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FACILITATOR'S
GUIDE

BEYOND CANCER'S SCARS:
LAYING CLAIM TO A STRONGER SPIRIT



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Beyond Cancer's Scars: Laying Claim to a Stronger Spirit

by F. Elaine Olsen

Before we begin our time together, I want you to know how honored I am that you have chosen to work through this study with me. Early on in my journey with cancer, I learned the value of choosing “population over isolation” — community over seclusion. As I traveled through my suffering season, my tendency was to hibernate, to go within and to stay there. There is a time and place for going within; there is also great value in doing so, but left unchecked, going within can easily become our default. For this very reason, I have created this facilitator's guide for *Beyond Cancer's Scars* in hopes that you will link arms with others who are suffering and who want to collectively move forward in the healing journey. Healing is best accomplished when it is fleshed out with flesh — with others who have known a similar wounding and who are committed to the process of recovery and renewal.

Courageous are those who are willing to contend with suffering, lay claim to a stronger spirit because of suffering, and refuse to retreat from the battle until something is gained from the suffering—even if that something is as small (or as huge) as befriending another soul walking a similar path. I want to be that friend for you, so if you're willing, take hold of my hand, and together we'll take hold of the heart and hands of Jesus. Our best days are ahead of us!


Peace for the journey,

PS: I would welcome the opportunity to hear from you about how your group is using this study. Feel free to contact me through my website: www.peaceforthejourney.com.

Before Beginning {tips for facilitators}...

- ☞ First rule, there are no rules. This is a guide that allows you to use the book *Beyond Cancer's Scars* as a resource for small groups. More often than not, there will be more activities/questions provided than can be covered during the session. As the facilitator, you will determine what to include.
- ☞ Small groups don't have to be exclusively for cancer patients. Groups can include care-givers, family members directly affected by cancer, or individuals who are walking through a season of suffering. As the facilitator, you will decide the parameters for membership.
- ☞ Each participant will need the book *Beyond Cancer's Scars* and a journal for reflection (a 6x9 spiral bound notebook is sufficient).
- ☞ There are nine group sessions; the first session serves as an introduction to the study. Sessions can meet once a week, once every other week, or once a month. As facilitator, you will decide what works best with your group.
- ☞ Each meeting is designed for 60 – 90 minutes depending on group preferences and can be adapted to fit your needs.
- ☞ Because of the intimate nature of this study, I recommend a small group of participants (5 - 8 is ideal). The study can be used with larger groups, broken down into smaller groups (one facilitator for each group).
- ☞ Each session includes the following components: opening prayer, group activity, scripture focus, discussion questions, a "take it with you" focus, and a closing prayer. The discussion questions initiate from the questions covered during the five days of reflective reading from the book. In addition, participants are given a journaling option each week. (*Note: journaling is optional and is sometimes incorporated into the group discussion. As facilitator, you will decide how to use the journaling component with your group.)
- ☞ The scripture focus for each session could be written out on index cards on a weekly basis and given to the participants as a focal point for meditation. Another option would be to have participants write the focus verse(s) in their journals.

- ☞ There will be five assigned readings for each session (along with the corresponding questions) that should be reviewed and reflected upon prior to the next session's meeting. While the assigned readings aren't necessary for participation, not reading them will greatly limit the participant's ability to interact with the group. (**Note: the first session doesn't require any reading by participants prior to meeting together.*)
- ☞ In addition to reading the assigned chapters each week, as the facilitator you will need to review the notes from this facilitator's guide prior to meeting with your group.
- ☞ As the facilitator, you are in charge of keeping the conversation moving and preventing over-sharing by any one individual. There will be plenty of time throughout the course of the study for participants to progressively share personal insights from their stories. For this study to be a group study, everyone must agree to share the conversational stage.
- ☞ Group sessions should be confidential and foster a safe environment for sharing. Be sensitive to those who are uncomfortable with sharing or with reading in front of others. Give each participant time and space enough to find his/her voice.
- ☞ Name tags, snacks, registration forms including contact information, and a well-staffed nursery are recommended.



Session One ~ Introduction

Opening Prayer

Group Activity:

Have nametags available for participants as they arrive. Following the opening prayer, allow participants to introduce themselves and to share their reasons for doing this study. Take time to give an overview of the study, explaining the guidelines.

