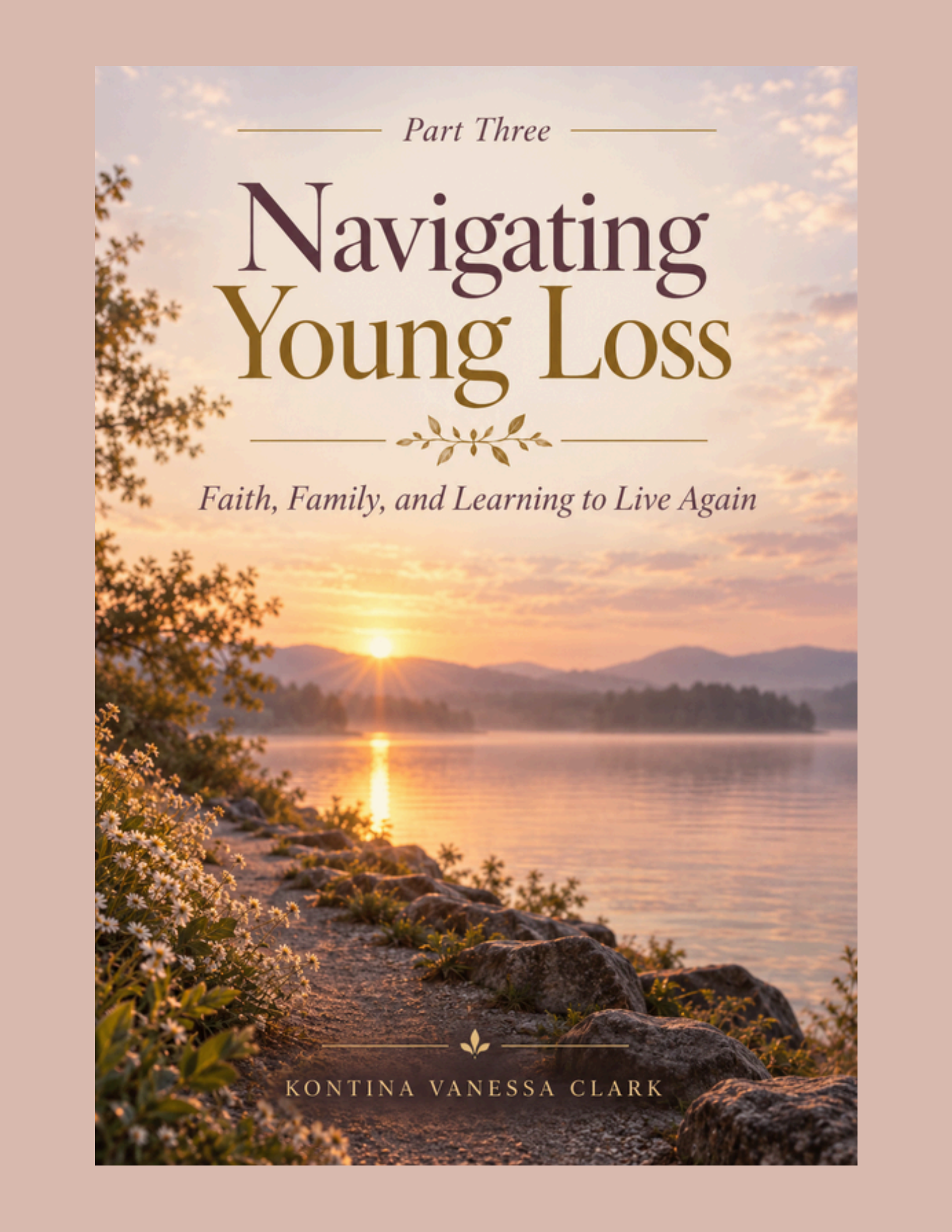




Part Three

Navigating Young Loss



Faith, Family, and Learning to Live Again



KONTINA VANESSA CLARK

SECTION SEVEN

GOD, WHY DID YOU LET THIS HAPPEN?



When Grief Shakes Your Faith



Kontina Vanessa Clark 

Section Seven

God, Why Did You Let This Happen?

When Grief Shakes Your Faith



When Grief Makes You Question God

There are losses that do more than break your heart. They also shake the way you understand God.

When someone young dies, when prayers seem unanswered, or when suffering feels unbearable, the question many people quietly carry is simple and raw: Why would God allow this to happen?

You may still believe in God and yet feel hurt, confused, disappointed, or even angry with Him. That does not make you faithless. It makes you human.

Grief often forces questions to the surface that were easy to avoid before the loss. And sometimes those questions do not come politely. They come through tears, silence, frustration, and the ache of a life that no longer makes sense the way it once did.

