

The Ride

The ride to the grave site seemed endless as the procession crept along. Following the hearse that carried my daughter's body, I tried to grasp the reality as I gazed in the side rear mirror through tear filled eyes. The endless stream of cars, all with small flags, straight in a line like a military procession filled the mirror lens. It was easier to look behind than look ahead. Ahead of me there was....the body. The body was inside the hearse, not Kristan, not my only daughter, but the body.

“Silent screams inside my head. Nothingness, please God, just nothingness. Oh, the gripping pain. Oh, please, help me. Oh, my heart. Please help me, God, not to hurt so much. Oh, no, oh, oh, no. I can't breathe. This can't be real. Someone has cut my heart out with a knife. Oh, the searing pain. Please stop the pain. Dead, gutted, oh the pain all the way down to my toes. Please help me. Somebody, please help me. This pain is so real. My heart aches, my mind is frozen.” Journal Entry

Oh, the depth of death. It reaches down into the body, and with clinched fingers, literally tears your heart out. The day, date, and time of the notification of Kristan's death is forever etched in my mind. At 12:45 P.M. the phone rang and the news devastated my world. Nothing ever prepares you for that call. Naturally, I fell apart upon learning that not only was my only daughter dead, but my son-in-law as well. Shock waves rippled through my body as I tried to comprehend the message my son attempted to deliver.

“Kristan is dead.” As if to make himself believe the words, he kept repeating them over and over. “They are both dead. Adam is dead. Kristan is dead. The coroner just called. Their bodies are at the morgue.”

No mother expects to hear those words. No amount of softening the delivery changes the circumstances. Shock! Shock is real. Your body becomes frozen. Your mind spins and spins so fast you cannot comprehend the words, as if your ears are closed. You know what is being said, but the transmission is jumbled in your mind.

“Reject the thought, the idea. Send it back to where it originated. Don’t let it enter the ear canal again. Block your ears. I don’t want to hear it. No, No, No. It can’t be true. You are lying. They’ve made a mistake. This can’t be real. I’m in a dream. No, No, No. Are you sure? Are they sure it is Kristan and Adam’s body----bodies? (A fresh wave of racking sobs till you can’t catch your breath) Did I just say their Bodies? This can’t be real. I didn’t hear. I can’t breathe. Oh, God, Noooooooooo. Did you say their bodies? I don’t believe you. Call somebody else and ask them. It can’t be Kristan and Adam.” Journal Entry

Tragedy had struck again. It was true. Kristan and Adam had passed away. We laid Kristan to rest beside her Dad. She was Daddy’s little girl. Her father was killed years earlier in a semi- truck accident. Kristan and her brother (six and eight at the time) had to learn to adjust to life without their Dad. I, too, had to take on new skills as I learned to be both Mom and Dad.

We don’t know the hour when we will be called out. My daughter was no different. One minute Kristan had exciting plans for the future and the next second her spirit had departed this world. Her time down here was fleeting, leaving this earth at the tender age of 30. (She was the same age as her Dad, when he departed this world.)

The darkness of death is real. The heartache is almost unbearable with the death of a child. The pain cuts deep inside with no relief in sight.

“I want to come out of the darkness of death that surrounds me, but I can’t. Memories fly by every time I think I have repressed them. What happened to good intentions? They went flying out the window with this fresh bout of memories. Please help me get there. Please hold my hand, Lord, and bring me to the top. I can’t do it on my own. I am weak. I need your help. Please help me.” Prayer
Journal Entry

Trying to explain death is like trying to describe the wind. It is an impossible feat. The wonders of life cannot be captured with words. I can feel ,breathe, and attempt to explain it, but words fail because -----it has to be experienced. Can you define the wind? It tears, rips, and roars, yes, but it also lies in peaceful, tender, calm after the storm rages. My best description of death and grief could never accurately depict the trail of destruction it leaves behind. The grief began immediately and as the sense of loss deepened I went through so many emotions it was difficult to separate the feelings which ripped through my body. At times it all felt so disorganized inside my mind and body. At first I reached out and drew comfort and support from family and friends. Then, overnight, I didn’t want to talk; on the phone, in person, or even hold a conversation. I became anti-social for a period of time not taking any phone calls, or communicating in any way with anyone. As time went on for a few weeks or months, I experienced loss of appetite, couldn’t sleep at night-insomnia, and was so unmotivated that I couldn’t complete daily chores and functions around the house. I became so tired or lethargic that some days I didn’t even want to get out of bed. When I reached this point-an all time low- I knew that I needed to get myself together and regain some semblance of normalcy in my life. I was at this point when I wrote the following journal entry. I knew I was in need of God’s hand of mercy. I really didn’t understand all the emotions (or lack of emotions) controlling my body. I felt so numb at times and my mind so disoriented and foggy from the shock that I would hear what was being said but wouldn’t bother to answer.. I didn’t want to tear my mind away from the images

