

GROWING FAITH THROUGH LOSS

Mary's mother died in 2010,
Mary's 60-year-old husband David died in 2012,
and Mary's 8-year-old grandson died in 2013.

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Self care articles for the bereaved

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I've written my way through most of my adult life. As a young mother at home raising eight children, writing was a way of utilizing my inherent creativity, and the craft saved my sanity at times.

When my husband went through cancer treatment, I sat next to him during chemotherapy, holding his hand with one of mine and writing with the other.

When my mother died on my fifty-first birthday in 2010, my "housewife writer" blog became one about journeying through grief. After my grandson, Jacob was diagnosed with cancer a month later, it became one about faith and grief.

The morning after my husband David died in 2012, I sat down and filled four pages of a journal with everything I was thankful for. Ironically, the husband who had become the biggest supporter of my writing, who was the "wind beneath my wings," never got to see my books published.

I signed four book contracts in the space of three years after David died. I will never forget standing in front of Barnes & Noble and seeing the window filled with my book. I just stood there, numb. How could I enjoy it, without him who believed in me?

The next book was about how caring for him during his cancer changed our marriage. Those

five and a half years after his cancer were the best years of our life together. The book that followed that one wouldn't exist if it weren't for the loss of him; it details my journey through the darkness of grief after the loss of my mother, husband, and then grandson Jacob, who lost his battle with cancer seventeen months after David died.

The next book was co-written with the friend who was really there for me after David's death. Our friendship, linked by thousands of letters spanning twenty-five years, deepened immensely when she took me out to eat every month and asked me questions no one else dared ask.

People ask "How are you?" with a sympathetic tone when they hear my story. A better question might be "Who am I?" Multiple losses have made me a different person than I was just a few years ago.

Through loss, I developed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I learned to "be still" and listen to God. I am a public speaker now, sharing my story and bringing hope to other grievers. It is as if my heart broke wide open and I care so much more about others. My eyes are on Heaven, where my parents, David, and Jacob wait.

I love the saying that we are here "to help each other Home." I truly believe that.