

# WHEN BETRAYAL MAKES YOU A SINGLE MOM

From Shaken to Steady

A guidebook from one who has been there.



**KIM BREUNINGER**

SMART LIVING IN SMALL BITES

To read more, the entire book is available on Amazon.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .....	v
Dear Reader .....	1
My Story .....	5
Your Story .....	13
Problems to Face .....	17
Steps to Take .....	29
Finding Hope .....	53
Finding Your Hope .....	57
When Memories Return .....	61
Before You Go .....	69
The Hope We've Found .....	73
Beginning Faith .....	75
Battered Faith .....	81
Building Faith .....	87
About the Author .....	93
Resources .....	95
About Grit and Grace Life .....	97

Published in the U.S. by: The Grit and Grace Project

Address: P. O. Box 247

Estero, FL 33929

Email: [info@thegritandgraceproject.org](mailto:info@thegritandgraceproject.org)

Web Address: [www.gritandgracelife.com](http://www.gritandgracelife.com)

Author: Kim Breuninger

Editor: Ashley Johnson

Special Projects Manager: Allison McCormick

Photo credits: All photos courtesy of Shutterstock

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ISBN: 979-8-9921665-1-4

This book is written by the author to share her life experience with the sole purpose of providing insight, encouragement, and hope. The information provided in this book is for informational purposes only and is not intended to substitute professional counseling or treatment.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Everyone has a story, and mine would have remained locked inside if not for my husband, Dave. He's loved me sacrificially, held my tears, nurtured my broken pieces, and laughed with me at just the right time. With unrelenting patience, he has been my 'Jesus with skin on' every day. He's proud of me, is for me, and believes in me. I often wonder how the Lord blessed me with this man! I'm so grateful He did.

To my sons who've walked this story with me: I was helpless to shield you from the pain of our past, so I strived to ensure you understood the endless love of Jesus. Even if I were a more eloquent writer, my words would still fall short of expressing how proud I am of the honorable men you've become and your exceptional accomplishments. God has answered my prayers for you in abundance. Thank you for your support and for allowing me the freedom to share my story and a bit of yours. You are my heart-song and always will be.

Susie and Gary: You both have faithfully walked with my family through storms and joys over many years. You are a godsend to us all! Thank you for being the role models this world desperately needs and for your sacrificial love that still flows from you today.

Bonnie, Penny, Paulette, and Lisa: You are my oxygen, the deep breath of springtime air every girl needs when it's time to let her hair down and share every pithy thought, no matter how random or snarky I could not

put my story into the world without you walking beside me and shouting, “You can do this!”

Allison McCormick, Darlene Brock, Ashley Johnson, and the Grit and Grace team: I’m deeply grateful for the opportunity to be part of your team. It’s been a lifelong dream to encourage others through writing, and you have gracefully, patiently, and generously nurtured this ministry and my part in it. Thank you for your vision and the many hours spent seeing to the success of this project.

I must close with gratitude to my Lord, Jesus Christ: You have lifted me from a low place and chosen me, even when the world said I had no honor and belonged to no one. Against all odds, you brought me to work alongside you in ministry and have blessed me through it every day. You are the gold in every piece of my story. To quote the final words of my beloved Mom, “Thank you, Jesus.”

# DEAR READER

Thank you for joining me here.

If you have chosen this book, you may be searching for guidance and rest. You might be hoping to understand what's happening in your life. I'm willing to bet that you have questions for which you wish you could find answers—from someone who has been where you are.

That's the very reason I am here. I have been there, and I am going to share my experiences and the lessons I learned along the way. As you peek into my chaotic, messy life, I pray that my vulnerability will feel relatable and that my story will help you navigate the twists and turns ahead of you. My hope is that by sharing my experiences, you will find confidence when your life feels out of control, and, perhaps, you may even gain a fresh perspective to see you through.

There are a few things I would like for you to keep in mind before we move on:

First, trust that you will find joy again. Not only has this happened for me, but I have also seen it happen in every single mom I know. Believe that you will get there too.

Next, if you've flown on an airplane, you've heard the flight attendant explain that in the case of an emergency, parents should apply their



oxygen masks before tending to their children. For a parent, this feels counterintuitive, but Momma, this principle applies to you, especially in this new season.

Self-care is the first step to a single mom's survival; this guidebook is a good beginning. There's nothing selfish or self-centered about taking the time to gather the strength you need, emotionally and physically. Your stability is a vital part of your and your child's well-being.

