

JOURNEY TOWARDS HOPE

LESSONS FROM STEVE CARTER'S
GRIEVE, BREATHE, RECEIVE



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SESSION 1

**WHEN
CHANGE
SHOWS UP**

SESSION 1: WHEN CHANGE SHOWS UP

Welcome to Session 1 of our Bible study! This week we begin our journey towards hope together as we spend time connecting with each other, watching Pastor Steve's teaching, and then, discussing the video and related passages from the Bible. At the end of each session, we've also included information on corresponding chapters from Steve's book *Grieve, Breathe, Receive*. We invite you to reach for a gritty and courageous hope, the kind that can sustain you no matter what life throws at you.

CONNECT

Get to know each other in the group! If Story Cards are available, have each person pick an image that represents what life feels like now or that resonates with where they are in their journey with God. Have them introduce themselves and briefly say why they picked the card they did.

Here are some additional connection questions, if needed:

Who is new to the area or our church?

Who has been in the area and/or our church the longest?

Who grew up the farthest away?

What prompted you to join the Bible study?

VIDEO

Listen for Steve to discuss the following:

- An illustration for how we imagine life will play out and what happens when change affects that dream or plan.
- A strategy Steve outlines "D.A.R.E."-ing us to be people who grieve yet still have hope.
- A reminder that God sees us in the midst of whatever we are going through.

NOTES

8. Have you heard or maybe used the following “hopeful sayings,” perhaps offered with the best intentions, only to find them NOT very helpful to someone walking through change, loss, or grief?

“All we can do is hope for the best.”

“You’ve just got to believe.”

“You need to have more hope/faith/time/perspective.”

“You just need to move on with your life.”

“God never gives us more than we can handle.” (This is not in the Bible, by the way. More on that below.)

Other?

We wonder then, how we find a “gritty and courageous hope.” What does it look like when the bottom falls out of our lives? Paul helped explain that kind of hope to the house churches in Rome. (Yes, to those living in that same culture that ridiculed hope!)

Read Romans 8:22-28:

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

*Not only so, but **we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly** as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies [a reference to our own resurrection when Christ returns to set all things right, including our full rights and privileges as members of God’s family].*

***For in this hope we were saved.** But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

*In the same way, **the Spirit helps us in our weakness.** We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.*

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

12. Does God promise “not to give us more than we can handle,” as some well-intentioned people have said? What does God promise to do with the pain and suffering that comes into the lives of believers living in this broken world?

RESPOND

This week we are reminded that there is a “gritty and courageous hope” available to us that we can **D.A.R.E.** to embrace.

13. Would you be willing to take this D.A.R.E. over the next few weeks? Below are the components to consider. Which ones do you think will be the toughest for you?

D – dare to **Desire** something good. *If God invaded my areas of change, loss, or grief, what good would I want Him to bring?*

A – believe **Anything** is possible. *If Jesus can get up from the grave, could I trust him to rebuild my life?*

R – discover how **Resurrection** brings certainty. *If even death is not the end of the story, how does that shape my hope?*

E – **Expect** that good is on its way. *Can I develop a confident anticipation that God's goodness is on the way?*

COMPANION READING AND REFLECTION THIS WEEK

From Pastor Steve in *Grieve, Breathe, Receive*:

“In order for change to make room for the future, something from our past must be set aside or adapted. This invokes a loss, a giving up of something. Grief fills the vacuum change creates when it visits.” (Page 1)

Read pages 1–50 (chapters 1–4) of the book. Steve offers additional questions for personal reflection to help you process “what comes up when change shows up.” Jot down any additional insights and feel free to share some of your learnings at the next gathering.

NOTES

SESSION 2

GRIEVE

SESSION 2: GRIEVE

In our first session we talked about how and why change shakes us, surprises us, and even shocks us with grief, something we don't always understand how to process. We want to become people who "grieve but with hope" (1 Thess 4:13), but we often need a plan forward in that journey towards hope. Today we discuss the first stage of the that journey, which is to fully experience the journey IN grief.

CONNECT

Welcome any new members joining this week and make quick introductions!

Did anyone DARE to hope last week by committing to Desire something good, believe Anything is possible, lean into Resurrection certainly, and Expect that good is on its way?

What felt encouraging about that?

What felt difficult about that?

For anyone who read the first portion of Steve's book, did you gain any additional insights or tools?

VIDEO

Listen for Steve to discuss the following:

- How Jesus modeled good grief.
- The first crucial step in the grief journey.
- Several healthy ways of processing change/grief and two unhealthy ways we may choose instead.
- The importance of guarding our hearts by protecting the process of grieving, and some of the results when we do not allow ourselves to embrace the grief journey.

