



# *15 Years*

BY MICHELE SPARKMAN



Last week marked the fifteenth anniversary of my sister's death. Never has the passage of time felt so long and so short, a paradox where a lifetime and no time has passed since I last sat by her side, and we laughed together. I miss her laugh.

There is nothing easy about losing someone you love, no matter when it happens. For me, this loss began a difficult and complex journey of grief that unfolded in different ways over time. In the days following our family's deepest loss, the sorrow was so powerful it was as if an unexpected ocean wave overtook me, rendering me breathless and disoriented. The waves were nonstop and overwhelmed at every turn. They appeared in sacred moments where my sister's absence was acutely felt: wedding days, where covenants were made before God; gravesides, as we said goodbye to grandparents, loss occurring in what felt like more natural time; in joyful days, as new life was born, yet still under the shadow of sorrow that my sister was unable to see her son grow into the incredible young man he is today. Life became bittersweet in her absence.

As I navigated these days, I tried to understand what it meant to live with a wound, a soul-deep wound, invisible to the world around me. How could life continue as it did before but where now I walked wounded, slower, and more painfully aware of all the shattered pieces? Yet move forward it did. Slowly, life began to shift from days replete with sorrow

into more ordinary days. There were still days when those waves of sorrow blindsided me; but in time, life settled into a new rhythm and the ordinary days began to outnumber the deep, sorrowful days. Yet even as time continued I discovered every day held faint whispers of sorrow. Things were not as they should be.

The simple reality is when you love someone, you miss them when they are gone. And that feeling enters every space—the sacred and the ordinary—for all the days that follow.

In reflecting on his father's death, RC Sproul wrote, "I don't know the sovereign purpose of God in it. But I do know that God used that suffering in a redemptive way for me. My dad's suffering drove me into the arms of the Suffering Savior." Sproul's words have echoed within my soul. I don't know or understand God's sovereign purpose in my sister's death; but like Sproul, I know God has used this suffering in a redemptive way for me. For walking through the many dark days and nights drove me to Christ, the Suffering Savior, a sacred place where I found refuge under the careful and loving protection of His arms. This Suffering Savior, whom I had long followed but whom I had never quite realized I so desperately needed for life and breath, became my only hope, my only refuge. And it is there, in the unwavering arms of Christ, that I have seen His goodness and faithfulness: both in days where the waves of sorrow overtook me as well as the ordinary days hued with the knowledge that things are not as they should be. Christ has been my steadfast hope.

And He has been my Healer.

On every level, healing is what I needed. I quickly discovered wounds of this depth are not healed by the passage of time, distraction, or avoidance. Deep wounds require soul-deep healing and the healing I desperately needed was found only in Christ. For Christ, perfectly human and perfectly divine, was no stranger to deep wounds. The prophet Isaiah described him as one who was "pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds."

✧ *Michele Sparkman* ✧

This life has brought deep and sorrowful days, more numerous than I could have fathomed, yet because of Christ, I am healed. Though I once was overcome by waves of sorrow, yet now I am overcome by waves of hope. And for this, I rejoice: Christ is my steadfast hope and my healer.