



And Still She Laughs: Defiant Joy in the Depths of Suffering

Kate Merrick

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Kate Merrick examines the Bible's gritty stories of resilient women as well as her own experience losing a child—a journey followed by more than a million on prayfordaisy.com—to reveal the reality of surprising joy and deep hope even in the midst of heartache.

Is it possible live fully—even joyfully—in the middle of overwhelming pain?

In the excruciating aftermath of her young daughter's death from cancer, Kate Merrick struggled to find a way to live. Not just to survive or go through the motions, but to live fully. Faithfully. With real joy amid inevitable tears.

To discover how, Kate delved into the stories in the Bible of real women who suffered deeply and emerged somehow joyful. How did Sarah, after twenty-five years of achingly empty arms, learn to laugh without bitterness? How did Bathsheba, defiled by the king who then had her husband killed, come to walk in strength and dignity, to smile without fear of the future? In her encounters with these heroines of the faith, Kate discovered how to have contentment—and even joy—whatever the circumstances.

By turns heartbreaking and humorous, *And Still She Laughs* reveals the secret to finding hope in the midst of devastation. In the end, no matter what hardships we face, we can smile, cry, and come away full—laughing without fear and eagerly looking for what is to come.

“And Still She Laughs is the terrifying, tearful, heartbreaking, heart healing and humorous, definitive true story of survival and triumph.”

—Kathy Ireland, chair of Kathy Ireland Worldwide

“Kate Merrick is one of those women that I always wish I had more time with—her honesty, sincerity, and messy straightforwardness are different, in the very best way. Her book, *And Still She Laughs*, is the same way. It's one of those books I will keep coming back to it for truth and inspiration.”

—Lindsey Nobles, COO of the IF:Gathering

And Still She Laughs: Defiant Joy in the Depths of Suffering Details

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From Reader Review And Still She Laughs: Defiant Joy in the Depths of Suffering for online ebook

Ian says

I first came to 'know' Kate Merrick when I stumbled across her husband, Britt, and their church in Carpinteria, California. Soon thereafter I became aware of their daughter, Daisy's, illness. And so I joined the global army of prayers that stood on the watchtower for dear little Daisy and this gorgeous family.

After a few years of immense struggle, dearest Daisy passed away in the arms of her parents and brother, Isaiah. The family held a wonderful memorial service for their little girl which those of us from far way were able to watch.

And then the family went off the grid. For years.

They bunkered down in their grief and loss. I was one of those who from far away wondered from time to time how they were doing.

Until February this year. I was watching IF Gathering annual event and lo-and-behold Britt and Kate step onto the stage and both speak. Britt ministers in the Word (golly gosh can this man preach!) and Kate shared as only she can. And then she mentioned this little book she'd written that was coming out in a few weeks.

It's a wonderful book. As another reviewer states so eloquently: "She (Kate) writes from a depth of understanding grief and from an inspiring place of understanding how to grieve but still live life fully and with joy."

Daisy's presence is threaded throughout every page ... the first few chapters are intense as we read how grief knocked Kate down. But ever so slowly the Lord in all His tenderness lifted this wonderful lady back on her feet. Through His Words and gentle touch.

Kate shares the stories of 3 great women of the Bible who also suffered much: Sarah, Abraham's wife, Bathsheba and Mary, mother of Jesus. Kate's retelling of their stories brings them alive in a way I'd never experienced. Especially, Mary. Chapter 6 is a very powerful chapter. Mary, this teenager, who had everything to lose, says 'Yes' to Gabriel, when he informs her she is to birth the Messiah. How she must have suffered. Her family, her betrothed, her community would have all scorned her.

But she still said: "Yes"

I want her faith.

This is a book about so much more than grief and loss. It's also about the discovery of leaning into the mystery of walking with the lover of our souls, Jesus. It's a book that often brought me to tears but also made me laugh and laugh. Death of a loved one, especially one so young, doesn't make any sense. And even though Kate doesn't know the answer to why Daisy passed away much too young, she knows the lover of her soul is always close, always tender, always loving and suffered as much as Kate did.