Scripture Focus:

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word."
—2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

- ☞ Prior to the meeting, print the verse on an index card or make a bookmark for each participant to be handed out in this session to be used for the entire study. These verses represent my prayer and hope for each participant.

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

- ☞ Discuss the title *Beyond Cancer's Scars: Laying Claim to a Stronger Spirit*. Take time to examine each word in the title. What definitions/images come to mind?

Beyond...

Cancer's...

Scars...

Laying Claim...

Stronger...

Spirit...

- ☞ How does a study like this relate to your current season of struggle?
- ☞ Read the book's dedication aloud as found on the dedication page. How are courage and suffering connected?
- ☞ Explore the Prologue, *From Poverty to Promise*, by reading it aloud as a group or silently.
- ☞ Focus discussion on the following concepts presented in the reading:

- *“The walking wounded”* ~ How do you identify with this label?
- *“Hope and wholeness walk their own pace”* ~ What false assumptions have you made regarding the timetable for your healing?
- *“Adopt every cancer patient”* ~ What is your tendency? What is realistic and appropriate?
- *“The overriding purpose of my life—to know God and then out of that knowing, to lead others to know the same”* ~ What do you believe to be the overriding purpose of your life?
- *“A lesser, more hidden cancer—the cancer of hopelessness and despair”* ~ What are some of the hidden cancers in your life?
- *“You will begin to trace the faithfulness of God in your own life and progress from a place of personal poverty to a place of eternal promise”* ~ Where are you on the scale? (*facilitator can draw a similar scale on paper/board to use as a concrete visual and have participants mark their spots)

God

Poverty

Eternal Promise

- ☞ How does this illustration speak to your *“beyond”* and your *“stronger spirit”*? How is God connected to both? Reread the Scripture Focus.

Take it with you {assignment for next session}:

- ☞ Participants need to read Chapters 1-5 in *Beyond Cancer’s Scars* and answer corresponding questions. These reflections will serve as the backdrop for the next session’s discussion time.
- ☞ Journaling: Instruct participants to write their own definitions of the word *cancer* and *survivor*.

Closing Prayer and Dismissal



Opening Prayer

Group Activity:

- ✎ Items needed: box, newsprint or brown wrapping paper, string, mailing labels, markers
- ✎ Prior to the session, wrap a box in newsprint or brown paper—the rougher it looks the better. Include some twine or string to emphasize the fact that it's a package to be opened. Include a couple of mailing labels (e.g. "Handle with Care," or "Fragile") on the outside of the box. Place the box on a table for the participants to view as they arrive.

Explain to the participants that the box represents the "cancer" or the "something" that has arrived on the doorstep of their lives. Emphasize the labels, as well as the tattered wrapping. Give each participant a few, blank mailing labels, and instruct them to write down their own descriptions of the box (e.g. feelings, names, etc.). Allow participants to briefly share those descriptions, and have them apply them to the box.

Scripture Focus:

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." –Hebrews 10:23-25

- ✎ Print out the verses ahead of time on an index card for participants or have participants write them in their journals for personal use.
- ✎ How are these verses being "lived out" in your group's gathering? According to these verses, what are some of the benefits of meeting together?

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

- ✎ Share responses to journaling activity from last week. Define *cancer*; define *survivor*.

Chapter One ~ Poverty is a Good Starting Point

- ☞ Read Luke 21:1-4 aloud.
- ☞ How do you relate to the widow's story?
- ☞ How is faith connected to surrender?
- ☞ If others were only given one "window look" into your current season of living, what would they learn about you? What would they see?
- ☞ What coppers are you holding onto that God is challenging you to release into the treasury of his ministry?

Chapter Two ~ Cancer Gives Back

- ☞ What is your reaction to the statement "cancer gives back"?
- ☞ What is one way that your cancer or "something" has given back to you?
- ☞ The author says, "The disease that has sought to claim me has, instead, become the means that God has used to rename me *Hope-filled Survivor*." What name has God spoken over you in this season?

Chapter Three ~ Unwrapping the Unexpected

- ☞ Using the opening activity as a backdrop, allow participants to talk about their boxes (its arrival, initial feelings, etc.).
- ☞ What role does acceptance and rejection of our boxes play in the healing/recovery process?

Chapter Four ~ Everybody Has Something

- ☞ Discuss the other "cancers" that have arrived to your life? What is the *something* that is tripping you up?
- ☞ Read the definition of cancer from the American Cancer Society from Chapter 4.
- ☞ What are some of the *somethings* plaguing the hearts of this generation? How might these hidden cancers be more damaging than the seen, diagnosable ones?

