

# IGNITE

THE FIRST RESPONDER'S LIFE GUIDE  
DECEMBER 2022 / ISSUE NO.12

FROM BULLIED AND  
SCARED TO  
BEAUTIFULLY WHOLE  
AND FORGIVEN

THE UNPREPARED  
LIFE

PTSD:  
NOW VERSUS THEN

FIGHT THE ELEPHANT NO  
ONE'S WILLING TO TALK  
ABOUT

FALLING  
THROUGH THE  
HOLES

HAPPY SPOUSE . . .  
HAPPY HOUSE

UNITING FIRST RESPONDER FAMILIES

**YOU MATTER!**

# IGNITE MAGAZINE

Lorie Gurnett – Creator & Editor

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**"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."**

**~ Romans 15:4**



Dallas Block

In 2005, Dallas Block had a passion for reaching a segment of Canada's youth (addicts) and their families with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He soon became a founding board member of Rock Solid Refuge. This ministry, 95 km southwest of Swift Current, Saskatchewan is committed to bringing God's transforming love to adolescents with life-controlling issues, that hope might be restored. Dallas is now the Executive Director.

A former Youth Worker/Pastor and Associate Pastor to Youth and Families, Dallas has 29 years' experience working with teens and families. He and Marla, his wife of 30 years, have raised their four children around Rock Solid Refuge and are no strangers to the sacrifices it takes to minister in the most desperate situations.



Jennifer Lamson-LaPlume

Jennifer Lamson-LaPlume was born and raised in Maine where she currently resides with her husband, two children, and two cats. Jennifer taught elementary school for fourteen years. She has written two books of poetry: *Anything But Empty* and *Invisible Hope*. She enjoys spending time with her family, especially walking in the woods and by the ocean. During summers and holidays, Jennifer loves to create family theme days filled with fun, competitive, and cooperative activities.



Alina Bulmer

Alina Bulmer, 29 years old, lives in northern Alberta, but she was born and raised Ukrainian. She has been married almost eight years, and a tuxedo cat completes the family. Alina is passionate about relationships and absolutely loves the Christmas season. Her life continues to be an adventure, now helping Ukrainians adjust to life in Canada.



Barbara Katuula

Nothing gives Barabara Kaplan more joy than putting a smile on someone's face. Her dear sister was involved in a car accident at a very young age, and Barabara learned to be caring as a child. When her sister experienced mood swings, Barabara thought her sister didn't like her. It took Barabara a long time to understand that her sister's emotions changed because of the brain damage she sustained. Barabara's weapon as a child, and one she still maintains, is to pray for situations beyond her control.



Susan Ford

Susan Ford is an author, coach, and former volunteer firefighter/EMT. Her calling is to offer a safe place to ask questions and explore answers for those harmed by religion, so they can find truth and experience healing. Susan is the author of *Beyond the Parentheses: Your Journey to Transcend Religious Trauma, Seek Truth, and Embrace Love*. This book is for people who, like her, are navigating a return to faith after religious pain or trauma.

Connect with Susan at [susanford.com](http://susanford.com).



Dustin Burlet

Dr. Dustin Burlet is an instructor at Millar College of the Bible (Winnipeg, MB). His book is *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of Noah's Flood in Genesis*. At age fourteen, Dustin started volunteering, alongside his Mom and Dad, with the P. V. Fire Department. Dustin and Rebecca have been married since 2007. Rebecca (M. A. Counselling Psychology) works at Oakville Wellness Centre. They have three children: Malachi (11), Ezra (9), Daisha (6).

# Stepping Through Your Grief

Editor's Inspirational



Cordie was born on February 7, 1973 in Atikokan, Ontario and passed away after a courageous battle with cancer on November 16, 2022 in Trail, British Columbia.

Cordie is predeceased by her dad, William Moir, aunt Nellie Moir, uncle Bill Kasper, grandmother Lavon Wheatley, and grandmother Sybil Jones.



Cordie is survived by her mom, Doris Moir, brother James (Liliana) Moir, sister Lorie (Mervyn) Gurnett, nephew Logan Gurnett, niece Aurora Gurnett, aunt Donna Kasper, and many more aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Cordie was a vibrant and adventurous soul. She was a speech pathologist, residing in Warfield, British Columbia. She was a world traveller and very creative with home renovations, landscaping, and photography. She delighted in camping with her niece and nephew in the summers and kayaking with her dog, Lulu, and friends.



“Normality is boring,  
I am one with my weirdness.”

~ Cordie Moir ~

# FROM BULLIED AND SCARED TO BEAUTIFULLY WHOLE AND FORGIVEN

**BY: Dallas Block**  
[rocksolidrefuge.com](http://rocksolidrefuge.com)

“Identity.” Such an interesting word nowadays. Its implications are wide and varied in our times, and how we understand our identity shapes so much of how we think, believe, and behave. Are you the scared, bullied, junior-high kid who's always wondering what personal attacks might happen today? Or perhaps just the youngest of eight, one of the clan expected to tow the family line so as not to dishonour those who have gone before you? Are you a singer? I like to sing, but will others like it if I sing? Perhaps a husband, father, or grandfather? When it comes down to it, what is the core of who you are and what gives your life meaning and purpose? Does it even matter?



“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”  
~ Genesis 1:27



What is the difference between having happiness because good times have come and having joy because you're secure in who you are? Is there a place to rest in knowing you are not a mistake (even if your parents didn't plan for you)?

When I sit with a young person who seems to be just as willing for life to end as for it to go on ... who seems to have no light in their eyes or hope for the future, what is it that gives me a passion for seeing light return, hope restored, and meaning—deep meaning—as the foundation on which they live?

I am the youngest of eight. I was always very small for my age and was an easy target for bullying. I was never the smart nor academic student; I could never dominate in athletics. I became a heavy-duty mechanic. I have been a Youth Pastor. I am one of the founders, and now the Executive Director, of Rock Solid Refuge—recovery program for struggling teen boys—responding to hundreds of call-ins for crisis situations from suicidal threats to violent outbursts. Does

how I understand my identity actually matter when it comes to staying the course—the right course—when people depend on me and lives are literally at stake?