You Can Love God and Still Ask Why

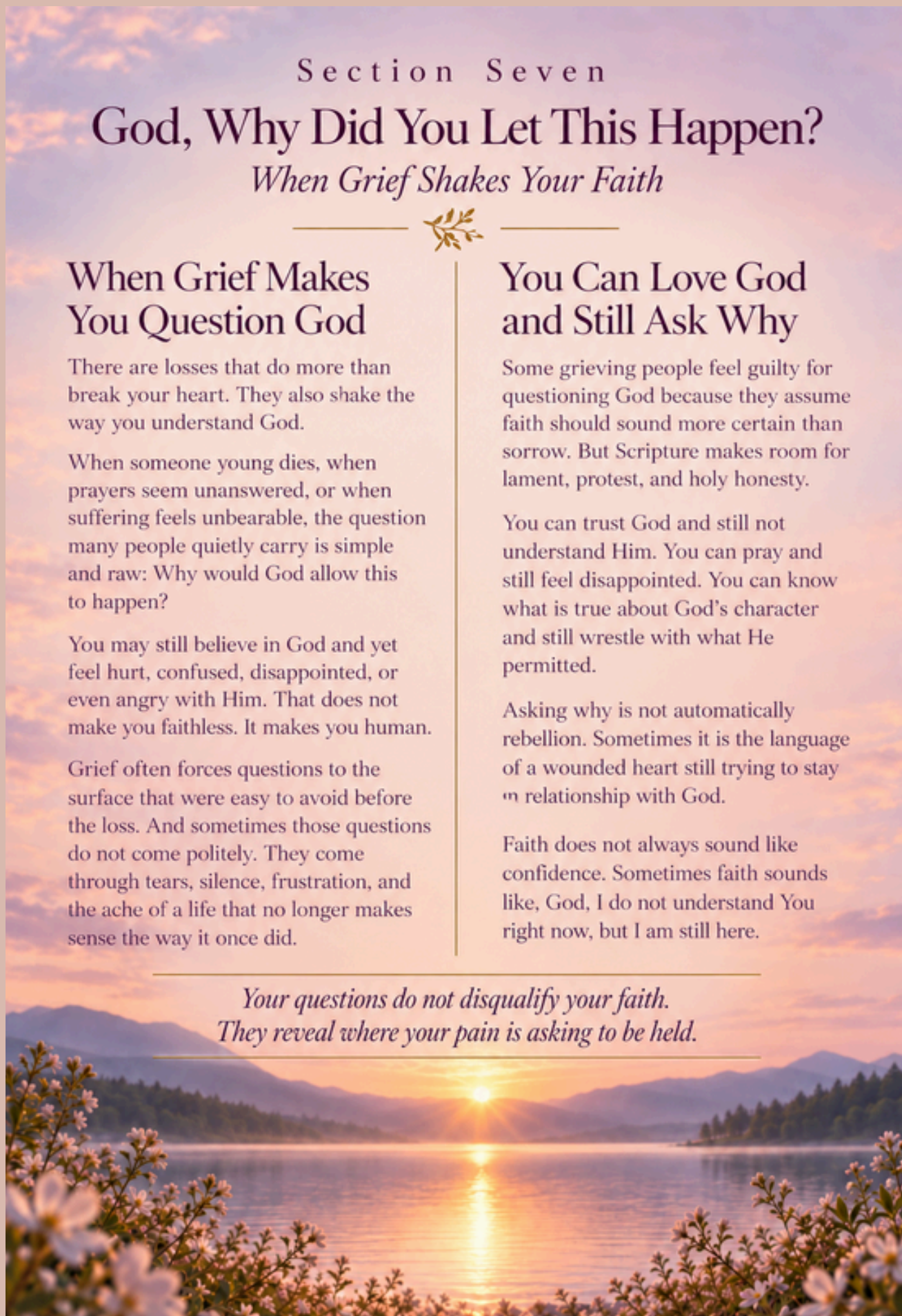
Some grieving people feel guilty for questioning God because they assume faith should sound more certain than sorrow. But Scripture makes room for lament, protest, and holy honesty.

You can trust God and still not understand Him. You can pray and still feel disappointed. You can know what is true about God's character and still wrestle with what He permitted.

Asking why is not automatically rebellion. Sometimes it is the language of a wounded heart still trying to stay in relationship with God.

Faith does not always sound like confidence. Sometimes faith sounds like, God, I do not understand You right now, but I am still here.

*Your questions do not disqualify your faith.
They reveal where your pain is asking to be held.*



Section Seven

God, Why Did You Let This Happen?

When Grief Shakes Your Faith



If God Could Have Stopped It, Why Didn't He?

This is one of the hardest questions grief can ask, and it does not deserve a shallow answer.

When someone you love dies, especially when they are young or when many people have prayed, the mind naturally returns to what God could have done. If He is powerful, why did He not intervene? If He is good, why did He allow this pain?

Not every question receives a full explanation on this side of eternity. And one of the cruelest things we can do to the grieving is pretend we know more than God has revealed.

Sometimes faith is not about solving the mystery. Sometimes it is about telling the truth that the mystery hurts.

When Prayer Feels Complicated After Loss

Loss can change the way a person prays. You may wonder what the point of prayer is if healing did not come. You may feel numb in worship, unsure in church, or resistant to words that once comforted you.

