

After Grieving Wife's Death, Jim Garlow Tells Church: 'I'm Seeing Someone'

Editor's Note: Pastor Jim Garlow sent this e-mail out to his congregation. He gave Charisma News permission to reprint it. You can read about Garlow's six-year battle to keep his wife alive while she was battling cancer here.

After 120 days of almost unbearable pain, I finally began improving. At about the four-month mark, my grief became much more bearable. As you know, I am well into the seventh month since Carol's passing.

My grief was painfully deep. But I have discovered that deep grieving does have one advantage. As the general superintendent of our denomination told me, "Those who grieve deeply heal faster." I did not realize the journey I was taking was helping to alleviate the length of grief.

Without realizing it, I followed the right steps for what was needed for my personal grief journey. The first two weeks were spent going through approximately 15,000 or perhaps 20,000 pictures of Carol and our family. Though it was painful to see these pictures—knowing she was forever gone—it had healing power.

The next three weeks were spent on the beach—sobbing most of the time. It was hard to go there without Carol, as the beach was Carol's and my favorite place.

The three weeks after that were spent going through every drawer, every cabinet and every closet—handling every item, getting them ready to either give to my kids, sell, throw away or give away. That was far more painful than I expected, but once again, it had healing power.

The next two weeks, my daughter Josie and I moved out of our

house, as it was being remodeled to get it ready to sell. We lived in a wonderful RV that was provided for us, then stayed at Skyline's mission house and then at my mother's. This "unsettling season" was actually quite good, bringing even more healing.

Then, after the remodel, we moved back into our house. But since everything had been stored in boxes due to the anticipated sale of the house, we continued to live out of suitcases. In fact, I have lived out of a suitcase from July 21 to the present. And since I am not a cook, there has not been a meal cooked on our stove in seven months. (I am not complaining at all! I have been well cared for. I cannot complain!)

Once I moved back into my house, it was as if I was occupying only one tiny part of it. And since it was totally remodeled, with rented furniture staged for showing, I felt like I was on the top floor of the Hyatt in the presidential suite, as opposed to being in my own home!

Without my knowing it in advance, these situations—while painful in themselves—in the end produced healing. As I look back, I am now thankful that I pushed through these situations.

Along the way, well-meaning people would say, "I am sure you are feeling the presence of God." I finally decided that I needed to be honest. Thus I answered, "While I intellectually know He is present, I do not feel Him—at all. In my present emotional state, I am so consumed with Carol's absence that I cannot feel His presence!"

On day 100 after Carol's passing, I sat down and wrote the words, "She is not coming back." Up until then, I had an internal war. I simply could not let her go! I could not face life without Carol, the love of my life for the past 43 years. But on day 100, as I wrote "She is not coming back," the war within me ended, or at least greatly subsided. I finally allowed her to die. It was extremely painful. But it was a necessary step in order to let her die. I had to let go.

I did not experience much change initially. But at day 120 (one-third of a year), I could begin to tell a difference. Healing began. I could finally conceive of surviving. I could finally envision a future.

As you know, my grief did not start with Carol's death. It began long before that, as I saw all my attempts to save her were failing.

It is no surprise to you to hear that it has been a very painful six years. When the cancer came back the second time, we both still felt we could beat it.

When it came back the third time, I knew we were in deep trouble.

Then it came back the fourth time. The fifth. The sixth. And the seventh (depending on how one calculates "remission"). And she could never get into remission at that time. We both knew she was in deep trouble, but we kept believing that somehow she would be the first person in history to overcome primary peritoneal cancer.

As I watched her health fail, and then at the point of her death, I fell into the deepest, indescribably painful anguish.

I looked at my mother one day and said, "It is hopeless. All I feel is hopelessness!"

And one time, while walking through my home alone, I unthinkingly said out loud, "My life is over! My life is over!" And candidly, I thought it was.

But then, slowly, I began to slightly improve.

I remember the time on a Thursday night at the dinner table, sitting by myself, eating in total silence, when I finally resigned myself to being alone. The war within me had ended. I did not like being without Carol. But I would have to accept it. So—slowly—I did.