My parents taught me to believe in the God of the Bible. Some would say I believe because I just carried on my parents belief. But losing my mom in a car accident when I was twelve years old shook my beliefs to the core, and I refused to believe just because it was expected. So, I experimented for a season. But when it comes right down to it, I just couldn't shake the fact that we cannot all be just a cosmic accident. It is the most comforting truth that God made the cosmos. He is unfathomably powerful, yet He knit me together in my mother's womb, unplanned as I was. Psalm 139:13 says God is intimately interested in me.

If I am created in God's image, carefully woven or knit together in my mother's womb, then my significance and the deep meaning of my life doesn't come from my accomplishments, roles, or titles but from the character of the God who made me. But then, like the first humans, Adam

"I just couldn't shake the fact that we cannot all be just a cosmic accident."

~ Dallas Block



"WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAVING HAPPINESS BECAUSE GOOD TIMES HAVE COME AND HAVING JOY BECAUSE YOU'RE SECURE IN WHO YOU ARE? IS THERE A PLACE TO REST IN KNOWING YOU ARE NOT A MISTAKE, EVEN IF YOUR PARENTS DIDN'T PLAN FOR YOU?"

~ DALLAS BLOCK



and Eve, I am also intimately aware of my failings. How do I keep going when I have been harsher than I should have been? Or I learn that a youth we tried to help still dies of an overdose? Or I simply can't make everything right for that family who is desperate for help? Romans 8:1, "That there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." I can't bear the weight of my own sin without being destroyed by the guilt and, ultimately, by my accountability to the God whom I have most offended. I have to know that my sin is not overlooked, but forgiven. I can no longer imagine living without the knowledge that my sin is forgiven by God. No more condemnation. Free from guilt and

fear. Free to live in my new identity: I'm a child of God, deeply loved by the One who made me and redeemed me by the sacrifice of His own life.

But now what? How do I deal with the fact that, daily, I am tempted to forget these truths and sink again into fear and anxiety? How do I avoid wearing, almost like a huge heavy overcoat, the struggles of day-to-day life and work that has no shortage of crisis moments? Psalm 73 is inescapably helpful and comforting in my deepest time of need. The author starts out by acknowledging his struggle with trying to do what is right, yet life still seems to be unbearable. Then he comes

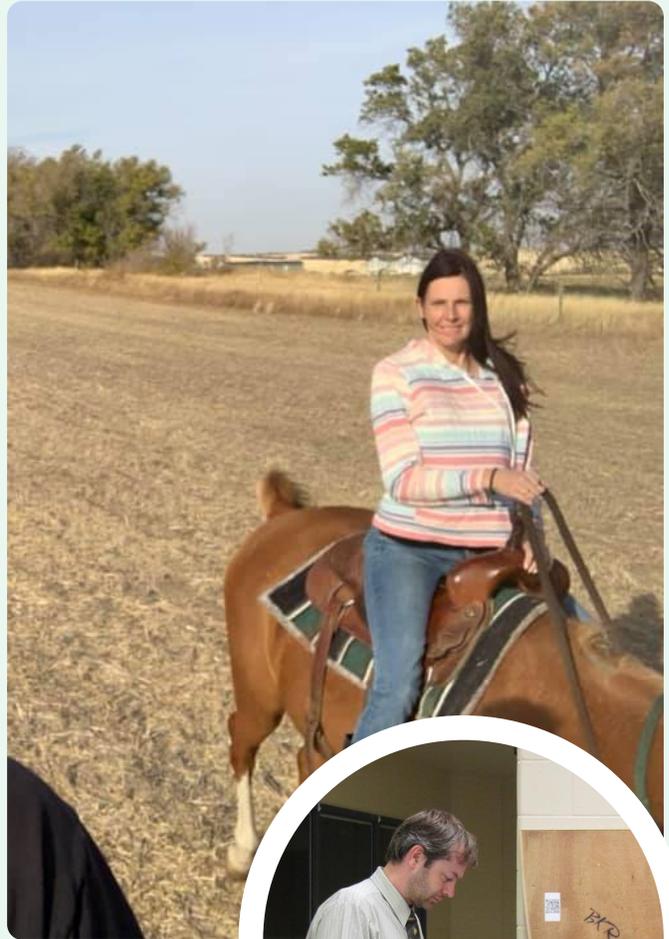
into the presence of God. There, he is able to ponder things: what life is all about and who life is all about. He let's go of being primarily concerned about himself and gets his eyes on his Creator and Lord.

“I am continually with you.” My life is secure in the perfect presence of God.

“You hold my right hand.” My right hand is my hand of strength, yet my strength is always insufficient. God holds my right hand and, therefore, becomes my strength. When I walk into a crisis with a teen, threatening himself and others with a broken piece of glass—when I am totally out of my element and don't have enough in myself—God holds my hand and gives me what I need.

“You guide me with your counsel.” I can promise you I am not smart enough for all that God has called me to do, but God promises wisdom for all who ask him in faith.

“And afterward you will receive me to glory.” Everyday I am comforted that God is preparing a place for me that will be perfect. Not just for me but for all who put their faith and trust in Christ. No more pain, tears, sorrow, death, mourning, etc. Perfect paradise for all eternity. We can't escape the difficulties of this life, but God has promised us a hope that is beyond our wildest imaginations. I am comforted knowing this is



what my mom now experiences.

What thrills you most in this life? What are you most passionate about? What gets you up and gives you the greatest joy and satisfaction? The author of Psalm 73 would say it is God, Himself—a personal and intimate relationship with God. “Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my

heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

How about you? Will you come daily into God's "sanctuary"—His presence? Will you rest in who He is and then live out the calling He has for you?

Article by Dallas Block



To find out more about the ministry of Rock Solid Refuge and the help they offer to struggling teens, go to [rocksolidrefuge.com](http://rocksolidrefuge.com).



"If I am created in God's image, carefully woven or knitted together in my mother's womb, then my significance and the deep meaning of my life doesn't come from my accomplishments, roles, or titles but from the character of the God who made me."



