

TOPIC 1

Create a Safe Pace for Inquiry Through Pivotal Circumstances

John 11: 6-7

So, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was for two more days, and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go to Judea."

We've all been there and can easily look you in the eye and say, "Me too!"

When bad things happen, and circumstances go wrong, there's something instinctive in all of us that makes us look up and say, "What in the world is going on?"

"Lazarus is dead, and for your sake, I am glad I wasn't there, so you might believe. Let us go to him." John 11: 14-15

Jesus goes out of his way to create a scenario that includes pain, sorrow, grief, sickness, and anger.

He made a special effort to create this scenario to assure us that God the Father is aware, our Heavenly Father cares, and He is with us in it and can see us through it.

When Martha and Mary go out to meet Jesus, they unload on him.

Mary and Martha are weeping, angry, and frustrated, not only because they lost their brother but also because they are in the presence of the very person who could have prevented it from happening.

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. John 11:32

At this moment, Jesus creates a safe place for inquiry large enough to include all of us because Mary and Martha represent us with our disappointments, frustrations, and often anger toward God.

Haven't we all inquired of God... If only you had been here?

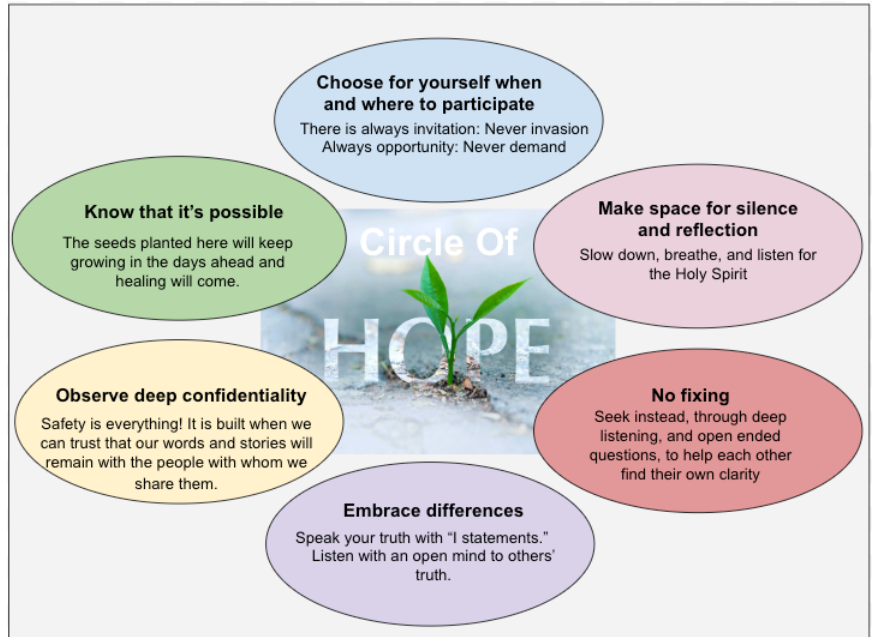
Even though we may be besieged with pain, sorrow, grief, and even anger, Jesus assures us through the story of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha that our story is embraced in the grand story of God's good news for all people.

Reinforcing the Boundaries and Guiding Principles

Before we begin our Circles of Hope discussion, it's important for everyone to review the following guiding principles and boundaries. These are essential for creating a safe and restorative space for those dealing with spiritual trauma.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Play the “long game” and trust God with the outcome.
- Use love to build bridges to Jesus; don't lose the relationship.
- You can love well without losing your convictions of faith.



CIRCLE OF HOPE TOPIC

Even though, at times, we may feel alone and alienated, even from God, how might our story be embraced in the grand story of God's good news for all people?