

Invitation to Emmaus



As a pastor, I have officiated at countless funerals. I have walked with many people as they experienced deep losses. As a human being, I have suffered my own losses: favorite pets, many relatives and acquaintances, my father. All of them impacted me, especially the death of my father. But when I lost my husband to lung cancer, my experience with grief took on a new depth of meaning. This was a new road, one with many twists and turns that I did not expect nor could I have predicted. Ed and I were soul mates; our marriage was “made in heaven,” so to speak. We shared everything: the call to ministry, the love of fly-fishing, our dogs, and our extended family. I had invested everything in that relationship, so his death changed the shape of my life. I was still called to ministry. I still had my dogs and fly-fishing. Ed’s children and grandchildren remained close. But he was gone, and that changed everything.

My friend Mary, then a hospice chaplain, commented that I was approaching my grief more intentionally than most people. I’ve often reflected on that statement. I don’t know if I’m different from other people, but I do know this: I decided a long time ago that I am not going to grow into a bitter old woman. Does that sound strange? There was a point in time a number of years ago, when it seemed as if I was surrounded by bitter, angry old people. It was not a pretty sight. I didn’t want to grow old that way. I figured that the only way to keep from becoming embittered was to deal with my losses as they came. To embrace God’s healing for every hurt. To allow the difficulties of life to soften my heart instead of make it hard and cold. So, when Ed died, I made the only decision that made sense to me: I intentionally embraced my grief and began to seek God’s healing. That decision has borne some wonderful (and surprising) fruit. Along the way, my therapist, Ruth, told me that she believed that people who embrace

their grief experience transformation. She's right. And of course, the nature of transformation is such that, going into the process, you have no idea how the end of the story is going to come out. But it is a fascinating and wonderful thing. This is the transformation that happens on the road to Emmaus.

Loss is inevitable, as are the feelings associated with grief. The decision to take the road to Emmaus, however, is a choice. No doubt, because you are reading this book, you have experienced loss. I invite you to embrace your grief, make it an intentional decision, knowing that along the way, God's healing will come, perhaps in surprising ways. So come along with me on the road to Emmaus.

MY TRAVEL JOURNAL

1. What has brought you to this book?
2. Are you ready to embark on a journey? Why or why not?

SUGGESTED ITINERARY

List any obstacles that loom in your way.

Talk to God about those obstacles.