BEYOND THE BROKEN HEART
A Journey Through Grief

Julie Yarbrough
BEYOND THE BROKEN HEART
A Journey Through Grief

Julie Yarbrough

ABINGDON PRESS
Nashville
Introduction ................................................................. 7
1. Naming Grief ............................................................... 9
    What Is Grief?
    Anger
    Fear
    Worry
    Suffering
    Prayer
2. Understanding Grief ..................................................... 37
    The Stages of Grief
    The Journey of Grief
3. Yielding to Grief .......................................................... 55
    Changing Through Grief
    Loneliness
    Solitude
    Rest for Your Soul
    Comfort
4. Responding to Grief ....................................................... 77
    Making An Effort
    Attitude
    Courage
    Victim or Survivor
5. Adjusting Through Grief ................................................ 99
    Where Do I Fit in Life?
    Gender-specific Grief
    Adjustment
    Acceptance
6. Moving Forward in Grief ............................................... 119
    How Long Does Grief Last?
    Healing
    Happiness
    Hope
7. Growing Spiritually Through Grief ........................................... 137
   The Faithfulness of God
   Reconstruction
   Choose Life
8. Living Beyond Grief ............................................................... 153
   Durable Love
   Gifts of Your Spirit: A Lasting Legacy

**Supplement**
9. Grief at the Holidays ............................................................ 171
   The Season
   The Experience
   The Light
    Personal Business Management
    Forms and Worksheets
Notes .......................................................................................... 203
INTRODUCTION

On a beach vacation in January, 2004, I sat on a beautiful chaise one afternoon, reading a book as warm sunlight streamed into the room. The steady cadence of ocean waves accompanied the rhythm of a soft tropical breeze. I was at peace; life in that moment was carefree and full of contentment. My beloved husband, Leighton, sat in the next room, resting and relaxing. Our life together seemed perfect, complete in every way—not because we were on holiday, but because we were married and had each other to love and cherish.

Three months later Leighton was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, an overwhelmingly terminal disease. Ninety days later he was dead. When he died, I was destroyed: my heart broke into one million small pieces. At fifty-five I was young and very old. I was too old to be young and too young to be old. I was suddenly very much alone.

So powerful was the experience of his illness and death that, for a while, I was certain I would die of a broken heart. Far beyond the poetic, I understood those souls portrayed in literature who languish with no will to live, slowly dying from insurmountable emotional loss. Cause of death: a broken heart. Though my soul survived largely intact, I found myself in frightening, unfamiliar spiritual territory. As I sat alone a few days after Leighton died, immobilized by shock, a tidal wave of emotion engulfed my entire being. I came face to face with the inescapable reality of grief.

There was no other name for that indescribable sense of helplessness, the utter hopelessness that threatened to overwhelm me completely. From deep within I knew that I must go through grief. I could not avoid it, delay it, deny it, or circumvent it. I sensed that grief would be both power and presence in my life for the unforeseeable future. And so began my own personal journey through grief.

Like you, I have faced death in the first person. Although I am not a therapist or professional, I have endeavored to fully understand my life-altering encounter with death and grief. Over many months I worked at grief, I read about grief, I strained to understand grief. Its compelling urgency became my relentless companion.

In my quest to understand grief, I discovered that we grieve because we love. In fact, the more we love, the greater our grief. The ratio of love to loss depends only on the depth of relationship measured by the quality of love. You might say
that we grieve in direct proportion to the depth of our love. Few of us would forego love to avoid the pain of grief. Even in the face of grief we give thanks for having loved so deeply that when death touches our lives, we do nothing for a while except grieve.

We all have a story. “We spend our years as a tale that is told” (Psalm 90:9 KJV). A central part of your personal story is the chapter you continue to write through grief, a story you long to tell so that others will understand this pivotal moment in your life when, for you, all the world changed forever. Being able to share your story within the sanctity of a group of people who know the experience of death and grief helps you to realize that you are not alone. You are certain that you are heard and understood.

Herein lies the purpose of *Beyond the Broken Heart*. Within the sanctity of your group, you will find a community that shares your emotional isolation and loneliness. Together you will find support and encouragement as you seek a life of renewed hope and joy after your personal experience of grief. In the weeks to come, you will experience personal and spiritual growth and enrichment that will transform your grief as your broken heart is healed by God’s triumphant adequacy. “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3 NRSV). You also will discover that death has redemptive value as loss and survival inspire you to greater compassion for the suffering of others.

Each chapter combines stories from my own journey through grief and explores relevant topics using passages from the Bible to illustrate the unfamiliar emotions and questions of grief. You will find that the book explains both the spiritual and practical issues of grief and suggests specific strategies to guide you back to fullness of life. It is recommended that you read one chapter each week prior to your group session (the two supplemental chapters may be read if or when your group chooses to schedule those sessions).

The questions and prompts for personal reflection found throughout the book are provided to help you process your thoughts along your journey through grief. They are private and for your use only. You may want to share your thoughts and feelings with the group, or you may choose to be an active listener. Your participation is strictly voluntary. The group will respect the privacy and individuality of each participant’s unique experience of grief.

Even as I will always cherish my marriage to Leighton, which was the best part of my life, I will continue to transform my experience of grief into a new life that honors the memory of my beloved husband, a life lived in gratitude for the steadfast love and faithfulness of God. This is the goal of your journey through grief as well: transformation and new life. As you embark upon this journey, may the promises of the Bible and the support of those who accompany you along the way sustain and encourage you to trust in life and contemplate hope. You are not alone.

*Julie Yarbrough*

*Dallas, Texas*
How do you understand grief when your heart is broken by the death of a loved one? To survive and live forward, you must find answers. Beyond the Broken Heart is an eight-week grief support and ministry program for anyone who is grieving the loss of a loved one. Author Julie Yarbrough chronicles her personal experience combined with a deep love of Scripture and years of leading grief support groups to create an authentic and deeply personal journey through grief.

This book explains both the spiritual and practical issues of grief and suggests specific strategies to guide you back to fullness of life. Each chapter includes:

- Personal reflections from the author’s own journey through grief
- Help for navigating the emotions, experiences, and questions of grief
- Scriptures and biblical support
- Questions for personal reflection with space for recording responses

You will learn how your experience of grief can be transformed so that your life becomes a life lived in gratitude for the steadfast love and faithfulness of God and a life that honors the memory of your loved one.

"Julie Yarbrough has walked through the valley of the shadow of death and experienced the pain and anguish of great grief, and she knows firsthand the comfort and strength that only God can provide. I commend this remarkable book to you highly."

James W. Moore, Pastor in Residence, Highland Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas

"Guides the brokenhearted on an honest journey toward acceptance and hope."

Stephen Bauman, Senior Minister, Christ Church, New York City

This book also serves as the participant book for the Beyond the Broken Heart grief support and ministry program.

Julie Yarbrough is a native of Dallas, Texas, and the author of Inside the Broken Heart, and Beyond the Broken Heart: Daily Devotions for Your Grief Journey. Inspired by her personal experience after the death of her husband, Dr. Leighton Farrell, the senior minister at Highland Park United Methodist Church for many years, Julie established a grief support group and began writing articles and books for persons who are grieving. She also is the author of Peace of Mind: Financial Management for Life, an estate-planning guide. With over thirty years’ experience in business management, Julie currently serves as president of Yarbrough Investments.