

Widow for a Season

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FEBRUARY / MARCH NEWSLETTER FOCUS IS MOVING ON

Welcome to our February /March edition of the *Widow for a Season* Newsletter. If you have received this newsletter from a pastor or friend, know that it can also be accessed at www.widowtowidow.net and printed for your personal or group use — spread the word! Be sure to browse the site if you haven't done that yet. Bible studies, information on financial resources, listing of FAQ's, and the option to correspond with other widows who are finding victory in similar circumstances as yours are there to encourage you. You will also find excerpts from the book, *Widow for a Season: Finding Your Identity in Christ*, by Kristine Pappas under the Chapter Summaries Tab. This valuable resource can be purchased through BMH Books at www.bmhbooks.com or through the site Purchase Book Tab. Be sure to tell your pastors about our site. There are many articles and resources there for them as well. We welcome your responses to our materials. Please let us know how we are doing.

CHECK THESE OUT!

- www.widows.org
- www.rbc.org
- [www.christianwomentoday.com/
devotionals](http://www.christianwomentoday.com/devotionals)
- www.crown.org
- www.newcommandment.org

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Moving On ... The Heart of the New Widow



Moving On -- not exactly a topic I wanted to write about let alone try to accomplish with my life. I wanted to stay where I was, in the comfort, yet painful memories of my husband. Moving on meant I would forget his touch, his smell, his eyes, his voice,

his laughter, and forget him. And forget I did *not* want to do. If I did, I reasoned, then our love was not strong enough to hold us together even in death. I wanted to hold onto his memory; this way I could keep him alive at least in my mind and

heart. The process of moving on is difficult at best. It is not as if we wake up one morning and say, "Today is the day that I move on with my life." No, God just seems to keep life moving right

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Take the Risk
By Ben Carson

BOOK REVIEW

After becoming a widow, like it or not, there comes a time when we have to “move on” with our lives. The thought of making our own decisions without our spouse to offer opinions and lend support can be terrifying. The fear of failure may cause us to stay stagnant and be afraid to make changes in our lives.

In the book, *Take the Risk*, by surgeon Ben Carson, he relates how starting in childhood, taking risks is what made him the surgeon, husband and father he is today.

Mr. Carson first encourages the reader to imagine how our lives can be changed if we dare to imagine the unimaginable.

Mr. Carson instructs us to first prayerfully consider what is before us, using past experiences and all of the knowledge we can obtain about the decision. He suggests in making a decision to ask ourselves two questions: first, what is the best that can happen and secondly, what is the worst that can happen? We need to have faith because the real consequences of our decision may not be seen until the future, and we need to have patience in God’s timing for our answer. When making a decision, the author encourages us to remember situations that unfolded in our lives in a completely different way than what we wanted or thought they would. We need to recount the steps that led us there, realizing it wasn’t our doing, but God working in our behalf to remove any road blocks in the way while opening doors for us, with the end result better than we could have ever imagined.

Finally, minimize the feeling of our old “self” that may accompany our efforts to take risks and move on with our lives. King David pleads with God in Psalm 51: “Create in me a clean heart, oh Lord, renew a right spirit within me.” We too, need to ask for a clean heart that is new and willing to go where God wants to lead us now.

By Janelle Fling

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along, even when I scream, “Stop, I cannot do this.” My son was advancing in the military; my daughter was going out with friends; they were living their lives as they should have done. I got out of bed every morning and lived the day as best I could, but I could not get beyond the past. I could not make myself move forward to face reality. The thought of having to make decisions without my husband was overwhelming. So I put them off as long as I could.

There were times I was sure he was going to come walking through the door and that this nightmare would finally end. The pain was becoming unbearable and reached the point where I had to decide, “Am I going to live in the past with these memories or take steps forward and chance having my memories of him fade until I might not remember how his touch felt? I decided I needed to live life even though it was physically without him.