Read this book especially if you're struggling with grief and loss but even if you haven't you'll find this a wonderful book that opens one's eyes to the immensity of Jesus' love for each of us and through all of life's

ups and downs He gives us hope and a reason to laugh.

Michele Morin says

Laughter on the Pathway of Lament

When we read about women in the Bible, there's a tendency to flatten them out into cardboard characters, one-dimensional and distant. Kate Merrick was in that camp as well, intimidated by the fabulous woman of Proverbs 31, judging Bathsheba, missing the depth of Mary's sacrifice in saying yes to God, and brushing Sarah off as that old lady who had a baby.

Then, her nine-year-old daughter died of cancer.

Desperate for moorings in an ocean of loss, Kate looked to the Truth of Scripture and found there a community of women who had suffered as she was suffering. When she delved into their stories, her collision course with bitterness and despair slowly turned toward joy and peaceful acceptance of the will of God. In *And Still She Laughs*, Kate Merrick is still writing from that liminal place between tangible grief and the new normal that finds its way to the surface, so her words are raw and real, and just about right for me in these days following the death of my mum.

Like breaking in a new pair of jeans, like the bathing suit that fits everyone differently, like a water balloon that if you let just a little bit out it might explode on everyone, Kate employs multiple metaphors to bring her readers into the world that opened up to her when she joined the ranks of the bereaved. Still longing for the old jeans, and having realized that grief looks different on everyone, she encourages readers to throw her book across the room if it helps — and then to come back to it later at a different stage of grieving.

A Path Through Grief

Since a Western understanding of living “blessed” only served to drive Kate further into bitterness, she turned to the stories of biblical women, for whether one reads Bathsheba as roof-top temptress or helpless victim, the ultimate outcome of King David's moral lapse was the loss of their baby son. Bathsheba's story became a virtual grief support group for Kate since so many of their story-points coincided:

“When I was the only woman I knew who had experienced death so close to my heart, I remember how she had too. . . She whispered strength, dignity, and fearlessness. When I was comforted with a pregnancy, I remembered that she had been too. She showed me how to be loyal to another child while grieving the first. She held my hand in the gloom, leaned close to my ear and whispered, ‘Me too.’”

Then there was the dawning realization that, like Sarah, grief and bitterness were leading Kate toward a “bitter, hardened laughter, like a waste product of a sick heart.” Sarah's Old Testament story sounds idyllic from a distance: remarkable beauty, a godly husband with unlimited assets, a bevy of servants, and exotic travel opportunities — and Kate is convinced that Sarah “was covered in swanky accessories.” (Sure, why not?) But then, there were the empty arms, and the seemingly empty promises of God: Sarah had waited so long that even good news elicited bitterness, bubbling forth in a sneering laugh alone in her tent.

Opening the heart to a journey of grief puts a mother in company with Mary, who demonstrated that a yes to God can lead to a sword through the heart.

“The yes doesn’t always make sense. We don’t fully understand how God works, but we read in 2 Corinthians 1:20: ‘For all of God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding ‘Yes!’ And through Christ, our ‘Amen’ (which means ‘Yes’) ascends to God for his glory.”

Ultimately, Kate realized that her bitterness was directed toward God. She had lost sight of the truth that, in her suffering, Jesus was suffering with her. In the midst of our own Romans 8 groaning, we need to hear, again and again, that we are foreigners on this planet, but we do not grieve without hope. Like Mary, Bathsheba, and Sarah, we are citizens of heaven and live in anticipation of a day in which death will be swallowed up in life, the empty arms of grieving mums will be filled, and the laughter our hearts long for will never end.

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This book was provided by Thomas Nelson in exchange for my review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255 : “Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.”

Mazzou B says

From a mother who lost her eight-year old daughter after a three-year battle with cancer, this book is a testimony to God's faithfulness. The author writes with strength and meaning and fulfills the purpose of the book; to show that through Christ, a person can survive the greatest tragedies and still live a life of joy. It goes without saying that I felt deeply for this mother, for this family and I learned from their strength in the Lord. I hope to someday be as unshakable as this mother learned to be. It wasn't always easy for her, but here in her own words is her journey. It is such a testimony to see how this bereaved mother still has joy and laughter. I recommend this book! I don't agree with all doctrinal statements expressed by the author but there is still much to be gained through reading such a book. I also don't always like the choice of words or humour in this book.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest opinion.