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## PTSD- NOW VERSUS THEN

Jennifer Lamson-LaPlume

A little over ten years ago my world was flipped. As the car I was in, flipped onto its side, my internal world also flipped. Within a year I would not only be diagnosed with single-trauma Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) but also what is referred to as complex PTSD which means having experienced trauma over a long period such as having experienced child abuse.

During the first few years of my diagnosis, I felt like I had detached from who I was before. There were so many aspects of life that became challenging. It seemed like everything was harder, from sleeping to working as an elementary school teacher to raising my two boys with my husband. Sounds that I had lived with, like sirens and loud

voices, that I had not really been bothered by suddenly caused a panic now. I had to leave my job of teaching which was a very important part of my life. Teaching is all I ever wanted to do, and suddenly, I knew I could not do it any longer. Anxiety attacks were a regular part of my life. I had very little energy. Sometimes it just felt like I was merely existing and not actually living my life any more. I felt separated from everyone and everything in my life. I felt alone and scared most of the time.

I was going to therapy sessions twice a week for 90+ minutes each. At first, I could not talk in therapy. I would just sit there thinking about all the things I wanted to say and wondering so many things about my life. I would open my mouth to speak and no sound would come out, and I would just close my mouth and sit back resigned. I often found myself cowering on the floor at the sounds of sirens outside because of flashbacks. Eventually, I was able to write. I would journal between sessions, and my therapist and I would read them together. Sometimes in session, I would write on paper what I wanted to speak out loud.

Along with therapy, it was necessary for me to seek additional help. I went to an outpatient partial hospitalization program which taught strategies, provided therapeutic guidance, and



medication management. I was admitted to local hospitals on the behavioral health units or sent to psychiatric hospitals. These places usually terrified me more at first, but eventually proved to provide a safe enough space for me to settle my internal world back down and return home after a short stay.

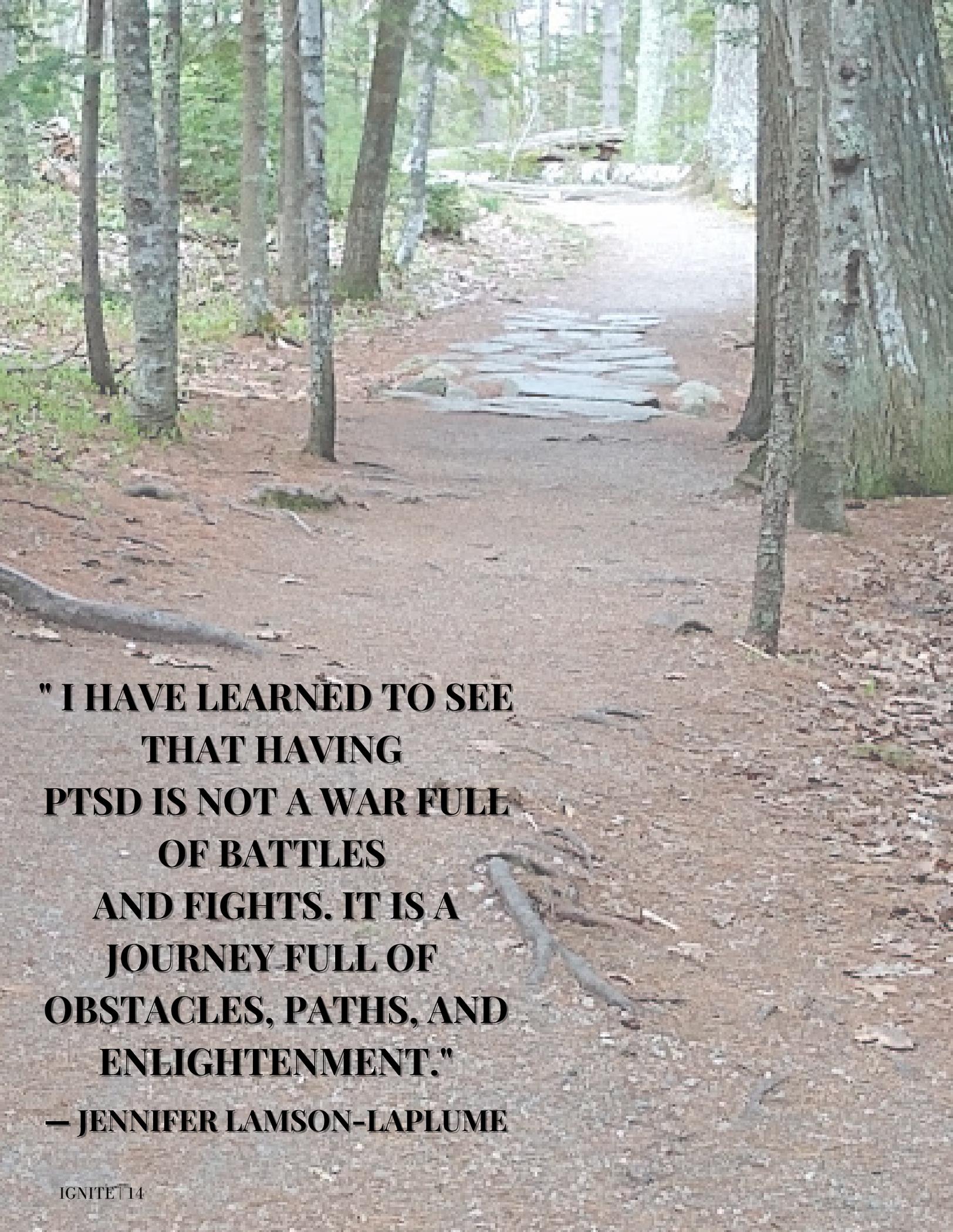
The place that I credit for saving my life is Sheppard-Pratt Hospital. Moses Sheppard co-founded the hospital with the idea that, "Courteous treatment and comfort of all patients; that no patient was to be confined below ground; all were to have privacy,



**"MANY PEOPLE ARE RESISTANT TO INPATIENT TREATMENT. OTHERS DO NOT REQUIRE SUCH CARE. EACH PERSON IS DIFFERENT."**

sunlight and fresh air; the asylum's purpose was to be curative, combining science and experience for the best possible results; and that only income, not principal would be used to build and operate the asylum." I traveled across several states to be admitted for inpatient care in the trauma disorders unit and learned that his vision still holds true with the quality of care that I received over a century later. It is the place where I could step away from the world, learn

about myself and my PTSD, and learn strategies to help in my everyday life. Many people are resistant to inpatient treatment. Others do not require such care. Each person is different. I used to think I was inferior to others who had the same diagnosis as myself because they did not seem to need such intensive treatment. Now, I am grateful for the help I received inpatient and I am grateful that I have had a therapist as knowledgeable and supportive as the one I have

A photograph of a dirt path in a forest. The path is covered in brown leaves and pine needles. In the middle of the path, there is a stone step or a small bridge made of several flat stones. The trees are tall and thin, with green foliage in the background. The lighting is soft, suggesting a slightly overcast day.

