

## *Heartache & Hope*

### **40-Day Lenten Journaling Guide**

*Holding Space for Grief. Pointing Toward Hope.*

Welcome dear hearts,

I don't know about you, but this year I feel especially beat up. I've had personal circumstances and family circumstances that have once again plunged me beneath the heavy and impenetrable fog of grief.

It will be an unbelievable twelve years since Dominic ran ahead to Heaven on April 12<sup>th</sup>. He died the Saturday before Palm Sunday and was buried the Monday after Easter. When the dates and days don't correspond, I feel like most years I experience it all twice. And even though I depend on the observance of Lent to walk my heart through this Season of Sorrow, I just don't have it in me to look up verses, parse their meaning and try to derive some deeper spiritual lesson from any of it. But I want something structured to keep my focus from drifting away from the truth which keeps me anchored to hope.

If that resonates with you, then this Lenten Journaling Guide might be something that helps your heart too.

Before we start, I want to say this: Lent is not about performance. It is an invitation to walk honestly with Jesus.

For those who carry grief, surrender can feel complicated. Some days you may have many words. Other days you may have none. Both are sacred. This journal is a gentle companion — not a task list. Move slowly.

Skip a day if needed. Linger where the Spirit meets you. You are not behind. You are not failing. You are walking a broken and sacred road.

Holding space for grief. Pointing toward hope.

~ Melanie

### **How to Use This Guide**

Choose a journal that you like and lies flat so it's easy to write in. If you, like me, find writing longhand physically painful—feel free to type your response to each day's prompt and then print it. Either way, leave some space between entries for afterthoughts, illustrations (cut from magazines, etc.) or sketched, doodled or painted, Bible verses that come to mind, quotes or anything else that makes the document your own.

Don't edit yourself as you write. Don't worry that someone else might read it one day. Don't think too hard or try to fit your experience into a predetermined "Sunday School" narrative. Be authentic.

Day 1: Where do I feel the ache of absence most right now?

Day 2: What am I afraid to surrender this season?

Day 3: Where have I seen small mercies recently?

Day 4: What expectations am I carrying that may not be from God?

\*First Sunday of Lent: Take a break or catch up with any prompts you may have missed for the week.

Day 5: What does trust look like today — not in theory, but in practice?

Day 6: Where am I exhausted?

Day 7: What does rest mean for me right now?

Day 8: What grief feels unfinished?

Day 9: What truth do I need to rehearse today?

Day 10: Where do I sense resentment growing?

\*Second Sunday of Lent: Take a break or catch up with any prompts you may have missed for the week.

Day 11: What would gentleness toward myself look like?

Day 12: What prayer feels hardest to pray?

Day 13: Where do I need courage?

Day 14: What does forgiveness mean in this season?

Day 15: Where do I feel unseen?

Day 16: What has suffering clarified for me?

\*Third Sunday of Lent: Take a break or catch up with any prompts you may have missed for the week.

Day 17: What have I lost that I'm still grieving?

Day 18: Where has God met me before in pain?

Day 19: What feels heavy today?

Day 20: Where do I need community?

Day 21: What would honesty with God sound like?

Day 22: What expectations of others do I need to release?

\*Fourth Sunday of Lent: Take a break or catch up with any prompts you may have missed for the week.

Day 23: What am I trying to control?

Day 24: What would surrender look like in one small step?

Day 25: Where am I comparing my journey?

Day 26: What lie am I tempted to believe?

Day 27: What truth anchors me?

Day 28: What does hope look like today?

\*Fifth Sunday of Lent: Take a break or catch up with any prompts you may have missed for the week.

Day 29: Where do I need to lament?

Day 30: What memory brings both sorrow and gratitude?

Day 31: What is resurrection asking of me?

Day 32: Where have I grown — even if I didn't want to?

Day 33: What would courage look like this week?

Day 34: Where do I need to ask for help?

\*Sixth Sunday of Lent: Take a break or catch up with any prompts you may have missed for the week.

Day 35: What feels tender right now?

Day 36: What does love require of me today?

Day 37: What does it mean to carry both joy and sorrow?

Day 38: What am I still holding tightly?

Day 39: What is God inviting me to release?

Day 40: What does resurrection hope mean for my grief story?

## *Resurrection Sunday*

### **What next?**

Journaling has been very important in my own grief journey. When I am forced to put my thoughts and feelings into words, they become more manageable. If journaling each day has been helpful and healing to you, consider continuing this practice even though Lent has ended. You can find more prompts in books, online or (hopefully!) from me each month. I'd love to hear if or how this *Lenten Journaling Guide* helped your heart.