Jalynn Patterson says

About the Book:

Kate Merrick examines the Bible’s gritty stories of resilient women as well as her own experience losing a child—a journey followed by more than a million on prayfordaisy.com—to reveal the reality of surprising joy and deep hope even in the midst of heartache.

Kate Merrick faced the crippling grief that life can bring when her five-year-old daughter was diagnosed with cancer. Three and a half years of suffering followed, accompanied by fervent prayer, hospital stays, emotional agony, and teeth-grinding fear. And in the end, her baby girl was gone.

How was Kate to believe again, to hope again? To find out, she turned to stories in the Bible of real women

who dealt with pain and survived. How did Sarah, after twenty-five years of aching empty arms, learn in the end to laugh without bitterness? How did Bathsheba, defiled by the king who then had her husband killed, come to walk in strength and dignity, to smile without fear of the future?

In *And Still She Laughs*, Merrick writes poignantly and transparently about finding joy in sorrow and shows how we—just like the ordinary women seen in the Bible—can rise above unbearable circumstances and live fully. In the middle of whatever hardships we face, we can smile, cry, and come away full—laughing without fear and eagerly looking for what is to come.

My Review:

In the midst of grief the last thing you want to do is laugh. Laughing is the farthest from your mind yet it is something that must be done in order to find your way out of those very dark and lonely places. If we stay in those places too long they become part of us which in the end will define us. Not the coming out of it but living with the grief so much that it is who are.

Kate Merrick knows this pain and darkness too well. In fact she knows it better than anybody and she wants to help us see the way out. She hopes through her journey she can show you the light at the other end of that unending tunnel of darkness to a better place of moving on from the grief.

I love the richness of Kate's authenticity in her writing. She is very real and it shows throughout the book. She is a great mentor for grieving people!

****Disclosure**** This book was sent to me free of charge for an honest review from the author. All opinions are my own.

Julius McCarter says

Kate Merrick's *And Still She Laughs: Defiant Joy in the Depths of Suffering* recounts the horrors of caring for Merrick's young daughter, Daisy, from a cancer diagnosis in 2009 until her eventual death in 2013. Much as CS Lewis before her, Merrick speaks with a heart-breaking honesty about the various stages of her daughter's suffering, and how God revealed himself at every step of the way even in the midst of that suffering.

Merrick has given us a spiritual gift -- an accessible, heart-wrenching primer on dealing with the worst life has to offer that is equally poignant and spiritually edifying.

Merrick refuses to keep us confined in the grips of grief, so readers will find some humor here, too. In fact, it's that lightness that gives spiritual depth to her account.

True to her subtitle, Merrick is defiant in finding courage, hope, and a stalwart trust in God as she continues to feel the loss of her daughter. Merrick's deeply personal story will be great medicine for the brokenhearted, downhearted, and downtrodden.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the BookLook Bloggers book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Rebekah says

I lost a child 2 years ago and I thought I was ready to read this book. I love the title. I love the concept of joy in the midst of suffering. I wasn't ready for the heaviness of this book. The raw details of her pain and emotions. Kate's experience was nothing like mine and painstakingly similar all at once.

I listened to this book I did not read it. My mind often wandered to my own situation and I found myself working through my own feelings and not realising that I had been listening for long chunks of time. Yet I had used too much emotional energy to go back and find what I last heard. So the 5 star rating assumes that I didn't miss anything critical that I disagreed with. Maybe one day I will listen/read it again. But I'm not ready for that yet.

Favourite part: no one can write about what it's like to lose a child, like someone who has lost a child. I was sold on the book when Kate gave permission to throw the book across the room whilst reading it. A temptation I have had with more than one book over the past 2 years.

Least favourite part: it's personal, but I wish it had been read by the author on audible. I understand it might have been too difficult or not her thing, but I always prefer to hear books read by the people who actually wrote them.