**" I HAVE LEARNED TO SEE  
THAT HAVING  
PTSD IS NOT A WAR FULL  
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ENLIGHTENMENT."**

**— JENNIFER LAMSON-LAPLUME**

been working with outpatient for over nine years.

Ten years after the car accident and over nine years after my diagnosis, I see life much differently and I feel like I am a combination of my “old” self and my “new” self. I have learned to see that having PTSD is not a war full of battles and fights. It is a journey full of obstacles, paths, and enlightenment. I am not as easily triggered as I was in the beginning. I know how to use my skills and strategies when I find myself faced with stressful situations, whether stemming from the past or from the present. I still struggle, but I feel stronger. I can laugh and smile. I can enjoy my current life. I still work on reconciling my past and accepting that this is part of my story. I do not yet consider myself stable enough to take on the responsibilities of a regular job, but I can do more than I was able to in the beginning. I spend a significant amount of my time at appointments to work on healing my physical and emotional well-being. The difference is now I understand my journey and my job.

I see hope that I did not see before. I know that I have so much support on my journey, including my family, my friends, my church family, and God. In Philippians 4:6-7 it is said “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” I have felt this strength come into my life through the support of those



around me when I am feeling scared and alone. God walks among us with the angels here on earth. If you or a loved one are receiving a PTSD diagnosis or dealing with overwhelming symptoms, know that there is hope and things will get better. I do not know where it originated, but hope is often used as an acronym: hold on pain ends. The intense pain of this moment will pass and allow room for light. Find your path, follow its twists and turns, and know that you will learn how to navigate life with PTSD.

Article by Jennifer Lemson



# THE UNPREPARED LIFE

BY: ALINA BULMER

Life is a journey that no one can prepare us for. It is one that shapes and molds who we become along the way. In my life, I can testify that God is undoubtedly present in the moments that we can hardly bear, just as he is present in our happiness. Through Him, we have incredible strength to face life's uncertainties, and He meets us there in the way that He knows we need.

Grief found me in one of the happiest seasons of my life. That season when the man I love got down on one knee to ask that perfect question. The





“I lift my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of Heaven and Earth”

– Psalm 121:1

“I used to think  
that there was an  
expiry date on  
grief, but  
that is a lie.”  
-Alina Bulmer

season of shopping for the perfect white dress. Where the date is set and invitations are sent out in anticipation of that beautiful day. The countdown to marrying the man God had blessed me with had begun! March 2015 was the anniversary of our wedding, but that was not all.

There was something missing in that special season. Not something, but rather someone. Mom.

On opposite sides of the country, we were planning my wedding. That year her health was struggling, but she would

say it was nothing to worry about and that soon it would all work itself out. Every phone call ended with her sending me her love as we were counting down the days to being reunited soon on my wedding day. But my hope of that reunion was shattered when a call came. She was not able to come.

I cannot describe what emotions filled my heart in that moment, but the Lord stirred my spirit with urgency and spoke to me through the embrace of my fiancé and the words of my mother-in-law. He told me to go home. It was now one week before our wedding day.

I didn't know it then, but it would be my last visit with my mother, and it was one I will never forget. A memory of her in our home in Ontario. A place that was full of precious

memories. God sent me home for what I now know, was my last goodbye. He granted me one final moment that I will now cherish forever. With her health declining rapidly, she passed away within the couple of weeks that followed our wedding day. She was diagnosed with a late stage of Cancer and the Lord took her home.

I used to think that there was an expiry date on grief, but that is a lie. Grief changes over the years, and it presents itself in a moment's notice. I thought it was a constant sorrow, but instead, it moved in dark thoughts, and sorrow was replaced with anger. I was lost in my emotions. I did not know how to grieve. It has been nearly eight years since then, and I have learned to accept that it does not get easier.

With normal grief, you may appear from the outside to carry on like you had before the loss. But inside, your emotions are experiencing changes associated with grief, such as pain, anger, emptiness, and numbness. These emotions may come in waves where everyday life fills up thoughts and actions. But being alone can allow the

wave to form into a tidal wave when the grief emotions burst through. Usually, the grief emotions lessen over time, and you develop a new normal in the way you think of the loss. You learn to accept the loss and deal with it healthily.



**“Through Him we have incredible strength to face life’s uncertainties and He meets us there in the way that He knows we need”**

I asked the Lord to help me survive the triggers. I asked Him to preserve the best memories I have of my Mama, and He has done so. In moments of grief, the light of those memories becomes a comfort. Like a movie rewind and played at my favorite part. I will miss and love my mother forever. I praise God for the 22 years I had with her.

God meets us in the way He knows we need. To me, He has spoken through songs. My joy lies in praising Him with song, and I have used that passion to serve my church as a worship leader. They are also my comfort

when I grieve, and they give me hope. “In Christ alone, my hope is found. He is my rock; my strength; my song” (Chris Tomlin). As I walk this journey of life, I know the Lord continuously embraces me. He is a gentle and loving Heavenly Father. There is no burden too great for our God to bear and He promises that we do not need to carry them alone. In Him we can rest.

