



EMBRACE YOUR LIFE

HOW TO FIND JOY WHEN THE LIFE YOU
HAVE IS NOT THE LIFE YOU HOPED FOR

ELIZABETH WOODSON

DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

- As you feel comfortable, share any feelings of painful disappointment you've had in your life. How do you identify with Charlene's situation?
- During periods of longing in your life, when have you sought God? What was that experience like?
- What is your experience with the practices of self-examination, lament, hope, remembrance, faith, and joy? Have any of these helped you during seasons of longing?

CHAPTER 1

- What symptoms of longing do you notice in your life?
- How does Joshua's experience encourage you to get to the roots of your longing?
- Describe the tension of life between God's sovereignty and your unmet expectations. How will you submit to God's sovereignty in those places of longing?

CHAPTER 2

- How is it possible to experience true joy in your longing? What do you need to do?
- What are some of the ways that you avoid your pain? Examine whether you obsess about or deny your pain or do both.
- Discuss how the gospel helps you process your pain and the importance of seeking God—not idols—as you deal with your longing.

CHAPTER 3

- As you are comfortable, discuss your experience with the pain of grief. To face pain, what must we do first?
- What does Joshua's experience with mourning loss teach you about how you are to grieve?
- How do you regard suffering in your life? Why do you not lament?

CHAPTER 4

- What is the relationship between lament and hope?
- How does God's plan of restoration eliminate doubt and despair?
- What do you think of "practicing hope"? What are some practical ways you can practice hope regularly?

CHAPTER 5

- What three promises does God give Joshua in Joshua 1:3-6? How had God delivered on these promises for Israel in their past? Give a few examples.
- Why is it important to understand God's character when also considering his promises? How do they relate to one another?
- How does the practice of remembrance help us overcome the pain of longing? Give a few examples.

CHAPTER 6

- How is Joshua's purpose connected to the larger story of Israel? How is your purpose connected to God's larger story?
- What does it mean to be created in God's image? How does that truth affect the way you cope with longing?
- How do you respond to the truth that our seasons of suffering or longing are not in vain? How have you seen God work during those times?

CHAPTER 7

- What positive affirmations do you use to encourage yourself? What words in Scripture do you focus on when you need encouragement?
- What is faith? Discuss times when you have acted in faith.
- How does longing affect your walk of faith? What are the four aspects of taking a step of faith?

CHAPTER 8

- Define joy and how we can attain it.
- What is the relationship between pain and joy? What was the Israelites' experience of both? How does their example encourage you?
- What practices can you adopt that will help you cultivate more joy in your life?

CONCLUSION

- What have you learned about your longing and how to view it through a Christian lens?
- What has the example of Joshua taught you about coping with the pain of longing?
- How will you adopt the six spiritual practices of self-examination, lament, hope, remembrance, faith, and joy in your life?