



joy JOURNAL
for the grieving heart



Jackie
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Grief is a devastating challenge that takes us on a journey that we never imagined we would have to take. We all experience grief differently, but I have learned that having a friend by my side eases the fears and helps smooth the path – and I hope and pray you will, too. Thank you for joining me on the path to joyful living.

Immediately after a health crisis or the loss of someone we love, we may feel that our dreams have been shattered, our lives destroyed, and our love vanquished. I wish I could magically fix or erase the sorrow you face. I can't. But GOD can! I can only offer you support, encouragement, and insight into the way I coped and came to terms with tragic and unexpected losses and the new challenges they brought. In spirit, I can accompany you as you find your way to our Great Comforter, God.

Journaling and writing have been important vehicles on my road to better health and healing – and I hope you might try this practice, too. I encourage you to spend time with me here in this JOY JOURNAL, recording your feelings, thoughts, worries, concerns, and progress on your journey. I promise that if you do, in time, you will look back on your notes with thanksgiving and a renewed appreciation for God's role in your life and your accomplishments.

WHAT IS JOY?

Joy isn't found in circumstances or other people. Circumstances and people change. Joy is found in the Lord, and He never changes. Joy is found in God's presence: "You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever" (Psalm 16:11, NLT). God desires us to experience His joy here on earth and throughout eternity.

I pray that you invest time in this JOY JOURNAL, realizing you are not alone; you deserve and need the quiet moments and contemplation that this journal and your Bible will offer. May you always "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer." Romans 12:12.

So...let's start our journey through Grief and to Joy together!

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*In the Appendix, you will find various Scriptures that have aided me on my grief journey. One of these may help you too.





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Day 1

Before I started my journey through Grief, I hammered God with questions: Why did this have to happen? Why me? Why now? What do I do now? How do I do it now?

God knew me as recorded in Psalm 139:13, NIV, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” But where was God in my story – and I wondered where I was in God’s story. Where was my God in my time of need? It’s perfectly natural to ask for insight into your situation. But sometimes, we can find it harder to listen for the answers.

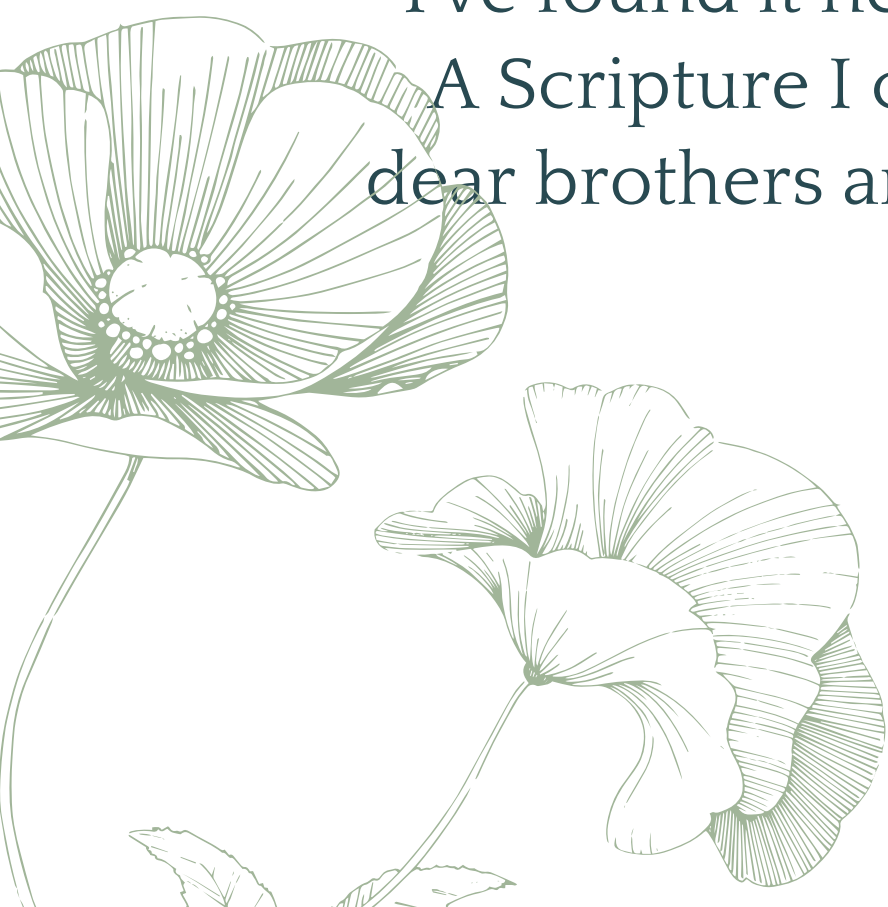
What are the questions that keep you awake at night?