Article by Alina Bulmer

# FIGHT THE ELEPHANT NO ONE'S WILLING TO TALK ABOUT

Barbara Katuula

I have worked in mental health services for over 20 years, but the rate of suicide has never been this high, especially in young children. Where are we failing as parents; where are we failing as families? Where are we failing as a society? Where are we failing? Losing a loved one is devastating. But the questions that follow a suicide cut deeper, with all the *what ifs*. What were they battling internally? Could



Photo by: Mikhail Nilov



I have done something to save them? How could I have let something like this happen? All these unanswered questions, will destroy you, if you only dwell on what cannot be changed. The emotions that go hand-in-hand with these unanswered questions will cut like a knife.

I started working with individuals suffering from psychotic episodes, including amnesia, forgetting who they and their loved ones were for many years. Being hard struck by these events, nothing could have prepared me. While visiting my mother in Uganda, she was unwell and during the time I visited her, she had lost consciousness. Later, she could no longer recognize me, she kept asking me for her daughter. She was calling for her children and could not believe it when I presented myself as her daughter. She pushed me away and called me a liar.



We will defeat it, we need to fight the elephant, together

My best friend, whom I had known all my life, didn't recognize me and that was traumatic, but this hit me like a ton of bricks.

Losing a loved through a traumatic experience leaves long-lasting implications, but losing a loved one to suicide is even harder. It is hard to talk about trauma without mentioning the emotions and events that comes with self-harm and suicide. Take a moment to comfort that person who self-harms. Take a moment to comfort those who survive



suicide attempts. Take time to comfort their closest loved ones too. The individuals that self-harm, the deceased who complete suicide, and the loved ones left behind to grieve, all need support and comfort.

Long-term grief is largely associated with trauma which can be manifested in post-traumatic stress disorder. I call it unfinished negative emotions that can linger for a very long time. These emotions, buried underneath, can surface and bring back raw emotions of the traumatic event. What I learned is that there is always something good from these traumatic experiences.

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible, unpleasant event such as an accident, violent act, rape, natural disaster, etc. For some, it begins with shock, denial, numbness, or anger, but there are long-term reactions, such as unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strange relationships, and many more. Some survivors struggle to move on, getting stuck in those situations for years while some move on with their lives quickly.

In our journey of life, there is pleasure and pain, sunshine and rain, loss and gain; but we must keep hope and learn to smile again ... and again and again. The good news is that we can overcome these traumas by dealing with the causes and, together, we can triumph.

Through my experiences, I learned to be more empathic and more understanding. It made me more patient, supporting, and caring. Being able to relate to the underlying emotions, I can give my best. Trauma is not always a negative thing; sometimes it brings the best out of us.

There's no doubt this is a very sensitive topic. One that can be easily avoided because it is an elephant in the room that people would not want to talk about. We need to fight the elephant. Together we will defeat it. It always comes as a shock, and it's not one of those that one would ever get a grip on or even understand, but it is happening. Please let's join our hands and voices together to minimize suicides. This is a call out to the youngest generation. Parents, siblings, friends, and families are grieving losses of lives as young as 8, 9, and 10 years old. I can't even begin to quantify it. Let's join our voices, write about it, raise awareness, and share the impact to the entire community.

Article by Barbara Katuola



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# FALLING THROUGH THE HOLES

By Susan Ford

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Have you ever watched someone fall through the holes? In emergency medical training, we talk about Swiss cheese. No, not the kind my husband loves to put on top of his burgers. I'm talking about James Reason's "Swiss Cheese Model" of system failures.

Reason created this model to explain how patients could be harmed or even die due to a series of failures in the healthcare system. No matter how many barriers and



safeguards we put in place to prevent adverse outcomes, it's not perfect. Each person or policy in the EMS system can fail.

Normally, one failure would not lead to patient harm because another part of the system would provide protection.

When the "Swiss cheese holes" line up, however, the danger passes right through a series of gaps and failures in all the checkpoints. Despite the precautions we've taken—the training, the practice, and our best intentions—the person we were trying so hard to save "falls through the holes" and dies.



As EMS professionals, these are the calls that stick with us. How do we live with them? How do we learn from fatal failures and move on? How do we avoid being consumed by each toxic “what if” question on the chain of events that ended in a death which may have been preventable or, in the fire service, a structure that didn’t need to burn down?

Take, for example, the cardiac patient who begins having chest pain. What if he and his wife had called for help sooner rather than waiting more than 24 hours and then merely scheduling an appointment with his cardiologist?

What if the cardiologist had told them to go straight to the emergency room rather than booking an office visit?

What if the EMT crew had loaded him up and started for the hospital right away rather than lingering on scene getting a full set of vitals, asking about his medication list, and wasting precious minutes waiting for the paramedic-staffed ambulance to arrive?

If he had gotten care sooner, he may not have suffered fatal cardiac arrest in the back of an ambulance on a remote rural road, miles from the nearest hospital. Maybe he would have been flown to an advanced cardiac treatment center where he could have had a life-saving procedure that would have allowed him to return home to his wife, his dog, and the life they had together.

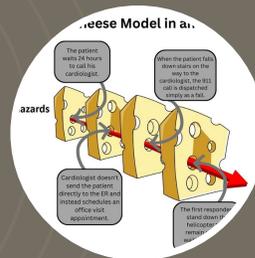
Instead, we are left with questions and his wife is left with a final memory of her husband looking her in the eyes and telling her he was going to die about 45 minutes before he ultimately did.



My husband—a military veteran, retired law enforcement officer, and volunteer first responder—always says, “The what ifs will kill you.” Whatever happened is over and done. We no longer have any control over the outcome. We can’t change what happened to that patient.

What we can do—what we owe to him and his family to do—is to conduct a thorough after-action review (AAR) to identify each failure point so we can learn, move forward, and help others avoid this chain of events themselves.

We guard against and learn from “Swiss cheese” scenarios as first responders, but what about in our personal lives? It’s not just our patients and those whose



emergencies we respond to that matter. Are we, or those we love, silently falling through a series of holes that threaten our mental, physical, emotional, relational, and/or spiritual lives?

My own Swiss cheese experience was spiritual and began in childhood. The holes of learned and innate perfectionism, a desire for parental approval, respect for authority, and being raised in a legalistic fundamentalist Christian church all aligned.

