

*Widowhood:
To Date or Not To Date...
That Is the Question*



Judy Towne Jennings

Too many widowed women are told they don't need a man to be happy. That may be true, but those widowed deserve to seek companionship if that is God's plan for their lives. This book is composed of stories from 40 people revealing their various choices.

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By Judy Towne Jennings

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INTRODUCTION

Each widowed person must be willing to move forward into the frightening unknown one step at a time. Living an inspiring story is available for each woman and man after they come through their grief and realize they still have a lot of life to live. It is not easy but do-able.

If you are reading this Introduction and are intrigued by a title that suggests life might yet have adventure, keep reading. It most definitely can. I am claiming that notion, based on my own experiences and the experiences of the many people I have had the opportunity to mentor.

The characters in this book are real; their identities are protected. I am not advocating any one single path to happiness and peace of mind. That is an individual journey. What I am trying to do is offer safe examples of what people have done and why. Some of the stories are inspiring, some offer red flag warnings of what not to do. A few are included because they represent negative personal experiences. In life, bad things happen, but can become worthwhile when shared.

The first principle I am advocating is that widowed persons deserve to find a different source of unconditional love. The Old Testament recommends in several stories that a widowed woman should be provided with another husband to care for her and fulfill her life.

The second principle is that having a purpose can bring joy and peace. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, probably did not remarry after Joseph died, but found purpose in supporting her son, Jesus, and His earthly mission. It is God's plan for all of us to love and be loved. The challenge may be to believe that premise and have faith that the future can be good after a calamity, maybe even exhilarating!

The third principle is that God continues to work in our lives, especially after a catastrophe occurs. Looking back on my own widowhood journey, I claim God-moment interventions at every step. The helps that moved me through my grief were often unexpected but sufficient.

Often, the most difficult tasks required the most faith that God would get me through...and resulted in life changing resolutions. Many of these stories reflect that principle.

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The purpose of the book is to offer permission to men and women everywhere to make the choices that suit their best future selves. Too often, women are told what they should do:

- You shouldn't quit your job.
- You should quit your job.
- You should move in with your kids to help raise your grandkids.
- You shouldn't be looking for a companion. It is costly, time-consuming, and dangerous.
- You should join a dating site and start dating.
- Don't buy a pet. It is expensive and will tie you down.
- Don't move out of the family home.
- Sell your house and move closer to your children.
- And so on...

The advice is endless. In reality, only you will benefit or be harmed by your choices, not your friends or your family. Wise counsel is important. Prayer is powerful. Decisions based on reason rather than emotions will help. Several suggestions are listed to help people be safe and savvy if they decide to begin dating.

Four men shared their stories, revealing that their wants and needs are as powerful as those of widows.

In all of these stories, I pray you laugh at the humor, cheer for triumphs, and become inspired to learn what might work for you. Hopefully, you will better appreciate your own potential for a path directed by God, with purpose and unconditional love.

God bless your journey,

Judy Towne Jennings

SECTION A:
Happiness is Possible

CHAPTER 1:

Finding a Purpose is Essential To Moving Forward

Kate's Story

In the process of finding a meaningful escape out of the chaos, all widows have one thing in common: they need to find a purpose for living. It is easy to give up and think life is cruel and not worth the effort. It takes courage and persistence to move on to a new, better “something.”

Kate credits her life purpose to inspirations from God. A winding path through her grief made her into a dynamic Widow's Support Group Leader and Mentor. To highlight how she arrived, we need to start at the beginning.

When she was attending a Christian college, she was introduced to a handsome guy named Jack. He was 6'4.

Being 5'2, she opened the conversation with, “How's the weather up there?”

He responded with “How's the weather down there?”

That bit of humor started a lifelong relationship. They realized they had several common interests in faith, music, and teaching. After Jack graduated, they were married and moved to Florida for his new teaching position in music. In hindsight, it seems God was directing their steps. Jack met a recruiter, for a company that published music for Christian performers, who hired Jack for the Georgia and Alabama territories.

He was perfect in that position. His dry wit and laid-back demeanor encouraged trust and confidence in his clients. He exuded his Christian ideals with his family and his contacts. For many years he was honored as Salesman of the Year. His success exposed his family to many talented Christian performers and faith-based trips and conventions. He and Kate felt they were living a blessed life experience.

