

## Champions for the Widow with Rachel Faulkner Brown and Nick Vujicic

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**Rachel** Faulkner Brown>> When I walked back to my house, I knew there was something so big happening here. The Lord had called me out not even six months before Blair died to just marry him, and I'm like, I mean, you know, I was in a church where intimacy wasn't really talked about with the Lord. I mean, but the Lord was inviting me into this really intimate relationship, and I'm like, "This feels scary. I don't know what that means. I don't have anybody to go to, to like process this with." And then, this happens with Blair three weeks before he dies, so you can imagine, I get to his death day, and I'm like, something is happening.

[Champions for the Brokenhearted: The Widow]

**Nick** Vujicic>>Hi everyone, I'm Nick Vujicic, and I'm so excited that you've decided to join Champions for the Brokenhearted. First, I want to say thank you to everyone for those of you who support us, who pray for us. It's because of your generous hearts we are able to reach the brokenhearted here through Life Without Limbs. I also want to invite everyone else watching to join our Circle of Champions, where you can be a part of what God is doing through this ministry if you haven't yet partnered with us. This month Champions for the Brokenhearted is highlighting God's heart for widows and widowers.

As we celebrate International Widows Day on June 23rd. I'm excited to partner with Rachel Faulkner Brown, founder of Be Still Ministries. Rachel has flown in from Atlanta, Georgia, especially to be in our studio today, and she has one of the most incredible testimonies I've ever heard involving heartbreak, anger, disbelief, and eventually surrender. Rachel's story is a good reminder that even as Christians, we face trials and hard seasons, and we go through the valleys of depression and loneliness, and wondering, "God, why? What is going on right now?" As we all know, God has a plan, but sometimes there are just some seasons where it's only in hindsight we can say, "Yes, God, I thank you that I'm here today, but that was hard."

When you're in it, it's just one day at a time, one hour at a time. And I know that each and every one of you who is watching this right now, you're gonna be blessed. And I want you to think about a friend or a family member who needs to watch this while you are watching this

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interview. You have heard me talk about how God can take our broken pieces and do something beautiful. Amen! Well, in 2014, Rachel founded the ministry Be Still Ministries, which seeks to help and equip and encourage women to step into their freedom as lavishly loved daughters and to release the Kingdom on Earth as it is in heaven, in Jesus' name. If you or someone you know is grieving right now the loss of a loved one, I want you first to be blessed, but also think about them and pray for them even while you're watching this. It's an honor to have you, Rachel, here in the studio. God bless you, and thank you so much for joining us here.

**Rachel**>> Oh my gosh, it is such an honor, Nick. I have loved you for long time. I have heard you speak many times, but such an honor, really.

**Nick**>> I learned about your ministry because a very, very dear friend of mine was widowed twice, and I knew both of her husbands, and I know her boys. She has a boy from each of the husbands that have gone on to Heaven. And I know, as a friend of Bernadette, how helpless I feel. not knowing how that feels. where you just have no words, there's nothing that, as a friend, sometimes you feel like you can offer. And as we here at Life Without Limbs are doing Champions for the Brokenhearted series, we've really been laboring over who can we, as a ministry, find, and I'll tell you right now, you're at the very top of the list. I mean, we have researched the Be Still Ministries, and I just...we praise God for this ministry. And if you're looking for a ministry that blesses the heart of women, I'll tell you right now, there aren't a lot of ministries that are doing what you're doing. But I can tell you, you do it so well. So, God bless you, and we love you.

**Rachel**>> Yeah, we love you all too. We're so grateful. I mean, honestly, it is, you know, as with anything, Nick, you just kind of fall into things. Like, we just thought we would do, like, a little one-off for widows, right? And it became what it is today, helping thousands.

**Nick**>> And you just had a retreat with 400. Tell us about that. Let's start there real quick, and then we'll start from the beginning.

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**Rachel**>> Yeah, so we just had a conference in February with 400 widows, and it was unbelievable to watch what God did. We had done it the year before for 250 widows, and then to do it for 400 widows, we were like, "Oh, can it have the same feel? Will it still feel as intimate?" And it did. And we ended up baptizing 40 at the end of the conference, which to me is such a miracle; 23 of them were planned; the rest were spontaneous. They just, you know, I was saying earlier today, Washing the grief, stepping into new life they just wanted to step into their new life. And I think there is a washing off of the grief that you've been mired in, mucked in, you know, grief. And, it can really mar you down.

And I think when you get around other widows, when you worship with other widows, there's no sound like the sound of 400 widows worshipping. I wish you could all be there. Oh, honestly, like, it really feels like heaven. And to know that there's this chorus in heaven who's doing the same thing, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," you know? I mean, it's just... There are no words to explain it, truly. Yeah, it's amazing. Rachel was 23 when her first husband died in 2001. Well, congratulations on the ministry, nearly founded 10 years ago. Rachel, tell us how this started. Tell us about your first husband and your experience as a widow on your first husband.