The God I was being told to believe in was seemingly serving up a heaping plate of soul-crushing law. He had little to no grace for those of us who couldn't live up to the lofty standard of Christian perfection. Despite genuinely believing as a child, years of religious trauma and pain aligned with an environment in which it felt unsafe to ask questions or be imperfect. My former beliefs seemed both unfounded and unsustainable, so I became an atheist.

In EMS, the closest we get to raising the dead is using CPR or an AED to jolt a heart back into a normal rhythm. That's seemingly miraculous in and of itself, but God can actually bring people back from the physical or spiritual dead.

Effective CPR isn't gentle. It's forceful and rigorous, often causing broken ribs and extensive bruising. Coming back to the faith after religious pain can be equally intense as fears are triggered and unresolved traumas are brought to light.



My calling is to offer those harmed by religion a safe place to ask questions and explore answers so they can find truth and experience healing. As fellow first responders of faith, I invite you to join me.

My book, *Beyond the Parentheses: Your Journey to Transcend Religious Trauma, Seek Truth, and Embrace Love*, is an AAR of sorts that looks at my spiritual journey from legalism to atheism to grace.





I wrote this book for those who have been wounded by religion or have had faith and religious teachings used as a weapon against them. It is for people who are navigating a return to faith after religious trauma and for those like you who love and want to support them.

On a personal note, my prayer for you is that whatever “Swiss cheese” events you’ve witnessed or lived through, you avoid the “what ifs.”

Article by Susan Ford

Do your AAR, then extend yourself grace and forgiveness as you move forward carrying what you have learned to the next call.

“I do not at all understand the mystery of grace—only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us.”

– Anne Lamott

# HAPPY SPOUSE . . . HAPPY HOUSE

DR. DUSTIN BURLET

While the above quip may, perhaps, be considered by some people to be somewhat hackneyed and cliché, I remain persuaded that one of the key components (if not the key component) of any successful public service (volunteer or not) involves cultivating/maintaining a strong marriage.

The greatest evidence of this for me, personally, has involved watching my own Mom and Dad.

To be clear, my parents recently celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary. My mom and dad together have served for over thirty years on the Paradise Valley Fire Departmentt.

As such, I have seen firsthand how vital mutual love and respect is for a solid marriage and how much of a positive impact their influence has made in the community for leadership and service.

Of course, marriage isn't always easy.

For instance, my dad is a Toronto Maple Leaf's fan but Mom cheers for the Habs!

I'm going to use the acronym L - A - F to help give a framework for building a strong marriage.

The 'L' stands for LOVE. Above all, love is the glue that binds two people together.

Scripture helps us define love in a tangible, concrete way. The Apostle Paul states: "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps

no record of being wronged . . . Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance” (1 Cor 13:4-5, 7 NLT)

Whatever else a marriage might need, love is the source that gives relationship life.

The ‘A’ represents the word APPRECIATE.

When we appreciate someone, we nurture them, cherish them, and see their value.

To value someone means to create time, space, and energy for them.

This can take many forms.

Gary Chapman’s popular book, *The Five Love Languages*, offers a great overview:

Quality Time - there is no substitute for spending sustained one-on-one time with your



“People today know the price of everything but the value of nothing.”  
– Oscar Wilde

spouse. Watching a movie, going for a walk, exploring new restaurants, and other shared activities help nurture growth in relationship and create positive memories that can be shared over a lifetime.

While we don’t all have the same number of hours in the day to carve out time for our spouses due to varying work schedules, etc. we each have the capacity to make our spouse feel special.

Physical Touch: although not everyone appreciates being touched in the same way, warm embraces, passionate kisses, unexpected





foot rubs, scented candles, and luxurious back massages can make all the difference in a marriage. Holding hands, too, marks a special bond. The thing about touch is that it must work for both parties. Supportive marriages think win-win.

Words of Affirmation: my wife, Rebecca, wrote in our Christmas letter this year how much she appreciated me being a great dad and playmate to our kids. Needless to say, her comment(s) made my heart sing. Surely everyone would agree that encouragement is oxygen to the soul.

Gifts: Inarguably, the Christmas season puts this aspect at the forefront of many people's minds.

That said, unique, thoughtful, and creative ideas need no special holiday (or a through-the-roof budget!) to show that you care. The most special gift that I have ever received from my spouse was three hand-made paintings of three related scenes from one of my favorite authors, Dr. Seuss.

"Stag at Night," "Pink-Tufted Creature," and "Antlered Animal Adoring Pink-Tufted Creature."



