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ON
THE
FAMILY

GONE

IN A HEARTBEAT



Our Daughters Died . . .
Our Faith Endures

DAVID & MARIE WORKS
with Dean Merrill



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

Gone in a Heartbeat

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This is the real-life account of a family who walked through hell on earth. David and Marie are my heroes. The way they dealt with this tragedy is a testimony to the amazing power of God's extraordinary grace, and proves once again that He is with those who love Him, no matter how horrific the circumstances.

If you're like me, you won't be able to put this book down until you've read the final word of the final chapter. It's the inside story of what took place. It's engaging and powerful, and it will rock you to the very core of your soul.

—PETER WARREN

Director of Youth With A Mission (Denver)

When it seems as though this generation is spiraling out of control, the powerful testimony of the Works family in the midst of the tragic loss of their two daughters stands as a reminder that faith endures to the end. David and Marie Works have allowed God's forgiveness, healing, and grace to work a miracle in their family that surpasses any human expectation.

—RON LUCE

President and Founder of Teen Mania Ministries

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Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine,
or nakedness, or peril, or sword [*or assault rifle*]?
As it is written:

*“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”*

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors
through Him who loved us.
For I am persuaded that neither death nor life,
nor angels nor principalities nor powers,
nor things present nor things to come,
nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing,
shall be able to separate us from the love of God
which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—ROMANS 8:35-39 (NKJV)



Foreword

By Jack W. Hayford



The tearful scream and the pounding on the office door were the first shock, but the gunshots immediately following, ringing from the foyer directly below us, announced the emotional and death-dealing earthquake that had already begun in the parking lot outside.

It was Sunday, December 9, 2007—an unforgettable day of death and heartbreak, with that painful pair of realities matched by heroism and divine intervention.

I was there, privileged by Pastor Brady Boyd to be pulpit guest at New Life Church in Colorado Springs that morning, and privileged by God's providence to be a witness to the profound mix of terror, trauma, and transcendent grace.

The pages that follow are a testimony to the horrible being answered by the Holy—of human brokenness and shredding being addressed by divine intervention and mercifulness, at both the instant of shocking impact as well as during the aftermath of the horror. As you read, you will be stirred deeply as well as surprised greatly—just as I was on that day and all the more over the weeks and months that have followed.

Notably, you will gain inspiration and hope as you read and identify with people just like you and me who face sudden fear or instantaneous upheaval. Here is a testimony of how divine peace-amid-storm is available to any of us in such moments.

For example, from the moment the door was opened to Pastor Boyd's assistant, who was desperately crying and beating at the door—

interrupting the quiet postservice lunch we were having—an immediate flow of peace ensued. Her cry was a warning, “*There’s a gunman in the building!*” And with that exclamation, I observed a virtual miracle of confidence and wisdom descend over the pastor.

Though Brady is obviously an experienced and wise leader, overseeing a large congregation of well over 10,000, it was moving to me to see transcendent grace overtake a man in a moment of literal “under fire” dimension, as he instantly, with perfect clarity and confidence, began giving instructions and directives to associates in the room. There was no rehearsal or any way to prepare for such a moment; gunfire was being heard downstairs, and there was no way to know the gunman’s intended path of pursuit. The stairway was as accessible to the shooter as it was to the assistant who had just arrived. None of us had any reason to doubt our own vulnerability. But unexplainable peace—manifested in instant, decisive, and discerning action—reigned beyond the terror.

To such evidences of God-in-the-middle-with-us examples, you may also be encouraged to believe in the importance of your own simplest words or actions in trying or crisis circumstances. God can and will use any of us in such settings, even when we have no idea what their spiritual impact or blessing may be at the time. Let me illustrate that statement from my personal experience that day.

Swept up in the stunning moments that shook that Sunday, I viewed myself as a mere spectator. Though I had ministered the Word of God to several thousand people during the two services preceding the outbreak of terror, when the lightning moments began to strike, I felt numb rather than afraid and unimportant rather than significant.

Naturally, I joined in prayer with Brady and others in the room—and continued praying as he began to issue directives. I was there with him, available and present to encourage or serve, but I was not a key

player in any way. I saw it as a moment to be handled by people familiar with the setting, the staff, the resources, the campus, and what to do then and there. Yet Pastor Boyd would later relate to me—as did others—how strengthened they felt by my presence, how partnered they felt I was with them in the crisis, and how thankful they were for my help.

Please understand—I am not mentioning these things for self-affirming reasons. I write that paragraph to affirm *you!* As you read, I want to urge you to do so with a dual expectancy. The first, obviously, is to expect your faith and hope to be uplifted as you hear David and Marie Works’s story; to be astonished by the raw disaster they faced; and then to be more than amazed by the way destructive disaster turned into a divinely directed outcome filled with the comfort and confidence of God’s goodness beyond horror.