You may pray less. Or you may pray differently. Sometimes prayer after loss becomes less polished and more honest: Help me. Carry me. Stay with me. I do not know what to say.

That still counts as prayer.

You do not have to force spiritual language that is not real for you in this season. God is not intimidated by your tears, your silence, or your unfinished sentences.

*Sometimes the holiest prayer in grief is simply:
God, I'm still here.*



Section Seven

God, Why Did You Let This Happen?

When Grief Shakes Your Faith



Lament Is Still Faith

One of the gifts of Scripture is that it does not hide human anguish. The psalms are filled with questions, tears, confusion, and cries for help. Job spoke honestly from the middle of suffering. Jeremiah lamented. Jesus Himself wept.

Biblical faith is not pretending everything feels fine. It is bringing what is true into the presence of God.

Lament is the language of sorrow that still turns toward Him. It says, This hurts. I do not understand. I wish this were different. And I am bringing my pain to You anyway.

That kind of honesty is not a failure of faith. It is one of the deepest forms of faith there is.

You Do Not Need All the Answers to Stay in Relationship With God

There may be questions in this life that never feel fully resolved. You may not understand why this happened, why the timing was what it was, or why the answer you hoped for never came.

But uncertainty does not have to end your relationship with God.

You can live with unanswered questions and still let Him hold you. You can grieve what you do not understand and still remain open to His comfort, His presence, and His grace.

Sometimes faith after loss becomes simpler and quieter. Not easy. Not neat. But real.

Maybe for now, faith is not having every answer. Maybe it is choosing, little by little, to keep the conversation with God open.

A Truth to Carry

*It is okay to have questions. Your grief does not mean your faith is weak.
God is big enough for your doubts, your tears, and your unanswered why.*



*"It's okay
to bring your
questions to God.
A real relationship
has room for
honesty."*