**Rachel**>> Yeah, so I married my college sweetheart. I saw him, Nick, pull into the parking lot. He had a spoiler, and back in 1994, spoilers, that was everything. Those were the thing. I mean, they were the thing. And he had a personalized license plate, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, he's rich, and he has a good car." I mean, I was 17.

**Nick**>> I love it, I love it.

**Rachel**>> We dated all through college, married the weekend after I graduated. I mean, life was really, And, you know, pretty picture-perfect. We were, like, leading all the, you know, Sunday school parties each month, themed out. I mean, I was in charge of all that, and Todd would plan all the recreational activities, and I mean, we were just living that dual-income, no-kids, early marriage life. It was just awesome. And he went to play a game of pickup basketball Sunday

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afternoon after church. We talked about that actual day. We had just talked about starting our family. We've been married three and a half years. He'd run five miles the day before. He was a cross-country runner in college, and he had a massive aneurysm in my best friend's driveway. And I pulled up. My friend had called and said he's been hurt, I think he broke his leg. So that, in my head, I was going to a broken leg. And when I got there, one of our doctors, who we called on, we were both pharmaceutical reps, was doing CPR, and I was like, "This is not a broken leg." Never in my mind thinking I was about to be a widow at 23 years old, because he was in perfect health. I mean, the day before, you know, and that morning. And so it was just a shock to my system. But I will tell you, that day, our whole town...

We... I'm from a very small town in Alabama, Florence, Alabama, 40,000 people. Word spread fast. I went to church with a thousand people. He did, too, growing up. And one of my sorority sisters was there that day, and she came back to my house after we left the emergency room. And she said, "Rachel, I don't know how you're doing this," and I heard the Holy Spirit whisper in my ear, "Really, Rachel? She doesn't know me. She doesn't have a real relationship with me." And so we went to my bedroom, and it was Todd died at 3:30, and at 6:30, Melanie radically encountered life. She radically encountered the person of Jesus.

And I don't know what I said, you know, I mean, obviously, I'm just doing what you do as a widow who's newly widowed, and, you know, I didn't really know what to say. But I knew that I knew that she did not have.... She had religion, but she did not have a relationship. And every day, every September 16th, I text Melanie and I say, "Happy birthday. Today's the day you live forever." And so I know, I look at that, and it just makes it, you know, I can truly say, "It is well with my soul," when I see Melanie's family, and her whole entire family got baptized. They're still super active in their church and just raised their children and, you know, and just in the faith, in the faith of relationship. And there's a difference, as we all know. I mean, she knew religion, she did not know relationship. So, it has been--that was in 2001, so it's been 22 years.

**Nick**>> Wow. wow. Rachel, when you go through the depths of despair, what's the one thing that held you breathing? I'm not going to say upright. I mean, 'cause that's, I can't ever imagine losing

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a spouse. I can't, your best friend, your soulmate, forever. You were so young. Was it verses? What was it that held you through?

**Rachel**>> Yeah, well, I will tell you, I had a jambox in my bedroom that, you know, I was leading worship and singing at church, and, but I did not know worship, you know. I, I was singing songs, but I don't know that I was really worshiping. And I will tell you, I had Anne Graham Lotz's "Give Me Jesus" book, and in the back of it, there was a CD where she did a spoken word, and Fernando Ortega singing "Give Me Jesus." And it's, you know, "When I'm alone, give me Jesus. When I come to die, give me Jesus." And I would She learned to worship on her bedroom floor, "Give Me Jesus." sit on my floor every night, and I would play that CD, and I learned to worship on my bedroom floor. And I know it sounds, you know, almost cliché, but it wasn't. It was literally life to me.

And I, I think music can take you out of the space that you're in. I think worship music can take you out, and it creates an emotion. It creates a connection to the God of the universe that you did not know maybe had not existed before. And it transcends the language of tears, you know. And I think for me, it has been worship music. I pulled over on the side of the road. Sarah Reeves wrote this song called "Mighty Wave," and I can remember hearing it on the radio in Birmingham and pulling over on the side of the road and weeping, like, just like the day of the funeral because it just Mighty Wave - "He bottles every tear." struck this chord. It was like she was reading my.... "He will bottle every tear, and they're going to wash back over you like a mighty wave." And I will tell you, that's when I learned to worship. But I always tell even newly widows, I'm like, "Turn on the music, like literally turn on the worship music. It will be your lifeline because it is."

I couldn't really read the Word, Nick. I'm going to be really honest. I knew scripture. I had a well of scripture that I knew that I knew. You know, if I'd been in prison, didn't have a Bible, I could come up with them. But at the end of the day, I really couldn't read. And most widows will say that, like, "I can't read." I just—it's like my eyes are blurry, my brain is foggy. But you can

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worship, and man, will it ever take you to the heavenly places, which is where we're meant to be, right?

**Nick**>> Amazing, amazing. Friends, I want you to hear the next part of Rachel's story because oftentimes we think we're only going to get through one big tragedy, one big struggle that's the main one of our lifetime. But I'll tell you right now, Rachel, something happened to you. Remarriage and lightning strikes twice. You got remarried and tell us what happened.