NOTES

DISCUSS

Steve discussed that Jesus wept over the things that caused him pain and grief. He wept over the people of Jerusalem because they were without protective, godly leaders (Matthew 9:36 and Luke 19:41-46). Also, you may have heard the shortest verse of the Bible, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). In that passage, Jesus cried and felt intense feelings (John 11:33-38) over the death of his friend Lazarus, even while knowing he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead.

As Steve mentioned, Jesus, full of strength and wisdom, allowed himself to feel deeply and practice “good grief,” honoring what comes up when change shows up. Steve encouraged us that it is healthy, biblical, and human to honor our Good Friday experiences while still holding on to the truth that Easter Sunday is coming.

1. Steve talked about a first crucial step of the grief journey. What was it?

2. Why might it be important to be very honest about what we are grieving?

Steve introduces a drawing of two concentric circles, the inner one representing our lives that have been invaded by change and the outer one representing the hope for what life can become as we courageously examine and respond to what comes up when change shows up. Grief fills the space between, though we do not always recognize it as such. The journey towards hope happens as we process and adapt during that time between what was and what will be, beginning with the “Friday” of our story, the journey IN grief.

THE GRIEF JOURNEY



3. What were some examples Steve gave of healthy practices for processing grief? Any others you have heard about or found helpful?

In *Grieve, Breathe, Receive*, Steve explains more about the word guard:

“The Hebrew word translated as “guard” is natsar, which means to relentlessly defend and guard what matters most from danger. Picture the defensive wizardry of NBA basketball star Patrick Beverly— that’s the kind of fierce energy this verse wants us to bring to the table when it comes to guarding our hearts.” (Page 56)

Along with encouraging us to guard our hearts, Scripture offers numerous passages that give words to our feelings and model how to grieve with honesty. As Steve mentioned, the Bible contains an entire book called Lamentations and over forty psalms of lament that contain a full range of emotions and honest conversations with God about pain, loss, and injustice.

Jesus cries out the opening lines from one such psalm during his crucifixion, making clear his physical, emotional, and spiritual agony while fulfilling prophecies that he would take our punishment for sin. Examine a portion of Psalm 22 below to see how the writer gives an honest account of physical, emotional, and spiritual anguish while also reminding himself of God’s character and past actions.

Read Psalm 22:1-5:

*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.
In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.
To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.”*

7. What are some of the expressions of grief, anguish, and loss that you notice?

SESSION 2 GRIEVE

8. Can you relate to any of these?

9. What are some of the descriptions of God's character and past actions that you notice? Why do you think the writer includes these, too?

Note that the writer continues to alternate between truthful expressions of agony and truthful statements about God — for 26 more verses! The other lament psalms all follow a similar pattern, showing that the journey through change, grief, and pain are a process to be embraced, not a quick fix to be applied. While almost all end on a positive statement of God's character or promises with a transition that feels decidedly hopeful, Psalm 88 ends still asking God when His help will arrive, expressing deep anguish, and naming specific pain:

Read Psalm 88:13-18:

*“But I cry to you for help, Lord;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
Why, Lord, do you reject me
and hide your face from me?
From my youth I have suffered and been close to death;
I have borne your terrors and am in despair.
Your wrath has swept over me;
your terrors have destroyed me.
All day long they surround me like a flood;
they have completely engulfed me.
You have taken from me friend and neighbor —
darkness is my closest friend.”*

10. Why might it be important for God's word to include a psalm that ends without a tidy, hope-filled ending? Do you find this encouraging or discouraging as you contemplate the grief journey?

RESPOND

This week we were reminded that when the shock and pain of change comes, we find ourselves in our "Friday," just like the disciples who watched Jesus arrested, beaten, and crucified. Though we may know intellectually that "Sunday" is coming, we must begin our grief journey to get there. Steve asked us to consider a question:

11. What do you struggle to embrace or honor either about the process of grieving change or about the parts of your story that caused the change?

12. Consider reading and reflecting on these six psalms of lament this week: Psalm 3, 4, 5, 22, 88, 142. How might reading and reflecting on the honesty of the Psalms help you in with that struggle?

COMPANION READING AND REFLECTION THIS WEEK

From Pastor Steve in *Grieve, Breathe, Receive*, on naming the source of our grief:

“Sometimes we make generalizations or create false narratives that stunt the grieving process. But when you define reality and put a name to the source of your wound, a sacred movement toward healing is unlocked within.” (Page 52)

Read pages 51–110 (chapters 5–9) of the book. Steve offers additional questions for personal reflection to help you continue the journey IN grief, the “Friday” of your story and then move into “Saturday,” the journey THROUGH grief, with encouragement to use this waiting and wandering time well. Jot down any additional insights and feel free to share some of your learnings at the next gathering.

