

I FELT BETRAYED AND ABANDONED

A widow's journey

Valerie's 47-year-old husband Ken died from a pool drowning in 2009

BY VALERIE STAGGS, adapted from the book, *Grief Diaries: Through the Eyes of a Widow*
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Self care articles for the bereaved

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I still believe in God

I was born and raised Catholic and attended church most of my life. After my son was born, I converted to Lutheran and found a small, welcoming church near my home. The pastor was warm and relatable. The congregation had a lot of young families, and my son enjoyed making friends in Sunday school.

My son was enrolled in a Catholic school at the time of Ken's death. I felt the faith-based curriculum gave him a good education while also providing a strong moral foundation. All this changed when my husband died.

For someone who has believed in the goodness of God her whole life, reconciling the sudden, inexplicable loss of a beloved husband and father is impossible. I could not understand why God had taken Ken from us after I had prayed so fervently for him to spare my husband. I felt betrayed and abandoned.

I felt equally betrayed by my son's school. In the aftermath of Ken's death, my son was angry and sad. He found it difficult to concentrate in class and acted out on the playground. Although I sought out therapy and tried to work with the

staff, in the end the school determined he was too much to deal with and asked us to leave.

The caring, Christian environment I thought was so nurturing for my son instead turned its back on him.

I still believe in God. I don't go to church and my son is no longer in a Christian school. My pastor and church were supportive after Ken's death, but we moved and I'm no longer close enough to attend. I don't know if I would anyway. I am still very angry at God.

I speak with a lot of schools and faith-based organizations. I stress the importance of understanding and compassion as two things families need most when struggling with grief.

**You need look no further
than the Bible to understand
how to help a grieving family.**

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you," Ephesians 4:32 tells us. This is the best grief support.