**Rachel**>> Yes, so I was single for almost two years, remarried when I was almost 26. Blair was a fighter pilot. He flew the A-10 in New Orleans, so, you know, he's dropping bombs. I'm still selling drugs [Nick laughing]. We are like this quiet little combo living in New Orleans. My mom was like, "Oh my gosh, you're moving to that horrible city." And I'm like, "Mom, it'll be fine." You know, again, just living that—I mean, that newly married life of, you know, it—it's just so fun, and life is just so bright, and you're just, you know, all you have to worry about is what restaurant you're going to do on Friday night. It's like, "Oh, that was for the simple days." But life was just good. I mean, he was doing what he was born to do. He loved flying the A-10. He loved being in the Air Force.

He'd gotten an age waiver to go to pilot training when he was 29. So it's like such a dream for him to be in his—the A-10, which was just the most amazing airframe ever. And he went to Afghanistan, came home. We had our first baby 10 months to the day that he came home from Afghanistan, and had our second baby, moved to Columbus, got blown out by Hurricane Katrina, and life was just good. We had our baby boy, we had our baby girl, and Blair went on a beautiful April day. It was just sunny, and it was what they called VFR—visual flight reference—like, you don't even need instruments on your panel because it was such a beautiful day. He had a 22-year-old student pilot in his backseat and was training the next generation of fighter pilots. He went out, took off. I had made Amish friendship bread the day before. I was making bread at this time, and he was talking about Amish friendship bread and how much he loved it on the taxi out. And it's because we have the recording.

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And it was just—it was just precious. And 15 seconds into the flight, I was at swimming lessons with my two children. I had a five-month-old and a two-year-old little boy. I'd kissed Blair that morning. He had three flights that day. And I get a phone call at swimming lessons from the chaplain at the base, and he said five words to me. He said, "We are looking for you." And there is, you know, there is no way to describe to you how a person who is widowed once frames their life. It's like, okay, that was the worst thing that ever happened. So I kind of get, like, a pass the rest of my life. I was kind of like, "Well, the worst thing has happened. I mean, nothing will pay—everything will pale in comparison." But, you know, I get that call, and I knew that. I mean, you know that pit in the bottom of your stomach that every widow listening to this will totally know that feeling. And I drove home. I started calling my parents. I called Blair's parents. I said, "I don't know what's happened, but I know you need to get here." I called my neighbor, who I knew would know what was going on.

She said, "I can't tell you anything. You just need to go to my house." And I get to my house. I've dropped my two babies off. I walk across the street. The wing commander is dressed in blues, not in his flight suit. And so I immediately knew. And that black and white car was in front of my neighbor's house. And I was like, "Oh my gosh, I cannot believe—I mean, Blair and I had joked almost, like, you're—you're more likely to die in a car crash than you ever are in a jet crash." And that was like, "Oh, the worst things happen to me. That would be like lightning striking twice. That never happens." And I go into her foyer, and Colonel Garber, who was the wing commander at the time, he said, "Rachel, I'm sorry to tell you, but Blair and his student pilot were killed on the runway today at 12:30. And the United States Air Force is going to take care of you and your little children."

And I'll tell you, Nick, I did not know Genesis 50:20, that scripture, at the time. "I know the plans I have for you...." Jeremiah I knew Jeremiah 29:11, which I had claimed the entire time of, you know, through Todd's death. "And I know the plans I have for you, plans not to harm you, plans to prosper you, to give you a hope and a future." And I—I knew that scripture, but I did not know Genesis 50:20. It's Joseph and his brothers, you know, Joseph becomes king, and all of a sudden, you know, his brothers need food, and they've gone through the famine, and he says—he

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says to his brothers who tried to kill him, "What you intended for harm, God intended for good and for the saving of many lives." And then Joseph goes on to say, at the end of that, he says, "Fear not, I will take care of you and your little children." I will tell you, on the walk back from them telling me that Blair died, back to my house, which was probably about 150 feet, I think my brain was rewired for the destiny that I currently sit in because there is no other explanation.

I knew this does not happen twice unless there is something so much bigger happening. And that was so, on some level, so easy for me to say because I had surrendered my life. Blair, three weeks before he died, he had gotten a mentor, and I don't tell the story often, but he had gotten a mentor. And that mentor said, "I want you to read Hebrews, the Hall of Faith in Hebrews." And he said, "Blair, if you would be willing to even sacrifice your job for the cause of Christ, your job, which was being a pilot, which he would say ran in my—that was like in my veins. Pilots will tell you, it just runs in my veins.

And he said, "If you would give up your career for the cause of Christ, then I will meet with you. But if you will not be willing to sacrifice your career, then I cannot be with you." This is three weeks before Blair died. And I remember him coming home and saying, "This is what he said." And I'm like, "Oh God, I mean, that's our benefits, that's our life, that's our future, that's—I mean, really, Blair? I mean, maybe you could find another mentor, you know? I'm a stay-at-home mom, I'm like, this feels so scary." And Blair prayed about it, and he, and a couple, you know, the next day he called him and he was like, "Okay, I want to do this." And he died three weeks later. And I will tell you, I mean, his funeral was different because of that surrender. My life was different because of that surrender. When I walked back to my house, I knew there was something so big happening here. The Lord had called me out not even six months before Blair died to just marry him.