Last, you are not alone. You may forecast lonely days, but your life won't stay that way. Your story may be unique, but don't allow yourself to hide in the shadows because of it. Many women have weathered hard times like these and made it safely to the sunny side of the street. You can too.

I have high hopes for you, my friend. You are a woman worthy of love and respect, and you *can* do this!

You're in my prayers,

*Kim*



"Taking care of yourself IS  
productive."

# MY STORY

I met my husband while waitressing at the coffee shop he managed. At first, I barely noticed him. Our schedules rarely aligned, and I was focused on getting through college, a dream I chased despite unsupportive parents, hence the waitressing job.

It was the 70s, and I'd disappointed my parents by becoming a "Jesus freak" during the California Jesus Revolution. Raised in a disconnected home where there was no acknowledgment of God, the idea of being unconditionally loved instantly drew me toward Jesus. At the same time, my dad's chronic anger pushed me out of my parents' home—as it already had my three brothers. I'd found a path to a happier life and jumped on it. I graduated high school early, found a job as a waitress, rented a room from a friend, and enrolled in college. I was 17, and life was finally going my way... until the accident a year later.

Too soon, my high school boyfriend of three years, a tall, blue-eyed blonde with a big smile and the football star of our alma mater, was taken in a tragic motorcycle accident. I stood with his family at the funeral, feeling lost and lonely, accepting condolences as if I were his widow. It was a terribly painful loss.

I called the coffee shop on the day of the accident to explain why I wouldn't be coming in. I barely understood my own words through

the tears and wondered if my boss would think I was drunk. But the compassionate, warm manager who took my call was reassuring, kind, and patient, encouraging me to take the time I needed and return when I felt ready.

As I began to heal and re-enter life, that same manager became a friend, and, soon after, we were engaged. I was welcomed into his loving, Christian family a year or so later; I was barely 21, and he was just 23.

### *Everyday Married Stuff*

In the months following our wedding, it became evident that our expectations of marriage were very different. My new husband became unhappy over the time I spent in school and studying, preferring I focus more on our relationship and a paying job. I struggled with the tension of finishing my education and a blurred image of the proper Christian wife, a lifestyle I had never seen modeled but was hoping to get right. I considered our differences to be normal married stuff, and I figured these were compromises all couples make. So, trusting God would redeem my choice to honor and obey, I left my dreams of a college degree and a career in counseling behind and moved on without them.

Over the next few years, we bought a home down the street from my in-laws, had two children, and my job as a courtroom clerk kept me in a professional atmosphere I enjoyed—until my husband decided he wanted to get out of the busy Southern Californian atmosphere.

Against my better judgment, we moved a 10-hour drive away from family and friends to chase his dream of a career in business management. There, I gave birth to our third beautiful boy. I was also baptized and became more involved at church. My children were happy and making new friends. Our lives were finally settling in, albeit amid the stress of my husband's travel for work. We were making it work... until it didn't.

### *An Anniversary Surprise*

He might as well have dropped a bomb on my dinner plate. As we sat at our favorite restaurant celebrating our tenth wedding anniversary, my husband confessed he had been unfaithful while away on business and, oh, by the way, had medication in his car that I would need to start taking immediately. Another painful consequence I had to bear for his infidelity.

To say I was stunned, shocked, and confused doesn't begin to express my incomprehension. My arms went numb. I could no longer hear the clatter of the restaurant's busy noises.

I looked at him, asking too loudly to be inconspicuous, "Why? WHY?" while my heart screamed, "WHY ME? WHY US? WHY NOW?"

He wore a mask of defiance, but I knew him too well. Behind his prideful facade, I saw fear and regret. I longed for an apology or a comforting hand, but he just sat there, his fork in mid-air. Sickened, I finally understood how alone I was in this marriage. Obviously, dinner was over.

The rest of the author's story has been intentionally removed. To read more, the entire book is available on Amazon.

# YOUR STORY

In the space below, feel free to share your story, because this book is meant to be more about you than me. I understand a blank page can be intimidating, but I know that this work is worth the reward.

Writing my story was one of the healthiest growing exercises I have undertaken on my journey. Expressing my feelings and experiences, as embarrassing as they feel, has given my raw, internal cries for justice and comfort a safe place to live outside of myself (instead of burning my insides like hot, molten lava ready to erupt!).

So, let it out here, on these pages, for your eyes only. Don't judge the words that come out or try to correct your emotions, your tone, or your beliefs.

As you process what is happening inside, you'll move closer to a place of calm where knotted-up feelings and circumstances can untangle. Allow warmth and acceptance to blanket and hold you in this place of self-discovery. And don't forget to celebrate your bravery along the way.

