

GROWING THROUGH  
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS  
IN EVERY CHAPTER

# seasons of change



## Chrissy is married to Mark and they have two children, Ethan and Seth.

She is a part time teaching assistant and has been coming to All Saints for eight years.

Chrissy shares with us here how God has helped her through the experience of losing both her parents in a short space of time.

**"I just can't move my legs, other than that I'm fine!"** This was what my mum said to anyone who called to see how she was doing once the cancer had spread. She wasn't stoic in a stiff, silent, martyr-like way, she just truly didn't feel hard done by and wholly focused on her blessings. This made her a joy to be around, even though she and we knew that time was running out and only God knew how long we would have her for.

We were able to get mum home for her last days, surrounded by flowers, her favourite books, music and the quilts she'd made. But what gave her the most and truest comfort was her daily bible reading and looking through her hymn book and humming her favorites. Her enduring peace and unquashable joy came from her faith in Jesus and knowing that her circumstances were not a mistake or unfair, but part of God's plan. She felt gratitude every day and thanked God for the care that

she was receiving from the nurses and from her family and friends. The lovely nurses would tell us that they loved coming to visit my mum because she was just so full of warmth.

That first night, I felt guilty that I hadn't been loving enough to her during her life. That I hadn't been as patient as I should have been and that I hadn't made enough of an effort to see her when I was in my 20s and 30s. I also felt that I hadn't been as joyful to see her, as I could have been when we spent time together. I hadn't made the most of her or made her feel truly appreciated. I couldn't stop crying that night and I couldn't answer the phone to my best friend for all the sobbing.

My mum's courage and faith are what I clung to when I lost her. In her illness she set me an example of thankfulness and one of the ways I coped with losing her was by doing the same. I thanked Him that I got to have her as my mum. That I had her for all of my childhood and until I was nearly 40 with a wonderful husband and gorgeous children. I thanked Him for the care that she received from the nurses and the overnight hospice staff. That I was with her right to the end.

We got dad into sheltered accommodation in Hayward's Heath in the September. He didn't want to live in Ely on his own, but he also didn't want to be in a tiny flat away from his beloved wife. It was a huge shift for him to move down here without my mum and away from their church and friends. After two falls in December, he went into hospital and while waiting for a package of care, he contracted covid. After a spell in intensive care over

---

***Her enduring  
peace and  
unquashable  
joy came from  
her faith  
in Jesus.***

---

Christmas and time in rehab, his lungs couldn't recover from the damage and we lost dad seven months after my mum. For him life without my mum was totally unbearable. They were two parts of a whole. She laughed at his jokes right up until the end. They were soul mates in every sense. To be honest, I couldn't imagine one without the other either.

I had lost both of my parents within seven months. It was so



*Chrissy, Mark, and her parents on their wedding day*

much to deal with. I have two brothers. One didn't talk to either of my parents (that's another essay in itself) and the other reconciled with my parents just before my mum died. He lives in France. So, I had two funerals to organise with no help from family. Thank heavens for Mark. Both funerals were during lockdowns so we couldn't do all the things we wanted to do.

Again, I tried to find things to thank God for. I thanked him that my dad was with my mum now and that's all he really wanted, although I think he was torn between wanting to stay for me and desperately wanting to be with my mum. I thanked Him for the love briefly shown to him by All Saints. I thanked Him for how much joy my parents had in their relationship and how they had given me such a wonderful blue print for marriage.

Once my dad's funeral was over and we had cleared his flat, I had to find a way to make a new normal. I didn't work at the time so I found I had a lot of time on my hands now that I wasn't constantly going to hospital or arranging care for my dad. I often felt like I had lost my anchor. I had lost both my parents and I felt like an orphan. Who would I call if something terrible happened? Who would I run to if something happened to my boys

or to Mark? Who would I ring to tell of Ethan's successful day at school or when Seth said something hilarious? I felt truly lost and like I didn't belong to anyone.

Mark told me to do whatever I needed to do to feel better. I was so so tired. Totally drained, emotionally and physically. So, I slept a lot and rested in the day while the boys were at school. I needed focus. And I found myself hugely comforted in doing the things that my mum loved to do.

---

***Both funerals were during lockdowns so we couldn't do all the things we wanted to do. Again, I tried to find things to thank God for.***

---

I started making things. My mum made quilts for everyone but she loved to make anything, she knitted, she sewed, she baked. And she loved gardening. So, I found the crafts that I enjoyed. I worked with clay and made bowls, I knitted booties for my great nephew, I started doing origami. It was such a balm. It gave me huge comfort to do things that my mum loved, but in creating pieces, I felt useful and rewarded. I also gardened like my life depended on it! I sowed far too many seeds, so many in fact that Mark made me special shelves to house my seed trays so they didn't take over the house. I threw myself into making my allotment into a sanctuary. I poured over books about growing vegetables and looking after an allotment. I dug the soil till I couldn't dig anymore, but oh it was such therapy. Mark teased me in the spring that I was obsessed with checking my seedlings progress every day and every evening.

Another way I got through this time of loss was to look outwards. I saw a Facebook advert for The Ration Challenge. It really felt like a way to connect with others suffering in different ways. In June, I signed up for a week of eating the same rations as a refugee in Syria. It was really tough, tougher than I thought it would be. To get through it, I needed to pray more than I would normally. I had to pray for strength and endurance. The Lectio 365 daily devotional was invaluable for this. Doing the challenge took the focus away from myself and onto others. It didn't dissolve my grief but it was very freeing. I love the phrase "what would Jesus do?" It helps me look upwards and outwards and live in a contended way.

---

***I love the phrase "what would Jesus do?" It helps me look upwards and outwards and live in a contended way.***

---

In losing my parents and in feeling anchorless, I have found peace and comfort in creativity, in the beauty of my garden and in loving and caring for others. These activities seemed to mirror the beauty, creativity and loving care of God and they helped me keep close to Him.

I've realised that Jesus is my rock and when we can't find our earthly one, He is there, where He's always been. He's taught me contentment again in these ways.

