

**HELP!**

# I'M A SINGLE MOM



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## INTRODUCTION: TEAR UP THE SCRIPT

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When I stood at the marriage altar on June 7, 1986, I had hopes of a long and happy marriage. I actually had a script in mind of how my life would go. Jeff and I would enjoy some time together alone and then we would have children, four of them, at two-yearly intervals. Our whole family would be active in our local church, and our children would, of course, grow up to love and serve the Lord. Once our children were grown Jeff and I would travel and enjoy our grandchildren with a few trials thrown in for good measure. Needless to say, the script I had written for myself never included becoming a widow and a single parent after only eight years of marriage.

I'll never forget what I would later consider to be my last "normal" day as a wife and mother. It was Sunday, October 2, 1994, a beautiful fall day on California's central coast. Jeff, our two children, and I enjoyed a wonderful day at church concluding with a meaningful Lord's Supper during the evening

service.

The following evening my life changed forever. The phone rang and our pastor asked for Jeff. I didn't think much of the call. After all, Jeff was a deacon. I thought our pastor simply needed to discuss church matters with him. It never entered my mind how this phone call would drastically change our lives. Jeff left to speak with our pastor. When he returned he shared the news that hit me like a ton of bricks. A girl at church had accused him of molesting her. After a few days my husband confessed to serious immorality and he took his life a week later. Because of the nature of his sin I faced potential lawsuits, even the possibility of losing my own children. At the time our children were ages seven and five, and I was nine weeks pregnant with our third. What was I supposed to do?

Thankfully, during the year before Jeff's death, the Lord had taught me much through his Word about trusting his sovereignty and walking in obedience to him day by day. I learned that these truths, though simple concepts to understand, aren't always easy to live out. Learning to accept and embrace each of God's assignments, especially ones that break our hearts, is never easy.

When God asked me to accept the assignment of

being a widow and a single parent, I had a choice to make in the midst of being confused, heartbroken, and overwhelmed. I had to decide whether to trust God's sovereign plan, knowing that his wisdom and love are perfect, or rely on my own understanding. Though what happened made no sense in human terms, I chose to anchor my soul on the truth of God's Word. Several verses were especially meaningful during that time, including the following:

*What then shall we say to these things?  
If God is for us, who can be against us?  
He who did not spare His own Son, but  
delivered Him up for us all, how shall He  
not with Him also freely give us all things?  
... For I am persuaded that neither death  
nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor  
powers, nor things present nor things to  
come, nor height nor depth, nor any other  
created thing, shall be able to separate us  
from the love of God which is in Christ  
Jesus our Lord.*

*(Romans 8:31-32, 38-40)*

God clearly showed his love for me by giving his Son to die for my sins. No trial could separate me

from his love. As I pondered this kind of sacrificial love I knew that my heavenly Father could be trusted. By his grace, I chose to embrace this assignment. But what began as a simple commitment became one of the most difficult challenges I've ever faced.

# 1

## *Devastated, but Not Destroyed*

**I**t was our pastor who found my husband's body and had the sad task of informing me. The news that my husband was dead sent shock waves rushing through my very being. I didn't want to go back into the house because it was full of so many memories. Only a few days earlier, Jeff and I had discovered that I was expecting our third child, Rebekah. Questions flooded my mind.

How could things change so drastically in just a few days? How was I going to tell the children? Would my grief cause me to lose this baby I was carrying? I didn't have a job, so how was I going to pay the bills? Would I receive payments from Jeff's life insurance? How was I going to plan his memorial service?

