

Praise for
God's Healing in Grief

"This is not only an incredible, invaluable study for anyone who has ever experienced grief; it's a study we all should do. In addition to preparing our hearts for the inevitable, it will teach us how to minister to those who grieve. Ron and Kathleen have given us a compassionate, comprehensive, courageous study of grief that will take us full circle in comforting others with the comfort of the One who promises us He will never give us anything we cannot bear."

—Kay Arthur, Co-Founder of Precept Ministries International, speaker, host of *Precepts for Life* radio and television programs, and award-winning author of over 100 books and Bible Studies

"Those who have lost loved ones often find themselves suddenly launched into a sea of grief, buffeted by the wind and waves, tossed about helplessly with no sense of direction, convinced life can never be good again. Pop culture theology and well-intended platitudes only add to the confusion. Ron and Kathleen do an excellent job of pointing those who grieve to the only true source of comfort and direction, the Word of God. Through inductive study, they guide readers to discover truth for themselves, and show grieving people that though life will never be the same again, peace, hope, and even joy are still possible through a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. We recommend this for all who are mourning the loss of a loved one."

—Brad & Jill Sullivan, Co-Founders of *While We're Waiting* ministry to bereaved parents

"Some people say that time is what we need to heal in the midst of grief. But we need more than time—we need time spent hearing God speak into our pain and confusion. In *God's Healing in Grief* the Duncans help us as grieving people to hear and process God's Word so that deep despair can give way to genuine hope.

—Nancy Guthrie, Co-host of the Griefshare video series and author of *Hearing Jesus Speak Into Your Sorrow*

God's
Healing in
GRIEF

by
Ron and Kathleen Duncan

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To all who grieve.

Dear one, we understand your pain and sorrow. We've written this book for you. It came out of our experience with grief—grief over the loss of our parents, an aunt, a nephew, and many friends. But mostly out of our experience with grief over the loss of our son. And out of the amazing, beautiful grace and healing in Christ we have experienced. We have hope because of Christ.

Our prayer is that through this study you will find hope and healing in Christ Jesus as we have. We pray, too, that you will reach a place in your healing where you can share this hope with others who grieve.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

(Romans 5:3-5)

In Christ,

Ron & Kathleen

August 13, 2013...The Day Our Lives Changed Forever!

There was a knock on the door. It was 5:47am. I looked out the window and saw a cop car. Not good. Never a good thing to have a cop at your door. Worse this time of day.

I grabbed my bathrobe; Ron got up to get dressed.

Officer Wiggins had seen the news on the police wire and volunteered to come to our home with the news. He knew our family. His son had graduated just a few months before with our son Peter.

Officer Wiggins came in and told us our 20-year-old, Andrew, had been in a car wreck. Our son was dead.

I sat in the corner of the couch. Numb. My son was dead.

Our three children living at home had heard the door and the noise in the living room, and one by one they came in to ask what was happening. One by one we told them. One by one they each got off the couch and went back to their room. Their brother was dead.

I sat on the couch numb. My son was dead.

Ron called the other children to give them the news: one daughter on vacation with her family; our former Marine in Denver; our gymnastic coach son in Michigan. Their brother was dead.

While Ron called the kids, I got on Facebook to see if I could learn more. The local police knew very little. The troopers were still processing the scene. All they knew was that our son was dead.

One young man had posted kind words on Andrew's page. I sent him a message asking him to call me. He told me they had all been at the end-of-the-season cast party for "Texas" the day before. (This had been Andrew's second year in this outdoor musical. Andrew loved that show; he loved being a professional actor and dancer; he loved the cast and crew.)

On the way home from the cast party about 11:45 pm, six young people had been riding back to Canyon, Texas, when the driver ran a stop sign and pulled out in front of a semi. Andrew was killed along with four of his friends, including the driver. They were pronounced dead at the scene by a justice of the peace at 12:30 am. One person survived and was in critical condition. The driver of the semi was in serious condition. I had one question: "Was Andrew driving?" He was not driving . . . but he was dead.

I called my step-mom. Her grandson was dead.

Ron called more family. Their nephew, cousin, etc. was dead.

Ron contacted our pastor. A member of his congregation was dead. A youth from his youth group was dead.

I posted the following on Facebook and sent out an email to tell people their friend was dead:

Our sweet, funny and talented Andrew Raymond went to be with Christ this morning about 12:30.

He was riding in a car going back to Amarillo from the annual End of the Show Ranch BBQ with other cast members from "Texas." He and four others were killed when the car they were in was struck by a semi. One person in the car is in surgery. We do not know any other details at this time.

Please pray for our family as we deal with this loss.