*Still
Here.
Still
Believing.*

GRIEF

FAITH

HEALING

A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

HE
HEARS
YOU
♡

SECTION SEVEN

Sacred PAUSE



REFLECT • PROCESS • BRING IT TO GOD

1 What question do you keep replaying in your heart right now?

2 How can you be honest with God about what you're feeling?

3 What helps you find peace in the middle of your questions?

4 What is one truth you want to hold on to, even when it's hard to see?

5 How can you allow this season to draw you closer to God instead of pushing you away?

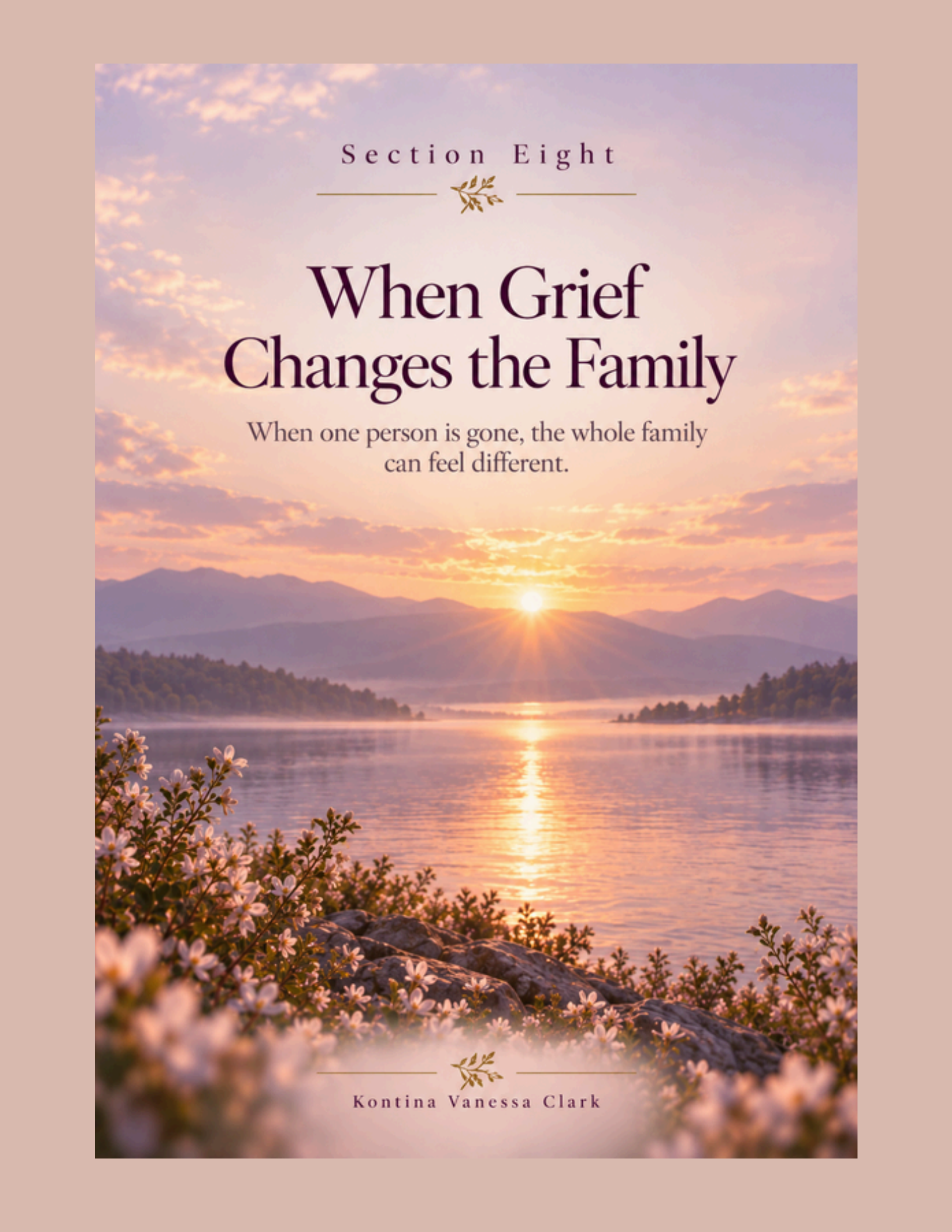


A TRUTH TO CARRY

*Your questions do not weaken your faith.
They often deepen it.*

HEALING DEEPLY. THINKING BIBLICALLY. LIVING COURAGEOUSLY.

Kontina Vanessa Clark
♡



Section Eight



When Grief Changes the Family

When one person is gone, the whole family
can feel different.



Kontina Vanessa Clark

Section Eight

When Grief Changes the Family

When one person is gone, the whole family can feel different.



When One Person Is Gone, Everyone Feels the Shift

After a death, a family is not only grieving a person. The family is also adjusting to the absence of the role that person held. The one who called first. The one who made everyone laugh. The one who remembered birthdays. The one who checked on everybody. The one who kept peace. The one who understood the unspoken dynamics of the room.

When that person is gone, even ordinary routines can feel different. Holidays shift. Conversations change. Group texts feel quieter. Family gatherings can carry an empty space that everyone feels, even when no one says it aloud.

Sometimes grief changes the family because the person who died held more than a seat. They held a role, a rhythm, and a place in everyone's life.

Family Roles Can Change Overnight

Loss can also change the responsibilities inside a family. Someone may suddenly become the helper, the peacemaker, the organizer, or the one everyone leans on. A sibling may feel pressure to protect a grieving parent. A grandparent may try to stay strong for everyone else. One family member may become more protective. Another may become more distant. Someone may withdraw. Someone may overfunction.

These shifts do not always happen because people choose them. Sometimes they happen because grief forces a family to reorganize itself around an absence it never wanted.

This is why a family can love each other deeply and still feel different after a loss. Everyone is learning how to carry the same grief while standing in a changed version of the family.



"Sometimes grief changes the family because the person who died held more than a seat. They held a role, a rhythm, and a place in everyone's life."



Section Eight

When Grief Changes the Family

When one person is gone, the whole family can feel different.



Grief Can Pull People Closer — or Push Them Apart

Loss can change family relationships in unexpected ways. Sometimes it brings people closer. A shared loss can soften hearts, increase tenderness, and remind family members what truly matters. Many families find that they become more intentional, more appreciative, and more open with one another after a death.

At the same time, grief can also expose old wounds. It can create tension, stir up unresolved hurt, and bring long-standing differences to the surface. Family members may disagree about hospital decisions, funerals, belongings, traditions, how to communicate, or how often the person who died should be discussed. What feels comforting to one person may feel painful to another.

Conflict after loss does not always mean love is absent. Sometimes it simply means that grief is overflowing in different directions, and everyone is hurting in their own way.

The Pressure to Hold Everyone Together

In many families, one person naturally becomes the strong one. They may take on the role of organizer, comforter, problem solver, or peacemaker. They make the calls, keep track of information, check on others, and try to hold everything together.

While this can be incredibly helpful, it can also be exhausting. The person who is holding everyone else often has their own deep grief, even if they have less time or space to show it. They may feel pressure to stay strong, keep going, and make sure everyone else is okay.

The strong one needs care too. Families can ask not only who is handling things, but also who is helping the one doing the handling. Grief can make some people overfunction, while others shut down or withdraw. Both responses are normal and deserve compassionate understanding.

A family does not have to do grief the same way. Supporting each other with patience and kindness can make it easier for everyone to navigate the changes together.



“A family can love each other deeply and still struggle after loss. Grief does not always make people harder. Sometimes it simply makes their pain easier to see.”



Section Eight

When Grief Changes the Family

When one person is gone, the whole family can feel different.



Becoming a Family Again

After a loss, families may spend a long time trying to figure out who they are now. Everything feels different — the rhythms, the roles, the conversations, and even the way ordinary days unfold. It can take time to understand what the new normal looks like and what it means to be a family without the person who is gone.

Becoming a family again does not mean going back to who everyone was before. It means learning how to love, gather, communicate, and make room for one another inside a changed reality. It is about finding new ways to stay connected while honoring the place the person who died will always hold.