Second, however, I invite you to place yourself in the moment, because we all face them—indeed, doubtless many who read my words already have. Sudden fear and terrorizing trauma are common intruders into our human situation. God’s Word speaks to the reality of “sudden fear,” “sudden terror,” or “sudden disaster” in Proverbs 3:25-26:

Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the LORD will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught. (NKJV; see also KJV and NIV)

Whether you are an onlooker, as I was, or one of the principal parties, as were the Works family and Pastor Boyd—God has placed you there to be an instrument, however surprising such a possibility may be to you or me! To conclude, I offer this last example.

It was about 11:30 that morning. The second service was in progress, and I had been resting in the pastor’s office to refresh myself

before speaking again. None could know that within less than two hours the gunman's onslaught would become a part of the day's history. I was headed back to the sanctuary, and as I briskly moved across the foyer, a slender woman approached with an extended hand—apologizing for her request that I stop a moment. She simply said, “Pastor Hayford, you don't know me, but your ministry has blessed me more than you know. I simply wanted to meet you and shake your hand.”

She continued, “I won't be able to hear you this morning because I have a ministry assignment during this service.” I affirmed my gratitude, being careful to avoid being hasty and careful to express my appreciation for her faithfulness to the task that required her presence elsewhere in the church. I breathed the simplest of prayers over her, such as, “God bless you, Jeanne,” since she had said her name when introducing herself.

Little did I know, *I had just blessed the hand that would fire the gun that would take the shooter down in the church, a little over 100 minutes later!* Jeanne Assam, a member of New Life, was a part of the security team overseeing the church site that morning—a trained and licensed policewoman whose almost dainty size belied the capability, skill, and preparedness that would make her a key part of the day, though her role was entirely other than any she would have wished for.

Indeed, we never know what role we may play in any moment of sudden terror. You will find David and Marie to be victims who became victors through such a moment. I discovered Brady to be a startled pastor who instantly became a confident general in a moment of warfare. And I afterward found myself, a virtual nonentity in that moment, become an actual boon and bestower of blessing in it.

As you read, amid the inspiration you'll find, let me invite you to expect something of an incarnation to take place in your own heart as well. The same Holy Spirit that enabled ordinary people like those

herein to deal with a moment of upheaval and loss is ever ready to breathe His same power and wisdom into you—*in a moment*.

Yes, *in a heartbeat*.

—JACK W. HAYFORD

President, International Foursquare Churches
Chancellor, The King's College and Seminary,
Los Angeles, California

THE PROPHECY



Our twins were ten years old, and our younger daughters were eight and two, when something truly terrible happened in our city. I (Marie) was driving down a Denver avenue that Tuesday morning in our blue Oldsmobile with Laurie sitting across from me, while Stephanie and Rachel were stuffed into the back alongside Gracie in her car seat. We would resume our home-schooling lessons once we returned from these errands to our storage unit and the post office.

The music on the radio suddenly faded out for a news bulletin. I didn't have time to shield my daughters' young ears from the shocking words. "A shooting spree is underway at Columbine High School in Littleton. Authorities are now on the scene trying to contain the damage. It appears there may be more than one shooter at work—there are multiple victims both inside the school and out on the grass. . . . We're not sure at this point how many casualties there may be, or whether there have been any fatalities. Stay tuned for this fast-breaking story, and we'll keep you updated as soon as we get further information."

I wanted to keep listening, but I didn't want to upset my girls. In fact, it was too late. "Mom! Mom! What's going on? What's happening?" the twins and Rachel seemed to chorus all at the same time. Little Gracie was mercifully too young to catch the impact.

I turned off the radio and wondered what I should say. "Something bad is happening at a school across town," I said at last. "It sounds like someone has brought a gun to school and is shooting at people. I don't know why."

"Is anybody going to die?" Stephanie wanted to know, her dark brown hair framing a serious face in my rearview mirror.

"I sure hope not," I replied, trying to be optimistic. "You don't have to be afraid. We're here on the east side, and that school is over on the southwest side."

"Mom, who brought the gun?" asked Laurie.

"Again, I don't know," I answered. "We'll turn on the TV as soon as we get home and find out more." My inquisitive girls, I knew, could not be diverted from this awful event; their curiosity was fully piqued by now. We began to pray aloud in the car. "God, please send Your angels to protect the innocent people," I said. "Please stop this awful thing that's going on."

When we got home, I called my husband, David, who was at his job downtown with USWest, the regional phone company. "Turn on a TV!" I said. "There's a terrible shooting going on at Columbine High School!"