Chapter Five ~ Everybody Has a Story

- ☞ Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 aloud.
- ☞ What story has God entrusted to you?
- ☞ What earlier chapter in your "book" has best prepared your heart for the writing of this current one?

Take it with you {assignment for next session}:

- ☞ Participants need to read Chapters 6-10 in *Beyond Cancer's Scars* and answer corresponding questions. These reflections will serve as the backdrop for the next session's discussion time.
- ☞ Journaling: Pay attention to your *some things* this week—those other cancers that are eating away at your heart. Pay attention to the *some things* of those with whom you come in contact. Remember that with every *something* comes a story. Journal about a personal *something* and about a *something* belonging to another. Surrender them both to Jesus in prayer.

Closing Prayer and Dismissal



Opening Prayer

Group Activity:

- ✧ Items needed: 8-10 magazine photos mounted on posted board and/or objects that are representative of the *somethings* plaguing this generation (e.g. bills, money, drugs, beautiful models, music, etc.).
- ✧ Take time to discuss these *somethings* and then have each participant share one of his/her personal *somethings* they journaled about during the week.

Scripture Focus:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." –2 Corinthians 1:3-5

- ✧ Print out these verses ahead of time on an index card for participants or have participants write them in their journals for personal use.
- ✧ What comfort have you received from God? What should be the resulting action of your heart?

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

Chapter Six ~ Taking Good Care of Your Heart

- ✧ What does the author's recommendation to "take good care of your heart" mean to you?
- ✧ In what ways are you taking good care of your heart?
- ✧ Discuss Alicia Chole's quote from Chapter 6. When has your previously rehearsed faith served as a strong anchor for you in a time of trial and testing?

Chapter Seven ~ Living Up to Your Learning

- ✧ Who was one of your hardest teachers growing up? What did you learn from him/her?

- ☞ Discuss the learning process: *showing up* to the classroom, *listening up* to the teacher, *living up* to the learning. Which part of the learning process is most difficult for you?
- ☞ Describe one of the lessons you are learning as a result of your *something*.

Chapter Eight ~ Real Love Looks Beyond the Scars

- ☞ Name one of the scars from your recent wounding?
- ☞ What one person has loved you beyond your scars?
- ☞ How do Christ's scars better enable you to deal with yours?

Chapter Nine ~ God Keeps Pace with Your Pain

- ☞ "There are some places where only you and God can go to together." Discuss your feelings about this statement.
- ☞ What are some of the benefits of suffering in isolation? What are some of the pitfalls?
- ☞ What strong encouragement from someone else has meant the most to you in your season of struggle?

Chapter Ten ~ Suffering Need Needs a Suffering Friend

- ☞ Who has been your "Luke" in the midst of your suffering? How has his/her pain served as a catalyst to ministering to yours?
- ☞ Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. Discuss the apostle Paul's and the author's thoughts on "our pain belonging to one another."
- ☞ Who is God calling you to come alongside to serve as an encouragement during his/her time of suffering?

Take it with you {assignment for next session}:

- ☞ Participants need to read Chapters 11-15 in *Beyond Cancer's Scars* and answer corresponding questions. These reflections will serve as the backdrop for the next session's discussion time.
- ☞ Journaling: Spend some time writing about the ways you are allowing God to use your scars as a ministering agent to others. Examine any hesitation you're having about doing so.

Closing Prayer and Dismissal



Opening Prayer

Group Activity:

- ✎ Items needed: stones/rocks roughly 4-6 inches in length with at least one flat side (one for each participant), paint pens (available at any craft store). Prior to session, prime the flat side of each stone with Kilz white primer. This allows the paint pens to adhere to the stone. Stones can be found anywhere landscape supplies are available.
- ✎ As participants arrive, have them select a stone and then paint words and/or symbols of remembrance on them (e.g. words/symbols directly related to their suffering seasons such as important dates, names, scripture references, etc.). Allow them to dry; they will serve as the backdrop for Chapter Fourteen's discussion.

Scripture Focus:

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." –Luke 10:41-42

- ✎ Print out the verses ahead of time on an index card for participants or have participants write the verses in their journals for personal use.
- ✎ Read about Jesus' visit to Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42.
- ✎ Who are you most like, Mary or Martha?
- ✎ What is the "better thing" that Christ is moving you toward?