Pray for the families of the others involved, including the driver of the semi involved. I pray that somehow God will be glorified in this.

I walked away from my computer. The next few moments were quiet and still. It would be a little while before anyone arrived at the house, before we could really do anything; we had to wait.

Ron and I talked a bit. We had plans to make; arrangements for our son's funeral needed to be made. We talked quietly.

We made a few decisions:

1. We would not blame the driver. It could have as easily been Andrew. Cast and crew had taken turns driving to events all summer. He could have been driving. Blame would not change things. It didn't matter to us if alcohol were involved. That would not have changed the outcome.
2. We would make it through this. We WILL make it through this together.
3. We would believe. The most important thing we discussed was this: **Our son was not dead!** Andrew was and is still alive! He is alive in our memories, in our love, in our home, in the thousands of pictures we have of him, in the hundreds of hours of video of him. He is alive!

More than that: the reality is that Andrew **is** not dead. He is now living in the presence of Christ. He will be dancing and worshiping before the throne of his

Savior for eternity! He is *even more alive than he ever was on earth!* And Andrew lived well here; he lived life to the fullest here on earth! But now he is living eternally with Our Heavenly Father.

My life changed forever that day. I had to deal with grief in a way I never dreamed. We had lots of things to take care of: lots of details, legal stuff, funeral stuff, closing accounts, shutting off his phone, cleaning his apartment, finding his car! It took a long time to work through details and legal stuff.

But one thing in my life didn't change and never will: God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

On August 12 God was a loving, compassionate God. He cared for me. He loved me. He had begun a work in me and promised to carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. He sent His Son to die for me. He promised to never leave me or forsake me. He was the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, Creator, Redeemer, Messiah and my Friend.

On August 13 all those things were still true!

They still are true.

They will be true forever.

Even on remarkable days, some things don't change.

Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved, for you are my praise (Jeremiah 17:14).

What Will this Study Do For You?

Though we had lost others, no event in our lives prepared Ron and me for the loss of our son. It was as if the death of a child was a murky theory, a remote possibility that happens to everyone else. We expected our children to live long, happy lives. We expected them to outlive us. When that doesn't happen, when the improbable becomes real, life gets dark and grim quickly. We need light in the form of short-term relief and long-term hope.

That's what we want to share with you. While there are many books on how to handle grief, the purpose of this one is to help you find healing, hope, peace, and joy once again, *even while* you're grieving, by reading and studying God's Word. This is how you can get to know your heavenly Father, the God of eternity, personally, develop a closer relationship with Him, and in doing so find the healing you desperately want and need.

God alone heals broken hearts. He promised to comfort those who mourn. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4)

This sounds promising, but those of us who have suffered through the loss of a child, spouse, parent, best friend, *still* have some pretty tough questions:

- What "comfort" can we expect from the Lord and how do we get it?
- How can I find joy and peace when my child, spouse, or parent is dead?
- How can we truly heal when the relationship we had can't go back to "the way it was"?
- Why did my loved one die? Why are others healed from the same sickness?
- I'm sad all the time; am I sinning?
- I'm angry at everyone who was at fault. What do I do now?
- Is my loved one okay? Is she in heaven?
- Did my loved one become an angel? Does he watch over me now?

The Bible has answers to these questions and many more. We'll guide you through your own study to find answers to these questions *for yourself*.

Many books do the work for you. Some of them help you understand the psychological impacts of loss but you need to be careful: many of them teach philosophies contrary to the Bible and in fact reject its teachings. Others combine biblical truths with errors, usually more fantasy than fact. How can you discern the difference?

By studying what the Bible says yourself!

We offer simple activities to help you get truth straight from God's Word. Together we'll address the tough questions above and others directly to relevant scriptures. This will gently lead you to the foundation of Jesus Christ—the rock-solid Base of all comfort, healing, and hope!

The first part addresses our need to have a relationship with God to deal with grief. But we'll first learn about who we're relating to. If we don't know God's nature and works we can't begin to heal. The second part addresses positive responses to grief in light of the hope God gives us for this life and for eternity. We learn how His Word transforms us into the image of Christ. Along the way we look the topics that most often come up when we deal with the death of a loved one. Finally, we observe the responses of several psalmists to God when they were tested and how these responses can help us heal.

Each lesson begins with an introduction to the topic. Often it will include a story and insights we learned from our own grief journeys. Then we look at passages from the Bible to see what God says about the topic. This is where inductive study comes in.

We'll ask you to observe the text carefully so it will speak to you directly. While we offer some opinions here and there, the study is designed for you to interact with God's thoughts yourself. The Holy Spirit will teach you; that's God's promise (1 John 2:27).