NOTES

SESSION 3

BREATHE

SESSION 3: BREATHE

Welcome to “Saturday,” the in-between place in the grief journey after the shockwaves of the initial change but before the “Easter Sunday” of our story when restoration, healing, and joy return. As we will learn, we may feel compelled to journey **THROUGH** grief as quickly as possible, only to discover we must slow down, breathe, and learn to trust God in deeper ways.

CONNECT

Welcome any new members joining this week and make quick introductions!

Did anyone read and reflect on the psalms of lament?

What did you learn about the psalm writers' experiences with hardship or change?

Did you resonate with anything they experienced or expressed?

For anyone who read the next portion of Steve's book, did you gain any additional insights or tools?

VIDEO

Listen for Steve to discuss the following:

- Why and how the in-between “Saturday” of grief may be a time for deepening trust in God.
- An acronym for the grief journey and the thoughts and feelings that characterize the middle portion of the journey.
- The role of forgiveness and a related prayer we can practice.

NOTES

DISCUSS

THE GRIEF JOURNEY



Steve discussed the middle “Saturday” stage of our journey when we are processing change, grief, or loss. After the shock and pain of a change subsides – that “Friday” part of the journey—we begin what may feel like a desert season of wandering and waiting while we wrestle with various thoughts, memories, and emotions. While we are tempted to rush the steps to get through our grief as fast as possible, Steve encouraged us to recognize the benefits of embracing this time of wandering and waiting.

1. Steve likened our journey to process change, grief, and loss to the Israelites’ desert wanderings, which extended for many years beyond what a journey from Egypt to the Promised Land should have taken. What did he say the Israelites struggled to understand about God when they left Egypt?

DIG DEEPER

As Steve began the middle phase of processing change, grief, and loss, he was often surprised by feelings of anger and depression and the way his mind brought up frequent memories of past hurts. His mentor helped him see that that the middle phase of the grief journey is often characterized by these feelings and thoughts, giving him the SPADURA framework for the grief journey:

S-

P-

A-

D-

U-

R-

A-

His mentor encouraged him that he would need to acknowledge and work through his “Saturday” feelings and thoughts. Each person’s grief journey is different just as the change that sends us on that journey is different. The greater the change, particularly in cases of traumatic events and loss, counseling and other support for mental health is highly encouraged.

5. During the middle desert wandering stage of grief, what are some healthy ways of working through the strong emotions, vivid memories and pain caused by change?

Because some of Steve’s grief was brought about through hurtful actions by others, he also realized he needed to learn a lot more about forgiveness. He focused on two concepts from Scripture that helped him receive forgiveness for self and practice forgiveness of others. One concept had its roots in the Old Testament from the time of the Israelites’ desert wanderings:

Read Leviticus 16:20-22:

*“When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall **send the goat away** into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall **release** it in the wilderness.”*

6. In the Old Testament, the priest helped the people observe the holy day of atonement, when the temple and the people were cleansed in the sight of God for a year’s worth of sin and rebellion. Though the priest made animal sacrifices as a substitute for the punishment demanded by people’s sin, he also used a living “scapegoat.” How did the priest and his assistants create a strong symbolic picture of God removing the people’s sin and forgiving them?

7. In what ways might this picture of forgiveness also foreshadow Jesus taking the sins of people on himself once and for all?

In the New Testament, one Greek term for forgiveness, *aphiemi*, is frequently used because it means to release and send away, reminding people of the ancient “scapegoat” in the desert. One such place is in Jesus’ model prayer.

Read Matthew 6:12:

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

COMPANION READING AND REFLECTION THIS WEEK

From Pastor Steve in *Grieve, Breathe, Receive*, on learning to trust God by practicing forgiveness:

“What I’ve come to realize is that forgiveness is a solo sport. Forgiveness is an act you must freely choose to do. No one can force you; you can’t forgive yourself before you’re ready. You can be free only after you are sick and tired of carrying that extra dead weight. Forgiveness is a process. It takes time. The deeper the pain you’ve experienced, the more complex the healing and, therefore, the longer and more difficult the practice of forgiveness tends to be.” (Page 118)

Read pages 111–192 (chapters 11–16) plus the Benediction that closes the book. As your journey towards hope now anticipates the Easter Sunday of your story, re-examine your initial commitment to DARE: Desire something good, believe Anything is possible, lean into Resurrection certainty, and Expect that good is on its way. Jot down any additional insights and feel free to share some of your learnings at the next gathering.

NOTES

SESSION 4

RECEIVE

SESSION 4: RECEIVE

Welcome to the final session of our Bible study! Our prayer is that you feel more equipped than when you began to examine and respond to life's changes while sustained by a gritty and courageous hope.

CONNECT

Welcome any new members joining this week and make quick introductions!

If you used Story Cards during week one, would you choose the same image today? Something different?

What has surprised you most as you have learned about the grief journey?

What has been your biggest takeaway from our time together?