Elicia says

So grateful for this book in the season I am in. ♥

Bethany Baird says

This book is excellent. It's a bit hard to write about. My husband is a surfer and we followed their blog about Daisy because at the time we were desperately trying to move to Carpinteria to live and go to their church. It wasn't in the cards for us we had to stay and deal with life and some hard stuff in Los Angeles. So I knew she was a good writer and I knew the background. I've lost too many friends to cancer the first being when I was only 15. I've also walked through multiple traumatic miscarriages. Right now I'm currently going through some health issues and some major life changes that usher in quite a bit of grieving. I got a lot out of this book. I cried and I laughed. I said me too and I said I hope to respond in that way. She writes from a depth of understanding grief and from an inspiring place of understanding how to grieve but still live life fully and with joy. This is a book I will keep on my bookshelf. I'm confident it will be one I read again. It's one I've already purchased for friends. It's a keeper.

Michelle says

`And Still She Laughs: Defiant Joy in the Depths of Suffering` by author Kate Merrick. And Still She Laughs is a spiritual growth book about one woman's excruciating aftermath of her young daughter's untimely death.

This grieving mom spent two years going through and sorting out, her daughter's things. Looking for little treasures along the way. Remembering the way her daughter looked in leopard-print leggings, remembering the quirky writings of her daughter. Such as q-cumbers, rut beer, and keewee. Yet, this mom does not grieve alone. She has a family that grieves with her.

This is a book full of emotion, a laugh here and there, bitterness and tears. I had to laugh when Kate mentioned a nest of mice. My emotions went from ugh to ewww as she described one little mouse and how cute it was. Of course, she didn't keep them and I was glad when the chapter moved on to the next best thing.

In her writing, the author compares her life to those who preceded her, such as, Bathsheba, Sarah, and Jesus mother Mary.

Kate reminds her readers that it takes faith to see through the inky blackness and to see beyond the present sadness. It takes faith to face another day. (pg #87) The ending was very fulfilling. I recommend this book to fans of inspirational reading.

Disclaimer: "I was provided a free copy of this book by BookLook. All opinions are my own."

Sarah says

When I saw the title "And She Still Laughs, Defiant Joy in the Depths of Suffering" I knew it was a book I needed to read. As someone going through deep suffering I needed to understand the art and beauty of joy in pain. Suffering isn't fun and in fact, it isn't easy, but God tells us to consider it pure joy, and so I have been wandering trying to find out pure Joy. When Kate's child was diagnosed with cancer and eventually, her daughter passed away, Kate had to discover how to find Joy. She did it by looking into women of the Bible who suffered. It has given me a greater appreciation and knowledge for some of these stories that I did not know existed with this view point. Kate gets to the heart of the issue for most of us when she talks about how most Christians want a blessed life, but we want to skip the pain. We'd rather have a life that is comfortable and safe, rather than one that is hard. In the midst of hard, pain and suffering we can still find humor, joy and trust God. This book isn't for those who just have experienced pain, it's for those who have experienced loss, for those who are going through physical pain, for those who are looking for wisdom or for those who are just struggling to stand. This is a book that will remain on my shelf for years and years to come and I will continue to pull out. I give this book 5/5 stars. I was not required to write a positive review.

Brooke says

Recommend this book to everyone. I absolutely love Kate Merrick. She is as authentic in this book as she is in real life and her words bring refreshing as well as insight. Truly a perspective shifting book.

Rosa Cline says

This book takes you with the author throughout moments of mourning,...she her young daughter and you,...anything you might be going through. Seeing the loss and the anchor that faith can be during that time. I enjoyed how The writer reminded us of some of the strong (but they didn't think they were) women of the Bible. This book will help you through whatever tough time your going through and reminding you that you will be okay when it's all said and done. Enjoyed all the story except the ending,...it was almost like sh3 wrote three or four different endings, as when your reading you think that is the end bu5 then sh3 starts in another something else. That was th3 only downfall to this book. Am glad I own it so I can read anytime I feel I need that boost-reminder that things are going to be okay

Jessica says

The last 2 chapters were my favorite ??