And I'm like, I mean, you know, I was in a church where intimacy wasn't really talked about with the Lord. I mean, but the Lord was inviting me into this really intimate relationship, and I'm like, this was scary. "I don't know what that means. I don't have anybody to go to, to like, process this with." And then, and then this happens with Blair three weeks before he dies. So you can

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imagine, I get to his death day, and I'm like, something is happening. And, but this time I had kids, that, you know, I mean, it was—it was not a death like Todd. I mean, it was totally different. I'm looking in a rearview mirror, a baby turned around facing, you know, facing the back seat, a little two-year-old little boy who needs his dad, you know, staring at me in the face, and that's different, you know. It's not the same.

And, I got a picture yesterday, somebody sent me of the funeral. It was a picture I'd never seen, and it was me thanking, you know, everyone at the base and sharing just what God had on my heart that day. And, you know, I said something to the effect of, "Christ in me is the hope of glory," and I would say that today, you know, to anybody listening, "Christ in you is your only hope." I mean, He is the only hope. I can't help you outside the Person of Jesus and what He wants to do and the purpose that He has for your destiny. And so I just, I say to any widow listening, there is something so much bigger than, you know, happening through your loss, and there definitely was through my loss.

I couldn't see it then, but, but I definitely see it now. And so I just, you know, I always tell people, like, you can't go from hope, you can't go from pain to purpose, you have to stop at hope. You have to stop at hope. And, I think that's what, you know, Blair meeting with Hugh, that gave me this hope and, you know, that scripture in Genesis. It gave me this hope, like, you don't have to fear. Like, He is going, he is going to use this for the saving of many lives. And that feels hard because I'm at the brunt of that sacrifice, you know, but it's true. **Nick**>> I can't explain in words to people who don't know Christ, in essence, that He's just everything to me. For someone who's watching, and doesn't know Christ the way you know Christ, and doesn't feel hope, I want you to look into that camera, and this is not the end of the interview, but I just feel the Holy Spirit, wanting to use you right now to encourage someone who doesn't really know Jesus. Maybe they know God as a religion, but what does hope in Christ look like for them, Rachel?

**Rachel**>> Yeah, so if that's you, you know, it's so funny, I just did this at a conference recently, because we went around the room, and I had 20 widows in front of me, and about five of them said that what they wanted to leave behind from this retreat that they were on with our team was

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hopelessness. And if that is where you are right now, if you are at hopelessness, then I want to say to you that there is a Person, and His name is Jesus, who wants to take that from you, and He wants to take it as far as the East is from the West today. And I think for anyone who's in that place, if that's you, I want you to know that the enemy-- there's a very real enemy who has come to steal, kill, and destroy your destiny, And there is a destiny on your life that you cannot imagine. There was a destiny on my life that the enemy tried to take out not once, but twice. And so I say to you, "Warrior up, daughter," because if you have been playing church, if you have been thinking about God, It's just, "Oh well, when I need him." Well, today is the day. Today is the day for you to surrender and just to lay your life down and say, "Gosh, Lord, I don't understand what is happening, but I know there's something so much bigger than me, and there's a destiny in front of me that is calling my name."

And I just pray that you feel that call on your life today, that there are people on the other side of your "yes." And I always tell people, I'm sure you're asking, "Why did this happen to me?" That is the common question for anyone who has tragedy in their life. But I would ask you to stop asking the question "why" and ask the question "who." Who is on the other side of this pain? Who is on the other side of this pain that needs the hope that you could give them because of your surrender today? So if God has just been a thing for you, I would say surrender to the name of Jesus. At the name of Jesus. Just say His name. He is going to hear you, and He wants to meet you exactly where you are.

**Nick**>> I love it, praise God. Thank you, Rachel. When you were going through the valleys, was it a circle of intimate friends that you would hang out with? I mean, obviously, there are seasons of grieving and emotions and all these things, but what methods did you adopt for your own day-to-day coping, and, if you will, endurance during that time?

**Rachel**>> I didn't do it well, Nick, I'm gonna be really honest. I mean, I was, you know, I grew up very emotionally unfit, as I would say. I couldn't, you know, I kind of soldiered on. I mean, I was just like, "I am a soldier and I just get through," and the less you feel, the easier it is to be a soldier, right? And so, like, the warhorse, like, "Don't hear the bullets, face...you know, just run

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to the front." And I kind of ran to the front in all my life. I was kind of like, you know, we didn't talk about emotions. I didn't have an emotional vocabulary, which actually worked out pretty well for someone who loses two husbands. It's pretty easy to soldier on, right?

