of examples of you or others feeling this way?
3. Louisa was a survivor, and that shaped the way she told stories that impacted others. How has the way you tell your story to others changed as a result of surviving grief?
4. How have you seen God carry you through other people? What does this tell you about God's character? How does this influence the way you interact with others?

Personal Reflection Activities

Write a note to someone who showed up as you grieved or write a letter to the Lord, thanking him for the unexpected ways he has met you in your grief.

Chapter 9: What Cannot Be Lost

Additional Reading

Isaiah 43; Hosea 11

Questions

1. What joyful and sorrowful things have happened since your loss? How do you react to them?
2. Melissa writes, “you are, right now, in the best possible position to be loved by God.” What might the truth change about the way you are living right now?
3. What do you think of Louisa rearranging the timeline of her family’s story for the Little Women, and of what happened to the family after Louisa’s success?
4. How would you summarize God’s larger story? How does your story fit into His and how does that anchor you even in loss?

Personal Reflection Activities

Write out your testimony and story of grief, keeping in mind God’s larger story.