

Rusty Yates Says He Forgives Andrea Yates, Even After the Unthinkable

Nearly 25 years after the deaths of his five children, Rusty Yates continues to wrestle with grief, faith and forgiveness, not as abstract ideas, but as lived realities forged in unspeakable loss.

In an interview reported by the Daily Mail, Yates said he has forgiven his former wife, Andrea Yates, who drowned their children during a psychotic break in 2001. His words are not an attempt to rewrite history or soften the horror of what happened. Instead, they reflect an acknowledgment of mental illness and a faith that refuses to give way to hatred.

"It's just that we shared a special time in life and we're the only ones remaining who can reminisce about those good times that we had," Yates told the Daily Mail. "That's really all it is. I cherish that time; she cherishes that time. The tragedy obviously has been really hard on both of us."



Yates said he still speaks with Andrea monthly and visits her once a year at Kerrville State Hospital, where she has lived since 2007 after being found not guilty by reason of insanity. His continued contact, he said, is not denial, but recognition of a shared loss no one else can fully understand.

"I think in most respects, it's been harder on her than me because we both dealt with a serious mental illness, but she was the one who was mentally ill," he said. "We both lost our children, but it was by her hands. We both dealt with a cruel state prosecuting her for this, but she was the one on trial."

The Yates family tragedy has been revisited in a new HBO Max

documentary, *The Cult Behind the Killer: The Andrea Yates Story*, which suggests apocalyptic preacher Michael Woroniecki influenced Andrea Yates' actions.

Rusty Yates rejected that claim, placing responsibility squarely on untreated mental illness.



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"I can definitely say that without the [mental] illness, it wouldn't have happened," he said. "I can definitely say that if she'd gotten better care, it wouldn't have happened."

Both Rusty and Andrea Yates were devout Christians who wanted a large family. However, Andrea's history of depression, suicide attempts and postpartum psychosis was well documented, and doctors had warned against further pregnancies. She later stopped taking medication while pregnant, a decision Rusty said he did not fully understand at the time.

"I didn't know she was psychotic," he said. "I thought she was depressed. There's a big difference."

Yates later remarried, divorced and raised another son, but he said he informed Andrea before participating in the documentary, even though she preferred privacy. "I told her I had to balance that with defending our family and really, to try to do what I can to prevent something like this from happening to any other families," he said.

Andrea Yates remains institutionalized and could theoretically apply for release, though Rusty doubts that will ever occur. "No judge would ever want to be the one to sign off on an order releasing the infamous Andrea Yates," he said. "But I don't think she would ever want to be released either."

For believers, Yates' words land in difficult territory. Forgiveness does not erase consequences, and compassion does

not excuse sin. Still, mercy matters. His testimony is restrained, measured and deeply Christian, acknowledging evil, recognizing brokenness and choosing grace anyway.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a background in journalism from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine.