

# **A MESSAGE FROM THE SCOTT MEN**

Judi Scott Celebration of Life, 1.26.19  
read by Mike Scott, Tim Scott, Chris Scott

## **INTRODUCTION...MIKE**

### **THE EARLY YEARS (Chris)**

Judi Elaine Scott was Born on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1948.

No wait. Born isn't exactly the correct word.

She was pulled out of her mother with utensils and left to die in the delivery room due to complications with the pregnancy.

It was only through the grace of God, the sheer will to live of a newborn baby girl, and the love and tenacity of her father that she survived that day. The doctors were busy working on her mother and had written my mom off to die in the corner when her father MADE them save her.

But that was only the beginning of her challenges.

You see, my mother then contracted Polio. Few diseases frightened parents more in the early part of the 20th century. Sweeping through entire towns in epidemic fashion, most folks eventually recover, but some suffered temporary or permanent paralysis and even death. My mother (Judi) spent an entire year inside what is called an Iron lung, a metal sarcophagus looking device that breathed for you. Once again, she emerged from what was considered near-death to take on life again.

### **MEETING MIKE (Chris)**

Despite these early setbacks in her life, mom (Judi) excelled in school at Escondido High as well as being an excellent swimmer, which showed when she was accepted to San Diego State University.

As a test to her bravery, before setting out for her scholastic degree she decided to go spend some time with some bears.

Yes. You heard me right. She and two friends decided to visit relatives in the Lake Tahoe area and stay at the park. They heard if you camp near the dump, you have an excellent opportunity to see some bears. What they didn't know, was that it also was a great opportunity for the bears to see them.

So, after spending the night in the park outhouse, they decided to change strategies and camp as FAR AWAY from that dump as possible.

And that night, they found themselves in the company of Cougars.

Three Washington State Cougars, to be exact. Two years into their studies at Pullman – and just coming back from a wild...Um...sorry dad...Educational...Trip to Lake Tahoe, my Dad saw my mom and, well...I'm standing here aren't I? The sparks flew, and the rest, they say, is history.

From there it was a two year long-distance relationship through hand-written letters. They were married on August 23<sup>th</sup>, of 1968. Dad decided that the cold nights in Pullman were, well, too cold, so he moved his hot California girl to north with him, and dad finished his Masters in Agriculture Econ, and mom finished her Bachelors in Microbiology.

### **THE BOYS ARRIVE (Chris)**

Mom and dad soon started a family. After a painful miscarriage, mom got pregnant again and on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1972, my oldest brother Tim was born. Following more complications and another painful miscarriage, mom became pregnant with me.

The doctors told her I would be their last, as her pregnancies were too high-risk. That must have motivated her to give it her all, because I was born at 10 lbs 11. Oz. My grandpa used to say that he knew when I was born because he heard the scream in California.

And so the young Scott Family was complete, and off to the races we went. Though the early days were busy...mom and dad working jobs, flipping houses, running orchards, our family never wanted for anything. Christmas's were heaping mounts of green, red, blue, silver, and gold wrapping paper lovingly embraced in glitter-dowsed ribbons and bows.

### **CHILDHOOD MEMORIES...CHRISTMAS (Chris)**

One fond memory stands out in particular. My brother and I, being the little gremlins we were, would go around shaking presents and guessing what they were and who they went to. So, my mother, who was never known to give up a battle, began coding the presents so as to foil our sneekery.

The first couple Christmas's were a test to our math skills, but Timm and I (Ok, who am I kidding, Brainiac Tim) would eventually crack the code before Christmas Eve.

Then she got really sneaky. SOOOO sneaky she forgot the code herself.

That was a fun Christmas.

*"Oooo...Grey socks. Here you go dad."*

*"Drakkar Cologne? Here you go Tim."*

*"GI Joe Snake Eyes? Ahh, yeah. That's what I'm talking about....hand it over dad."*

### **CHILDHOOD MEMORIES...WRESTLING AND COLLEGE (Chris)**

Lets fast forward a bit and skip the times where mom tickled me until I peed.

No, not the most embarrassing moment.

Freshman year in high school. Tim was a senior. I go to Walla Walla High School to wrestle the senior John Parsons – State Champion - where he proceeded to use me like a towel in a steam room.

At one point, he put me in a move endearingly called a "Skate Board" and I heard my shoulder pop. Now, my father and brother were giving me shouts of encouragement.

My mother?

Well, she was screaming "JUST GET PINNED CHRIS! JUST GET PINNED!!!!!"

Oh, the maternal instinct of survival. She had no shame, she wasn't pushing me to win, she just wanted her boy to live.

Another fun memory...Fast forward a bit. Mom and I drove out to be with Tim when he checked in for his first day of college at EWU. My mom sobbed uncontrollably the entire drive home. I remember thinking, "If I take a left, instead of a right, I could drop her off at the Medical Lake Mental Hospital..."

Come on. I didn't entertain it.

Ok, you're right. Pastor Josh...we need to talk.

Timm played football at EWU and we all traveled to see him play at Cheney. My parents would stay up Friday night and watch me, then we would travel to Cheney to support Timm.

Unfortunately, they didn't travel to watch him play many away games because they knew I would set the house on fire if they left me alone. No, really. Not a joke. Then we both got to play together at EWU, and mom and dad went to every game no matter where it was.

We won't talk about my college years, for the sake of time and my ego, but suffice it to say, mom was always there for her wild and crazy sons.

### **CHILDHOOD MEMORIES (Tim)**

As you're starting to tell, our mom was everything and anything her two boys needed her to be. Supporting, caring, loving, challenging and demanding. She made our beds, cleaned our rooms, cooked our meals, drove us to school and to practice. She was always in the stands cheering us on, and when I say always, I mean always. I don't remember a time when she missed a game, home or away.

We had tearful nights where she insisted I learn my Algebra, or I would have to walk across the street in the morning and get tutored from our neighbor Sharon Johnson. She would make me involve my younger brother in the games of whiffle ball or jumping our bikes off homemade ramps.

Mom always ensured that every birthday and Christmas celebrations was memorable. She was all in as a mom. She even drove a sky blue Oldsmobile station wagon with a rearward facing rear seat. It was the ultimate sacrifice of all things cool, the definition of the mom wagon. That thing was big enough to haul 2 boys, a couple of friends, a pack of dogs and a month's worth of groceries with room to spare.

### **CHILDHOOD MEMORIES...DRIVING FAST (TIM)**

I can remember riding in the front seat with my brother, one of us perched on the arm rest between the driver and passenger the other riding shotgun. Whenever she had to slam on the brakes, her right arm would swing out to keep us from hitting the dash board.

And our mom loved to drive fast.

She grew up in the southern California, where driving fast was a pastime. Her family had property near a desert community called Ocotillo wells. They would race around in sand buggies to blow off steam on the weekends.

She applied many of the principles learned from desert racing to her daily trips to school, and Safeway, and to ball practice in that big old grocery getter. She treated the throttle and the brake each like wall switches. They were either on or off. Those foot pedals were either on the floor or being ignored all together. We must have been quite a site rollin' in old blue.

### **CHILDHOOD MEMORIES...SPANKINGS, WORK, & PLAY (Tim)**

Mom was caring but she wasn't a softy. She had demands on us just like all good parents do. We had household chores, she expected good grades in school. She demanded that we be respectful, and when we crossed that line she let us know.

Mom believed in spankings, and she never felt compelled to wait for dad to get home. She believed in swift punishment and swift reconciliation. When we were younger these hacks started with her hand and with age it became spoons, and then finally as Chris and I became immune to spoons, she put into play a wooden tennis racket. Let me tell you that when she connected with that little slice of heaven you knew it. You knew immediately that the crime committed wasn't worth the punishment.

Mom was a good compliment to my dad. We were a working family, with always some kind of project going. There didn't seem to be many lazy days. I can remember mom and dad working on the house, the books, the yard, and the farm together. These were good times and it taught my brother and I work ethic. She was eager to do whatever needed to be done.

I'm thankful for mom because in spite of her willingness to work, she also loved to play. I remember her pushing for us to have a boat and to spend a week at Chelan in the summer. That summer tradition provided some of my best childhood memories.

Those days were a boys dream. We would invite friends to come with us and those long summer days were magical. We would fish, swim, tube and ski until our arms and legs would shake. We would go to Slide Waters and slide the day away. Mom wasn't a beach towel diva either. She was right there water skiing, sliding, laughing and having fun with us.

It will be no surprise to you that mom loved to drive the boat. She especially loved to drive when pulling the tube. She considered it her life's calling to make sure that you got your money's worth behind that boat.

It was such a twist of irony looking back on it now. She would remind you to tighten that life jacket, make sure the snaps were all clasped, and lecture you about keeping your hands free of the rope so you didn't get stuck in it while falling off. She would review all the hand signals so we could communicate and she would never start the motor until we were all well clear of the prop. She was like a safety inspector for a salt mine.

But then something would happen. After you were in the water, safety brief completed, a metamorphosis would occur. She would turn the key and bring the boat to life and it was on. She would have made the engineers at Bayliner sweat when they saw the paces she put their designs through. It was hammer down and she sawed on that steering wheel like a woman possessed.

And you've got to remember...back in those days a tube was just that...a rubber tube bought at Les Schwab with a rope tied to it. It wasn't one of these nylon wrapped sissy sleds we use today complete with back rests and handles. There was no upright seating. You hugged that thing with all your might and every bump in the water brought a face full of tube like a sort of wet, defenseless, boxing match while hanging on for your life while going the speed of light.

Mom loved to ski and swim in that clear blue Chelan water. As a grown man reflecting on my mom's life, I still cherish those precious memories. So much so that I have implemented that into my own family's summer traditions. We will miss her this summer as we enjoy the gift of Lake Chelan and the Columbia river without her.

### **A FAMILY DRIFTS APART (Mike)**

For all of these memories and more, you might be tempted to think that we were the perfect American family. But that would be far from the truth. For all of the laughter and love we shared and experienced as a young family, that would all begin to change as the years rolled by. As we grew, so did the relational friction and distance.

Now unfortunately, relationships are not like a fine wine...they do not naturally get better with age. They take hard work...communication, forgiveness, kindness...otherwise they can spoil. And regrettably, this was the path our family relationships began to drift down.

### **THE FACADE OF THE JACKET (Chris)**

Our family was, in a way, a lot like this suit jacket I'm wearing today. Along with a nice haircut, trimmed beard, nice pants and shoes, and a quick smile, this jacket can make a homely guy like me look pretty dang good. Almost like I actually have my act together. The exterior looks nice, so the interior must be the same.

But for many years in our family, nothing could be further from the truth.

You see, if I were to take this jacket off and roll up my sleeves, you'd see a very different picture...not of something put together, but of something very broken. Scars left from painful experiences, tattoos memorializing sad memories. You'd realize the nice jacket was nothing more than a cheap facade, thinly covering the underlying brokenness and pain.

Now, let me be clear. We're not sharing these things in a cathartic expression of regret. Because, thanks be to God alone, our family experienced the sweet beginnings of restoration and redemption from these (often) self-inflicted scars. So it is not in sadness that we share these things today, but rather with an overwhelming thankfulness to God that they did not mark the final chapter of our family's life.

And we share them because 1) we do not think you could fully know or appreciate our mom without the story told, and 2) we do not think we our struggles are unique as a family.

All of us have scars we hide, masks we wear, smiles we paste over pain. And it is our prayer that in sharing our family's journey through those scars to healing and wholeness that we would honor our mother's memory, and in a way, fulfill what we are sure was her prayers many a time. And we pray that you might be encouraged in your journey as well.

So, back to our family. The world would have looked on at what they would define as a "great family." Everyone of us was successful. We had the wives and nice looking kids. We pay our taxes. We contributed to society.

The coat fit well.

But the truth is, it was just a coat, thinly covering a mountain of pain and relational dysfunction.

About 7 years ago, things went sideways. Really sideways. Anger, resentment, bitterness, harsh words that should never be spoken, and kind words that should have been said but weren't, all added up to relational destruction, division, and distance. I'm not saying that we were perfect up until then, it's just that all of our past and present sins had continued to build beyond the point that any family's natural "glue" could hold together any longer.

And there we were, jackets off, shirt sleeves rolled up, swinging at each other.

### **THE OLDER BROTHER (Tim)**

In the fall of 2017, I was living the life I thought I was supposed to live. I had a wife, 3 healthy and beautiful kids, a rewarding job and money enough to do all the things that we value as a culture. I had a nice house, nice cars, went on nice vacations. I was living the life I thought I always wanted.

And I was miserable.

From the outside, I'm sure our friends thought we had it figured out, except there was one problem. My family wasn't getting along. I was no longer in fellowship with my parents or my

brother. We rarely spoke, and when we did it was tense and superficial. It was just easier to avoid each other. And so we did.

This was spawned by years of pent up anger over many different things, one of which was the family orchard business. How ironic that something we had all worked hard to build had in fact torn us all apart. Differences of opinions, broken promises, bad communication, and harsh words spoken between us had built an un-crossable divide. And it had made me a bitter person that affected every area of my life.

I carried the anger around like a backpack full of rocks. It's not something that I realized at the time, but I was miserable. It affected my marriage, how I treated my kids, and how I interacted with friends. I avoided social situations. I was so caught up in myself that I couldn't see that I was in fact the problem. Here I was, up to my eye balls in blessings, and all I could think of was what I didn't have that I thought I deserved. I had everything that I had ever wanted in life, and yet underneath the jacket I was operating at a low boil of anger and misery stemming from bitterness and un-forgiveness.

### **THE YOUNGER SON (Chris)**

While Tim wrestled with his own demons, I was contributing to my "lion's share" of the problems. During and after my divorce in 2001, my decision making skills, if ever measured, would have come up seriously lacking.

I didn't know it then, because at that time I believed my problems were everyone else's fault. But my selfishness and self-destructive tendencies were the real problem. I severely lacked a purpose in life. College football, the one thing I felt made me who I was, was over, and I didn't know what to do. I was lost.

And in my lost-ness, I lashed out in pain. I did nothing but hurt my mother and father, and alienated myself from my brother. I made selfish choices, and I didn't care who it affected.

This behavior continued into my second marriage with my very loving and VERY patient wife, Paula. When people face conflict, they can either get to work to fix it, or ignore it by sedating themselves with alcohol, drugs, tv, or video games...anything to take their mind off the pain... or they lash out in anger and burn things to the ground around them. I was good at the last two.

I was sedating myself and burning my marriage, and every relationship I had, to the ground.

### **THE PRODIGAL GOD (Tim)**

One evening my wife asked if I would go to a small bible study group. She explained that Bob and Jackie Wilt had invited us to some pastor's house in Monitor, and she thought it might be fun. We were in apple harvest, I was coming off a stressful day at work and I was in no mood to go read bible verses. My answer was a resounding "No" (rated G version of what I really said).

My wife, being the constant source of encouragement eventually got me coaxed into the car with a series of threats and reprimands and we were on our way. This was the first of many small groups I would attend at the Mac's house over the next year.

What I encountered when I got there is not what I expected. It was the Wilts, The Smiths, The Phillips, and the Bruners. Josh and Sharon McPherson hosted. Everybody brought their families. We laughed, joked, played games of whiffle ball and football and ate fantastic meals. They were friendly, honest and trustworthy folks that cared about what was happening in my world, and openly shared what was happening in theirs.

Sure we took time to pray before the meal, and we did sit down and talk about that week's sermon, or a verse in the bible, but what it always turned into was real life stories about real stuff. It was honest. It was practical. For the first time I saw how the gospel and my life connected. It was what had been missing in my life and I drank it like cold water on a hot summer day.

As the meetings continued our friendships deepened and I shared some of the problems I was having in my own family. They all listened intently, and shortly thereafter Josh gave me a copy of a book called the Prodigal God by Tim Keller, which is a book about the parable of the Prodigal Son that Jesus spoke of in the Gospel of Luke.

Essentially it's a story of a father with two sons. The family had a farm. The older son works on the farm day and night but the younger son is too involved with a sinful / party life to help with the farm. The younger son comes home after being gone a long time and begs his father for forgiveness and the father gives it to him.

The father throws the younger son a huge party to rejoice the younger son's return. This angers the older son because there was no party thrown for him and he has been at work the whole time. The point of the parable is that the older son is the biggest sinner in the story. He denies his love for his brother and father out of petty jealousy and selfishness.

