Embracing Grief and Joy: Dahlia's Arrival

(Written August 4, 2026)

I woke up this morning and before my feet even touched the floor, I was in tears. Why today? What triggered this wave of sadness and grief? What brought the stab of pain to my heart and the tears to my eyes? What was it about this morning that made me miss Bob so much?

I spend time with lots of widows, and I hear their stories of grief and pain. I also hear about times that they miss their husbands. Like when they need a smoke detector battery changed, or a storage tub brought in from the garage, or they need a repair to a ceiling fan. Usually anything that requires a ladder brings on a longing for one's deceased hubby. That's not the case with me as I feel fully capable of handling the chores of life. If I can't do it, I know who to call. Those times of need are not the times that trigger my sadness or my longing for Bob. I would hate to bring Bob back to life to have him tick off a few items on my to-do list. Nope Bob can continue to rest in peace and not have to worry about any mundane chores.

But actually, I do know what it is that brought on the flood of tears. I know why I am missing him extra right now. It's because I'm experiencing something truly wonderful that I wish he could be experiencing. He's missing out and I wish he was still here for this joyful time in our family.

Recently, in Texas my 24-year-old great granddaughter Courtney had an emergency c-section and gave birth to Dahlia. Dahlia is still in the NICU at a local Children's Hospital but she's doing fabulous and as of today, she is breathing on her own. The breathing tubes are removed and she's breathing "room air"

–yes, “room air” which is a new term I learned.

Dahlia represents 5 generations in Bob’s lineage. Many in Bob’s family can remember how Bob loved that he had such a BIG group of 4th generation great grandchildren. We took lots of 4 generation group pictures! I may be off a little on the number, but I think at the time of Bob’s passing in November 2021, he had 21 great grandchildren. There were a couple of those greats that were old enough to have babies and Bob would “tease” them and let them know he would like to have a great great grandchild soon thus giving him a 5-generation family tree! We had to remind those young women that we would prefer that they not have any babies at such a young tender age.

They may not have given their great grandpa the 5th generation that he wanted then but I really don’t think he was really disappointed. Maybe Bob was even relieved that they didn’t follow in his (and so many others in the family’s) footsteps and have children at a very young age.

But now nearly 5 years since Bob’s passing, Dahlia comes into our lives! I’m beyond ecstatic to have another precious baby to love and I’m happy for all of Dahlia’s family. But there’s a big chunk of joy that is missing. A little black cloud hanging over me. I’m really missing the man who made it possible for me to have all this wonderful extended family. When Bob and I married, I became a “stepmom” to three “kids” but there has been lots of growth in the following 46 years. That family has grown exponentially to 4 “kids” plus spouses, 14 “grands” plus spouses, and 25 “greats”. And now a “great-great”. Thank you, Bob!

So now if you see me crying a little while I share a picture of Dahlia with you, you’ll understand. I am just wishing Dahlia’s great great grandpa Bob was here to hold her and take advantage of a 5-generation photo opportunity! Boy he would be so happy. I would be too.


MOM
GRANDMA
GREAT-GRANDMA
GREAT-GREAT GRANDMA
I JUST KEEP GETTING
BETTER


Dahlia

New Word for the New Year!

My Word for 2026

Peace, unspeakable peace.

Peace, unshakable peace.

Peace, unexplainable peace.

Yes, Peace is my word for 2026.

When many people make resolutions to start out their new year, I prefer to focus on a word. That word becomes my mantra for the year ahead. In the past years since I've started this new year's habit, my words have been GENTLE, JOY, KINDNESS, STRONG, and GRATITUDE. Each word was perfect for the season that I was in at the time.

2026 is my year for PEACE. Inner Peace.

This year, my new word came to me easily. A word to whisper when I'm feeling a bit down or troubled. A word to scream when I feel the world is crashing in on me. A word to focus on each morning as I rise to take on another day. A word to silently ponder when I crawl into bed and am recounting my blessings of the day.

Am I being over optimistic that I can have a peace filled year? Maybe it would be more realistic to focus on having a few peaceful moments throughout the year, but I feel like I should go BIG! I am focusing on peace 24/7/365! Why settle for a few peaceful moments when I could have more? A lofty goal perhaps but with God on my side, I'm feeling it.

How am I going to make this happen? If you know me, you know I usually overthink, over evaluate, and over worry. How will I replace that type of jumbled up mind/heart with a mind/heart

of peaceful thoughts? Can I bring peace out of the chaos of daily living? When my world seems messy, can I flip a switch and feel peaceful in that moment? How can I protect my peace and not let it be a fleeting thing?

So Holy Spirit, you've got a big job in 2026. Seeking God's word and relying on His son is where I will turn. Seek the Prince of Peace. Turn to Him. Jesus said to seek peace in Him as "*He has overcome this troublesome world*". (John 16:33). I think the directions are clear. Maintain a relationship with God. Keep in daily closeness with Jesus.

I have been listening to contemporary Christian music in my car and at home on my TV—what a beautiful way to destress when needed and fill my heart with praise and worship. One can't help but find peace in beautiful music. So I'll continue that trend and make it a habit.

What needs to be removed from my life to give me a more peaceful existence? What makes me anxious and worried? What causes sleepless nights and days filled with agitation? Without making a laundry list here, I know I need to remove ungodly behavior and troublesome relationships, take breaks from social media and news, steer clear of tenuous circumstances, and eliminate negative situations. Once I identify my stressors, I need to get rid of them quickly. Don't give them a chance to take hold of my mind. Turn and run! Away from chaos. Towards peace.

All the guidelines that I could possible need are in the Bible, and I need to avail myself of this great book of instructions. Why am I not going to the source of peace to find peace? This year, I will.

Google says there are 263-429 (depending on which bible translation) mentions of peace in the bible. Looks like I have all the resources I need to find God's peace. A good goal would be to read a new scripture about peace each day of the

year. Maintaining a daily relationship with God would certainly bring peace to each of my days.

So, this will be my prayer for myself and for you…

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way…”

2 Thessalonians 3:16




2025
WORD
GRATITUDE
→ FOR GOD


2026
WORD
→ PEACE

Choices. Choices. Choices.

I've come to the realization that as a widow, my choices are endless. I can plan my day ahead or just wing it on the fly. No one to consult or convince or cajole into doing what I want to do. My choice is my choice.

Well, doesn't that sound selfish? It sounds like all I think about is myself. I can, and I often do. I started out last Saturday with a plan to go to the writers' workshop at the local library and then come home and work in my yard to try to fine tune it a bit for the lovely spring weather. But while showering, I started thinking about other possibilities. Go to a friend's moving sale, go run a few errands and get greeting cards for upcoming birthdays and anniversaries, watch the Padre Spring Training game on TV, settle in on the couch and read a bit? All these tentative plans were bouncing around in my head, and I wasn't sure where the day would lead me. But the decision would be mine and mine alone and I didn't have to decide at that moment. I could see how the day played out. Maybe even a few new ideas would pop up.

If Bob were alive and well, I would be consulting him and finding out what he would want to do. And I would love that! Maybe he would prefer a zoo visit or a walk at Lindo Lake. We'd talk it out, weigh out our options and make a plan. I would give anything to have this be the case but as you know I am now a widow. No consultation from anyone is needed. No one to consult.

I guess this is the case for divorcees, single people, and widowers as well. I never ever considered how much time and effort and compromise it takes to be considerate of another person and include them in your day-to-day plans. For me, it just was part of our marriage. I was independent and made lots of decisions on my own but for day-to-day activities I aways willingly included Bob in my decisions. Would he like

to go along to the grocery store, did he want to go to Saturday night or Sunday morning church, would he want to swim or do yardwork, where would he like to have dinner, should we have friends over, should we pay Uno or Scrabble? The decisions we made as a couple were never ending and a part of our life. They happened naturally. The two of us were always considering each other and mutually making plans. Now it seems so long ago and so-so very time consuming.