New traditions may be needed. Old traditions may look different. And even the simplest, most ordinary moments — sharing a meal, watching a favorite show, celebrating a holiday, or sitting together in quiet — can still carry the memory and presence of the person who is gone.

You Do Not Have to Fix Everything to Move Forward

Healing as a family is not about pretending the death did not change anything. It is not about having all the answers or feeling “back to normal.” Families can still have unfinished grief, awkward conversations, and tender places while learning to move forward together.

It is okay if everyone is not on the same page. People grieve in different ways and at different paces. Some may want to talk often, while others need more space. Some may feel ready to make plans, while others still feel stuck. All of these responses can be part of the same loving family.

What matters most is not perfection, but presence. Honest check-ins can help — asking how everyone is doing, listening without judgment, and giving one another the grace to feel what they feel. Small acts of care can make a big difference: saying the person’s name, checking on the quiet family member, allowing space when it is needed, and asking, “What would make today a little easier for you?”



A Truth to Carry

A family may never be the same after loss, but different does not mean destroyed.

Love can survive the silence, the tension, the tears, and the re-learning.

With time, honesty, and grace, a family can become whole in a new way.



SECTION EIGHT

WHEN GRIEF CHANGES THE FAMILY

*Even in the
middle of it all,
God gives space
to breathe again.*

SACRED Pause

REFLECT | RELEASE | REALIGN



REFLECTION PROMPTS

- 1 How has grief changed my family dynamics?
- 2 What has been the most difficult adjustment for me?
- 3 What do I need more of from my family right now?
- 4 What do I need to release so I can move forward in love and peace?
- 5 How can I show up differently for the people I love while also honoring my own healing?

A MOMENT TO BE HONEST

Grief can bring out emotions, misunderstandings, and distance in families. It can also reveal love, strength, and a deeper appreciation for one another. Take a moment to be real with yourself about what this season has looked like for you and your family.

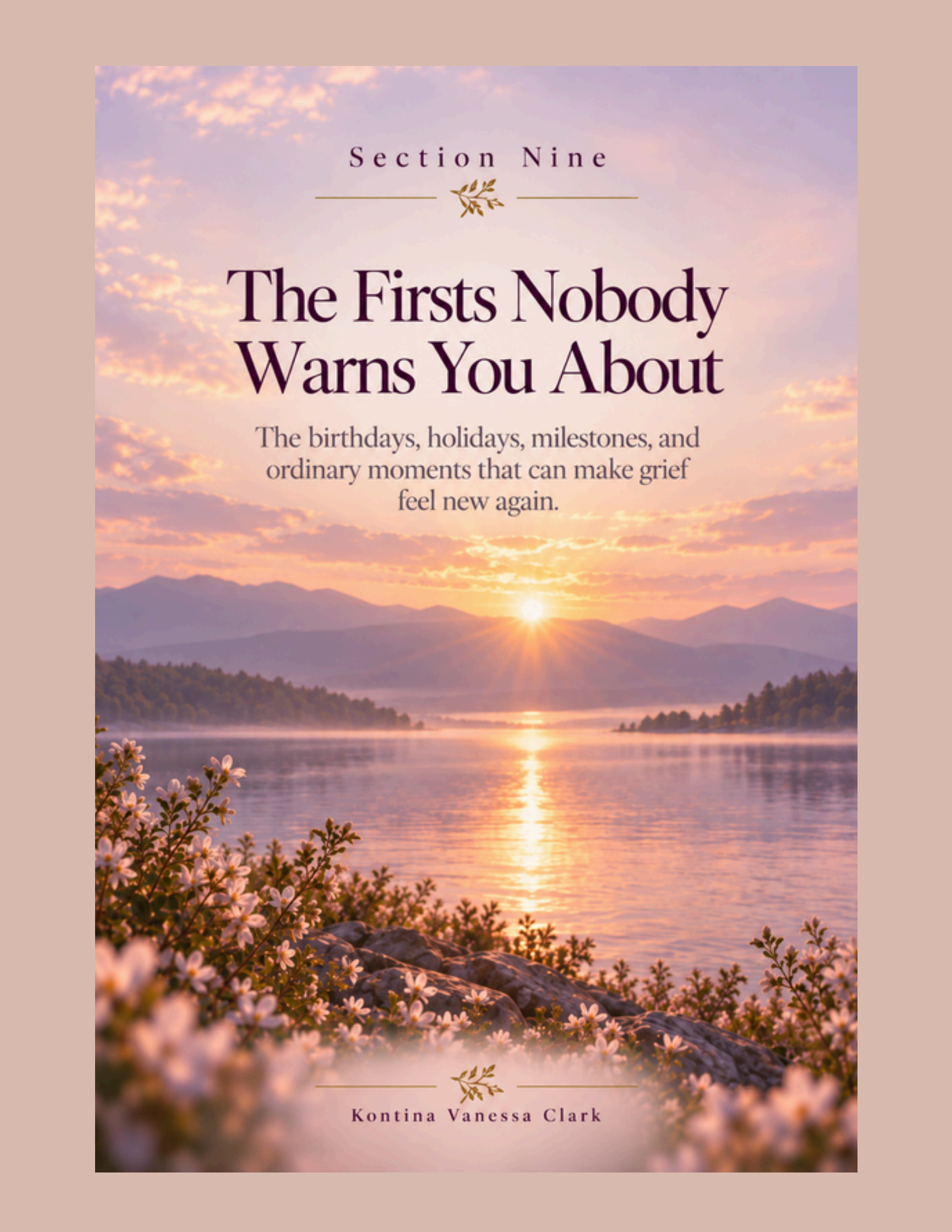
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A PRAYER FOR THIS SEASON

