

NEAR *to the* BROKEN-HEARTED

Dear Parent,

Perhaps you are reading this because something very dark, painful and utterly unwanted has burst in upon your life. Perhaps you have lost a child. Perhaps an accident or diagnosis has, in an instant, rewritten every aspect of life. Perhaps you are looking out on a future which now looks nothing like what you'd hoped for. Grief has an awful way of reorganising your life without permission, like a swarming plague of locusts arriving unannounced and unwelcome, and leaving grey desolation in its wake. We cry out, "Why this? And what now?"

We had a son, Jed, who died when he was three weeks old. Our co-author, Chris, lost a 20-year-old son, Brian. We know the numbing shock of sudden bad news. We know the ache of massive loss. We know the debilitating slowness that seems to embed itself in our minds and souls, leaving us unable to function as we used to. We know the long, heavy path of moving on with grief—a path we are still treading.

But we also know this: in Jesus, there is comfort and strength for what you are walking through. There is a place where the Bible says that the LORD is near to the broken-hearted (Psalm 34:18). An explicit part of the mission of Jesus is to bind up the broken-hearted (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:16-21). There is grace for people like us.

We don't write as experts on grief. Who can claim to be an expert on grief? Who can record, let alone grasp, the scale of all pain and suffering? Instead, we write to point you to the nearness and tenderness of Jesus. He is the expert on grief; the Bible's claim is that the Son of God became human and fully inhabited the experience of the broken-hearted. Sometimes Jesus is called the man of sorrows. As we share in Jesus, we share in his rich comfort (2 Corinthians 1:5). Others may struggle to comprehend the burdens we are carrying, but Jesus knows. We may struggle to think that hope and joy might ever be possible again, but Jesus is the bringer of hope. Let us keep going to him.

We'd like to invite you, in this book, to dip in wherever you feel able to—you needn't read it cover to cover—and know the nearness of Jesus to broken-hearted ones.

Dan & Anna Martin

Chris Manning