My prayers are with you!

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"There's gold in every piece of your story."

# PROBLEMS TO FACE

My sons finally cried themselves to sleep, a merciful respite after a dreadful day. As I lay alone in the dark, exhausted and unable to sleep, my mind raced from one question to the next. *How will we survive this? Do I have what it takes to raise three boys on my own? What about finances? Car repairs? Teaching them to shave?* Some of my concerns I could plan for, but what brought me the most fear were the things I couldn't control.

How will my sons become confident, honorable men in a fatherless home? The statistics on children who've suffered trauma were not in their favor, pointing to behavioral health issues as a result. [1, 2]

Will I be alone for the rest of my life? I hoped not, but with that hope came fear and vulnerability. Could I ever trust again?

Shame told me I should have done more and tried harder. If only I'd been more. More patient, more understanding, and not so needy.

Each day felt like an emotional roller coaster. Just as I gained upward momentum, I'd get blindsided by a reminder of my husband's affair or my son needing help with a project his dad would usually tackle and I'd plummet to the bottom. I left our home unkempt and the TV to babysit while reassuring my worried children that I was okay, *but I wasn't.*

In the following weeks, I began doing the only thing I could do: I took one step at a time. I wish I could say I heroically picked myself up and moved forward with confidence and a plan, but it didn't go that way. It was one step forward, two steps back—or maybe three.

Mommas, your story is probably different than mine. Shaped by personal challenges and complications, your circumstances are unique. You may have been single all along or widowed. Maybe your partner didn't end the relationship; you did.

Whatever your story is, I'm betting we have a lot in common: the loss of a lifelong dream, loneliness, the stress of carrying financial pressures alone, and work-life balance. Maybe you notice stigmatization or suffer from low self-esteem, as I have.

Our paths intersect here, where we can truthfully say, "I understand what you're going through. Your story matters. You're not alone." And, "I'm so sorry for what you're going through."

Keep reading and you will see that I've outlined five main problems I faced as a new single mom, and I encourage you to do that for yourself, too. Whether you have experienced these same hurdles I faced or others, take the time to read, write, and ponder. Don't rush this process; it's vital to explore fully, and when you do, the next part of your healing journey can begin.

## Loss of a Dream

The phrase “until death do us part” took on new meaning for me. I had imagined old age, sentimental memories, and holding each other until the end. Instead, the death of our marriage was a dismantling of lives and a ripping of hearts—the loss of what should have been made life feel unfinished, bereft. I wanted to stop the world and yell, “Wait! Stop! Let’s please try again.” But we were way past that now.

We all experience loss at some time, and the loss of a lifetime dream can feel like an emotional emergency. I cried a lot at first. So much so that I heard my son answer the phone one morning by asking the caller, “Can you please help my Mommy? She’s been crying all day.”

That physically aching pain in my chest wouldn’t leave, and I couldn’t eat or sleep as questions like “Why me? Why my life, my children?” played over and over in my mind.

*How would you describe your loss? How has grief shown up emotionally? Physically?*

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The rest of the problems faced and the steps taken have been intentionally removed. To read more, the entire book is available on Amazon.

## HAS THE MAN YOU TRUSTED BETRAYED YOU?

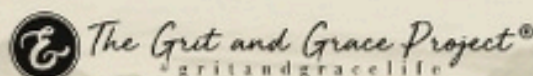
You've just discovered your significant other has broken his promise of commitment and betrayed you. Now you're left to pick up the pieces. Do you wish you could talk to someone who's experienced this struggle and can offer next steps to get you on a steady, sure path?

*In this book, you will find that woman. You'll also have the chance to:*

- *Read her story—a story like yours.*
- *Discover the problems she faced and the steps she took.*
- *Find courage through her confidence and hope.*
- *Pen your own story and struggles on the pages provided.*
- *Take comfort in realizing you don't have to walk alone.*

Being deceived by the man you believed you could trust feels like a punch to the gut. Immediately, the life you've built has shattered. Disappointment, anger, and heartbrokenness fill the void he left. You want to shield your children from additional hurt and help them process the betrayal, all while you get your bearings.

In *When Betrayal Makes You a Single Mom*, author Kim Breuninger recounts her ex-husband's sudden desertion and how, as a newly single mother, she worked through the aftershocks left in his wake: shame, loneliness, financial insecurity, and loss of a dream. As Kim's story unfolds, you'll learn to rein in the resources needed to grieve your losses so you and your children can bravely enter your next chapter.



*Another guidebook in the Smart Living in Small Bites Series.*