Laura says

Powerful and very personal account of a young mother's journey along the "Way of the Cross". The author, Kate Merrick, finds Christ to be the One Who accompanies and suffers with her and her husband during the 3-year journey of unimaginable suffering they endure as their young daughter undergoes aggressive cancer treatment and then, as they experience the profound grief that follows (and continues) after the fierce battle they've waged against this devastating intruder is lost with Daisy's death at the age of eight.

Kate has a gift for writing exquisite prose and for allowing us to draw close to her heart and her spirit during this, her intimate journey into loss and grief, putting into words what to most of us would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to give expression to.

In the process, she offers lessons and insights that gave her strength and that fed her faith through 3 key biblical figures: Sarai/Sarah and Hagar whose ancient stories are recounted in the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, whose story we learn of through Gospel accounts in the New Testament. Each of these women discovered the reality of how a life yielded to trusting the "One who sees me" becomes transformed from the depths of darkness and loss into the "joy that comes in the morning" and the ability to laugh again, as the author, too, was finally able to do.

While Kate makes clear that grief and loss are real and, in some sense, will always accompany the one who has experienced it, so, too, is the renewed appreciation for life, laughter, and joy that one can find through faith in Christ and through allowing oneself to re-engage fully in the life one has been given. (I was given this book as a advance copy and prior to its final editing. While providing a review of the book was

encouraged, there was no obligation for me to do so.)

Elizabeth says

When I learned of Kate Merrick I knew I had to read her book. Her story and mine are quite similar - both our children were diagnosed at the same age with the same type of cancer, both spent three years battling the monster before passing away, and both of us are trying to find joy in the aftermath.

And Still She Laughs by Kate Merrick is about a mother trying to find joy within the depths of suffering. Merrick delved into the stories in the Bible of real women who suffered deeply and emerged somehow joyful. This is not a history of Biblical women but rather Merrick weaves a bit of their story within her own, making this a very relate-able story to anyone who has suffered pain (and haven't we all?).

"We want the blessing of a Christian life but none of the pain. We think twice about diving in, risking love because we might lose it, risking reputation, comfort, all these things we think will keep us safe and happy." (p. 170)

Merrick digs deep into the fact that our culture equates being loved by God by being blessed by Him by receiving the life we ask for. It's the type of thinking that leads so many people to discontentment, and sadly leads people astray from God Himself. If our lives are rough we must not be loved by Him, if our prayers aren't answered in our ways we must not be blessed. While in reality the Bible points out that we must "take up our cross daily" and that the path of a Christian is narrow and hard but that the rewards are worth it. THIS is what Merrick comes to realize while searching the Bible and stories of hardship and pain.

"Choosing to live for eternity is such a game changer. It holds much meaning for the future, yes, but for the here and now it brings with it the ability to laugh. A hundred years ago, when I was in college, my pastor used to say "You do what you believe." He meant that we say much-we talk, talk, talk-but what we do speaks louder. We can talk until we go hoarse, but our actions show what our faith actually looks like.

If I believe I will see Daisy again, I can grieve, but not as those without hope grieve (1 Thess. 4:13). I can cry and hurt and wail and get it all out, but I can be confident in our future reunion (1 Thess. 4:14). I can wonder joyfully about her and what she's doing. I can picture her in Heaven riding a bear-or any of the crazy animals she loved so much-while eating a juicy mango, wild and free. I can see her meeting new friends and Jesus swinging her around like an airplane. I can trust she is well, she is whole, and she has done more than the things on her bucket list.

I believe she is with the Lord. I can rejoice in that, and maybe, if I really think hard about it, I might even be able to laugh."

It comes down to the fact that as children of God, who know that the treasure of eternity awaits us, we can find joy within any circumstance because we know that a reward far better will be ours. That's not to say we can't grieve, but within our grief we can find hope. In our pain we can find purpose. In our trials we can find wisdom.

1 Peter 1:3-8:

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,

5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be

revealed in the last time.

6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

This is not just for the grieving. As a matter of fact, it's more for any pain and suffering you may have experienced in life. As we all suffer, we all can use this reminder. This book will be going on my shelves to be read time and time again.

This book was given to me by BookLook Bloggers in exchange for my honest review.