A terrible emptiness occupied my heart. The loss of my husband brought such pain that I didn't think I could go on. The term "widow" means "deficiency, a



desolate place, forsaken, left empty.”<sup>1</sup> This is apt, for I felt all of those things. Without my husband, life seemed hopeless. Because Jeff’s suicide was the result of moral failure I also felt betrayed, forsaken, and abandoned. My joy and physical strength were gone. Would I ever smile or laugh again? I had no desire to do even simple tasks like cooking and cleaning. I wanted to withdraw and began to compare myself with others. This comparison only led to deeper despair. Then questions haunted me. *Why has this happened? What could I have done differently to prevent this? If only I had known ...*

Reality hit hard and I faced the fact that I now had to raise three children on my own. How was I going to complete this pregnancy? How was I going to lead, protect, and provide for my children while caring for the home and meeting their everyday needs? I needed to cook the meals, pay the bills, clean the house, make the decisions, be the spiritual leader, and discipline the children—among other tasks. Just thinking about everything I needed to do was enough to send me straight into depression.

1 G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; electronic edition, 1964).

## "God Knows My Name"

As I pondered these concerns, the Spirit of God brought his precious Word to bear on my fretful heart.

*Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing ... Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength.*

*(Isaiah 40:26, 28-29)*

The questions no longer haunted my thoughts. The God who had spoken this universe into existence, who upholds all things by the word of his power, and in whom all things consist, was perfectly capable of taking care of us.

As a science teacher I've often shared with my students that we live in the Milky Way Galaxy, which

comprises an estimated 100 billion stars. It is but one of billions of galaxies, each containing billions of stars, yet God “calls them all by name.” Even in his infinite majesty God is still personal and intimately involved with his children. What does Scripture tell us?

*Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting  
love ...*

*(Jeremiah 31:3)*

*For I know the thoughts that I think toward  
you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and  
not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

*(Jeremiah 29:11)*

*[Cast] all your care upon Him, for He cares  
for you.*

*(1 Peter 5:7)*

As I thought upon these truths, my heart changed from being fretful to calm. Though my life had been devastated, it wasn't destroyed. Becoming a widow and a single mom was big, at least from a human perspective, but God was and is infinitely bigger. Knowing this truth, I could go on.

## Overcoming the Giants

I needed to tell my children that their daddy was gone. I prayed for strength, asking the Lord to give me the words to say. Because Sarah was seven and the eldest, the news was hardest on her. Caleb was five and didn't fully comprehend what was happening, and of course Rebekah wouldn't be born for at least six more months.

My parents and in-laws helped with all the arrangements. When we planned the details of the memorial service, God graciously gave strength for each step. My overarching desire was that the service would bring glory to God through proclaiming the gospel so all could find the hope that comes only by knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Now came the next "giants" to overcome: the finances and my pregnancy. I'd recently left my job to stay home with my children for the purpose of homeschooling. Jeff had intended to place me on his insurance but now that was impossible. I knew that somehow God was going to provide, and he soon showed me how.

A gentleman came to our home one day with some other visitors to comfort us. He asked me how much money I had in my bank account. A few

hundred dollars, I said. He handed me a check for \$5000. Later, inside a card from my husband's former employer was a check for \$2200. My former employer also gave me a check for several hundred dollars and invited me to return to work after I'd taken my time to grieve. I was only required to work three hours a day during weekday afternoons. This arrangement enabled me to homeschool my children in the mornings. My employer also provided full insurance benefits, which meant that the medical cost of my pregnancy would be paid in full. I also learned that I would receive some of Jeff's life insurance. I stood amazed. God had done exceedingly and abundantly above all I could ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

Six and a half months later I delivered a beautiful, healthy baby girl. When I thought about what lay ahead, I again felt overwhelmed. Raising three children without their father was a foreboding task. When they were old enough to understand, how would I explain to them what had happened to their daddy? How could I help them understand that God was love and did only good things, when they'd experienced defilement and abandonment? How would they learn to forgive?

I again needed to counsel my heart from truth, not from emotions; too often we listen to our hearts, a

deadly practice. I realized that I must simply teach my children God's truth from his Word and live by his grace, trusting him to do his work in their hearts. I didn't know what the future held, but God did, and I could rest in that fact.

If on my wedding day someone had told me what would happen eight years later, without hesitation I would have said, "No thanks." But God, in his infinite wisdom, hasn't given me a five-year plan. He's asked me to walk moment by moment in helpless dependence upon him. I must view this journey as a precious privilege and opportunity.