But therein lay another source of pain: I would be alone—forever. Why? Because Carol had put the bar so high, I could never find anyone who could possibly complement my life. And that thought alone—without Carol—caused profound despair.

And then, quite unexpectedly, I began to be drawn to someone. One of the purposes of this letter is to let you know that I have met someone.

I have been seeing a woman from the San Francisco Bay area who has an international prayer intercession ministry, primarily in Israel. She is now making her 50th trip there.

She has traveled in 20 nations. These are not tourist-y trips. They are high-level intercession trips. She takes people on these prayer trips to change nations. Her trips to Israel are pilgrimages to help people fall deeply in love with Jesus, to help them prepare for His Second Coming.

She recently returned to the U.S. after six weeks of making her fifth trip to Turkey for a “Seven Churches of Revelation” tour, followed by her 49th trip to Israel.

And as I am typing this, she has just arrived in Israel today, making this her 50th trip to Israel.

Her name is Rosemary Schindler. You can see her pictures by clicking [here](#).

She is the grand-niece of Oskar Schindler of *Schindler's List*. Though she came into the Schindler name by marriage, she carries the Schindler mantle of defending Israel's right to exist.

The Israeli government recognizes her very highly. This week, she is going to the Israeli Leadership Summit as the only non-Jew (the only Christian) to be invited. Prime Minister Netanyahu is part of this meeting, along with the president of Israel. This is not her first time to be with top Israeli leadership.

She has many friends in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) and in the Israeli Defense Forces (Israel's military). Our U.S. State Department has brought her to Washington, D.C., to work with Holocaust survivors.

She was married for 25 years and has four adult children. She and her former husband founded a printing company in San Francisco that became the largest in the area. It was very successful. Then, 23 years into the marriage, her husband decided not to honor the vows of their marriage. (This was in the mid-1990s). She deeply loved her husband. She fought to save their marriage for many years. She and her children pled with him to stay. He did not. He left the family 14 years ago. She was left to raise their children.

Though she was raised Catholic, she truly discovered the grace of Jesus Christ in 1974, one year after her marriage in 1973. Two years later, she discovered Shiloh Church, a large charismatic church in Oakland. She has attended Shiloh faithfully for 37 years.

It is also important for you to know something about this awesome inner-city church. Shiloh Church was founded by Violet Kiteley in 1965. Her son David then pastored the church for many years. Then a few years ago, David's son Patrick became the third generation of Kiteleys to pastor the church. Patrick married Marlena, the daughter of Rosemary Schindler, the lady I am seeing. Thus, Rosemary's pastors are her daughter and son-in-law, Patrick and Marlena Kiteley.

Rosemary Schindler is intellectually strong and emotionally rock solid. She is spiritually remarkable. And she is stunningly beautiful. (Again, to see pictures of her, [click here](#).)

Our children (she has four and I have four) have been totally involved in our respective journeys and totally supportive since we began the relationship. My children knew all about her well before we even had our first phone conversation.

I am so profoundly indebted to my sister Judy, who is the one who introduced us. Judy and her husband, Keat (who lost his first wife due to cancer), have been constant counselors to me and have strongly encouraged this relationship. Judy has known Rosemary for quite some time.

Another mutual friend, Jeff Seif (who spoke at Skyline on two Sundays back in 2007 and who has a large Israeli ministry), also became involved and helped us become better acquainted in the early days of our relationship. (The story of our coming to meet each other is quite a lengthy story, so I will not take the space to tell it here at this time.)

My children have become interconnected with her children. Our children, who are at similar ages, have become friends. (The one exception is her son who lives in London, England, whom we have not been able to meet yet.) My grandsons established an almost instant connection with Rosemary's three grandchildren.

Although Rosemary and I have many mutual friends, we did not know of each other until our recent relationship began.

As the relationship began, I formed a sizable group of counselors (key pastors in the church; the church board; my district superintendent; and Don Welch, Skyline's marriage and family therapist), who have guided, and are guiding me, through this journey.

Even the general superintendent of the Wesleyan denomination, Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, became involved. Rosemary serves on many boards (often as the only Christian and sometimes the only female), one of which is the National Association of Evangelicals. Ironically, their recent meeting was at the international headquarters of the Wesleyan Church in Indianapolis. Dr. Lyon had dinner with Rosemary and then called me, saying, "I don't mean to speak for God, but I am going to speak for God. [She had a hint of a smile in her voice.] You two were made for each other. She is a most anointed woman."