In each lesson you'll read passages of Scripture then answer questions to help you extract what God is saying. Often we'll advise you to mark key *words* like sorrow, grief, comfort, and God and pronouns that refer to them to highlight the author's emphasis on key *ideas* that enhance understanding. Markings help you relocate these ideas *quickly*. You can use a plain pencil or colored pencils to underline, box, circle, triangle, or just shade them. After this you'll want to list what you learned to seal these truths in your heart.

The next goal is to direct questions to texts to help you understand their meaning and then record your answers.

God wants us to apply His Word—the ultimate purpose of all Bible study. But how do I do this? What should I believe and how should I act? This may be the hardest part. Grief will often put a drag on our applications. That’s okay! The good news is: the Holy Spirit will offset this, empower us all along the way.

The “way” is a long one so don’t plan to rush by trying to complete a lesson a day. Plan rather on spending a few days in each. Take each slowly and steadily. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the truth, beauty, and joy of God’s Word.

As you walk through grief, you will have times when you need to simply be still and listen for God’s voice. Other times you’ll need to “offer up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who [is] able to save [you] from death” just as Jesus did (Hebrews 5:7). Some of the concepts in this study may be hard to digest. Work through them in your own time at your own pace. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight and comfort. If you need more than a week for a lesson, that’s okay too.

We encourage you to work through the book with a group of friends who have experienced loss like yours. You can work through a lesson each week then come together weekly to discuss what you learned. In the back of the book you’ll find a section titled **Using This Book for Group Discussions**.

Just Journaling

Throughout this study, you will find *Just Journaling* prompts. They’re optional, but most people (starting with us) have found that journaling facilitates healing from grief. These prompts will cue you to think and record things like:

What or who I’m grieving

What I hope to gain from this lesson

How I’m feeling about what I just learned

Poems and prayers to express my thoughts about the lesson

[Kathleen] Writing about my feelings, thoughts, struggles, and successes helped me process my grief. My Journal is my blog. I write about my grief journey and what God has shown me in my private study time as well as in group studies. I share my struggles and failures; I write about the good things in my life and I write about my faith.

Consider using our companion volume “My Journal for God’s Healing in Grief” or start one of your own (a simple notebook will do). Some of the

questions in this book will take more space to answer than others. If we haven't given you enough room, write your answer in your Journal. You may want to express your thoughts in prayers, poetry, and/or drawings. You may want to compose a song that expresses your pain but also, eventually, your victories amid your grief journey.

You will have victories in grief, but grief itself is not something to be conquered, but rather it is something that is normal and natural, something we go through and feel when we lose someone we love.

Your Journal is a place where you can write your prayers to God the way the psalmists did. From my experience, a Journal to write or draw in is extremely helpful for processing grief and the accompanying emotions, thoughts, and questions. Be sure to date Journal entries so you can go back later and see how God worked in your life.

As we said at the beginning, the purpose of this book is to help you find healing through a study of God's Word.

Here's your first *Just Journaling* prompt:

Just Journaling

Begin to write about your thoughts and feelings in grief. You might want to start by writing about the loss you are grieving. Write about your loved one. Maybe include a picture or some of your favorite things about them.

Write down some of the questions you have about death, heaven, grief, and healing. What are you hoping to learn through this study?

Be honest in your Journal which is just between you and God. As we go through this study you will have opportunity to write in your Journal and look back to see what God has done in and through you.

LESSON 1

Comfort in Grief

¹I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

***²My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.***

***³He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.***

***⁴Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.***

***⁵The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade on your right hand.***

***⁶The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.***

***⁷The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.***

***⁸The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.***

(Psalm 121)

The loss of a loved one of any age and by any cause leads to pain and grief. Where can we turn for help and comfort when we are grieving? Who can comfort us in our grief?

Psalm 121 tells us that our help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. It says “The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.” But for those of us who have experienced the death of a loved one, it may seem that the Lord did neither of these things.

We have experienced loss in many ways over the years. We buried our parents and grandparents. We helped care for two parents as they each died from cancer. Those deaths were expected. Those wonderful people had lived good, long lives, but it still hurt when they died.

We have also had friends who died in accidents and from addictions and illnesses. We had to bury our twenty-year-old son after he was killed in a car wreck along with four of his friends. And we have watched friends bury their parents or children.

All of us who have lost loved ones ask the hardest questions. "Is what I have been taught true?" "Did God keep us from evil?" "Did he keep our son's life?"

We know grief. We know the pain of losing people we love. We know the questions that often plague us in those early days of our grief journey.