and memories being replayed, over, and over again. I refused to believe Kristan had passed on and waited for her to call, even though I knew she was gone. If I went shopping or anywhere there were people I would search for her in the crowd. I know grief has five stages, but when you are going through the ordeal, it is extremely difficult to identify the stages because they seem to overlap. Perhaps it is because you rotate in and out of multiple stages. Based on my own experience, there is no clear stage of grief because you have so many emotions occurring simultaneously within your body: stress, anxiety, and pain, etc. Healing did not occur overnight. I began to slowly accept the losses. The first year was the worst phase of my grieving.

Writing Journal Entry

Why am I writing this? I really don't know how I will react to life or death. Actually, I am petrified, afraid I will fall totally apart. I feel like I am being stretched apart at the seams, like when a pair of pants fit to tight. I really don't want to ever go to another funeral home, hear another funeral service, or see another pot of flowers on a grave. But, what do you do? How do you find the courage to walk past another open casket? I could scream, shout, at life. But it would still unfold. This-that-is life. It doesn't wait on anyone. It marches merrily along. Sort of reminds you of a rickety old cart, everytime it hits a bump in the road, something comes tumbling down. Until, finally, everything has fallen off and there is nothing left to come bouncing down. When you have nothing left to give does it stop? No, I don't believe it does. I believe it continues on and you have to search deep inside yourself and ask, Am I willing to just throw in the towel and let it get me, or am I going to come up with one little scrap of something?

When you are left with only memories, you slowly learn to deal with the loneliness, sadness, and sorrow. Friends sympathize but cannot comprehend fully your pain, unless they have suffered a loss. Internally you ache and externally you are frozen, lost in shockwaves of disbelief.

Death is silent. It sneaks in and attacks, then exits as quickly as it came, leaving behind devastation, chaos, and confusion. It feels like the world has disappeared from under your feet. Mentally, you throw up your hands in despair, crying out in desperation, but those around you go on by as if you are invisible. All you need is someone to reach out and snap you out of the spinning ---or to stop the spinning out of control--- but nobody volunteers or steps forth. They are too busy in living the everyday life and don't realize

your pain. So, you hurt. You ache. Then, you put on a cheerful front because you must not appear to be in pain. It is all so artificial. Yet, it is all so real. The hurt is real. The misery is deadly. Nobody knows the pain you are going through.

“Days have no meaning. Life is life. This is the raw, uncensored life. I am here. I am alive. I lost a husband, daughter, and son-in-law. So is life real? You bet it is real. It deals you such a rough hand your only instinct is to survive. Forget about fancy dreams, I just want to survive.” Journal Entry

My daughter began life as a carefree young child. At the age of six she was diagnosed with Type I diabetes. Tragedy struck two years later when her father was killed at the age of 30 in a semi-truck accident. Kristan matured into a beautiful young lady, married the love of her life, and had two wonderful children, a boy and girl.

She chose the path to walk on her own. The light of the path flickered, faded, and then reappeared at the end of her journey. One day, Kristan saw herself as she truly was ---a sinner in need of a Savior. As clarity emerged, consciousness and guilt appeared. The final months of her life were spent in trying to make up for all the lost time Satan stole. In a flurry, she attempted to reconcile faith, family, friends, and health. She accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, was baptized as an outward show of faith, and witnessed to the lost of God’s redeeming power. She contacted lawyers, social workers, and the court system to set up visitation with her children who lived in foster care. Appointments were made with health facilities in an attempt to repair the ravages of unhealthy lifestyles and eating habits. But, the turnaround of her life did not stop the hand of God. Her final breath was drawn as she departed this life for her final resting place. I am now reconciled to the fact that Kristan’s work was complete on this earth and God called her home.