For the record, Rosemary is highly deferential and honoring of

Carol and Carol's permanent role in my heart (just as I honor the good things that her former husband brought to their marriage). I honored my wife in life. I honored her in death. And I will honor her throughout my life.

And I might offer this side note: Rosemary did not pursue me at all. In fact, in our first three phone calls, she made it very clear that she was not seeking a husband or to get married. She let me know that God was her husband and had provided for her very well. To be candid, she did not pursue me. I pursued her. But she has responded in a wonderful manner.

And I need to clarify one more thing: We are not dating. Dating means, "I am shopping around."

We are courting. Courting is an antiquated term that mean, "We are aiming toward marriage."

Are we engaged? No. Will we be? Yes. When? Well, you will not be the first to know. I say that smiling, as Rosemary will. (Smiling again!)

Our relationship has been somewhat mildly confidential to this point, but it has now come time to share it with my entire church family. I decided to begin telling you as best as I could get to you. But I could not get to you all. Thus, this email.

Those who know have been extremely supportive, for which I am very grateful. It is certainly new territory for me, but God's hand and direction have been on it.

I have recently been alerting fellow pastors and Christian leader friends regarding Rosemary. This is especially meaningful because all of them walked with me during the six and one-half years of pain and losses.

The responses have been truly amazing. Yesterday, James Dobson emailed me and another nationally known Christian leader called me. (His comments are in the postscript below.)

And I must say an enormous, heartfelt thank you to the Skyline Church family, who have been so supportive of us in our coming together.

When will you meet her? Well, she was in our Sunday services a week ago Sunday with her oldest daughter and her three grandchildren. (By the way, she loved Skyline!) While she was in San Diego, she met some of you, perhaps as many as 150 of you. But I want all of you to meet her. She will be introduced in Sunday services when she returns from Israel on Sunday morning, Nov. 17.

You walked with me through my horrific pain for the last six and one-half years. Now I invite you to walk with me through my joy.

Every week, I end my church email by saying I love you. I mean it. I love my Skyline family, and I wanted you to know.

Blessings on you,
Pastor Jim

P.S. This email has been long, so feel no pressure to read any further. But for those who would like more information, particularly regarding timing, continue on.

As the word has spread, I have received so very many notes of joy. Each of these people wept with me. Now they are ready to celebrate with me.

James Dobson wrote a most tender email to me yesterday, sharing in the joy of this moment. Immediately after reading his email, I received a wonderful phone call from another nationally known Christian leader. His call offered many intriguing insights—so many that I asked him to try to write them down for me.

I will quote only a tiny portion of the thoughts he shared. He told me that as he told his wife about my relationship with Rosemary, he told her how excited he was for me and then said,

"But some will criticize Jim, saying it is too quick." His wife turned to him and said, "No, they won't, because everyone knows that people who lose spouses in good marriages get remarried quite quickly." He then said to me, "Don't let anyone get in your face on the timing of this."

Don Welch, Skyline's resident marriage and family therapist, points out that men tend to remarry within nine months of the passing of their spouse, while women remarry in approximately 18 months, on average.

That Christian leader's comment and Dr. Welch's statistics allow me to address the issue of timing for those who have interest.

Since this email is going to the entire Skyline Church email list, I know it will go beyond the borders of our church. Our church family has been so enthusiastically supportive of this new relationship. But since this news will travel well beyond our church family, I am not certain it will always be read by persons who know me or this situation well.

I am going to write the next section of this email not for you, dear church family, but for those who may not know me and who likely do not know Rosemary and who know nothing about our relationship but who might be tempted to become self-appointed judges of the content shared here.

Therefore, please fasten your seat belts as I address that type of person, just in case they read this email. Here goes!

It seems that percent of those I have talked to share my joy. But I suspect there are some who say, "It's too early."

Allow me to gently respond.

For starters, I fought as hard for my wife as a man can fight. I attempted to follow up with approximately 550 suggested "cures" for cancer. As you are aware, I examined every treatment possible I wanted to grow old with Carol, and until the diagnosis of cancer, I always thought I would.