We also know the healing and comfort that comes from the Lord. We have experienced it! We have found joy and peace even as we grieved those we lost. We know God does keep us from evil and He keeps our life. The keeping just may not look like what we thought it would look like.

For those of you early in your grief journey, we know you are still hurting. You may still be crying almost daily. You may be finding it hard to function. Whether the loved one you lost was a child, infant, teen, young adult, older adult or preborn child, the loss is painful. Some of you have lost your child, others a sibling, spouse, parent, family member, or friend.

Those of you farther along in your grief journey may feel like your lives will never be the same again. The truth is: they won't be. Someone you care for deeply is no longer alive on this earth. Something major has happened and it will change you. But if you ask Him, God can and will use all of this for His glory and your good. He is a compassionate, gracious God who loves you. He will heal your broken heart.

Each of us is unique. The people we lost were unique and special to us. Their lives were unique. Their deaths were unique. Our grief will be unique. But the source of healing for each of us is the same: Jesus Christ and Him crucified, buried, and risen from the dead!

Healing from the loss of a loved one does not happen quickly, certainly not overnight. But it can happen if you are honest and willing. It takes work, dear one. We must be honest and willing and we must work to find healing. It requires that we diligently seek the Lord and trust Him. We must study His Word and obey His commands. We must remain steadfast through this trial. There are great rewards for doing so:

JAMES 1:12

¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

And God has given us the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to help and teach us.

JOHN 14:26 (KJV)

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you

Though we will miss our loved ones who have gone on before us, we can find peace and joy again, in Christ.

[Kathleen] *There is a void in my life that only our son Andrew filled. I miss his laugh, his stomping through the house, his hugs, and his stories. Nothing will ever replace my son in my life. I still have moments and even days of sadness. Some memories still bring tears. I see his friends dance, graduate, get new jobs, and marry. Knowing I won't get to see Andrew do these things brings a twinge of pain. Yes, I will grieve the loss of my son until I die.*

However, those early days of sorrow so deep that I physically ached are gone. The days of doubt, sobbing, and aching have passed. Seeing an old picture of all four of my boys together no longer takes my breath away. I no longer count the days, weeks, or months since I saw him last or since the date of his death. I no longer cry each time I see a picture of him or hear his name. I no longer wake up with my pillow wet from my tears. Death is no longer a central theme in my thoughts.

How did I reach this point? How was I healed from this deep level of grief? By turning to Our Heavenly Father and trusting in His promises. I had studied the Bible and understood many of them. He promises to comfort us, to be with us, and to love us. He is a gracious God, full of mercy and abounding in love. I reached this point by trusting Him and doing the next right thing.

The next right thing may be as simple as getting out of bed and getting dressed or it may be going back to church for the first time in a while. It may

be going back to work, joining a Bible study, or taking care of your children. You don't have to figure out what tomorrow or next week will look like; you can simply do the next right thing today. You can apply God's truth in your life today. And in trusting God and doing the next right thing He will bring you to a place of healing and peace.

If you are willing, He will do the same for you. If you want to find peace, joy, and hope in the midst of your grief, the Holy Spirit will lead you to a place of healing and restoration.

Are you willing to let God work in you and lead you? If you are, begin with prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you, comfort you, and lead you into a place of healing and peace. I know that for many of us in grief, prayer has become hard. You may not be sure how to pray anymore. Sweet friend, simply talk to God. Ask Him to teach you. Tell Him you are willing to learn. He is listening.

Losing a loved one is tragic. It is horribly painful. You may be angry because of your loss. You may have doubts and fears you have not shared with anyone. You may even find it hard to pray. Your prayer doesn't have to be fancy or long, but it should be honest. As we work through this study, be honest with God. Take time to tell Him what you are thinking and feeling, no matter how bad that is. He knows it already, beloved. He knows your heart, and He loves you.

1 CHRONICLES 28:9

⁹“And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought.

Just Journaling

Write out your prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you, comfort you, and lead you into a place of healing and peace. If you can, write what healing might look like to you. If you can't imagine healing and joy right now, that's okay. Be honest about your thoughts and feelings.

God's Comfort in Loss

As we look at Scripture together over the coming weeks, be open and honest with God. He knows your pain. He knows your sorrow. He knows your heart.

And He loves you.

Let's start looking at what the Bible says about God's comfort and His love for you. We will look at some of these passages again later in the study, but for now read the verses that follow and draw a triangle over *God* and *Father* and any synonyms such as *he*, *I*, or *you*. Draw a cross over *Lord Jesus Christ* or *Christ*.

Then read them a second time, this time circling the word *comfort* and drawing a teardrop over the words *afflicted* and *sufferings* and a heart over the word *love*.