**“THE STRENGTH OF THE  
PACK IS THE WOLF AND  
THE STRENGTH OF THE  
WOLF IS THE PACK”  
~ RUDYARD KIPLING**



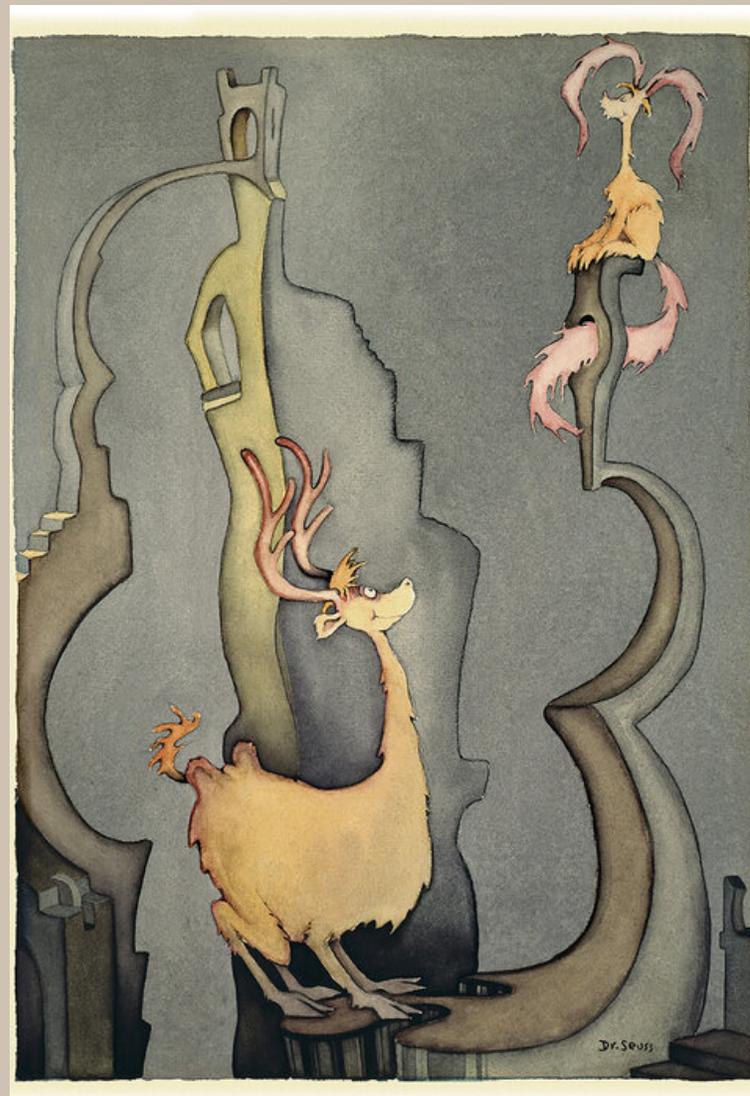
1. marriage is about mutual love and respect
2. marriage involves loving, appreciating, and forgiving your spouse
3. Supportive marriages think win-win

To be clear, the three images represented: (1) me, (2) my spouse, and (3) Rebecca and I together.

In inimitable Ted Geisel style, Dr. Seuss conveys the mystery of courtship through architecture. Whenever I lay on my bed and see those pictures it brings a smile to my face like nothing else!

Acts of Service : My wife loves to bake, cook, and delight our family with mouth-watering meals. There have been many days I have come home to a very full sink. Fortunately, I have been blessed with the gift of loving to wash dishes (after all, chicks dig men in uniform).

If only we could all consistently (and cheerfully!) do that which we know would make a deposit.

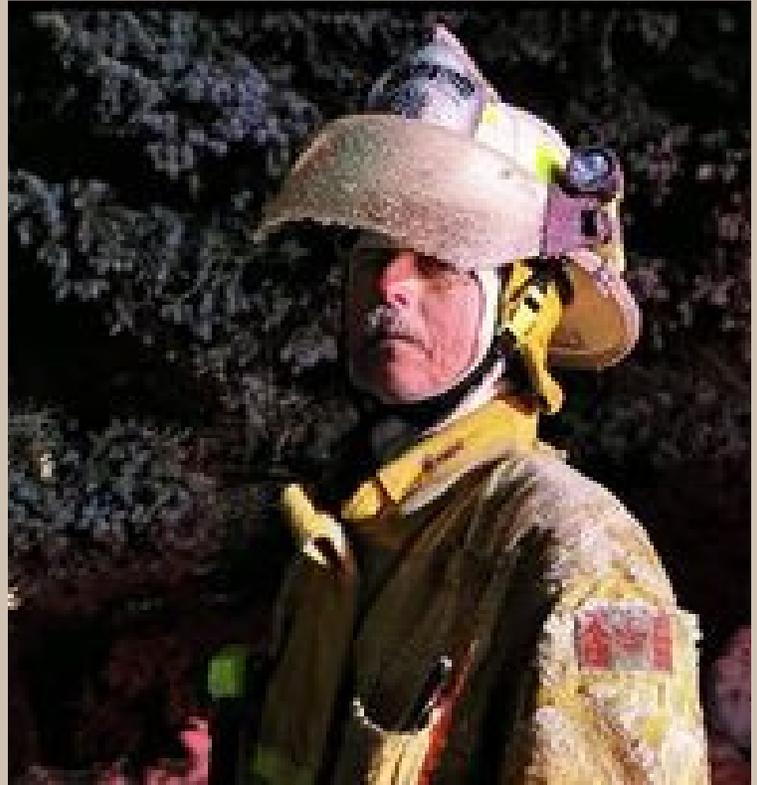


The final letter in the L - A - F is for FORGIVENESS.

The Bible makes clear what sustainable forgiveness looks like:

“. . . you must clothe yourselves with tender-hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony." (Colossians 3:12-14 NLT).

May the acronym L - A - F (Love, Appreciate, and Forgive) help you grow in your marriage.