God was gracious. He gave me little steps, and in those little steps He carried me until He steadied my feet and I was able to take one step, then another. I will not kid you, every little step was very painful; my love for Bill was strong and my desire to move on, weak. The one thing I had not counted on, however, was that God’s love for me was even stronger. I soon began to understand I was not going to forget the things I feared I would. My life with Bill shaped me into the woman I am; He will always be a part of me. Did I want him to be a part of a life that refused to move on and lived in the past? No. I wanted him to be a part of a life that was able to move forward.

I had to learn to trust God on my own. To give the burden of my life, all the anxieties, concerns, and fears, all of it I had to put on God. I had to let Him lead me. Whenever I wanted to ask Bill something, I asked God. I read Isaiah 54: 4-13 over and over again. I reminded myself that God is now my husband. I am His personal concern. Jeremiah 29:11-14 tells us that He knows *His* thoughts towards us; they are thoughts of peace not evil, thoughts to give us a future and hope. And when we call on Him, He will hear us. I did not see the future and hope that God talked about, but I did call on Him with all of my heart, and He answered me with all of His heart. Moment by moment, He showed me His love and strength, and soon I was able to see hope and just maybe a future.

It has been two years since Bill died, and it has taken every minute of these two years to get me to this point. I still have my fair share of moments when I fall apart. I still get worked up over the future. But when I stop and ask God to calm my heart and fears, He does. I remember that although this is not the path I would have chosen, it is the path God chose for me. And He is determined to see me through every turn, every puddle, every hill and valley. His love for me is unwavering, even when I think He has forgotten me. He has not, I am His personal concern; He loves me like no other could.

I know this, I also know that He feels the same about you.

Cathy Merrick

The Seasoned Widow
By Jo Reese

When I was asked to write an article for our monthly newsletter entitled "The Seasoned Widow," I paused and thought for a while. Why call it "The Seasoned Widow"? After thinking about other titles - Mature Widow, Older Widow, Long-time Widow, etc., and after looking up "seasoned" in the dictionary, I decided the correct title had been chosen. There were six definitions in my dictionary for "seasoned," and two of them helped me with what I want to speak about now. The first definition is: "to render competent through trial and experience" and the second one: "to accustom, to inure." I also had to look up "inure" in my dictionary. After reading the meaning of that word, I knew the path I wanted to take with this article. Inure means, "to make used to something undesirable by prolonged subjection." And there it is! No one wants to become a widow, and those of us who are must become accustomed to it - no matter how undesirable and awful it may be. So, how do we cope, how do we move on in this new life of ours? I don't know how others have handled it. I can only speak for myself and in so doing try to give encouragement to others.

When my husband passed away fifteen years ago, I went through the ensuing days in a state of shock. Friends and family rallied around me and were a strong support. I did not weep as I thought I would but stoically did the things that needed to be done. I could not sleep at night and my doctor prescribed something in an attempt to help that situation. At some point, and I cannot pinpoint exactly when it was or where I was, I came to the realization that I could not continue on without another source of help. That was when I realized I needed to rely upon my Heavenly Father and Husband. Isaiah 54:5 says, "For your Maker is your Husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name." I kept this foremost in my mind as I attempted to continue on without my spouse.

I was fortunate in that two weeks after my husband's memorial service, school started. I was still teaching at the time and had to prepare for the incoming second-graders I would have. The most difficult part was facing my fellow teachers. If one

of them tried to express their sympathy, I immediately would tear up and could not respond to their kind words. Away from other teachers I was fine, and I focused completely on my students. I felt my work was a blessing. At least during the day, my mind was totally on something else other than my life as a widow and all the things I had to do alone.