"Yes, I know!" he replied. "We don't have any TVs here in the office, but everybody's got a radio going. There's no work happening around here. It's awful, isn't it!"

For the rest of the day, we thought of little else. We were stunned, like everyone else, at this bolt of unexpected slaughter. We found out that two students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, had come to the campus heavily armed and firing wildly. We saw video footage from a helicopter showing students running away from the building in panic. We

saw ambulances screeching toward hospitals with lights flashing and sirens blaring. We heard police spokespeople trying to assure the public that they would soon have the situation under control.

By that evening when David got home from work, the bloody toll was becoming clear: 12 students and one teacher shot to death, the two perpetrators had committed suicide, plus 27 others had been taken to hospitals, some of them in critical condition. Survivors told harrowing tales of hiding in closets and under library tables. Denver radio and TV stations were covering the story nonstop. National media were picking it up as well.

That evening we sat together in the living room talking about the events of the day. We tried to get the facts straight as well as sort out several theories being raised by the news media.

“Daddy,” Stephanie asked, “why would someone shoot their classmates?”

“I don’t know, honey. I can’t imagine a reason for that,” David replied. “There’s no good reason—other than that there is evil in our world. Evil comes from Satan, and he’s out to hurt anyone he can.”

David and I finally went to bed pondering what a violent society we had become. Couldn’t you even take your children to a public building in a suburban area anymore and assume they would be safe? What dangers lurked in the shadows waiting to pick off innocent kids for no reason? *Oh, God, comfort those parents who are just devastated tonight, we murmured. And somehow protect us all.*

CARD FACTORY

The next day, we tried to resume the normal rhythms of home-school. When the spelling and math and social-studies lessons were finished, I noticed 10-year-old Laurie getting out construction paper and markers to make something at the kitchen table. She seemed very intent on her art project, whatever it was.

Her sisters came by before long and said, “Laurie, what are you doing?”

“I’m making cards,” she explained.

“For who?” Stephanie and Rachel wanted to know.

“For the kids in the hospital. I’m going to make a get-well card for each one of them.” She busied herself with folding and cutting unique shapes. She began decorating them with flowers and smiley faces.

“That’s cool!” her sisters responded. “We want to do some too. Can we help?”

Soon all three were busy making works of art for those in the hospital they didn’t even know. They weren’t sure how many cards to create. I told them that when their dad got home that evening, he could go online and try to find out the names of those who were hurt.

By the next day, a list of patients and their locations had been assembled. It appeared that nearly all were clustered in three large hospitals: University, Swedish, and Denver Health Medical Center.

Laurie wrote each name on a finished card. “Can we take them around to the kids?” she asked with upturned face. “I don’t want to just mail them; I want us to deliver them ourselves.”

“Well, maybe we could do that on Saturday, when I’m off work,” David replied. Naturally, the girls weren’t thrilled to have to wait that long, but it was the most realistic plan.

As it turned out, getting to the actual patients was not a simple task, given the fact that the attention of the whole city was on them. More than once we had to leave our card at a nurses’ station, hoping it would be delivered the rest of the way down the hall. But sometimes we were able to work our way to the actual bedside. At University Hospital, we accidentally ran into the mother of Mark Taylor at the elevators.

“Excuse me,” Laurie said, holding out her creation, “but I made something. This is for your son.”

The woman looked blankly at us for a second, then said, “Oh, that’s

really kind of you. Thank you so much!” We started talking, and soon she began to cry. “There have been more than a few unusual people stopping by, it seems. I just . . . it’s so nice that you thought of us,” she added, reaching down to give Laurie a pat.

We kept working down the list until all the cards were delivered. Then we turned our car in the direction of Columbine. We wanted to see for ourselves the place where the carnage had broken loose.

When we arrived, the campus was busy with hundreds of other families and individuals just like us. All of Denver and the state was gripped by what had happened there. We got out and began walking around the buildings, noting the broken windows and identifying the parking lots we had seen on television. It was hard to get close because a large area was still marked off with yellow crime-scene tape.

We saw impromptu memorials everywhere. It was clear a lot of people were overcome with emotion. We put our flowers with gold and white ribbons (the school colors of Columbine High) on a long fence by the tennis courts, which seemed to be the biggest memorial wall.

Everywhere we went, it was quiet, like a cathedral. To speak in a loud voice would have seemed irreverent.

A wet snow had fallen, even though this was the third week of April, turning many areas to mud. We slipped and skidded our way up a large hill behind the school. Looking out across the suburban rooftops of quiet Littleton, it was hard to believe this had really happened in a part of *our* city. But the plywood covering the school windows and the military police in their Humvees could not be denied.

