



## Reader Guide

### *Questions and Topics for Discussion*

1. How do you normally respond to death and grief? How do you respond to death differently from people you know well?
2. What message do you think your faith community conveys to those who grieve? What do you think it means to grieve as those who have hope?
3. Do you struggle to reconcile the belief in God's goodness with the reality of suffering in the world? How well do you live with the tension and mystery of never really knowing "why"?
4. Where have you seen the consequences of sin in your life, whether it is your own sin or those committed by others? How do you respond when you feel wronged by the sins of others?
5. Have you ever felt like you were suffering because of your faithfulness? How was that circumstance similar to and different from the persecution experienced by biblical martyrs and Christians in other countries today?
6. How does it affect you to know that God sees and acknowledges your pain? If God would speak audibly to you right now, what would you want to hear?
7. What biblical examples of "I will be with you" or "God with us" do you find most meaningful? How do you think such promises affected the characters in those stories who faced dangerous or frightening trials?
8. What actions have you taken to intentionally make something meaningful come out of senseless tragedy?
9. Consider the phrase "For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ" (2 Cor. 1:5). What does it mean that the "sufferings of Christ are abundant for us"? How do those sufferings become our consolation?
10. Do you have a clear picture of Heaven? Where did that image come from? Does it bring you comfort when reflecting on loved ones' deaths or your own?
11. Consider a commitment you entered into, perhaps a new job, a marriage, starting school, or having a child. What sustains you through the difficult times? What are the hopes and promises you felt as you began that journey?



**CHRISTIAN M. M. BRADY** is a professor of ancient Hebrew and Jewish literature and the inaugural dean of the Lewis Honors College at the University of Kentucky. He is also a priest in the Episcopal Church and is Canon Theologian in the Diocese of Lexington Kentucky.