For each verse, write what the Bible says about God's comfort and love for you. You may not be at a place where you believe these truths yet. That's okay, just look at what the Bible says about God, see what you can learn, and be willing to let Him teach you.

How does Paul describe God?

What does this passage say about God's comfort? Make a list of all you learn about comfort.

What is God's hope for you? What does He want you to share?

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.*

Notice that this passage says even the righteous have afflictions. What does it say about God? List what God does to help.

In the following verses, draw a triangle over *God* including synonyms and pronouns, a cross over *Christ*, and a teardrop over all words that show mourning. Write what you learn about God's comfort and love.

PSALM 34:17-19

¹⁷When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. ¹⁸The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. ¹⁹Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

PSALM 56:8

⁸You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?

PSALMS 147:3

³He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

LAMENTATION 3:22-24

²²The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

MATTHEW 5:4

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

²⁸Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

1 PETER 5:7

⁵ *casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

Summarize what you learned about God from these verses. Make a list of what He is and what He does for us. Although this is redundant, the repetition will help you remember who God is and what He promises to do.

Isn't it beautiful? God promises to be near and comfort us who are broken-hearted! He comforts us through His Word, other people, the beauty in creation, and through the Holy Spirit who teaches us and guides us as we walk through the valley of grief. God promises to comfort us in our grief because He loves us.

Read the next verses. Mark *love* with a heart and draw a cloud around *eternal life*. Note what you learn.

JOHN 3:16, 36

¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

³⁶ *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life...”*

ROMANS 5:8

⁸ *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

What is the result of God's love for us according to these verses?

Just Journaling

You've just looked at verses about God's love and comfort. How are you feeling about what you learned? Write your feelings and thoughts about God and His comfort in light of your loss. What impact do you think this understanding will make in your life?

Copy any verses you want to remember from this lesson in your Journal. Throughout this study you may want to write there verses that touch you in a special way.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-5. Mark *Christ* and all *synonyms* with a cross.

According to this passage what happened to Christ? What did He do? Make a list.

Continue to mark Christ. Draw a tombstone over the words *dead* and *fallen asleep*. Underline *alive*.

Because Christ has been raised from the dead, what is the result for those "in Christ"?

Put a tombstone over the words *dead in Christ* and *fallen asleep*. Circle *hope*.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-5

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-22

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-17

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have

What do Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy want their readers generally to know?

According to these scriptures, what will happen to our loved ones who have died before us?

fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

What key term does Paul use to contrast the grief of believers and unbelievers?

Is this term no more than wishful thinking? What is it based on?

Have you noticed this difference in your own life and in others'?

In writing to the church at Thessalonica, Paul said he did not want them to grieve as those who have no hope. We can have hope because of who God is and what He promises us in His Word.

Because of His great love for us, God sent Jesus to die on the cross and rise from the dead so you and I can have eternal life. Eternal life begins when we first accept Christ. It means we will "always be with the Lord." What a comfort that is for us who have experienced the death of a loved one! All who believed in Jesus Christ and have died are alive and in His presence!

Read Revelation 21:1, 4. Underline what God will do for us:

REVELATION 21:1, 4

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

If you want to learn more about heaven and what happens when we die, you may want to complete the 40-Minute Study "Heaven, Hell, and Life after Death."¹

The promises in God's Word are our hope! Even when we grieve, we have hope. Though we suffer and grieve on earth now, a day is coming when the dead in Christ will rise and we will join them to meet the Lord! There will be no more sorrow and no more tears! What a glorious day that will be!

Now is a good time to write down some of your thoughts and feelings about your grief and your loss. What do you think it will look like to have healing in your grief? You may want to write a prayer. Be honest with God about your grief.

Beloved, God knows your heart and your thoughts already. He knows you have questions. He knows your pain. He understands and loves you. He wants to comfort you and give you peace. Speak to Him about your grief and any questions and doubts you have. He understands and He loves you.

As you work through this study our prayer is that you will find healing and hope even as you grieve.

¹ Kay Arthur, Bob and Diane Vereen, *Heaven, Hell, and Life after Death* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2014).

ROMANS 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Just Journaling

In our Journal you'll find a chart titled "What I Learned About God." If you started your own Journal, then start a list with this title. We'll be coming back to it often. Then, go back through this lesson and add everything else you learned about God. As you go through the rest of this study, continue to add to this list. You may want to leave a few blank pages so you have lots of room to add to your list. This list will help you come to know more of who your Heavenly Father is, develop a closer relationship with Him, and in doing so find the healing, peace, and joy you seek.