The next afternoon after church, we attempted to go to the public memorial service in Clement Park that had been organized by Colorado’s new governor, Bill Owens. Phil Driscoll would play his amazing trumpet, and the two Cohen brothers who had survived the shooting would sing their new song, “Friend of Mine (Columbine).” The main speaker would be Franklin Graham, son of the famous evangelist.

When we got there, the place was so overwhelmed with people we couldn't find a parking spot. We sized up the challenge and decided it would be better to go back home and watch the service on TV.

In the coming weeks, however, we did succeed in attending other memorial events across the city. Our whole family wanted to stay in touch with this tragedy; Laurie had gotten us started with her card-making, and we wanted to stand in support of anyone in pain. We went to a service at the Foursquare church where the Cohen family attended; we also took in a big outdoor concert on Fiddler's Green that featured, among other groups, the Christian band called the Newsboys.

A student ministry called Revival Generation organized a rally at Cherry Hills Community Church, an evangelical megachurch on the south edge of the city. At least 2,000 attended. The keynote speaker, Josh McDowell, spent an hour with us adults in a breakout session. He spoke openly about the issues our society was facing with young people. I also stood at the back of the main auditorium, where the youth session was held. There was fervent prayer, some music by recording artist Wayne Watson, and straight talk.

Through all of these experiences that spring of 1999, we found new appreciation for God's ability to give strength to the wounded and courage to those stricken by unexpected evil. Our entire family learned afresh that the world is not always a nice place. Terrible things happen, and when they do, it's good to lean upon God's arm all the more.

A STRANGE WORD

The capstone of the post-Columbine events for us occurred that August, just before school resumed. An organization called Torchgrab put together another large youth rally to be held in the Ascot Theater in Littleton. The name reflected the call to "pick up the torch" of faith that had been carried by such Columbine victims as Rachel Scott and

Cassie Bernall. Both of them had been strong Christians, much to the irritation of their killers.

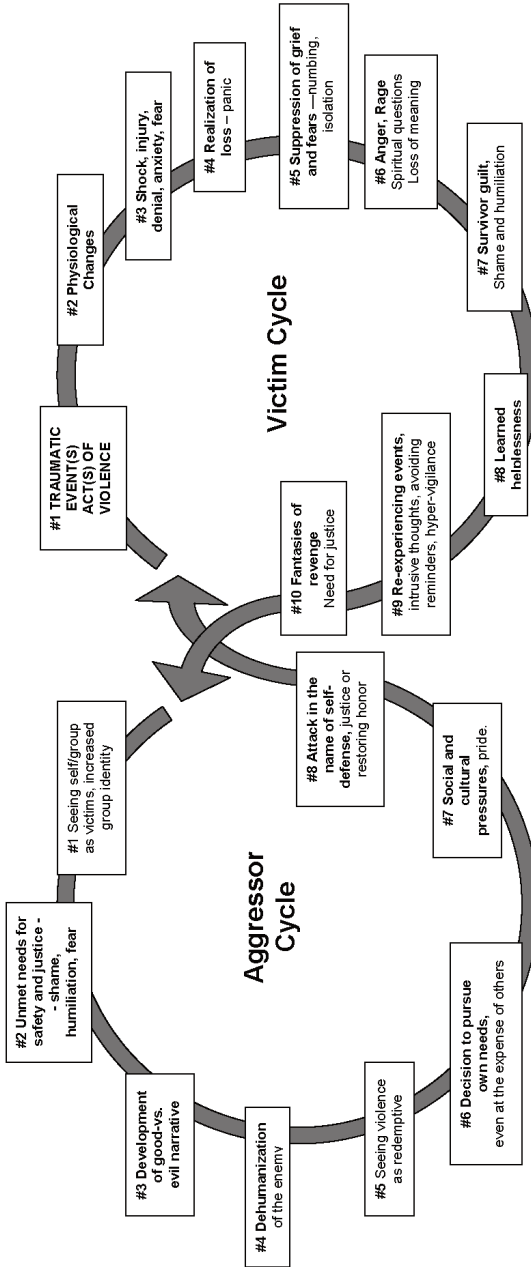
Once again, we went as a family. Under each seat was a bag of interesting freebies—a youth devotional book, a music CD, a *Who Is Jesus?* video, some Bible-study materials—that the girls thought was neat. A thousand kids filled the theater that night to hear nationally known youth speakers such as Ron Luce (president of Teen Mania), Eastman Curtis, and Bruce Porter, who had organized the event. Also on the program was Cindy Jacobs, an author and speaker, especially on the subject of intercessory prayer. She is also known for giving prophetic statements from time to time.