So here I am, Blair dies, two weeks later, I'm hosting a Bible study because I'm freaking out that I don't know the 66 books of the Bible well enough to teach my children. Not what you need to be doing two weeks after your husband dies. But in my framework, it was all about learning more, learning more about God, not experiencing the comfort of God, because I didn't know how to do that. No one had ever taught me how to do that. I was emotionally bankrupt. I was blaming Blair's job for all the problems that I had, but I was walking with a level of shame. And I will tell you, in my ministry and in any woman that I talked to, so many of us, we get there because of the explosion, like the death of a husband. But the reason that God brings healing and freedom is usually for something that happens before that, something that He wants to take, He wants to offload my heart of the shame of what had happened to me as a child.

And so I think for me, I did not do grief well. I really stuffed it, and it's like trying to put a beach ball under water. You are never, ever gonna be able to do that until you let it go. And the Lord was inviting me into a different story, a story of freedom. But honestly, I didn't know until I saw freedom in another friend's life. I saw a woman free from her past, free from her shame. I had been abused by a distant family member as a young child, and I carried that shame for 25 years. I buried both Todd and Blair. Neither one of them knew about my past because it was just like, "Let's just sweep that under the rug and act like it didn't happen." And I made a deal with God in college, "I will serve you to my death if you just don't make me tell what happened to me." and that just doesn't work. He didn't make deals like that. He's like, "I'm gonna make a deal where you're gonna get free, and I'm gonna put all these people in your life to help show you what that looks like." And I saw that in a friend, and it was intoxicating.

I was like, "I know Jesus, but you know something different about Jesus." And finally, I got up enough courage to ask her, and ended up getting the greatest gift, which is to offload my own shame, to walk free from what had happened to me as a child. And it unlocked my life and

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unlocked thousands of other lives too, because I am so passionate about people walking in freedom, not just from grief, but from their past. Because so many times, men and women, we walk around feeling unworthy, feeling like we're not enough, feeling like, "I can't go into ministry. I did XYZ."

And it's like Jesus has invited us into this grace-filled life that has nothing to do with your past and everything to do with what He did in the past, you know, what He did 2000 years ago. It's really all we need. And He's like, "Let me have all of that. I want to use it for My glory if you'll just hand it over." But we're like, "No, no, it's too bad. It's too bad." And that was me. And once I handed it over, my whole life was unlocked. That's when my ministry began. I asked for, you know, I was like, "Leah, I mean, like, you kind of know something besides just freedom." She knew the Holy Spirit in a new way that I didn't even know." And I was like, "I had the Holy Spirit for me. I did not have the Holy Spirit for other people. I didn't believe I could be in ministry. I thought you had to go to seminary. I thought you needed a Master's Degree." And I think the Lord is inviting women, men, whoever listens to this, I think He's inviting you into personal ministry if you just hand it over.

You know, you can hand over your shame, you can hand over your grief, you can hand over death, you can hand over your life, and because that's where you'll find it. I mean, you know this, treat you to the choir.

**Nick**>> No, no, no, this is awesome for all the viewers. I want you to hear very clearly, you know what we're talking about here are the brokennesses of our lives and deep hidden secrets, whether that's counseling and a grieving and healing process of something that you've never even told anyone about. You know, it's one thing to be saved and telling other people about the salvation of Jesus, but for the real freedom, we need to be healed. And so maybe the Holy Spirit's telling you, "Hey, it's time that you come to me with that brokenness. Let's heal that part of your heart, your mind." Because I know for me, I needed to go through counseling in February 2021, and it was a healing process for me where someone asked me what had happened. I told them what happened, and then they asked me, "Well, how did that make you feel?" I told them how it

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made me feel. It was very simple. And the one big thing was six hours' worth of content around this one hurt that I had.

And after I got through the six hours over six weeks, he said, "Is there anything else you want to say about how you felt and anything about this?" I said, "No." And all of a sudden, it felt as though I had a quickening of healing for my heart. And until you're actually free of that, you really do underestimate how much your mind, your emotions, your mental bandwidth were hijacked with this tick that does nothing but take from you, and so if the Holy Spirit's telling you, "Hey, go and talk to someone," please make sure you do that. Rachel, this is so awesome. Rachel, Well, because you can't give away what you don't have, right? I mean, you are giving from an empty vessel. And I think for most of us, you know, we aren't filled with love, so it makes love hard. We aren't filled with joy, so it makes joy hard to give away. It's like, "I barely have enough for me." It's like, "Oh, the Holy Spirit wants to be all of those things to you, but He wants to crowd out the wounds, the lies, the trauma." You know, it's just the way he designed it.

**Nick**>> Amen. Amen. I like to say that wounds turn into battle scars, and all the battle scars you've had, Rachel, now you got married a third time. Tell us how that came about and how that marriage is going and tell us about your family today.

**Rachel**>> I know it's, I'm like a professional married person.

**Nick**>> I love that. So good.

**Rachel**>> I just love marriage. It's so funny. My marriage is awesome. It is awesome. And my husband and I got introduced by a mutual friend. He had never been married, so you can imagine I'm like, "Oh my gosh." I mean, that is terrifying to me. You know, I was like, "I've been married a lot." And, "Oh my gosh," Rod he was just, it's so funny when we fell in love, he was like, "If this is what love is, I've never been in love." And I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" I can fall in love with the wall. I mean, I'm just like, that was just so shocking to me on some level, but at the same time, it was so tender and it was so real.