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

Chapter Eleven ~ Making an Apology to Suffering

- ✎ Explore the meaning behind the author's idea of "making an apology to suffering." Why should suffering be respected?
- ✎ How has your own pain changed your perspective regarding the way others choose to deal with theirs?
- ✎ What criteria do you use when choosing people to include in your inner circle? Why is it important to draw some boundaries around your pain?

Chapter Twelve ~ Living Up to Your Convictions

- ✧ What previously spoken convictions have you been challenged to live up to in recent days?
- ✧ Why is it easier to speak faith rather than to live it?
- ✧ What statement of faith can you easily proclaim because of the suffering season you've experienced?

Chapter Thirteen ~ Just Breathe

- ✧ Why is it sometimes easier to meet with God during times of suffering than at other times?
- ✧ When have distractions kept you from breathing in the presence of God?
- ✧ What are some practical ways to temper the distractions in your life?
- ✧ Read Philippians 4:6-9 and discuss Paul's suggestions for keeping our minds clutter-free.

Chapter Fourteen ~ Wearing Your Remembrance

- ✧ What are some of the "stones of remembrance" you've collected in this season?
- ✧ Why is remembrance important? What is gained by your remembering? What is lost by your forgetting?
- ✧ Have each participant briefly talk about the stones they painted in the opening activity.

Chapter Fifteen ~ God Knows Who You Are

- ✧ How are the world's opinions and the mirror's opinion about you flawed?
- ✧ Reflect on Spurgeon's words: "Before we had a being in the world we had a being in His heart." What encouragement do you receive from this truth?
- ✧ Why do you hesitate in exposing your scars to Jesus? What are the potential risks? Gains?

Take it with you {assignment for next session}:

- ✧ Participants need to read Chapters 16-20 in *Beyond Cancer's Scars* and answer corresponding questions. These reflections will serve as the backdrop for the next session's discussion time.
- ✧ Journaling: Read Psalm 139 and record the many ways that God speaks validation over your life.

œ In addition to the usual homework, have each participant bring in a picture or a postcard of a favorite vacation spot or a place they'd like to visit.

Closing Prayer and Dismissal



Opening Prayer

Group Activity:

- ☞ Items needs: postcards/pictures from participants of favorite vacation spots or traveling destinations.
- ☞ Have each participant share his/her picture and briefly describe the significance behind the chosen destination.

Scripture Focus:

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even great things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Son may bring glory to the Father." –John 14:12-13

- ☞ Print out the verses ahead of time on an index card for participants or have participants write the verses in their journals for personal use.
- ☞ Reflect on your journaling about Psalm 139. What phrase from the psalm means the most to you as endeavor to see yourself as God sees you?

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

Chapter Sixteen ~ Montana is Real

- ☞ Are you like your spiritual ancestors from Hebrews 11, a person who "says such things" —a person able to admit your alien status on planet earth, a person looking for a better country?
- ☞ Where is your "Montana" —the place, dream, desire in your heart that represents an inner longing for something more?
- ☞ When did you last hear the whispers of your heavenly home? What personal feelings did you experience with this reminder?

Chapter Seventeen ~ There is a Certain Place

- ☞ How can attention on “self” serve as a precursor to your making an idol out of your pain?
- ☞ How can suffering serve as a tool of refinement in regards to your “getting over yourself”?
- ☞ Describe your “certain place” —the occasion when you stopped running and rested your ambitions. If you haven’t reached that certain place, what is keeping you from this place of rest?

Chapter Eighteen ~ Ascending to Your Overlook

- ☞ What place represents your “overlook” —the edge from which you view the faithfulness of God working on your behalf to bring about victory? Have you made the ascent? Why or why not?
- ☞ *Praying, listening, worshipping, obeying, climbing.* As you consider these steps of the Israelites, where is your faith falling short?
- ☞ Why does corporate spiritual victory (God and you working together) bring about a stronger victory?

Chapter Nineteen ~ Living Your Greater Thing

- ☞ Reread this session’s Scripture Focus. What are your thoughts about the “greater things” that Jesus spoke about in these verses? What practical application can be applied to your life?
- ☞ When has God used you to be “a sacred bridge linking the dying, fear-filled soul” to himself? Why might this be considered a “greater thing” in God’s eyes?
- ☞ Read John 16:12-16. How does God enable us to live our “greater thing”?

