

9 Years Ago Today... My Greatest Pain...

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Greetings My Friend,

Nine years ago today, I experienced the greatest pain I have ever known. But have you noticed that from your greatest pain often comes some of your most unexpected ministry to others?



Carol, caught in an unexpected and unrehearsed pose, by photographer Erica Schneider



Jim Garlow

Apr 21, 2013 · San Diego · 🌐

Final Carol Update:

42 years ago, we ended our wedding vows with the words, "...until one of us shall place the other in the arms of God." I just did that.

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Facebook post, April 21, 20

Nine years ago today, Carol, my wife of 42 years, died. On Sunday, April 21, 2013, at 12:52pm, I posted on Facebook: "Final Carol Update: 42 years ago, we ended our wedding vows with the words, '...until one of us shall place the other in the arms of God.' I just did that."

(Note: Her actual time of death was 12:48pm, not 12:52pm. However, Carol always kept her clocks four minutes early, so we went by "Carol time." She kept her clocks early so she could be on time. But she never was. She was always late. And then when she would arrive late, she would do so with a mischievous and rather smug smile, as if she was sort of proud of being late. It was a thing that Carol, my children and I laughed about for decades. Consequently, we intentionally started her funeral a few minutes late. For real. Now back to a more serious and painful topic.)

Back to April 21, 2013. It had been a long, six year battle with cancer. I thought I was prepared for "the moment," but I was not. No one ever is.

However, as you have likely noticed in your own life, your greatest ministries to others often flow out of your deepest pain. I have no idea how many times I have been able to move alongside someone (usually via Facebook posts, emails, texts or phone calls) and minister to them in the moments following the loss of their spouse. Just last night I responded to one of my high school classmates when she asked me the question, "When Carol died, how did you make it through the long, dark nights? I cannot hardly make through nights now, without my husband" I typed her a detailed response.

On "Day 100" after Carol's passing, I sat at my computer and typed the words, "She's not coming back." What stings about death is it's permanency. (That is, until heaven.) With the "She's not coming back" recognition, I knew I had to get up and go forward with life. I needed to press on. I could not stay in the deep grief forever.

While sitting on the San Diego beach with a couple – a husband and wife – friends of mine, while in deep grief, I lamented that I would never be married again because I would never be able to find someone like Carol. In my pain, I blurted out, "I have probably known some 300,000 people over the years. (I simply pulled that number out of the air.) There is no one that I know that I want to be married to. I want Carol." The wife, sitting there next to her husband, said to me, "Don't you think that God could bring someone out of nowhere, that you don't know, that you would want to marry?" I pondered that thought for a moment, and then – in my pain and total lack of faith – I answered, "No, I don't think He can do that."

I was wrong.



Rosemary Schindler

While 2013 was marked by profound loss, 2014 became the year that I married Rosemary. She and I had not known each other in the years previous. We had never even heard of each other. Truly God had – like the friend said to me on the beach that day – “brought someone out of nowhere.”

How we met: I was supposed to speak at a prayer conference in Northern California. But I was just in too much grief at that time to go speak somewhere, so I declined. However, by the time the conference came, months later, I was doing better. I went online one day to see who the speakers were at the conference at which, just months earlier, I had declined to speak. I saw a picture of a woman named Rosemary Schindler. I asked my sister, “Judy, do you know her?” Judy looked at me and said only two words, “California gold!”

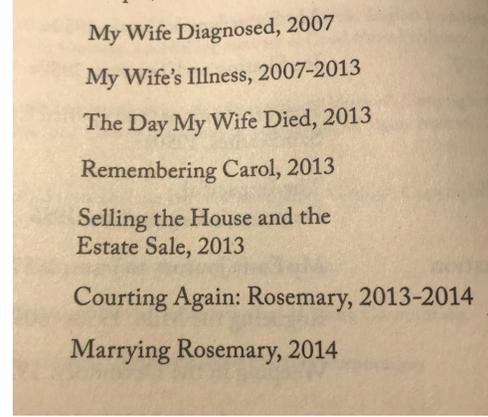
So I began a second ministry. Not only have I been privileged to help persons in the pain of the loss of a spouse, but I have helped many men, in mid-life or older, prepare for remarriage. How could I do this? Because of others who had blessed me. There were so many people who had helped me in my pain with the loss of Carol, and there were so many who also helped guide me as I prepared to marry Rosemary.

Once again, from your deepest pains often flow your most remarkable ministry to others.

It is true, one never “gets over” grief. One learns to navigate “through” it. I think it was almost four years after Carol’s passing before I could say her name without tearing up slightly. But God is faithful to see you through.

By bringing Rosemary into my life, He “put the pieces back together.” He gave me a fresh vision, a new start.

And in the meantime, I will keep doing the ministry that I never asked for and never wanted: helping people who lose their spouse begin to heal and to move forward in the midst of indescribable grief.



If you desire to hear more of the journey of healing and then remarriage, I wrote seven chapters about this in my book *God Will See You Through This*. It is available as a book and in audio as well. You can get one or the other (or both) by making a donation of any amount to the Well Versed ministry at www.WellVersedWorld.org – and then also by emailing us at info@WellVersedWorld.org either the words “book” or “audio” or “both.” It is important that after making the donation on the website you remember to send the email to info@WellVersedWorld.org with either “book” or “audio” or “both.”

But above all, please remember this, if you are one of those who is in deep pain today: From your greatest pains will emerge some of your greatest ministry to others.

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