It was a 2000 year old story spoken by Jesus, and I realized He was speaking directly to me. I was the oldest son in the parable. It was the attitude adjustment I had needed. It was the pin prick that broke the dike. My world was turned upside down with the realization that I was the reason for my misery, that I was the sinner in the story. And that the answer to my problems was not getting property, but rather getting forgiveness for my sins through the finished work of Jesus Christ. What I needed wasn't a material fix, what I needed was spiritual redemption.

### **A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING (Chris)**

Ironically, about the same time but in a completely different way, the Lord was inviting me on a spiritual journey of redemption and restoration. It took a heck of a lot of physical, emotional, and spiritual beating – as well as an over abundant amount of love - for me to finally see that God is a relational God. It wasn't the judgement of God or the fear of God that finally drew me in, it was the kindness of our Heavenly Father and his gentle but relentless pursuit of his thick-headed but beloved son.

Quite honestly, looking back, I can't honestly tell you if I believed in God or not.

I didn't see God. I couldn't hear him. I couldn't touch him.

I had people that wanted me to believe in him. Ok, to be honest, I had girls I liked that wanted me to believe in him, yet;

I had no real PROOF that he existed.

I wanted to believe. I wanted a higher power, a purpose to this life. I just couldn't find tangible proof of His existence.

I was a biology major. I believed in EVIDENCE. Come to me with FACTS and we can talk. Present me with theory, and I may listen. Say that I just need faith, and I would smile – maybe shake your hand – then quietly dodge you on campus for the rest of my life.

But, looking back, I desperately WANTED to believe in God. I wanted someone to present me with something that I could not dispute. Something that I could finally say *“A-HA! Finally, now I can do the things I feel I should do, but continue not to do, because I’m not sure I need to!”*

Come on, am I alone in this?

It took a VERY patient, loving, and stubborn wife, a Mohawked Pastor, a fire hose and some smoke bombs, sleep deprivation, a major loss of flesh, a screwed up hip, some Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, a lot of uncomfortable hugging, a lot of clapping, and some really Godly men to get me to a place where I was able to understand the nature of true saving faith. I’m sure there were a few baseball bats to the head in there as well.

What am I talking about, you say?

About 8 months ago, God decided to up my game. He apparently didn’t like the speed of which I was learning, so he had several men in black clothes beat it into me in the deserts of Southern California. Then, because that wasn’t enough, He sealed the deal with a trip to the WORD retreat this last fall and a whole bunch of hugs from manly men I’d never met.

And for the first time, I was willing to let people see what was underneath my jacket. I realized that perfection was not what my Heavenly Father was looking for. He was looking for repentance and faith. And with that, through his Son Jesus Christ, came his refreshing rivers of life-giving grace. Not grace in response to me getting my act together, but grace in response to me acknowledging the very fact that I couldn’t get my act together.

So my spiritual journey became not one of arriving at perfection, or even in seeking it, but rather of constantly learning and growing in my new-found relationship with Jesus. And of changing to become more like Jesus and less like myself.

“Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you.” This is the promise of Jesus, and I was finding it to be true.

### **A NEW FOUND URGENCY (TIM)**

Upon giving my life to Jesus and getting my relationship made right with my Creator, my life at once had urgency to make things right in my family. But how? The years of bitter conversations. The lack of trust. The feeling of needing to make things right was overwhelming. I knew that these would not be easy conversations, so for the first time in my life, I asked God for help. I needed some easy wins, and He graciously provided.

The stories of these conversations are moving and deserve their own pages in this story, but for time's sake I will just say that the conversation with my dad standing out in our orchard, and the conversation with my brother while sitting up in his office, were two of the most precious moments of my life. Both were surprising, both were heartfelt and emotional, and both centered on forgiveness. The Scott men were getting back on track, one conversation at a time. We had begun to rebuild our broken family, and it was awesome.

As these events took place over the past year, restoration began to take place. After witnessing my baptisms last Easter, my parents began attending Grace City Church and found it a place they could call home. I could see a lightness in their moods as their marriage and relationship with their sons improved. My brother and his family were attending Awaken and were leaning into God's word and I was watching an amazing change in him as a family man and brother.

What I never thought would happen was unfolding right before my eyes. With God at the center, our family was growing back together.

### **THE SINNER BECAME THE SEEKER (Chris)**

My Spiritual Journey right now is one of a Seeker. And it has only changed everything. For the first time ever, my father, brother and myself were sitting down to pray. A year ago, I would have said that could never happen.