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Kate also lived her faith throughout their marriage. As a teacher, she taught her students with dignity, providing them with a sense of self-respect. With her calm but fair classroom demeanor, she guided their life lessons and promoted a love for school.

After Jack retired, they moved to Tennessee to be near family. In the process of building their forever house, he developed stomach problems. The diagnosis was a blocked colon resulting from Cancer. Jack and Kate fought a mighty battle to restore his health for 22 months. Sadly, he lost the battle.

She gave up on the house they were building. It was too painful to visualize living there without Jack. Their son and family circled around her. They offered her an upstairs apartment in their new house, which provided not only a place to live but a family to fall back upon while she worked through her grief.

Kate could have given up on God because of this catastrophe and devastating change in her plans. She didn't. This is her story:

Initially, she tried many programs and suggestions. Some worked, some didn't help at all. Her goal was to find an acceptance of Jack's death and, ultimately, consolation that her life could be meaningful again.

--She attended a church Grief Program with her family. They all agreed that this program was not helpful to them. The room was filled with people who were in grief for various types of loss: spouse, mother, sister, child, or even a pet. Some had been returning to the group for over five years. The structure seemed to be a continuous regaling of feelings of grief for each member for each week. Not seeing any apparent hope for change was depressing for Kate and the family. They didn't go back.

--The Funeral Home sent a series of messages that were positive and encouraging and offered some personal help.

--Counseling with a positive, encouraging professional was worth the money it cost. During one session, when Kate reported having constant numbness in her jaw and upper chest, the counselor taught her breathing exercises that eliminated her habit of taking shallow breaths. It worked. The Counselor shared normal reactions to grief and how to

deal with them. Kate began to realize that she had the potential to be joyful again, but it would require effort on her part.

--Her small group, associated with her church, gathered around her. They provided food after the funeral and continued showing concern with hugs, invites, calls, and other kindnesses. This helped her feel valued.

--Attending a different small group composed only of widows truly helped her begin the process toward wholeness. Other widows, also seeking to move on, understood the depths of her loss and offered suggestions that were working for each of them. When the coordinator had to quit, Kate felt motivated to volunteer to organize the monthly dinners.

Over the next year, the widow's support group blossomed with Kate's creative ideas and Godly inspirations.

The group expanded from four to 30 persons, from monthly restaurant dinners to festive in-home potlucks, from once-a-month dinners to organized activities throughout the month. The women healed in the company of other positive, forward-thinking ladies. They added a Bible Study group, shopping, movies, garage sales, and traveling with the Senior Center's organized trips.

The cement holding this group together was a love for Christ shown through caring gestures. If a widow needed surgery, others took her meals or drove her to Doctor visits. If the burden was too heavy for a new widow, others visited frequently or talked on the phone till the tears could be managed.

Kate's strong faith and desire to feel purposeful provided a light for others to follow. In time, each began to nurture her need to feel whole by testing out new and different activities. One dusted off her violin and joined a performing orchestra group. Some became very involved with their grandbabies or volunteered in the church nursery. Each person's reignited purpose was unique to her and her special talents or interests. Some took jobs; others began dating. All began to see how God was available and connected to a life transformation: from being a widow to becoming a woman who happened to be widowed.

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The transformation was most effective when a woman could put God and Christ in charge of her life, knowing that God would and could bring peace and love out of the ashes of a destroyed life plan.

Kate has not dated nor anticipates dating in the future. She has carved out a purposeful life with many loving friends. Her days are full. Her mission is energizing. If she needs a man for manly advice, she has many married men in her church small group that she could ask. When asked what she would do if God placed a special new man into her world, she responded, “God always knows best, I would be willing to befriend him.”

WIDOWS HELPING WIDOWS

About the Author

Judy Towne Jennings lives in Manchester, Tennessee. She has started another Widows' Support Group because the need is apparent for this small town...as is the case in all churches and all towns and cities. Widows are everywhere and the journey is difficult.

Judy welcomes comments or questions from her readers about her topics and her books.

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Webpage: www.judytownejennings.com has information about all of her books with an order tab availability.

[Facebook.com/dementiacaregiver](https://www.facebook.com/dementiacaregiver)

Amazon: Author, Judy Towne Jennings

[Booklocker.com/14160](https://www.booklocker.com/14160)

She encourages new widows to read her second book: **The Wonderful Widowhood World... If You Give Friendship With God a Try**. There is an appendix in that book to help widows start a new widows' support group with a series of questions useful to start a discussion.

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