

# FROM ME TO YOU

Hi,

If we haven't had the chance to meet yet, I'm Brooke. I lost my only sister to a heroin overdose in 2011. Although I had experienced hardship and pain prior to her death, and have experienced it in a number of ways since, it was my first introduction to a sort of suffering I could not control, manage, reduce, or simply move on from. I like to say it's where suffering and I first got acquainted.

I'm assuming, based on the fact that you've picked up this book, you've suffered in some way, too. So, before we dive in, I want you to know how deeply sorry I am for the pain you've endured. I really mean that. While I don't know the specifics of what's causing you pain, I've imagined your face sitting across the table from me countless times as I write this book. I've wept over the unimaginable reasons that would cause someone to pick this book up—loss, betrayal, addiction, divorce, diagnoses, depression. I know there are simply no words sufficient enough to take your pain away, so I'll instead offer you this: I get it. You are not alone. I'm so sorry.

Suffering sucks. It really does. I hate watching my loved ones experience it, and I hate experiencing it myself. It's valid to want to run from it. It's normal to want to escape it. It's tempting to want to numb it. It's common to be overwhelmingly angry at it (Jesus was, too, by the way, which we'll get more into later). All of these feelings are valid.

Suffering was not God's "Plan A" for the world, or for us for that matter, which is precisely the reason why it feels so wrong.

You are allowed to be mad at God for the pain you are suffering or have suffered. I was, too, for a long time...sometimes I still am.

Goodness will return, it did for me, and it will for you, too, and not just when your season of suffering comes to an end, or when enough time has passed, or when something else eclipses the weight of your pain. Goodness will be formed and fashioned into you along the way as you process, struggle and wrestle your way through.

You won't find any quick solutions amidst these pages (I don't think "quick" translates into suffering anyway). And I won't provide you with glib answers either (i.e. *Everything happens for a reason, God needed another angel. Just have faith.*) Jesus didn't respond this way to suffering, so neither will I. I've come to realize these statements often make the comforter feel better, but rarely offer any real consolation to the sufferer.

This study won't answer your deep, aching question of "why?" While answers are often the thing we most desperately grasp for in our pain, they usually don't provide the thing we most

need, which is healing. So, that's what I want to lead you towards—true, deep, and thorough healing. Healing is (hopefully) what you walk away with at the end of this book.

Suffering is one of the most vulnerable, raw and tender experiences we have as humans. To be a voice in and through this fragile time in your life is not something I take lightly. I assume this role with great responsibility, care, humility and respect. Therefore, I want to make a few promises to you before we begin:

I promise not to simplify your pain.

I promise instead to give space to the complexities of it.

I promise not to make you justify your pain.

Your pain is valid and real. No proof needed.

I promise not to make you better, or get you “back to normal.”

I promise instead to walk you through this valley, to the other side, a new side.

I promise not to slap bible verses on your gaping wound.

I promise instead to thoughtfully, gently and intentionally share what God has to say as it relates to the suffering you are experiencing.

I promise to honor space for your pain AND remind you of hope.

Both/and. One will not be diminished by or negate the other.

One will also not be more valued than the other. Both hope and pain deserve equal space, attention, and care and that is what I plan to give them throughout this book.

Oh, and I promise not to rush you toward hope, either.

Hope will come, but not at the expense of the process.

I know that your suffering is sacred and tender.

I humbly promise to treat it as such.

I wrote this study because after my sister died, I wanted to “suffer well”. I wanted a guide that didn't minimize my pain, or amplify it, either. But, I couldn't seem to find one. So, God led me on a journey all my own. This study is a copy of that journey: a guide to help you make it to the other side. The work you are about to do—of sorting through, feeling, and healing—is holy, sacred work. You are already doing a good job. You are going to be ok. You are not alone. There are good days ahead. I promise.

Let's do this together. I'm with you.

Brooke