God is at work in this family, and old wounds are beginning to heal.

Yes, apart, we are all considered successful families. But there is no success that can match the sweetness of being together. There are riches in family that no success in business can match.

I am very grateful for God and his work in my life. At the very best, I would probably be divorced again, bitter and alone without Jesus.

With Him in my life now, I am not only watching my own family gain strength, I am watching our entire family come together. It is so awesome how God can take a tragedy like the passing of a mother, and use it for his glory and our good. The enemy tries so hard to tear us apart, but God uses those moments to build us back up.

If part of this story pulls on your gut just a little, or has you thinking of your mom and dad, or sister and brother, your marriage or your own kids, I give you this to consider;

Don't wait. Take the step. Say you're sorry. Own your stuff. If you don't know where to start, talk with someone. Talk with Pastor Josh or my pastor Daniel Kellog, or come talk to my brother or myself. We would love to help you take of the coat, and turn to our Heavenly Father who is the Healer of all our scars.

The enemy thought he could discourage our family and the progress of restoration we were making by taking our mom in what appeared to be a fluke tragedy. But it has only served to rally us closer together. While 2019 has had a painful beginning, we believe it will also have a victorious ending. We are not shrinking back, we are not backing down, we are moving ahead, together.

### **LANDING THE PLANE (Tim)**

We know this has been a little different, but real is the only way we know how to do it. So much of life today is plastic, fake, pretend...images we carefully craft on social media to present a picture of someone we're not. So as we sat and talked as a family, we just didn't have the stomach for that. God has been too good to us, the grace has been too sweet, the slow but steady restoring of relationship too real to ignore with a few sentimental comments and a closing prayer.

We wanted to tell our story, God's story. For what we are experiencing now we believe my mom had hoped for and prayed about for years. And that we got to experience it with her in our last days together is a gift we will always cherish. We stand before you today with no regret, but only thankfulness in our hearts for God's kindness to us. Through it all...the good, the bad, the hard, the fun, the painful, and the beautiful, we see nothing but grace. And we are thankful.

So this is how we want to end. Nothing would make us happier than if this day, and these stories, helped you reflect on your own story. So it is with great humility and not a little amount of prayer that we wanted to encourage you with these two things.

First, if our story has reminded you of any family relationships you have currently that are not harmonious...maybe it was because of a harsh word, or a mean act, or maybe for reasons you can't even remember...would you honor the memory of our mom by taking steps to make those relationship right today? Sure, it won't all get better tomorrow. But the healing can start today. The process can start now. It did for us almost a year ago, and we can tell you, from this perspective, it's worth it. And we know if mom were here and we gave her the mic, that's what she would say.

Secondly, if you've never considered looking to Jesus, or perhaps you grew up around church but for some reason have drifted away, would you consider coming back? Nothing would honor our mom's memory more, and nothing would make her more happy we believe, than if we used the opportunity of her celebration of life to encourage you along in your spiritual journey and to consider the offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Our mom was a Christian her whole life, but we didn't attend church often growing up. As I have been going through her stuff it has been a pleasant surprise to me that she continued to search out Jesus, and especially in the recent months. I found countless Bible verses that gave her comfort and strength. Many books, DVD's and references to GOD with worn pages and highlighted sentences. A worn Bible with many journal entries. Everywhere we looked, we found evidence of a steady, solid, growing faith.

As we have sat together this week and talked, reflected, laughed, and cried together, we have been overwhelmed by the grace of God in our stories.

Our three families were like 3 separate streams high in the mountains. We were divided by impossible terrain. Mostly flowing in different directions, with little mind to what the other streams were doing. We flowed along in our own channels, bobbing and weaving through the obstacles in front of us. Individually we were small in scope, but through God's grace, he has confluenced our families individual streams, and is making us into powerful river. A river formidable enough to determine its own route, to cut its own channel.

As we all stood around Mom's bed holding her hands, praying, crying, loving her and one another it occurred to me that had the Wilts not invited my family into their small group, had Becky not forced me into going, had the Smiths and the Phillips, and the Bruners and the McPhersons not loved and cared for me as they have, had my Dad and brother not forgiven me, and had Jesus not granted me grace and eternal life that released me from the bondage of bitterness I had shackled my life with, that the moment of my mom's passing would have been far more difficult than it was.