I always thought I would predecease Carol and made all plans accordingly. It never once occurred to me (until the diagnosis on June 20, 2007) that I might become a widower. Not once!

Neither Rosemary nor I wanted to be in a second marriage. She wanted her first husband to honor his vows, love her and be faithful as a husband and father. And I wanted my wife, Carol, to be healthy and live another 30+ years with me.

But our first marriages were taken away from us through no choice of our own.

To the persons who are not intimately involved, a remarriage always seems too quick. But the persons who have personally borne the pain have marked every day.

I am so grateful to God for the healing that came as I entered month five over two months ago. But others do not walk in the pathway of the widow or the widower.

There is one other complication: Pastors live in "glass houses." And I am a pastor of a relatively visible church. That complicates things.

Forty-two years ago, when Carol and I were married, I promised her that I would never allow a church to dictate to her how she would look or what she would wear or the length of her skirts. That was a big issue back then, and many churches damaged young pastors' wives by their control, their harping, their complaining. (Praise God, Skyline is not that type of church!)

And when we began adopting our children, Carol and I jointly determined that we would not allow the "glass-house syndrome" to harm our children. Many PKs—pastors' kids—rebelled against the faith of their parents due to the fact that church members placed excessively high expectations on the PKs, beyond what they place on their own children. (Praise God, Skyline is not that type of church!)

But now the potential “glass-house syndrome” is not about my wife or my children. It is, for the first time in my life, about me!

I have learned that since I became a single man, many others had plans for my life. It is somewhat humorous that some were happy to select a mate for me.

And now that I have begun courting someone, some persons might decide they need to have strong views about the “when.”

Praise God, Skyliners have been so loving, so gracious, and so supportive.

But just in case there is one who might read this who might be tempted to apply the glass-house principle and decide they are appointed to determine the “when” in my life on this issue, I would kindly and gently request that I be allowed to—at this tender moment in this relationship—have privacy and grace extended.

I seriously considered not telling anyone at all, except my children, mother and siblings, about this. I pondered it for some time.

I chose to not do that. I began telling individuals in the church about Rosemary in a systematic and concentric way. And I kept sharing this information until I realized that telling one at a time or a couple at a time was impractical and that it was time to simply tell everyone by way of this email. So, I am doing this.

Allow me to give you a glimpse into me and my personality (as if you don’t already know me!). With everything I have ever done in my life—and I mean everything—there has always been someone who said, “But you’re moving too fast.”

There are many things I cannot do well, but one thing I can do well is process fast. That is why I have done 1,100 TV, radio and print interviews, many of them under pressure.

Before I make a decision though that decision appears fast to some, I have done enormous research.

And Rosemary is no exception. I have done a staggering amount of “research” on her. Those who know are both stunned and find it humorous (and I take a fair amount of teasing about it from friends!). Before I ever talked to her the first time by phone, I knew almost everything about her. (Scary, isn’t it?! LOL.)

I am by nature research-oriented—highly curious.

In addition, I am quick to surround myself with strong counselors.

Rosemary and I have met, and are meeting, with two different counselors, and we have taken four different personality assessments and relationship inventories to tell us where all the conflict points might be. Bottom line: I don’t want surprises, and neither does she. We want to know each other.

Since she travels so much, we have been Skyping twice a day, working through one topic after another. Truth be known, we have likely had the equivalent of 75 “dates,” in terms of the amount of shared time. And we have been highly intentional about making full disclosure about every aspect of our lives.

Don’t get me wrong: This relationship is not merely about analysis. It is not. There is romance! We unabashedly love each other and are thoroughly enjoying the mystery of discovering each other.

But we are doing “due diligence.”

But allow me to totally switch to the more amorphous. We sense and feel confident that the Holy Spirit has brought us together, and—I do not mind saying it—we are in love.

I will be moving forward in this wonderful, glorious, God-given relationship at the pace God directs us and in consultation with our children. Thank you so much for

respecting and trusting us and our families.

As stated earlier, we are not engaged. But we soon will be. And yes, God willing, I plan to make her my wife. You see, I love her. I kindly request your prayerful support.