What do you think might be the answers?

These questions aren’t just for modern-day believers. Throughout Scripture, we read of people who suffered significant loss and tremendous suffering, and they asked many of the same questions you ask of God. What answers does the Bible provide?

I’ve found it helpful to pinpoint a weekly Scripture, memorize it, and repeat it frequently. A Scripture I clung to early on my Grief journey was found in I Thessalonians 4:13, “Now dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died, so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.”

Write a Scripture that you have found comforting:





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Day 2

Perhaps in your time of grief, you find yourself dealing with the grief and reactions of others – parents, children, friends, business associates, and neighbors. You find yourself having to “fix” new challenges you never anticipated (finances, health concerns, living arrangements, etc.).

I remember feeling overwhelmed when I realized I had to shoulder more responsibilities than I thought I ever would – or could – handle. I found the burdens easier when I made two lists and reminded myself of what I can and can't do.

I CAN'T

I CAN

Erase _____

Encourage _____

Fix _____

Focus on _____

What's one thing you can't do that you will let go of trying to fix this week?

Turning again to God's Word for insight, let's see how others handled challenges. The Book of Ruth is an excellent place to start. Psalms and Lamentations are filled with similar concerns that we face today – and we see that God participated and promised He would always be there.

This week claim Psalm 94:19 as a focus;
"When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul."



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Day 3

Whenever we ignore our feelings or worries, they fester and can erupt, which will make us feel even worse and cripple our efforts to move forward. I had to remind myself that I wasn't alone – over and over again. Even while friends and family surrounded me, offering comfort and care, I hid my feelings or pretended to be okay.

Are you trying to masquerade like I once did? Even worse, did you find yourself trying to hide from an all-knowing God? Believe Scripture when it tells us that no matter what we are feeling or thinking, God already knows, and He is standing by to comfort, guide, encourage and help us.

I find comfort in Psalm 56:8, “You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle.” God does not ignore our concerns; He keeps account of the tears of His faithful. What a comforting promise in our moments of grief.

When exhaustion and feelings of inadequacies threaten to overwhelm us, let's do this exercise once again – but note the reverse in order!

I CAN...

I CAN'T...