I've become a one-person show. It seems almost surreal that I can just make my own plans and do what only Susan prefers. It frees up so much time and the thought process is so simple. If I decide that I want to go to the market and head that way in my car, I can take a detour to the thrift shop without consulting anyone. If I never make it to the market, there's no one that needs an explanation. I'll take myself out to lunch. Simple to be on my own when it comes to how I spend my day. If I spend a whole day reading a book, there's no one wondering what happened to our plan to get yardwork done.

How does this work for a person who can't make an independent decision? I wouldn't know as I am 100% capable of making decisions for my life (with much prayer when needed). I wonder if this is one big reason that some single people, widows, and widowers are lonely or miss their spouses terribly. For those folks that can't make a solo decision, could it be that they just don't like making decisions on their own or need someone to approve of their choices. Fortunately, that's NOT me—I miss Bob for a million other reasons but not because I need him to help me make a choice on how to spend my time.

Could divorcees be even happier to be making their own decisions as a solo act? Do they celebrate the daily freedom of doing just what they want without asking anyone? I'm sure as a widow; I don't celebrate the solo decision-making process in the same way as a divorcee would! But I do find it to be a silver lining in my cloud.

So, what did I end up doing that Saturday?

Some of those things and some others as well. And it was a lovely day!

New Year and another New Word!

I pick a word each new year to focus on in the year ahead. I like this better than making a bunch of resolutions. A word gives me a thought to concentrate upon and often becomes my mantra. I ponder long and hard to choose the word that fits how I am feeling, what issues I may be dealing with, and hopefully a word that will speak to me throughout the year. Not just in the moment that I select the word but all year long. That's a huge task. And one I don't take lightly.

In the past years since I've started this new year habit, my words have been ***GENTLE, JOY, KINDNESS, and STRONG***. All have a back story, and all have fit the bill perfectly. I've never regretted my chosen word and felt it was the perfect word for that year. Success!

But now in early December, I find I'm already pondering my word. My head is a jumble of words that all speak to me. But I need a word that will speak to me ALL YEAR! Is it patience, generosity, authenticity, simplify, connecting? Maybe I need several words or even a sentence?! Where do I feel my focus needs to be in 2025? What goal for self-growth do I have in mind? Where is a weak chink in my mental makeup? What is a character flaw that I should work on? What "Fruit of the Spirit" is lacking in my life? See what I'm dealing with? There are a million words that might be my word!

I have three more weeks to sort this out but I'm still worried that I won't have the right word by January 1st. In past years, the words came to me clearly and I didn't vacillate once I zeroed in on the word. I felt drawn to that word and the connection was instantaneous. That's not happening now. I like the word but only briefly until I think of another word. Nothing is sticking! Each word could work but it doesn't feel like the perfect word. Am I being overly picky in my selection process?

As I type these thoughts up, I'm questioning where I'm going with this writing today. As I'm wondering if a word will come to me in the process of writing about my word, I see a handwritten note on a 3"X5" card taped above my desk. It reads: ***Take your eyes off yourself and focus on God***.

So, I change my focus to God. I take my eyes off Susan. And then the word came to me in a flash. ***GRATITUDE.***

My word for 2025 is going to be ***GRATITUDE***. What a perfect way to change from self-focus to Godly focus. What a way to live every day in 2025. Grateful to the GIVER of all gifts and grateful for all the gifts He has blessed me with. Living with an attitude of ***GRATITUDE*** will be an amazing way to live throughout 2025. My word will be on my lips and in my heart all year long.

GRATITUDE will be such a meaningful guiding word in 2025 that I think I'll start focusing on it early. Like this very instance! Why wait until January 1st?

So, I will finish the year out STRONG as that is my current word for 2024. Strong in body, mind, and spirit.
And full of ***GRATITUDE***!


2024
BE
STRONG
BODY MIND
& SPIRIT


2025
WORD
GRATITUDE
→ FOR GOD

A-D-A-P-T!

The word that popped in my head on a walk recently was ADAPT. As I took a leisurely walk, I had this word pop into my mind and instead of waiting to write down my thoughts once I was home, I started recording on my phone. I "talked texted" this blog to myself. I've never done this before, and really like that it seems to follow the theme of this blog. Adapt—do things differently.