Lord, help me navigate the changes in my family with grace, patience, and understanding. Heal the places that feel divided. Bring unity where there is hurt. Give me the wisdom to love well, even in the hard moments. Remind me that You are still working, even when things look different. Help me to be a source of peace in my family and to trust You with what I cannot control. Amen.

*Healing
creates space
for healthier,
stronger connections.*





Section Nine



The Firsts Nobody Warns You About

The birthdays, holidays, milestones, and ordinary moments that can make grief feel new again.



Kontina Vanessa Clark

Section Nine



The Firsts Nobody Warns You About

The birthdays, holidays, milestones, and ordinary moments
that can make grief feel new again.



The Calendar Can Start to Feel Different

After a significant loss, dates that once felt ordinary can begin carrying weight. The first birthday without them. The first holiday. The first Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, or family gathering where their absence is impossible to ignore. Sometimes the grief begins before the day arrives. You may feel anxious as the date approaches. You may dread the empty chair, the missing laugh, or the way everyone may be trying to be present while silently noticing who is not there.

These firsts can feel especially hard because they remind you that life is still moving forward without the person you love. The calendar keeps turning, but your heart may still be learning how to live in a world where they are no longer physically here.

Even Ordinary Moments Can Feel Like Firsts

Not every first comes with a holiday or a milestone. Some of the hardest moments are small and unexpected. The first time you reach for your phone to call them. The first family group text where they do not answer. The first grocery trip where you see their favorite snack. The first Sunday afternoon that feels too quiet. The first joke you cannot text them.

Grief is often stirred not only by major events, but by ordinary moments that suddenly make their absence visible again. A song, a scent, a restaurant, a television show, a certain time of day — all of it can make the loss feel brand new for a moment.

That does not mean you are going backward. It means love still notices where they used to be.



*"Some firsts arrive on the calendar. Others arrive
in the middle of an ordinary day. Both can make
grief feel newly tender."*

Section Nine



The Firsts Nobody Warns You About

The birthdays, holidays, milestones, and ordinary moments that can make grief feel new again.



Milestones Can Make Their Absence Loud

Some firsts are tied to moments you always assumed they would be part of: a graduation, a wedding, a new baby, a move, a promotion, a child's birthday, or the moment someone in the family reaches an age your loved one never got to reach. In moments like these, joy and grief often show up together.

You may be genuinely happy and still feel the ache of, *They should be here*. You may smile for the photo and cry in the car. You may celebrate the moment while grieving the person who is missing from it.

This can be disorienting if you expected grief to show up only in sad moments. But often grief grows loud in beautiful moments too, because beauty makes absence easier to notice.

Other People May Not Realize How Hard a First Is

One of the painful things about firsts is that other people may not see them coming. The day may look normal from the outside while, for you, it carries an ache nobody else can feel. Sometimes people may be moving through the day casually while you are quietly bracing yourself just to get through it.

You may need to prepare differently for firsts. That may mean making a plan, asking for company, creating a new tradition, leaving early, keeping the day simple, or giving yourself permission not to attend something at all.

You do not have to perform strength to prove you are healing. Some firsts are heavy. You are allowed to honor that honestly.



You are allowed to hold gratitude for the moment in one hand and grief for the missing person in the other.

Section Nine



The Firsts Nobody Warns You About

The birthdays, holidays, milestones, and ordinary moments that can make grief feel new again.



You May Grieve a First Before It Arrives

Sometimes the pain of a first begins in anticipation. You may start thinking about an upcoming birthday, anniversary, or holiday weeks in advance. You may wonder how you will get through it, what the family will do, whether you should say their name, or how to carry both memory and emotion through the day.

Anticipatory grief around firsts is common. Your body and heart are often trying to prepare for a moment they know may hurt. Even if the day ends up gentler than expected, the anticipation itself can still be exhausting.

If that is where you are, try to be gentle with yourself. Preparation is not weakness. It is part of how grief loves carefully.

There Is No Right Way to Face a First

Some people gather family and tell stories. Some light a candle. Some cook a favorite meal. Some go to the cemetery. Some keep the day quiet. Some cry. Some laugh. Some do a little of both.

There is no single correct way to move through a first. The goal is not to do it perfectly. The goal is to make room for what is true. That may mean remembering openly, creating new rituals, saying their name, or simply getting through the day with honesty and grace.