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And God was just, I mean, really, God knew Rod was looking for a ministry partner, you know? And we knew two were better than one. And I was, too. I was just like, "Hey, listen, this is the track that my life is. I mean, my life is laid down, it's the Lord's." And so, and his was, too. And I always tell the widows when they're looking to date, I'm like, go after your healing, then look to the right and see who's standing there.

And because, you know, you want someone on the track of wholeness, and Rod was definitely on that track. He lost his dad, he'd known trauma, he'd known pain. He lost his dad almost 20 years ago. And so, I was like, that felt comforting to me, that he knew what it was like to lose someone in an instant. He could feel the weight of my grief. He could feel the weight of being a fatherless child to my own children. And, you know, the relationship was fast and furious, and we got married in June of actually 2013. So we're going to celebrate 10 years. It was a beautiful start, and we went on a mission trip in July, which I don't recommend for a newly blended family. Like, not probably the place you want to, like, work out your marriage on a mission trip. But Rod actually had kind of a nervous breakdown on that mission trip. He was cooking pancakes, and we were serving kids with cancer at a ministry in Atlanta. And he just was like, "I can't do this anymore."

And I'm like, "I'm sorry, like, there are 150 people waiting to eat. Like, you have got to finish." You know, he was like, "I just can't." And he ended up with severe anxiety and depression. And of course, you can imagine, newly married, got two kids, looking at this amazing man who, you know, during our wedding, Davis was like, "Thanking Rod. Thank you, Mr. Rod." You know? And my daughter's calling him dad already. I mean, they are in it, you know? They are in it with this man. And I'm just like, "Oh my gosh, now he's sick." And I had never experienced sickness of a husband. I mean, I had experienced death, but had not, I had not the "for in sickness and health" really hadn't been our story.

And so now I have this husband who's sick. And I will tell you, because I did not grieve well, and because I skipped that anger phase, because those phases of grief are very real and they will

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come out, and I just, I got mad, frankly. I mean, I was just like, "Are you even kidding me? Like, you probably knew this was a reality before you got married." And it was, it was truly infuriating. And of course, I'm trying to protect my kids, so it's like I've got these kids watching, you know, him not be able to do things that I feel like you should be able to do. And having not struggled with anxiety and depression myself, I was just like, "You got everything you wanted on the same day. Like, get out."

And it was just... the Lord taught me compassion. He taught me the meaning of communion. And I will tell you, he taught me the really the meaning of forgiveness. I had to forgive Rod's body for anxiety and depression because I was really... because we're one, I was impeding his healing. I was literally locking him up in my unforgiveness. And as crazy as that sounds, I believe it was very real. Because when I released him to heal by forgiving him and forgiving his body for breaking down and his brain for not having enough serotonin, I mean, these are real things. And the Lord just sat me down. I ended up taking communion for what I would consider... I took communion my whole life, but I really took communion as your body, Jesus. Your body was broken for me to release forgiveness to his body. And I was changed forever. You know, it's like you think you've learned, and then you're like, "Here's another opportunity."

You know, it's just another opportunity to help somebody else. And I just... I look back, and I'm so grateful that we went through it because now I do have such compassion for women and widows and husbands and blended families who are experiencing just the rockiness of blending a family, because it's tough. It is really tough. You're bringing so much stuff. And I heard... I actually heard somebody say today, "There's a reason why 'blended' and 'offended' rhyme." Because you can live offended, you know, in your marriage. And I was offended at Rod's body. I'm like, "You got everything you wanted. What is wrong with you? Like, get over yourself." And, man, it is just... it is... you cannot... you cannot get over yourself. There is just a deep work that the Lord wants to do. And so, God has just shown me so much.

Rod has been off medication for seven years. He had a psychiatrist and a therapist and medication, and we made it through. But I will tell you, it was not easy. And, but we learned so

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much, you know? We learned so much. And now he helps, you know, men who are suicidal and in depression themselves. And it's real, you know? It's really real. And... God, it's just... I mean, just when you think you've learned it, there's something else, right? It's just... it's amazing to watch how what you think is your own personal nightmare and trauma and pain. And, you know, here... I am, seven years on the other side, and I see what God's done. And I can speak about not forgiving his body. You know, it really wasn't the person. It was just like, "Your body broke down on us." And it was very difficult for me. But forgiving that, and I've had so many women say, "Gosh, that really helped me release my husband's body."

Like, he didn't... Nobody means to get sick, right? Right? You know, nobody means to get depression. You don't wake up and say, "I want depression today." I mean, it's... No, it just doesn't work like that. And I think when you can step back and think about someone else, you know, and lay down your own life and let somebody heal....