Chapter Twenty ~ Grieving Your Losses

- ☞ How do you relate to the marines from *The Pacific*? Discuss the battlefield, the bravery, the victory, the cost, the coming home.
- ☞ When have you felt the rush to “get on with life,” not having the necessary time to work through the corresponding grief that has surfaced because of your suffering?
- ☞ What are some of the reasons behind our being uncomfortable with the pace of the grieving process? Why might others need for us to get on with life?

Take it with you {assignment for next session}:

- ☞ Participants need to read Chapters 21-25 in *Beyond Cancer's Scars* and answer corresponding questions. These reflections will serve as the backdrop for the next session's discussion time.
- ☞ Journaling: Reflecting from your overlook, journal about the valley below you and the climb yet to come. What do you see? What accomplishments? What challenges?

Closing Prayer and Dismissal



Session Six

Opening Prayer

Group Activity:

- ✧ Items needed: a book (preferably an autobiography with a table of contents), 8.5 x 11 paper (one sheet per participant), pens or markers.
- ✧ Show the group the book and the table of contents; read some of the chapter titles from the book. Remind the group that they, too, are writing a book about their lives, each chapter with a title and with lasting significance. Pass out a piece of paper to each person; have them fold the paper in half. On the outside front cover, have them give their books a title (e.g. "My Life," "Elaine's Story," etc.). On the inside, have them write 4-6 titles to some of the significant chapters in their journeys thus far. They don't have to be written chronologically, nor do they need to be all inclusive, just some titles that point to a few pivotal, life-shaping chapters in their stories.
- ✧ Sharing about those titles will take place with Chapter Twenty-Five's discussion.

Scripture Focus:

"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." –John 21:25

- ✧ Print out the verse ahead of time on an index card for participants or have participants write the verse in their journals for personal use.
- ✧ Consider this verse in the context of your "book" being one of Christ's letters to the world. How does this realization shape your understanding of your story?

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

Chapter 21 ~ Affording Them Grace

- ✧ Why is it sometimes difficult to speak the right words of comfort to those who are suffering?
- ✧ How can emotions serve as a dangerous breeding ground for our words?
- ✧ What words mean the most to you when facing a difficult trial?

Chapter 22 ~ Hope Grows

- ☞ Read Proverbs 11:12. How do you relate to this verse?
- ☞ When has hope extended a branch of encouragement to you?
- ☞ What hope is growing inside of you?

Chapter 23 ~ Holding On to Your Faith

- ☞ What “holding” of your heart has served as a strong anchor for you in your time of struggle?
- ☞ When is “letting go” a necessary part of the maturation process?
- ☞ When is “holding onto” a necessary part of the maturation process?

Chapter 24 ~ Speaking Your Faith

- ☞ What role does your faith play in shaping the lives of those around you?
- ☞ Why is “speaking your faith” important to the moving forward of God’s kingdom?
- ☞ What keeps you from speaking your faith to others?
- ☞ Why is it sometimes easier to keep silent regarding your faith, especially if you are in the midst of great, personal suffering?

Chapter 25 ~ Turning the Page

- ☞ Discuss the participants’ chapter titles from the opening activity.
- ☞ What is the title of the chapter you’re currently living? What chapter title preceded this one?
- ☞ What are some of the reasons we stay stuck in our chapters? What are some of the reasons we rush through?
- ☞ How do you determine when it’s time to turn the page?

Take it with you {assignment for next session}:

- ☞ Participants need to read Chapters 26-30 in *Beyond Cancer’s Scars* and answer corresponding questions. These reflections will serve as the backdrop for the next session’s discussion time.
- ☞ Journaling: Write down your thoughts about completing this current chapter in your story. How would you like it to finish? What lines will spill over into the next chapter? What one line stands out as hope and is worth of highlighting?

Closing Prayer and Dismissal



Session Seven

Opening Prayer {delay the opening prayer until the end of the group activity}

Group Activity:

- ☞ Items needed: contemplative, worshipful praise music and a CD player.
- ☞ As participants enter, have the music playing softly in the background. Once gathered together, choose one praise song to sing together or to listen to as a way of quieting hearts before the Lord.
- ☞ Lead participants in an **opening prayer**.
- ☞ Discuss the importance of quieting one's heart before God.

Scripture Focus:

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with him in glory." –Colossians 3:1-4

- ☞ Print out the verses ahead of time on an index card for participants or have participants write the verses in their journals for personal use.
- ☞ What does it mean to be "hidden with Christ in God"?