Encourage_____

Erase_____

Remember_____

Change_____

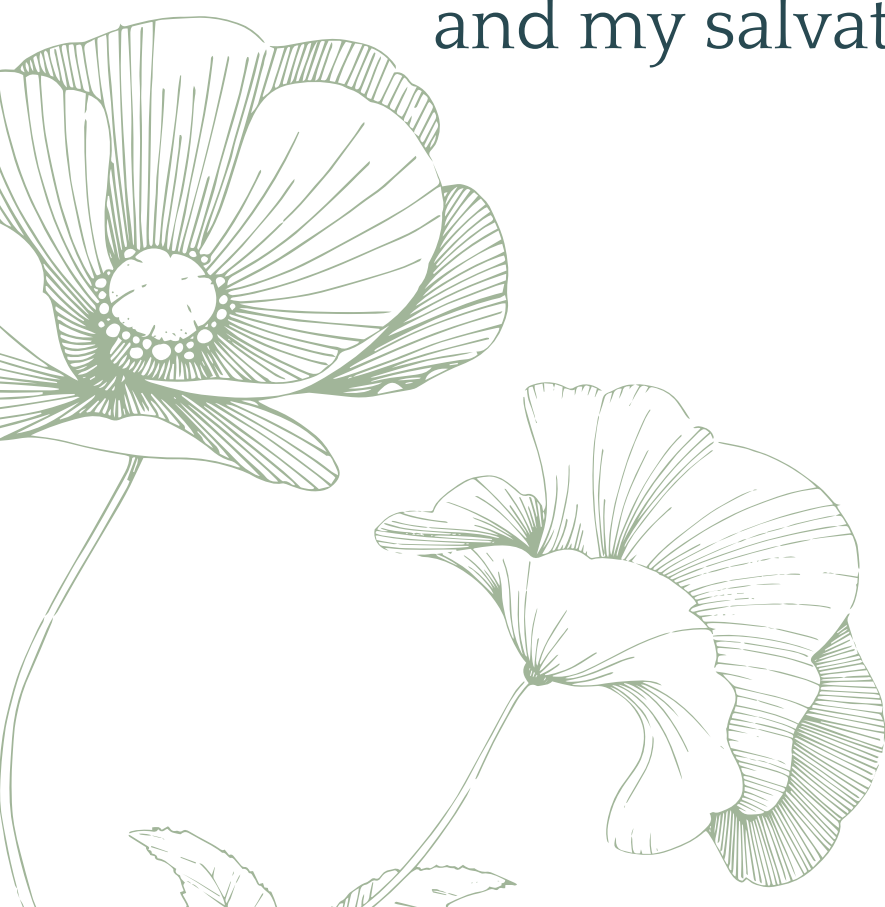
Focus_____

Fix_____

Once again, Scripture is full of stories of people who faced overwhelming odds – people who turned to God for help and guidance. The confidence that King David had in God, as he wrote in Psalm 62:5-7, NLT, facing tremendous trials encourages my heart:

“My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense: I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.”

What story is a comfort to you? How does it encourage you?





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Day 4

Gratitude is the attitude of a Spirit-filled life. It means being thankful for our blessings and the challenges and stumbling blocks put in our paths. Gratitude is the realization that God is always with us. Gratitude makes us eager to show our appreciation by passing blessings on to others.

Let's meditate on God's promises rather than our problems. Let's do it together by listing what we are grateful for. A friend once challenged me to list 100 things, ranging from little ("The traffic light was green when I was in a hurry") to big ("The love of my family").

Let me challenge you to do the same!

Was this easy or challenging? Adding to the list daily will make it more natural for you. I encourage you to find a notebook, create a document on your computer, or a note on your phone to keep a running gratitude list that you can add to regularly.

Where will you keep your list?

A passage found in Zephaniah (3:17) provides a feeling of gratitude for me:
"He will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by His love."





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Day 5

When I am in the depths of grief, one image especially helps me. It comes from Zephaniah 3:17: “He will rejoice over you with joyful song.” (NLT) I can imagine King David singing – but how wonderful to imagine God singing, accompanied by His angels!

Put your imagination to work: What would God’s voice sound like? What would His face look like as He rejoiced over you? Where do you picture God – on a throne, cloud, or by your favorite lake or hillside? What song would He choose to sing?

Living here on the farm, one of my husband’s cherished Scriptures was found in Psalm 121: 1-2 (KJV), “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.”





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Day 6

As the days and weeks passed, my questions continued to flow like water from a fountain. They were often the same questions, but sometimes I added new ones.
What questions haunt you?

Now let's turn our attention completely around and ask new questions:
When I find/found myself searching for God, what do/did I do?

When did I last sense God's presence in my life? How did it happen?

How did the presence of God make me feel? How can I feel that way again?

Oh, the joy I found in Psalm 30:11-12, NLT – “You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy that I might sing praise to you and not be silent. O LORD my god, I will give you thanks forever.”





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Day 7

God, Himself rested, as the Bible points out in Genesis 1:31 (NIV): “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis 2:1-3 adds, “By the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing, so on the seventh day He rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

Jesus Christ often went to rest and pray from the crowds and disciples. The value of rest, reflection, and rejuvenation is an excellent habit to develop. Ask yourself:
When did I last rest and recharge? And how did I do it?

What people and activities – or absence of people and activities –
can give me a sense of peace?

What day-to-day activities or plans can I pursue to remind me that I have felt joy
and will again – despite how I feel right now?

A promise I cling to when the sorrow is great can be found in Matthew 11:28 (NLT),
“Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.”

Grief sometimes will wane, and sometimes it will hit hard, and I encourage you to seek the
Lord as a constant Companion during your grief walk. I pray that you will always
“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.” Romans 12:12.





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Verses for the Grieving Heart

“When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.” Psalm 94:19, ESV

“The joy of the LORD is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10, KJV

‘You keep track of all my sorrows; you have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.’ Psalm 56:8, NLT

“You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence, and the pleasures of living with you forever.” Psalm 16:11, NLT

“Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken.” Psalm 62:5-6, NLT

“You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy, that I might sing praise to you and not be silent. O, LORD my god, I will give you thanks forever.” Psalm 30: 11-12, NLT

“He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by His love.” Zephaniah 3:17, ESV

“Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28, NLT

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.” Psalm 121:1-2, KJV