Some of you who have been widowed may not have been employed at the time of your husband's death and may not be now. I think the key to moving on is to stay busy - in whatever way you can. Continue involvement in activities you had done before, and if you only did things with your husband, then try to branch out and try other things. They are out there; you just need to look for them. You cannot be out of your home all the time, of course. There will be many hours you will be home, perhaps alone, perhaps with children. Just remember, God is with you always.. At times when I felt so very alone, I would snap myself out of that pitiful solitude and talk to my Heavenly Father. But I had to keep reminding myself over and over that I was not alone. One of the worst times I can remember was an evening when I was sitting alone watching television. There was a program on at that time called "Evening Shade" and at the end of the episode I was watching, the husband and wife were on a porch swing and he quoted lines from a poem that went something like this, "Grow old with me for the best is yet to be." That really hit me, and I sat there and cried and cried. That was sometime during the first six months after Jim's death. I probably would not react quite the same way now, all these years later. But I still miss my husband very much. I have not remarried, and at my age, I am sure I never will. During his illness, Jim told me he would like me to remarry, but that right man has never come along and I am content with that. As the years pass, the pain of losing him has diminished somewhat although it is never totally gone. Widowhood is not something any of us would have chosen, but with faith in God, we can cope.

I am retired from teaching now but still do some substitute

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Pastors Corner By Buzz Inboden

I realize that we don't have to have experienced something as a prerequisite to help others get through those same things. But it helps! So, before we go one sentence farther, let me say that I'm 52 years old and have never lost anyone close to me. I am a grief rookie; in fact, I'm worse than a rookie; I've never even played the game. As a pastor and friend I have, however, walked through grief with many people. They have taught me quite a few things.

I've learned grief is appropriate. After all, Jesus wept (John 11:4). What makes the story in John 11 amazing is that Jesus knew what was going to come next. He knew he would raise Lazarus from the dead, and yet he still grieved. If Jesus knew the specifics of the plan and grieved, then all of us who know only that a plan exists will certainly grieve, and usually for a long time.

I've learned from my grieving friends that grief comes and goes. Right when people think things are in perspective, they get ambushed by grief. There is no point in asking "why am I still grieving?" It is best to say "since I am still grieving . . ." The good pastor prepares the widow for those ambushes because they will occur for years and years. They are not a mark of the person's spiritual weakness; an ambush is a sign of the strength and joy that was a part of that lost relationship.

Grieving friends remind me that for everything there is a season (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). I can't make it Spring by running a heater outside. I can shout at the cold, I can reason with the cold, I can whisper to the cold; but it will never get warm outside until it is the season for warmth. I have learned that many times we want grieving people to "move on," so that they will be easier to deal with. We want them to "get over it and move on." We push, we teach, we counsel, we frustrate them and ourselves. I've come to realize that grief isn't something you get over, it is something you get used to. Getting used to things takes time. Pastors must make sure their goals are correct. The goal is not to help her "get over him and move on," but rather to get used to the grief and walk with God, wherever he might lead.

Grief is a strange thing. It jogs the mind. It pulls up memories, it savors them and cherishes them. It caresses those memories and it longs for them to be real again. But grief also propels our minds and hearts to heaven. Grief reminds us that our hope for now and eternity rests in the hands of the Lord Jesus. My Christ-following friends who grieve, like those who have hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13), cling tightly to the Holy Spirit, and walk by faith, and not by sight. They learn again, and again, and again, that Jesus is enough. He always has been and he always will be.

My grieving friends remind me that everyone has a place in the body of Christ, and as we emerge from the valley of the shadow of death we will slowly but surely take our place as an active, vital, healthy part of the body of Christ.

To learn more about Buzz visit his web page at:
<http://www.drbuzz.org/>

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teaching. One day a week I give tours of our state capitol. I frequently baby-sit grandchildren. I work one day a month at a local food pantry and am involved in church activities. There are countless opportunities to be engaged in worthwhile activities, and I would encourage you to look into what might appeal to you.

It is difficult to give suggestions to other widows when I do not

know your personal situations or your relationship with God. All I can say is that I know I would not have made it through the past 15 years if I had not had a personal relationship with Him. I have a loving son and daughter, each with a wonderful spouse and three children. They are an important focus in life, but without God as my dearest friend, closest companion, and source of strength, I would never make it through these years of widowhood.

