

Shadow Living...Paintings of Grief

Deborah Slappey Pitts
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Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views (11/07)

“Shadow Living...Paintings of Grief,” tells of what it is like to lose a spouse. Deborah Slappey Pitts lost her husband to Amyloidosis disease. Pitts takes us through her personal experience of becoming a widow at forty-years of age. In telling her story, she reaches out to others who have gone, or are going, through the grieving process of losing a loved one. In addition to telling her personal story, she also discusses the stages of grief. I believe that this is incredibly important for people to read, so that they can understand the myriad of emotions that they will be experiencing.

When reading “Shadow Living,” I discovered that it felt more like Pitts was in the room with me telling her story, than I was reading words. She vividly describes her experience in such a way that you are picturing, and feeling it, not just staring at words. It was very difficult not to tear up while reading her story. My heart went out her. She was a wife and a mother who all of a sudden had to learn to redefine her role.

I admired her for hanging on to her faith and putting God first. At times her prayers were heart wrenching. Having gone through the break up of a fifteen-year marriage myself, this grief brought back memories of my own grieving, and the moments where I begged God for things to be different. I truly believe that her incredible faith helped her survive through this ordeal. She also sought out help and went through the counseling process. When she entered into group therapy and heard other people’s stories, she was able to connect to them and relate. She also experienced physical problems because of her emotional pain. It is really important for the grievers to know that this can happen and that if they don’t care for themselves properly, they can really become ill.

The book is divided into several sections. Pitts’ experience is separated into three parts. She also offers resources through endnotes, a recommended reading list, an update on Amyloidosis, references and a discussion guide. People that will benefit from “Shadow Living...Paintings of Grief,” include those affected by Amyloidosis, people who have lost loved ones, and grieving groups. This book is a perfect tool for those in grief therapy, both individual and group. The groups would especially benefit from the discussion questions. Even though I was divorced instead of widowed, I found that I could relate to a lot of what Pitts went through after her husband passed on. The stages of grief were the same. She lost her husband physically and emotionally, I lost the dream of what I thought my husband was. Pitts definitely suffered a greater loss than mine; however, as I read, I felt that women going through divorces could also benefit from this book. The main thing we all have to learn is that life does go on and if you hang on to your faith and take care of yourself, it definitely does get better.