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

Chapter Twenty-Six ~ Embracing Quietness

- ☞ What are some of the noises in your life that compete for God's attention?
- ☞ Describe a time when quietness ushered in for you a time of rich intimacy with God.
- ☞ Read Isaiah 30:15. How are repentance and rest connected to salvation? How are quietness and trust connected to strength?

Chapter Twenty-Seven ~ Surviving is a Collective Effort

- ☞ Who is the care-giver in your life?
- ☞ How has your suffering impacted his/her life?

- ☞ Despite tremendous suffering on the cross, Jesus was able to minister to the hurting needs of those he loved the most. Read John 19:26-27. How might you practically reach out to minister to the hurting heart of your care-giver?

Chapter Twenty-Eight ~ Gracing the Stage You Stand Upon

- ☞ What stage are you standing upon?
- ☞ Why is comparison of stages dangerous? How might it be beneficial?
- ☞ As you stand on your stage this day, what is the one message—the one line—you'd most like to share with your audience? (This question fits nicely with the journaling homework from last week.)

Chapter Twenty-Nine ~ Clutching Truth

- ☞ What "crosses" have you clutched during your season of suffering?
- ☞ What truths have carried you through your darkest nights? Who authored those truths? What role has God played in your discovering of the truth?
- ☞ Read John 21:24-25. Describe a time when the witness of God's presence has been clearly evident to you?

Chapter Thirty ~ Never Take More Than You Need

- ☞ Describe a time when you received the rich "manna" of heaven from someone.
- ☞ When have you felt the "manna" not enough?
- ☞ What potential dangers exist with "taking more than you need"?
- ☞ According to Philippians 4:18-20, how are our needs met?

Take it with you {assignment for next session}:

- ☞ Participants need to read Chapters 31-35 in *Beyond Cancer's Scars* and answer corresponding questions. These reflections will serve as the backdrop for the next session's discussion time.
- ☞ Journaling: Take inventory of all the "manna" that has been given to you during this suffering season. Make a list of grateful thanksgiving and lay it at the Father's feet in prayer.

Closing Prayer and Dismissal



Session Eight

Opening Prayer

Group Activity:

- ✧ Items needed: blank note cards with envelopes (available at any craft store), 4-5 small bottles of craft paint, green paint pen.
- ✧ Using only their fingerprints and paint, have participants make a flower(s) on the front of one or two blank note cards. The green paint pen can be used to draw a stem. Let them dry during the session time (a hair dryer can be used to speed up the process). Participants will take them home and send them out to someone who needs a “flower” of encouragement. This activity corresponds to the discussion of Chapter 31.

Scripture Focus:

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. . . . He has made everything beautiful in its time.” –Ecclesiastes 3:1,11

- ✧ Print out the verses ahead of time on an index card for participants or have participants write the verses in their journals for personal use.
- ✧ From journaling homework: Name one way you’ve experienced “manna” from God in the previous week.

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

Chapter 31 ~ Sending Flowers to the Living

- ✧ Describe a recent “flower” someone has given to you.
- ✧ Why is it sometimes difficult to “send flowers to the living”? Why is it important?
- ✧ Suffering *somethings* can breed self-focus. Accordingly, it’s difficult to reach out beyond personal pain to minister to someone else in need. Take time to reach out to someone this week who needs a “flower” of encouragement from you. Use the card made in the opening activity to bring life to a hurting heart.

Chapter 32 ~ Rethinking Time

- ☞ How do you view time—as a gift you give to others or as a gift given to you by them?
- ☞ What are some of the time commitments you’ve experienced in the last 24 hours?
Removing your motives from the equation, what potential gifts do you see hidden in the exchanges that you missed?
- ☞ What makes an encounter with someone truly meaningful?

Chapter 33 ~ Pressing On

- ☞ What one surrender has been the most difficult for you in your journey of suffering?
- ☞ Have you ever felt that your surrender and subsequent consequences didn’t balance evenly? If so, what kept you pressing on?
- ☞ Read Philippians 3:12-16. What prize/goal was Paul chasing after? What prize/goal are you chasing after?

Chapter 34 ~ Seasons Change

- ☞ In what season are you currently living (winter, spring, summer, or fall)? What characteristics make it so?
- ☞ Read Solomon’s witness from Ecc. 3:1-11. How is your heart closely aligned with his?
- ☞ What hope can you claim as personal treasure from this passage?