Devotional Moment

Terri Burrows

WIDOW TO WIDOW MINISTRIES

Because no one can help a widow like another widow

Losing a spouse doesn't simply mean we've lost a loved one. With our life's partner we often lose our dreams for the future. So moving on doesn't simply mean "getting over it," it means finding a new plan for the future, dreaming new dreams. How do we do that when our desires and sense of loyalty tie us to old plans and dreams? The Scriptures God has given me for this word reveal three steps to moving on.

- Grieve for the purpose of healing, so that you can indeed move on (Hebrews 12:11-15). Allow yourself to be refined by the pain. Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." My reference to this verse doesn't mean that God is punishing you by your husband's death. No, the lesson we can apply from this verse is that God can produce a "harvest of righteousness and peace" from something painful if we allow ourselves to be trained by it. Don't avoid the pain of grief, but welcome it as a means not of punishment, but of training in self-control, and allow God to bring that good from His plan, a "harvest of righteousness and peace."
- Realize that God has a plan for you. In Jeremiah 29:11 God told His exiled people, "For I know the plans I have for you..., plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." While that promise isn't for us, we should recognize that this is how God worked with His chosen people in the past, the people to whom this promise was given. That plan was for them to be refined by their suffering in exile, and then return to the place He meant for them to be, the Promised Land. He has not sacrificed His Son so that we will simply endure our time here on earth. Rather, we see that He had plans for His chosen people in the past, and He does for us also. We can rely on the goodness of God's plan, even if it isn't what we've chosen for ourselves (Romans 8:28). Seek His plan for you.
- Follow Christ. (Hebrews 12:1-3). He came so that we may have abundant life (John 10:10). Contrary to the feeling that your life is over, you've got abundant life available to you! Since my husband's death, "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus" has become one of my favorite hymns. Let me leave you with those words:

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!

Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there.
Over us sin no more hath dominion-
For more than conquerors we are!

His word shall not fail you-He promised;
Believe Him, and all will be well.
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus;
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

Read the story of Ruth for inspiration. You will find it in the book of Ruth.

Letter From the Editor

I hope this month's Newsletter has encouraged you for the journey. It was our desire to offer you articles that will benefit you as you are working through this process of moving on. If you find yourself trying to move on but not succeeding, I encourage you to take comfort in God's arms. Read His words in Isaiah 54 and Jeremiah 29. It is there He will give you the strength that you need. He will open His heart to you and enable you to take the necessary steps needed to start this process. Jo told us in her article that the pain of losing her husband has diminished some but is never totally gone. I believe it is important to remember that we will have grief to one degree or another for the balance of our lives. So we must not let the grief stand in our way of moving on. As Buzz Inboden states in the Pastor's Corner, just when we think we have things in perspective, we get ambushed by grief. This grief is not a sign of spiritual weakness but a sign of the joy and strength that was part of our relationship with our husband. As I ponder my future and remember my past, I realize that I should not walk by sight but walk by faith. If I trust my sight, I will surely give up and throw in the towel because what I see on my own is not very pretty. But if I walk by faith and trust God's plan for my life, then I will see a future worth pursuing. Through the lenses of God's Word, I can see and embrace a future as beautiful as the promises of a loving Father.

If you do not have a personal relationship with Christ, I encourage you to give your heart to Him and let Him shower you with forgiveness, compassion, and strength for tomorrow. This is a simple step of faith, acknowledging that Christ died for your sins, and asking Him to forgive you and live in your heart. If you have questions about this or anything else, or you just need a listening ear, we welcome you to contact us. You can do this by visiting our website www.widowtowidow.net. One of our board members will respond to your request and will help you to the best of our ability.

In closing, I hope that this month's newsletter has been helpful for you and has offered you hope in Christ. It is in Him that we are able to move forward. Please check back with often and watch for our April / May newsletter in which we will address the combined issue of Anger and Depression.

Cathy Merrick

If you would like to learn more about our board members please check us out at www.widowtowidow.net under the "Meet the Board" tab. You may be surprised to learn that our members live both in and out of the United States.

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