A first can be painful and still meaningful. Hard and holy. Heavy and healing.



A Truth to Carry

*The firsts nobody warns you about can make grief feel fresh again.
That does not mean you are failing. It means love remembers.
Be gentle with yourself in the moments that remind you who is missing.*

Section Nine

The Firsts Nobody Warns You About

Sacred Pause

Reflect • Prepare • Honor



SOME
PEOPLE
MAKE
EVERY OCCASION
MORE MEANINGFUL
JUST BY BEING
IN IT



Sit With the Firsts

1. Which first feels heaviest for you right now?

2. What makes that day or moment especially hard?

3. How can you prepare for it with gentleness and honesty?

4. What is one meaningful way you can honor them in that moment?

5. What support would help you feel less alone?

Finish This Sentence

One first I am carrying right now is...

A Truth to Carry

The firsts nobody warns you about can make grief feel fresh again. That does not mean you are going backward. It means love still remembers. Be gentle with yourself in the moments that remind you who is missing.

GRIEF CHANGES THE CALENDAR.
BUT LOVE KEEPS EVERY DATE.



Kontina Vanessa Clark



SECTION TEN

You Are Allowed to Keep Living

*Hope, Healing, and a Future
Still Awaits*



*"The Lord
is close to the
brokenhearted
and saves those
who are crushed
in spirit."*

PSALM 34:18
(NIV)

HEAL.
BREATHE.
KEEP GOING.

THERE IS
MORE AHEAD.

SAME
STORY.
DIFFERENT
CHAPTER.

Kontina Vanessa Clark 

HEALING DEEPLY. THINKING BIBLICALLY. LIVING COURAGEOUSLY.

You Are Allowed to Keep Living

Hope, Healing, and a Future Still Awaits



Life after loss can feel uncomfortable. You may wonder if it's okay to smile again, make plans, or even feel joy. This section is a reminder that you are allowed to keep living. Choosing life doesn't mean you loved them any less—it means you're honoring the life they helped shape in you.



"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

JEREMIAH 29:11
(NIV)

IT'S OKAY TO LIVE AGAIN

Grief can make you feel guilty for feeling happy, but joy is not a betrayal. It's a part of healing. You can hold both—grief and gratitude, sorrow and joy, loss and a future. God never intended for you to stay stuck. He is still writing your story, and you are allowed to turn the page.

LET GO OF THE GUILT

Many grievers struggle with the fear that moving forward means forgetting. It doesn't. Living again simply means you're choosing not to let grief take everything. It's okay to enjoy a laugh, take a trip, pursue a dream, or fall in love with life again. You're not replacing what you lost—you're making room for what God still has for you.

A NEW NORMAL IS POSSIBLE

Your new normal may look different, but different doesn't mean less. It just means life has shifted. You can create a beautiful, meaningful life that includes their memory and your future. Walking forward doesn't mean you're leaving them behind—it means you're trusting God with what's next.

Remember This

- ♥ Joy is still allowed.
- ♥ You can smile without guilt.
- ♥ It's okay to make plans.
- ♥ A new normal can still be beautiful.
- ♥ Your future matters too.



TODAY'S ENCOURAGEMENT

You are not wrong for wanting more days, more joy, and more life. The same God who comforted you in your sorrow is the God who will walk with you into your next chapter. You are allowed to keep living, and there is still beauty ahead.

Kontina Vanessa Clark ♥

Choosing Life Again

It's Not Moving On, It's Moving Forward



Grief changes you. It shifts your perspective, slows you down, and sometimes makes you question everything you once knew. But in the middle of the pain, God gives you a choice—not to forget, but to keep living.

Choosing life again doesn't mean your loved one no longer matters. It means you are refusing to let grief be the final chapter. It means you are allowing joy, purpose, and hope to exist alongside your sorrow.

You are still you. And you are still becoming.

HEALING DEEPLY. THINKING BIBLICALLY. LIVING COURAGEOUSLY.



“

You can honor what was, love what is, and still look forward to what's next.

WAYS TO CHOOSE LIFE AGAIN

- 1 **Give Yourself Permission**
It's okay to laugh, to enjoy a moment, and to make new memories. Joy doesn't erase love.
- 2 **Set Small, Meaningful Goals**
Choose one thing that brings life back into your day—it could be a walk, a trip, a class, or a new routine.
- 3 **Surround Yourself with Support**
Be around people who encourage your healing and celebrate your progress.
- 4 **Say Yes to New Experiences**
Try something you've never done or revisit something you used to love.
- 5 **Keep Their Legacy Alive**
Live in a way that would make them proud. Let your life reflect the love they left behind.

You are allowed to enjoy your tomorrow.

TRUTHS TO HOLD ON TO

- ♡ Grief and joy can coexist.
- ♡ You can miss them and still move forward.
- ♡ Your happiness is not a betrayal.
- ♡ God's plans for you are still good.
- ♡ There is more life to live, and you are allowed to live it.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)



REFLECTION PROMPTS

- 1 What does choosing life again look like for me right now?
- 2 What is one new experience I want to say yes to?
- 3 How can I honor my loved one's memory while still moving forward?
- 4 What joy have I been holding back, and why?
- 5 What step can I take this week to invite more life into my days?