While her death was sudden, unexpected, and tragic, it did not leave us filled with regret. We stood around her bed, holding her hand and each others, praying out together, at peace with her, each other, and God. I'm not sure a family could be given a greater gift.

I am so grateful to the Lord for granting me some easy wins and I will be forever grateful for the people named in this story and their simple acts of caring and kindness.

If you are not in fellowship with loved ones in your family, if you are estranged from people that you hold dear, look within yourself. Take ownership for the part you are responsible for, give the gift of loving forgiveness and ask for forgiveness of your own. If you can't bring yourself to do it or you cannot find the strength to do it, ask God for help. He was there for my family. I believe he will be there for yours too.

And don't ever underestimate the value of a single act of love. If one friend, inviting another to spend an afternoon barbecuing at a friend's house in fellowship with friends can redeem a family just before tragedy strikes, what might it do for you? How might you impact someone you love?

Mom, we'll miss you. But hear us make this pledge...by the grace of God, we will endeavor to be men who take their faith in Jesus seriously; who take their spiritual leadership of their family seriously; who love their wives tenderly, and lead their children faithfully; and who leave a legacy not of money, wealth, or prominence, but a legacy of grace, hope, and love. Of healthy family relationships, of a growing hunger and knowledge of God's Word like you modeled for us in your own life. And in so doing, we will honor your memory, and we believe, your wishes for us as your boys.

My mom was a mom, a farmer's wife for 50 years, a business partner, a wine maker, a 40 year CWH employee and friend to many. She was accomplished in many ways and touched many lives along the way. She lived a life well lived. I love my mom and take great comfort that she was a child of GOD, and that because of Jesus, death is not goodbye forever, but only goodbye for now.

## **MIKE**

As I've watched the three streams of spiritual discovery and awakening come together, I marvel at the Lord's timing.

Now, I want to be honest with you all. I am a work in progress. And I don't believe I yet possess all the answers. I like to think something over before I accept it as true. I like to work with facts, so I ask lots of questions.

The first time I met with Pastor Josh to explore this thing called faith, I brought with me my list of questions. Very specific questions. And Judi sat quietly by as I asked them all, patiently allowing me to take my own path, at my own pace, on the road of faith she was already traveling.

So I am a seeker, with you. Aren't we all? Looking for answers. Looking for hope. Looking for transcendence, meaning, and purpose. A sojourner on this road of faith.

And a bit to my own surprise, it is a journey I am finding increasingly sweet and satisfying. The journey is not over for me, not by a long shot, *but this I do know...*for me, it has most certainly has *begun*.

I stand before you today grateful. Grateful to have loved and been loved by a woman such as Judi. Neither of us pretended to be perfect, but that's part of what makes the journey special. We were committed to each other to the end, and that is a precious thing.

I'm grateful to have spent 50 years together as husband and wife. Grateful to have raised sons together, planted orchards together, laughed together, built a business together, and in every possible way, shared our lives together. It is a gift I will treasure forever.

But even in her life ending, there are new beginnings. Even in her life's final chapter closing, there are new chapters starting. Even in her death, there is new life. And from the ashes of this loss, I am already seeing beauty grow.

I heard something the other day that resonated with me. The philosopher and writer CS Lewis summed up my feelings best, when he made the following observation: *"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else."*

And when describing his conversion experience, CS Lewis noted that he could not tell you the exact moment the sunlight of faith had broken the horizon of his life. But what he did know was this...that in his heart it had been darkest night, and now it was brilliant day.

I think that encapsulates my journey of faith...the slow, steady dawning of the light of Jesus on the horizon of my life, so that now I am starting to see the world in a completely different light.

It is a beautiful thing, a sacred thing, and one I believe my Judi would encourage you to consider.

This summer, it is my hope to be baptized in the Columbia River by my pastor and surrounded by my sons. And I believe my Judi will be smiling down from heaven as she enjoys watching her family grow in strength together.

So thank you for listening to our story. It is one we are grateful to the Lord for. He is writing an extraordinary chapter we never thought we'd get to read. And with Him as the story teller, the passing of time can truly make life and relationships sweeter and sweeter to the taste.

Just like a finely-aged wine.