**Nick**>> Wow! Profound. I've never heard anyone say it that way at all.

**Rachel**>> Yeah, it was real

**Nick**>> Yeah, this is huge. Your kids. How are they doing?

**Rachel**>> They are amazing, you know? They are really... you know, children. There's a trauma score, you know, for kids that you can take. I don't even know the name of the test. And, you know, they've got a score, you know? I mean, kids of widows have a score, and that's hard, you know? That's hard for me some days, because they didn't sign up for this. They didn't sign up for a life in the military where, you know, their life wasn't their own and it was determined by service. And at the same time, like, you know, I get to tell them and remind them every day, "Your pain is your superpower," because it is, Nick, you know? I mean, your pain has become your superpower, supercharged by the Holy Spirit. And that's the reality that they live in. And, some days I wish I could take that from them, but, you know, at the end of the day, they are amazing kids. They know where their help comes from. And Jesus has been their rock. And I hate the way they came to that knowledge, but it will take them far.

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**Nick**>> They must be so proud.

**Rachel**>> I'm just mom. I'm just... I'm so humbled to get to know your story and what God has done through you and your husband and what's going to happen for the years ahead, the children and your bloodline. I mean, what an incredible ministry,

**Rachel**>> It's generational.

**Nick**> It's a generational legacy. It's incredible. It's profound, For those of us who know a widow or a widower, just from a high level, what are like the two or three things that we can be aware of, the types of challenges, obviously, that they'll go through? How can we help? How can we best support someone we know who has had a loss? **Rachel**>> Yeah, I mean, I get this question almost every day. And for me, I think the biggest thing, you know, the Jewish tradition, they get this so well. They show up, and it's shiva, you know? That's what it's called in the Jewish tradition. So they're just there at the home. And I think for so many widows, most of us lose our support three to six months after our husband dies. Most...70% of widows will experience a life-altering health crisis in the first 12 months after her husband dies. She will experience a health crisis. and so my biggest thing is, like, show up. Like, show up with coffee. Show up when she says...she doesn't know what she needs.

He doesn't know what he needs, but you showing up will say a lot. I mean, you know, I always tell people who know a widow with young children, I'm like, "Just go wash her clothes." Just please keep up with the laundry if you could just do that. Or take them to the wash and fold. I don't care where, just go gather her laundry. Because it's those little details...dropping off a meal, send an Uber Eats. Like, if you live in California and you know a widow in Alabama, I mean, Uber Eats works there too. You just put in the address, you know?

I mean, this isn't an advertisement for them, but I mean, kind of, because it really helps. Meal times are hard, you know? Go eat with them. And for a man who is a friend of a widow, I will

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say, if she has boys, do the things that moms don't do, you know? I had to learn to fish and hook worms and nasty stuff like that. Like, but I would have... I would have so preferred that to have been a man, you know, who could have helped facilitate those things that guys do. Because that really... I mean, yes, I could do it, but would he have preferred probably one of Blair's friends? Yeah, he would have. and those little opportunities, like take them to go get ice cream. Just do... like, be the church, you know?

I mean, that's what... you know, koinonia is the phrase that you hear in scripture mentioned so many times. And that's like intimacy, intimacy with the family. And, and so many times I think people push away from widows when we really need you to push in, you know? I mean, intimacy, in... you know, it's "into me see." Into my family, see what I need, but you've got to be close to see that. So that would be my advice.

**Nick**>> I love it. I love it. Some widows and widowers feel not to remarry. Tell us a bit about that. And obviously, there's, I can only imagine, the pressure from family who think, "Whoa, you're young, yeah, you got kids." Some people feel the calling to go into service or prayer and full-time ministry, sometimes without ever feeling the need to remarry. Encourage anyone watching right now who doesn't feel the conviction to get remarried.

**Rachel**>> Yeah, it's real interesting. I think when a lot of times I'll experience this for widows who have, to the measure that you loved is the measure that you grieved. And I think for me, you know, my husbands didn't fully know me because I had this secret, but I do think so many times when you've, you know, married young and you've been married for 30 years and you're like, "I just, I had the best." Like, there was no way to top that. And I get that. I do. And I've seen my own mother-in-law. I mean, she's been widowed for 20 plus years. She's never remarried. She never felt the call. She's literally given her life away to Stephen's Ministry, which is like a lay counseling ministry. She is 78 years old. She, like, makes meals for shut-ins. I'm like, "You're the same age as the people you're taking food to." So, I mean, I'm so, like, amazed at the way and the time that she's had to just give her life away.

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And I will never forget my counselor, who, you know, I sat on her couch for two years, and she said, "Rachel, you're gonna miss the Holy Spirit and the Trinity when you get married, because it just won't be the same." And I remember thinking, "Oh, no, it'll be the same." But there is an element of, if you've got earthly people in front of you, you know, taking up time and doing the things that just happen naturally, you do miss that intimacy with the Lord. And so, I do think sometimes people are just, like, "I want to give that up," you know? And we're all probably better for it, let's be honest. They've been able to have more time. So, yeah, I, I love it. I appreciate it. And I also think that there's nothing like marriage to lead you into wholeness.

**Nick**>> I love it. I love it.

**Rachel**>> I mean, you want to get sanctified, get married [laughter].

**Nick**>> I like that! That's a shirt! Someone should make that shirt. Rachel, for the Be Still Ministries, the resources, the things that you offer people, tell us more about the programs and what the ministry really is.