A PRAYER FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

Lord, thank You for giving me the strength to keep going. Help me to choose life again without guilt. Heal the places that still hurt, and fill my heart with hope for what's ahead. Remind me that joy is still possible, that my story isn't over, and that You have good plans for me. Give me the courage to embrace this next season with trust, knowing that I can honor my loved ones and still live fully. Amen.



Kontina Vanessa Clark ♡

Journal Freely

A NEW SEASON IS STILL A BLESSING.

You Are Allowed to Keep Living

Hope, Healing, and a Future Still Awaits

SAME
STORY.
DIFFERENT
CHAPTER.
A BRIGHTER
YOU.



SECTION OVERVIEW

Life after loss, disappointment, or a major transition can feel uncertain. You may wonder if it's okay to smile again, make plans, or even feel joy. This section is a reminder that you are allowed to keep living. Choosing life doesn't mean you've forgotten what you lost—it means you're honoring the life they helped shape in you. Your story is not over, and there is still so much beauty ahead.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)

KEY TRUTHS TO HOLD ON TO

- 1 You can grieve and still have joy.
Both can exist in the same season.
- 2 Choosing life is not disloyal.
It's a way to honor what was and embrace what is still ahead.
- 3 Your next chapter matters too.
God still has plans for you.
- 4 It's okay to make plans.
Dreaming again is a part of healing.
- 5 You are allowed to be happy.
Joy is not a replacement—it's a renewal.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- 1 Where do I still feel guilty for moving forward?
- 2 What would it look like for me to fully embrace this next chapter?
- 3 What dreams have I put on hold, and which ones am I ready to revisit?
- 4 How can I honor what was while giving myself permission for what's next?
- 5 What is one step I can take this week to choose life on purpose?

PRACTICAL STEPS

- ☐ Give yourself permission to enjoy the good moments.
- ☐ Revisit a dream or goal you set aside.
- ☐ Surround yourself with people who encourage your next chapter.
- ☐ Plan something to look forward to.
- ☐ Speak life over your future daily.

A PRAYER FOR THIS SEASON

Lord, thank You for still giving me breath, purpose, and possibilities. Help me to release the guilt, embrace the joy, and trust that it's okay to keep living. Remind me that my story isn't over and that You still have good plans for me. Give me the courage to take the next step and the faith to believe that there is more ahead. Amen.

There is still beauty ahead.



Kontina Vanessa Clark

SACRED Pause

REFLECT | RELEASE | REALIGN



*Sometimes the bravest thing you can do
is choose life again.*

A NEW
CHAPTER
IS STILL
a beautiful
CHAPTER.



TAKE A MOMENT

Pause here. Breathe. You've carried a lot, and choosing life again may feel unfamiliar, uncomfortable, or even scary. That's okay. This Sacred Pause is your space to be honest with God, honest with yourself, and intentional about what comes next.

You are not erasing your past.
You are allowing your future. You are not forgetting what was. You are making room for what still can be.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- 1 What is holding me back from fully embracing this next season?
- 2 Where do I need to release fear, guilt, or other people's opinions?
- 3 What does choosing life again look like for me right now?
- 4 What is one step I can take this week to move forward with hope?
- 5 How do I want to feel six months from now?

A PRAYER FOR THIS SEASON

Lord, thank You for the gift of a new beginning. Help me let go of what no longer serves me, and give me the courage to say yes to the life You still have for me. Heal what's still tender, renew my perspective, and remind me that it's never too late to start again. I choose life — again — with You. Amen.

GRACE NOTE

You can choose life again and still honor what was. Both can be true. Your story isn't over — it's just entering a new chapter.

Kontina Vanessa Clark 

You Are Not *Alone*

Grief can make you feel like the world stopped, but you're expected to keep going. This guide was created to remind you that healing is possible, support matters, and you don't have to carry your grief alone.

Whether your loss is recent or years ago, this pocket guide offers compassionate insight, practical tools, Scripture, and gentle encouragement to help you navigate the hard days and honor the love that remains.

*You can grieve deeply and still live fully.
There is grace for both.*

HEALING DEEPLY.
THINKING BIBLICALLY.
LIVING COURAGEOUSLY.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kontina Vanessa Clark is a nurse, author, speaker, and founder of The Kovac Collective. Through her writing, teaching, and creative work, she helps women heal deeply, think biblically, and live courageously after life's hardest seasons. She is passionate about turning pain into purpose and creating spaces where healing and hope meet.

Kontina Vanessa Clark ♥

FOUNDER | WRITER | CREATIVE | KINGDOM BUILDER

STAY CONNECTED



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KOVAC 

THE KOVAC COLLECTIVE

KINGDOM-ORIENTED VISION AND CREATIVITY

*"There is beauty
on the other side
of grief."*



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HEALING PEOPLE. IMPACTING GENERATIONS.