

How to Escape the Valley of the Shadow of Death

On Mother's Day, 2007 I was staring at sleeping pills. Eight months pregnant, I felt numb as my 2-year-old daughter ran up and down the pharmaceutical aisle at the drugstore.

"Just end it. God has abandoned you," whispered the lies in my mind. Suddenly, little arms hugged my legs, shocking me back to reality. "Mommy! Can we go home now?" My toddler looked up at me with her innocent green eyes. Fighting back tears, I drove home to an empty house.

My husband had committed suicide one month earlier.

Hearts Shattered by Loss

I hardly slept, replaying events in my mind. What were the signs? Where is God?

The pain was inescapable. Now, I too silently fought suicidal thoughts.

I craved a mentor and community who truly understood my loss and could help me navigate this tragedy with wisdom, faith and victory. The casseroles from church friends were well-meaning, but our family needed much more.

I often asked God "*Why?*" I quietly remembered a line in the last sermon I heard with my late-husband. Pastor Andy Stanley said, "If you have a problem, you have a purpose."

A Problem Worth Solving in Church

- Surviving spouses after loss are at a 60 percent higher risk of suicide in the first six months.
- Those surviving the death of a loved one are at a 400 percent higher risk of heart attack.

- The body needs at least 20 months to physically recover from loss or trauma.
- Most church-based grief programs are only four to twelve weeks long and do not have a body/mind/spirit, biblically-based grief recovery approach.

Are churches pushing their grieving people out?

The serious problem I discovered as a Christian widowed mom was that consistent grief recovery for my children and myself was found only in secular environments. Grief programs in church lasted a few weeks or months. All widows and grieving women I interviewed said it wasn't long enough.

Pain Becomes Purpose

Working as a freelance producer for national network news, I started digging: talking to experts in grief recovery for the mind, body and spirit; interviewing women and men who experienced traumatic loss and were now living their best, most purposeful lives. Not surprisingly, many of these triumphant people were active Christians. How could I share their real hope for real grief?

My questions changed from asking God why my husband's suicide happened to how I could empower my family, the lives of fellow widows, bereaved women and their families with a fun, active, mind/body/spirit biblically-based, 12-month grief recovery program for churches.

The Solution: 180 Your Life

Ten years after losing my husband to suicide, with the help of a dedicated team of experts, friends and family, the award-winning, 12-month, *180 Your Life from Tragedy to Triumph: A Woman's Grief Guide* book series and companion online video series for churches is here!

Our mission is to empower widows, bereaved women and their

families to:

- **Team:** Work together toward a common goal, initially a 5K.
- **Train:** body, mind, and spirit in healthy, biblically-based choices and
- **Triumph:** by crossing a finish line and helping others on their path.

Miracles of Triumph

Six months after my wife died, I received a heart catheter procedure,” said Senior Pastor Ron Wean, a 30-year licensed counselor and five-year widower from Dayton, Ohio. “Doctors told me I had Broken Heart Syndrome.”

“Grief is physical, mental and spiritual,” confirms Pastor Ron. “Healing came four years later when I discovered 180 Your Life. In the past 12 months, my health is perfect, I dropped 40 pounds and, at age 64, I ran my first half marathon. Most importantly, my joy in God has returned!”

Pastor Ron is now working to co-create *180 Your Life for Men*. He says, “As a licensed clinician, pastor and widower, I know this ministry is a natural fit for the church. 180 Your Life empowers the church with biblical, healthy steps for body, mind and spirit to thrive after loss!”

Generational Healing:

LaTonya Pringle, three years past losing her husband said, “After I ran my race, I felt stronger and realized I could do the next big thing in my life. Now I have a degree in counseling and help grieving children.”

Kaiya, LaTonya’s daughter, said at age 9, “Grief was like having 10 bricks on my shoulders, and now they’ve been lifted off. If my mom is happy, I’m happy!” Studies show that the greatest determining factor of how a child survives after loss

is the health and wellness of their surviving parent or caregiver.

You can't help a grieving widow, a shell-shocked man, an unprotected child or anyone suffering from loss or trauma without empowering their whole person—body, mind and spirit.

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