**Rachel**>> Yeah, so we really do create curriculum for people to understand how lavishly loved they are, how fully forgiven, and how radically righteous they are. Because if you understand those three foundations, then you won't walk around going, "I'm not enough. I'm not worthy." You'll understand that Christ in you really is the hope of glory. And so we wrote a Bible study called "Father's House," which is an eight-week video Bible study encounter. It connects the heart and the head because I think so many believers were just walking around with all this head knowledge, and we really have not connected that to our heart. So at the end of each week, it's basically a journey into your wounds, into the things that have hurt you through your life, to walk you into Father's House and not help you understand that the house that you build is not the house that He meant for you to live in.

And because what you can do, He already did it way better than you ever thought you could. And so that is all of our leaders for "Never Alone Widows" have to go through that curriculum.

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And then we did a 20-video series called "How to Widow Well." Both of these are on Right Now Media, okay? And it's 20 videos of just like how to manage your finances and become a generous person, how to, what is spiritual warfare and how does it affect you, what is, how does forgiveness lock, unforgiveness lock you in places that you don't want to be, depression and anxiety, there's a whole course on that. So they're 40, you know, 35 to 40-minute videos where you get to really learn how to do this thing well.

Like, we're gonna take everything that God has given us in widowhood and we're gonna milk it and we're gonna make the best out of it, and we're gonna use it for the kingdom. We're not gonna sit around and go, "Why did this happen to me?" We're going to say, "Who did this happen for?"

**Nick**>> You're one of the most powerful women I've ever met in my life. You communicate. Have you written books? Well, I mean, you know, I've been a little busy. **Nick**>> You have been busy! Understatement right there!

**Rachel**>> Yeah, we just signed a contract with Broad Street to release called "The Widow's Mite," a 365-day devotional. So we're gonna start there. We'll see where that goes one day.

**Nick**>> I know it's gonna go into many, many hearts and change many, many people's lives. Tell us where the Be Still Ministries can be found online. 17:02 Surrendering awareness of Genesis. "You meant it for evil. God meant it for good."

**Rachel**>> Yeah, so BeStillMinistries.net, and then out of that is our outreach ministry for widows called Never Alone Widows. They both have separate websites, but you can get to one from the other. Never Alone Widows, if you are a widow, you can find our conferences, retreats, the curriculum, local groups. We have 80 local groups in cities across the country, hope to have hundreds and more. I feel like women have come to us, they've gotten healed, and then they want to go out and heal, and that's what this is all about. They want to bring care and comfort and

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community, and that's hard to do without an overarching ministry. So we give them the tools and say, "Go do it, here, go make disciples."

That's what this is all about. Throw your net and go make disciples, and whether they're widows or women, I don't care how they get there, just go release the kingdom. It's amazing, but you can find your local groups online at [NeverAloneWidows.com](http://NeverAloneWidows.com).

**Nick**>> One last final encouragement, someone who's a widow or widower, what's one piece of advice or some encouragement you can leave as well today?

**Rachel**>> My encouragement to you would be, you cannot give away what you do not have, and I would say run, run, run to the Father. Run to your healing. God has got an open-door policy for you to leave everything that you struggle with before your husband died, all those bits of grief, and He wants to just wash you clean. He wants to resurrect your life, He wants to give you a purpose and a destiny, and He's not going to skip hope. So if you need hope today, take it. That's my prayer for you.

**Nick**>> Amen, Lord Jesus. Right now, we ask, Holy Spirit, that you would touch the hearts and minds watching, and we ask God that you'd breathe into us new life and healing. We ask God a blessing upon Be Still Ministries and all the programs and all the videos that they have, and the devotional book coming up as well. Father, we thank you for this time together, and we ask, God, that you would bless everyone watching and bring us to our full healing in Jesus' name we pray, and all God's people said, Amen, Amen. I love you, Rachel. This is so much fun and an honor. Wow, what an incredible time that was. Amen. Remember, if you know someone who needs this encouragement, text them and say, "Hey, I'm sending you a link.

You gotta watch this." To each and every one of you, I love you, and I know that obviously this is a very heavy topic, but we've done this to remind you that God loves you, we love you, and someone cares about your healing. When you have a broken heart, He's got that open-door policy. Come talk to Him, and please go to the website, click on the links below, share your grief

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with someone, either someone you know personally that you can trust, or contact someone right now. You can actually text one of our Groundwire Christian coaches right now for free, a text conversation. We can make sure that you get all the resources that you need. But please, please go to the Be Still Ministry website and go check out all the resources there. May God bless you and keep you.

And I want to say to you, thank you for watching, and if you haven't yet gone on the Champions for the Brokenhearted website, go find that page under LifeWithoutLimbs.org, and you can see all the other additional Champions for the Brokenhearted partnerships, resources, and links there below. Love you. God bless you, and if you want to join us through the Circle of Champions to partner with us as we continue to stand in front of the gages of hell and redirect traffic and see the brokenhearted healed in Jesus' name, go and join the Circle of Champions. God bless you. Love you. Take care, and we'll see you next time. Bye-bye.