I think widowhood and grieving is not a process of healing or getting over your grief or completely mending. I think it's a process of adapting to the changes that happen as you navigate life alone. I think adapting to the changes is the answer. Not surviving, not getting over it, not putting it behind you, not moving on from it but adapting to it. So, I've been exploring what that means to me and maybe as a widow or widower or someone grieving the loss of a deep love, you'll look at it this way as well.

My life is going on without Bob and I feel God has a purpose for me at this stage of my life. I'm paying very close attention to the God "nudges". I am being obedient to His word, and I try to go where He sends me even if He just sends me across the street to visit a friend who needs a helping hand or He sends me to a hospital to visit a friend who is anxious. I'm saying yes to those "nudges" more than I ever have at any other time in my life and in that way, I feel like I'm adapting.

There are some changes I do NOT ever plan on making. I cannot imagine not missing and feeling deep love for Bob. I don't want that to change. I don't imagine ever not grieving his illness and his death. I can't imagine feeling like I survived this 100% and came out on the other side. I just don't see those things happening. And I'm good with that. That grief is part of my story with Bob. That won't change.

What I do see happening is coping, adjusting, and accepting my new lot in life. One time I thought that grieving and widowhood was like survival of the fittest. Like if I was tough enough, strong enough, smart enough I could get through it. But now (or at least for today) I don't feel like I want to get through it or over it or beyond it. I want to adapt. Adapt. Adapt. I keep saying that word over and over and over. I'm trying to think about what adapting would look like, what adapting would feel like.

I'm going to look up the definition of that word and ponder it and see if it's really the right word. I'm not sure why I feel so inclined to label everything and give an exact meaning to everything. Is it a coping mechanism? Is it a survival method? I am not sure why I feel like I must be so analytical about this. So, here's the definition– to make something suitable for a new purpose or a new use. Also to modify. I think that's a nice description of what I'm doing with my life right now at this stage. So, my new take on widowhood, loss and grief is to adapt!

I'm praying God will direct me in the right path in his perfect way. This favorite scripture says it all! "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, do not lean on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight" Proverbs 3:5,6

So, adapt, modify, go in a different direction, change, transform, – all of those seem obtainable. They seem doable. They don't seem traumatic, and they don't seem drastic. Can I handle adapting? I'm not going over huge obstacles, not making drastic changes, not trying to put something behind me, and not trying to get over something that's insurmountable. I'm just making minor changes. I'm adapting. I'm just moving ahead even if that means I must modify my former plan. Like reacting to a plot twist!

So, what I would suggest for you if you're grieving a loss is

to just go ahead and grieve. If you're missing your loved one, don't try to change that. If you're a bit concerned about your future, so be it. Just start making minor changes, taking a few baby steps and moving in a little bit different direction than you thought you were going to go. Adapt.

As I get very close to the three-year mark of my husband's death (Bob passed on 11/11/21), I get a little melancholier and even a little bit down in the dumps. There are a few more teary days and gloomy moments. The lump is my throat is a bit bigger. It's these times when I think even more about what we might have done these last few years and what we might have done in the years ahead. I miss him. I miss our life. I miss seeing him in my future. Life has changed but I'm ever so grateful that I had Bob and had his love and that will never change.

Adapting has a soft sound to it. Making small changes is necessary. Nothing major nor drastic. I think that's important for you to remember if you're going off on a new path that you need to do it with care. You don't want to just start out on some crazy rocky steep uneven terrain. You want to start out with a somewhat smooth level path, wouldn't you think? You need to acclimate to the new surroundings and conditions. Take a little venture out of your comfort zone. Dip your toes in, test the water, try some new foods, make some new friends, connect with old friends, go where you haven't gone before, learn a new dance, try a new lipstick, read a different style of book, take a class, explore your faith, love on your family, pamper yourself, exercise more, and travel. Just try to adapt to doing these things without your loved one.

You can do it. I am.



Even Darwin agrees with me!!