Chapter 35 ~ Live On

- ☞ “Kingdom work is sometimes flanked by the painful ache of a sacred obedience.” Identify the painful ache of your obedience. What has it required of you?
- ☞ Read 2 Corinthians 6:4-10.
- ☞ What does the apostle Paul’s “live on” mean for you? What are some of the obstacles you face as you endeavor to live on?

Take it with you {assignment for next session}:

- ☞ Participants need to read Chapters 36-40 in *Beyond Cancer’s Scars* and answer corresponding questions. These reflections will serve as the backdrop for the next session’s discussion time.
- ☞ Journaling: Reflect on your current “season.” How has it changed for you over the course of doing this study? How have your feelings changed? Be prepared to share some thoughts in the closing session.

☞ In thinking about next week's closing session, you might plan on having refreshments or a meal together. If so, please plan on extra time for fellowship. In addition, you might want to give each participant an inexpensive token of remembrance, marking the time spent together.

Closing Prayer and Dismissal



Session Nine ~ Closing

Opening Prayer

Group Activity:

- ✧ No supplies are needed for this opening activity. Allow the participants to briefly respond to their journaling homework. How is your spirit stronger now than it was when first beginning this study? What one “take-away” has strengthened your spirit for the days ahead?

Scripture Focus:

“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.” –1 Peter 5:10-11

- ✧ Print out the verses ahead of time on an index card for participants or have participants write the verses in their journals for personal use.
- ✧ Ultimately, who is in charge of your healing? Why can God be trusted?

Laying Claim {questions for discussion}:

Chapter 36 ~ Be Prepared to Give an Answer

- ✧ What venue serves as your pulpit in this season?
- ✧ What sermon are you sharing with your listeners? Would they regard it with respect or with suspicion?
- ✧ What is one of the major graces that God has written into your story?

Chapter 37 ~ Eden is Closer Now Than it Has Ever Been

- ✧ What momentary pleasure has reminded you of the beauty of Eden?
- ✧ What “one thing” in your life right now seems too hard for the Lord?
- ✧ Why is it sometimes difficult to move past pain in order to take hold of the new work that God longs to do in your heart?

Chapter 38 ~ God Will Take You Across the River

- ☞ What fears do you hold about your eternal crossing of the Jordan River? What hopes?
- ☞ Consider those who are making the journey with you to Canaan. How might you better prepare one another for crossing over into the Promised Land?
- ☞ Read Deuteronomy 31:1-8. What strength do you derive from this passage for the road ahead?

Chapter 39 ~ God is Next

- ☞ What questions to you have about your “next”?
- ☞ How does realizing that God is your “next” better help you to frame the realities that you are living with today?
- ☞ Read Jesus’ prayer for all believers as found in John 17:20-26. How does this prayer strengthen the truth that God is your “next”?

Chapter 40 ~ God is Faithful

- ☞ Share any specific promises that God has spoken over your life.
- ☞ When have you seen God’s “Yes!” at work in your life?
- ☞ How is God using your costly surrender to further his kingdom purposes?

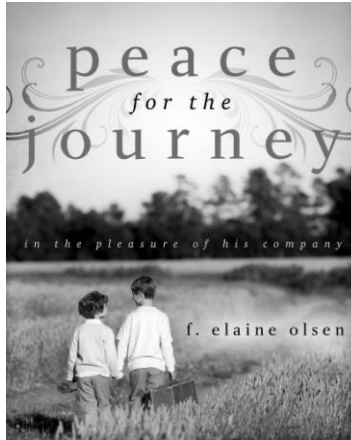
Take it with you:

- ☞ Journaling: Use Luke 4:14-22 and the Epilogue, *Living Cancer Free*, as your backdrop for journaling your thoughts about living “cancer free.” What would it take for you to live fully in the freedom that is yours as a child of the King?

Closing Prayer and Dismissal

Other Books by Elaine Olsen

Peace for the Journey: In the Pleasure of His Company



Find what you've never had. Rediscover what you've lost. *Peace for the Journey* is a collection of fifty-two biblical meditations to deepen your intimacy with Jesus. It includes study questions for personal or small-group reflection.



To learn more about Elaine, her resources, and her speaking ministry, please visit her website at www.peaceforthejourney.com. She enjoys connecting with her readers and would love to hear your story.