For anyone who read the final portion of Steve's book, did you gain any additional insights or tools?

VIDEO

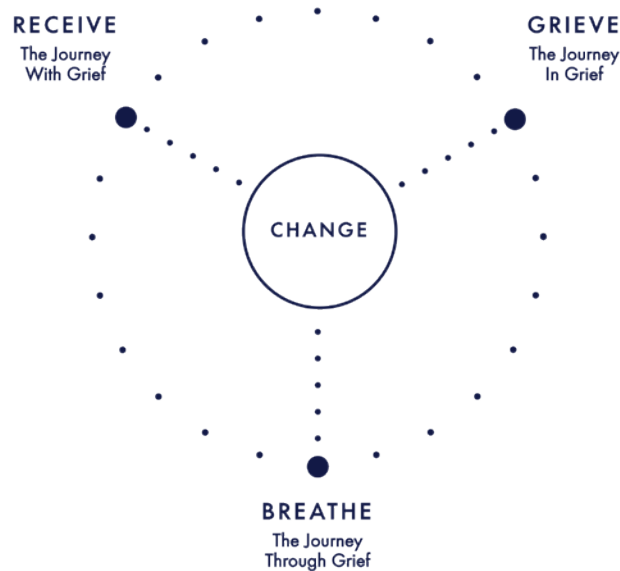
Listen for Steve to discuss the following:

- Why Steve calls the final stage “the journey WITH grief” and an example from Jesus' life after the resurrection.
- How the resurrection shapes our ability to hope.
- Some of the things we may receive on the “Sunday” of our grief journey when we remain open to what God has for us.

NOTES

DISCUSS

THE GRIEF JOURNEY



Steve discussed that the goal of the grief journey is not to forget our story but eventually, to be able to carry that story differently in light of the “Easter Sunday” surprises like care, healing, mercy, and grace that God provides. No one expected a crucified and buried Jesus to resurrect. Easter was a massive surprise, and the resurrection became ground zero for hope that with God all things are possible. Yet Jesus did not erase the evidence of what had happened on Friday.

1. What did Steve say Jesus showed his disciples as evidence?

DIG DEEPER

Steve says that for Christians, the resurrection is what allows us to grieve but with hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13) and for us to hold onto the possibility that hope might show up looking like something we never thought was humanly possible. It allows us to pray, like Steve, “Lord, surprise me today and keep me open to what you want to do,” keeping our hands and heart ready to receive from God. Mary Magdalene, the first person to see Jesus alive after his resurrection, received the surprise of her life that included a bonus blessing she could not have imagined.

Read John 20:1, 11–18:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.... Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don't know where they have put him.”

At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

SESSION 4 RECEIVE

9. Jesus responds to Mary with deep kindness and comfort during her grieving. What do you notice him doing in verses 14–16 to honor her grief and give her a chance to process it?

Verses 17–18 represent an important pivot for Mary in her grief, from being *in* it and trying to work *through* it, to carrying it *with* her as part of a miraculous, joyful story. Jesus comforted her, but now he commissions her.

10. What assignment does he give this first eyewitness of the resurrection?

11. For anyone in the Friday or Saturday of processing change, grief, or loss, how does Mary's story encourage you to hold on to hope?

RESPOND

Steve closes with the encouragement to keep our hands and hearts open to receive the hope God has for us. God is not done with our stories!

1. As you consider what you need to grieve (a change, a loss, an expectation), how you need to breathe (inhaling God's care and grace toward you, exhaling bitterness and unforgiveness), and receive (what God is teaching you, how he is redefining your story, what Easter surprise he has for you), what do you sense is your next step in the process?

2. Who might you reach out to in order to support you on your journey?

A FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT FROM PASTOR STEVE

"I know you have what it takes to make it the rest of the way. I know there will be pain and ache waiting at the finish line, but there will also be recovery, care, and confidence in yourself that you can't begin to comprehend this side of the finish line.

Close your eyes and picture it: you, on the other side of your grief.

Strong. Healed. Brave.

Grateful. Confident. Unshakable.

Because Sunday is coming.

We run the race and become someone who embraces the possibility of hope.

*First, we must **grieve**. Then we learn to **breathe** again. And from there, we can **receive** the new mercies God has for us."*

(Grieve, Breathe, Receive, page 190)

If you have not finished *Grieve, Breathe, Receive*, we hope you will continue reading! Steve also has a free devotional series available for download to help you connect to the book of Psalms.



Download the three *Evening Psalms* devotional sets at
<https://www.stevemcarter.org/evening-psalms>

Grace + Peace,

Steve Carter and the team at Faithbridge Church



281-320-7588 | FAITHBRIDGE.ORG
18000 STUEBNER AIRLINE ROAD
SPRING, TX 77379

REVISED: 06/24