Article by Dr. Dustin G. Burlet

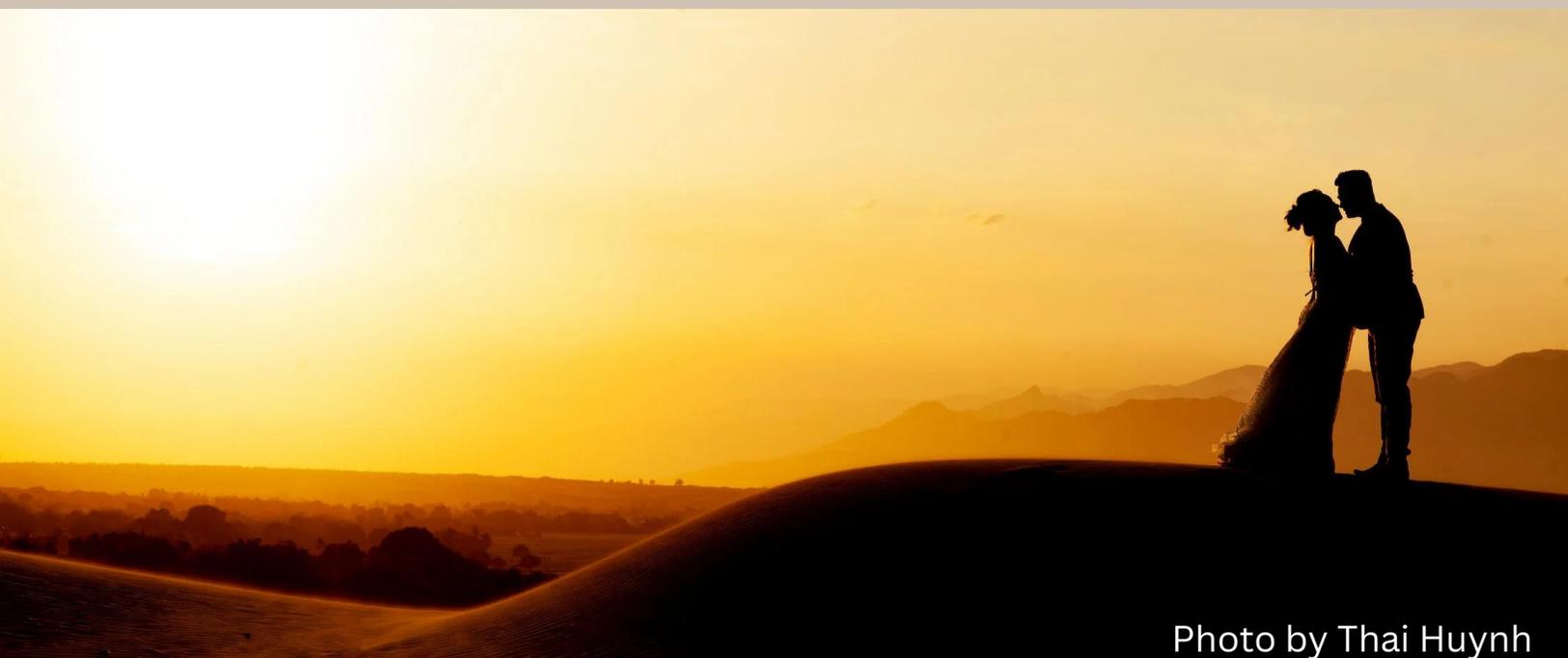
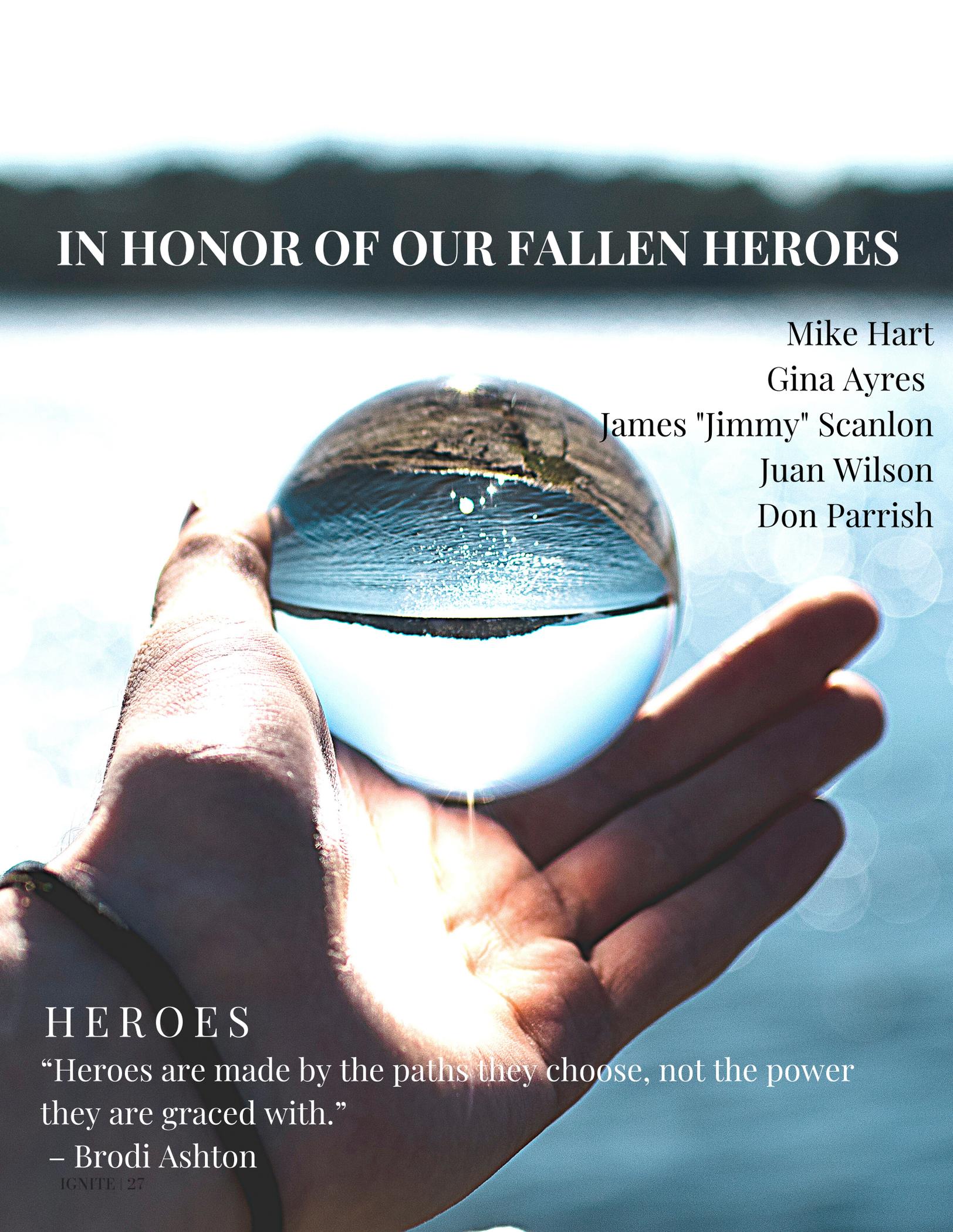


Photo by Thai Huynh

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a crystal ball. The crystal ball reflects a sunset over a body of water, with the sun low on the horizon and its light reflecting on the water's surface. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with a blue sky and distant hills.

# IN HONOR OF OUR FALLEN HEROES

Mike Hart  
Gina Ayres  
James "Jimmy" Scanlon  
Juan Wilson  
Don Parrish

## HEROES

“Heroes are made by the paths they choose, not the power they are graced with.”

– Brodi Ashton