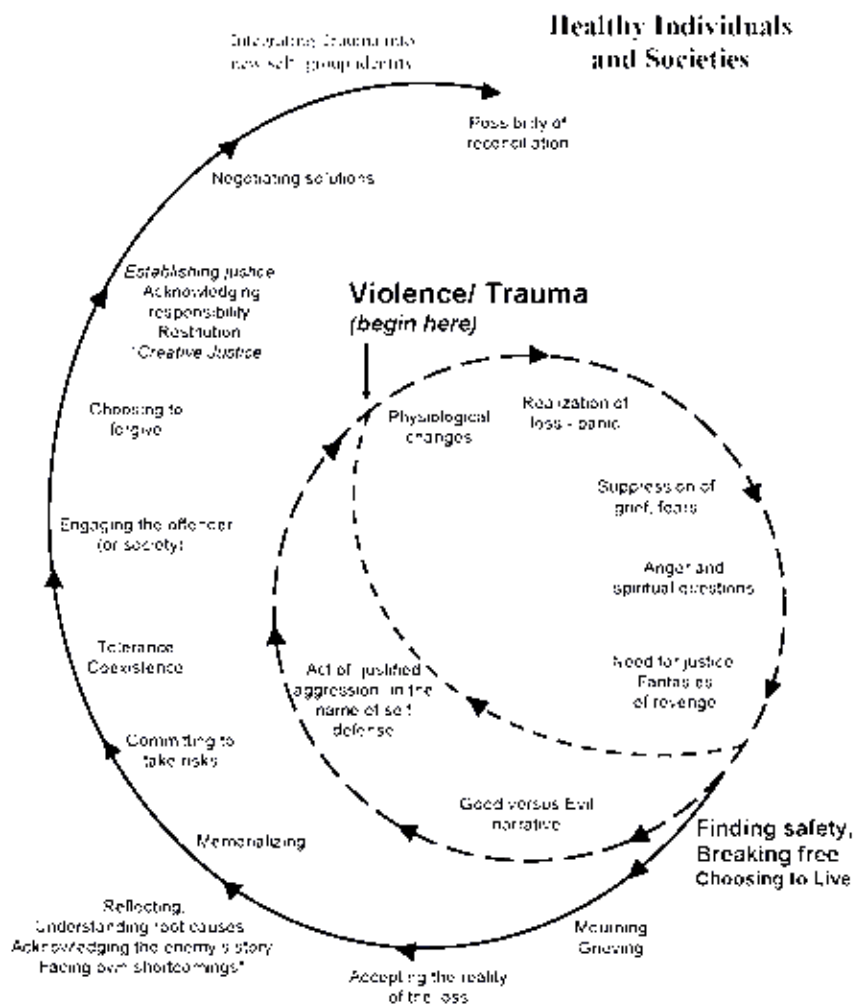
In her challenge to the young people that night, Cindy retold the stories of Rachel and Cassie. She declared that following Christ in today's world could be an uphill climb. She said, "In fact, I want to say that some of you young people here tonight will eventually be martyrs for the name of Christ." She then went on to call for dedication and determination no matter the cost.

Her stark prediction stuck in our minds, although our girls seemed not to notice. David told me later that on the way home, he thought to himself, *What was THAT all about? Such a blunt prophecy! Why would she even say such a thing to an audience of teenagers already traumatized by the Columbine shootings? Don't they have enough to worry about as it is?*

We put our sleepy girls to bed that night and hoped their futures would be far less ominous.

Appendix





Trauma Healing Journey: Breaking Cycles of Violence

*This does not apply in all cases. For example, child sexual abuse

Notes



1. <http://www.tatteredcover.com/NASApp/store/IndexJsp?s=localauthors&page=303102>.
2. Joshua Harris, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1997, 2003).
3. Jon Egan, “Who Are You,” © 2006, Vertical Music.
4. A young man scheduled to go on Rachel’s Teen Mania missions trip to Mexico back in June 2007—until he collapsed in the training center cafeteria on departure day and died on the spot (from a pre-existing condition). He was at the table right behind Rachel and her friend Aimee. She saw the whole thing—the caved-in chest, his last breath—and felt she never fully processed her grief.
5. Jared Anderson, “I’m Coming Your Way,” © 2006, Vertical Worship Songs/ASCAP.
6. Reprinted with permission of the author.
7. Eventually copyrighted in 2002 by Twin Sisters IP, LLC. Words and music by Hal Wright, Karen Mitzo Hilderbrand, and Kim Mitzo Thompson.
8. Actually, the verbatim wording of James 2:12-13 is, “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!”