

THE GOOD NEWS STORY

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

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God makes beauty out of ashes; He promises that He will bring good out of painful and challenging circumstances. Sometimes, that beauty is evident soon after or even during our seasons of suffering and struggle. Other times, we don't see that beauty come to fruition for many years. And even more times, we can't even imagine that beauty could ever actually come out of the pain we feel. My first husband, Ryan Raich, died 6 years ago on July 31, 2016. I've experienced many deep valleys during these last 6 years, but I've also reached high peaks of intimacy and understanding with the Lord.

No one wants to experience the tragic death of a loved one. No one wants to learn how to walk that journey. But because of what I have walked through, and the comfort and healing that I have received from Jesus Christ, I am uniquely equipped to minister to others with a similar broken heart. The apostle Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 that God desires to comfort others through us, His children. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ." For several years, I've prayed for God to use me in this way: to bring comfort to someone who is suffering how I have suffered. While I've had opportunities to comfort fellow believers in this way, God recently presented me with a chance to comfort someone who doesn't follow Christ and was in a parallel situation.

Clare experienced profound grief when her best friend of 25 years died at the age of 32. Clare had never experienced a death in her close family, let alone someone she loved like a sister. She didn't know how to cope or heal. And while I didn't have a clear plan or script ready, I just knew that I had to seek her out and comfort her as much as I could. I bought her a devotional for people who are grieving, one that helped me get through day by day after Ryan's death. We met for lunch, and I listened to her pour out her pain and anger and grief, and then after about 20 minutes, she paused, and asked me, "How did you survive when your husband died?" I knew that God had equipped me for that very moment, for that very question. I hesitated for a moment, overwhelmed a little bit that God had opened this blatant door for me to share my faith, I took a deep breath, and then I explained how Jesus was with me in the depth. He met me in the pain and dark and carried me through, teaching me and loving me as He led me forward. Clare didn't respond much; she was very quiet after I finished, and we soon went our separate ways. The next week, I got a text from Clare that she and her husband had attended church for the first time in a very long time, and that she felt a peace and comfort that she hadn't felt before. She continues to seek the Lord in her pain. And Jesus used me to show her that He was there. I'm humbled, grateful, and in awe of God's perfect love.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me...to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness...that He may be glorified." - Isaiah 61: 1,3



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