



FLOWERS GROW IN THE VALLEY: FINDING HOPE AND
HEALING THROUGH THE ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

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CHAPTER ONE: THE BEGINNING WE EXPECT

At Brigham Young University-Idaho and in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, marriage is seen as a sacred beginning, eternal, hopeful, and deeply woven into the purpose of life. It is spoken of in classrooms, emphasized in devotionals, and quietly anticipated in conversations between friends. For many students, it represents not only companionship, but a covenant, identity, and direction.

The expectation is not just that marriage will happen, but that it will last.

Within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, marriage is deeply tied to eternal purpose. It is more than a milestone; it is a step toward exaltation, a promise that extends beyond this life and into the next. Because of this, young adults often enter marriage with faith, intention, and a desire to build something lasting.

For some, that beginning does not unfold as expected.

For a small but significant number of women at BYU-Idaho, marriage ends in divorce, sometimes within months, sometimes within the first year. What was once filled with hope becomes something entirely different: confusion, grief, and questions that do not have immediate answers.

And in a culture where marriage is celebrated, the end of one can feel especially quiet and lonely.

Divorce is not often discussed in Latter-day Saint communities, particularly among young adults. There is no clear roadmap for what it looks like to navigate both faith and loss at the same time. Those who experience it may find themselves in a space that feels unfamiliar, caught between what was expected and what is.

This project seeks to understand that space, not statistically, but personally.

Through conversations with women at BYU-Idaho who have experienced divorce, a deeper story begins to emerge, one not only of pain, but of faith, resilience, and healing through Jesus Christ.

Sometimes, the stories we write in our minds do not unfold the way we imagined, and it is in those unexpected endings that something deeper begins.

CHAPTER TWO: WHEN EXPECTATIONS SHIFT

There is a quiet understanding that exists within the culture at Brigham Young University–Idaho, one that speaks of marriage as something lasting, something eternal, and something that will unfold the way it is meant to.

For many, that belief is not only taught, but deeply trusted.

Plans are made. Futures are imagined. Promises feel certain.

And because of that, when those expectations shift, when something once believed to be permanent begins to unravel, it can feel deeply disorienting.

Not just because of what was lost, but because of what was supposed to be.

Divorce, within this context, is more than the end of a relationship. It is the disruption of something sacred, something hoped for, something prayed over. It carries questions that are not easily answered, questions about identity, about faith, about the future.

For many of the women interviewed, the experience of divorce was not just unexpected, it was deeply personal and, at times, difficult to make sense of.

Participants described the sudden shift in their lives in deeply personal ways.

Lauren shared, “I thought I knew exactly how my life was going to go, and then all of a sudden, everything I had planned, just wasn’t there anymore.”

“It wasn’t just the end of my marriage, it felt like the end of the future I had pictured for myself,” Avery said.

The shift was not just situational, it was internal. What once felt certain suddenly felt unfamiliar. Plans that once felt inspired now felt unclear.

Some described asking questions they had never considered before: *What does this mean for my future? For my faith? For who I am becoming?*

And yet, within that space, between what was expected and what became reality, something began to change.

Not all at once. Not in ways that were immediately visible.

But quietly.

CHAPTER THREE: THE QUIET WEIGHT OF ISOLATION

One of the most consistent themes across interviews was a sense of isolation, both internal and external.

In a campus culture where engagement rings, wedding plans, and future families are common topics of conversation, those who have experienced divorce often feel set apart. Moments that once felt exciting can quietly become reminders of what has been lost.

Claire shared, “I remember sitting in church and feeling like I didn’t belong there anymore, like everyone else was moving forward, and I was just stuck.”

Bostyn explained, “People would talk about marriage and families, and I didn’t know where I fit into those conversations anymore,” Bostyn explained.

For some, Sundays became especially difficult, sitting through lessons on eternal families while quietly grieving the loss of their own.

Lauren reflected, “Sundays were the hardest because everything reminded me of what I had lost.”

This isolation was not always caused by others. More often, it came from an internal awareness of being different, of no longer fitting into a narrative that once felt so natural.

Even well-meaning questions could feel heavy. Even simple conversations could feel complicated.

Yet despite this, many continued to show up, to church, to school, to life.

That loneliness was not always visible, but it was deeply felt, carried quietly in the spaces where belonging once came easily.

And in that quiet showing up, something unseen but significant was taking place.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE BREAKING OF IDENTITY

Beyond the visible ending of a marriage, many participants describe a deeper loss, the loss of identity.

Marriage had shaped not only their daily lives, but their sense of self and future. When it ended, it often left behind questions that were difficult to answer.

Avery said, “I didn’t even recognize myself anymore. I didn’t know who I was outside of that relationship.”

“I felt like I had failed, not just myself, but everything I thought I was supposed to be,” Claire shared.

For some, the pain was not just in what had ended, but in what they believed it meant about them. In a culture, where marriage is closely tied to purpose, divorce sometimes felt like a reflection of personal failure, even when it was not.

Feelings of guilt, confusion, and inadequacy were common.

It is a quiet, kind of breaking, the kind that does not happen all at once, but slowly, as the life you once knew begins to unravel.

And in that uncertainty, they were left to rebuild, not just their lives, but their understanding of who they truly were.

Yet within that breaking, something unexpected began to emerge.

Not a new identity all at once, but the beginning of one.

CHAPTER FIVE: TURNING TOWARD HIM

For many of the women interviewed, the most significant shift did not come from circumstances changing, but from where they turned in the middle of those circumstances.

Faith was no longer distant or routine, it became something deeply personal. Prayer was no longer spoken, not a habit, but out of need. And Christ was no longer just someone they believed in, He became someone they reached for.

Bostyn said, “My prayers stopped being routine and became really real. I wasn’t just praying, I was pleading.”

“There were moments where I felt like Jesus Christ and my Heavenly Father were the only ones who actually understood what I was going through,” Lauren shared.

In a piece I wrote, I reflected on my own experience with trials and healing through Jesus Christ:

“There are moments when life is overwhelming, when the weight of sorrow, loss, and disappointment feel almost too heavy to bear.

I have felt that way. I’ve pleaded with the Lord to take away the pain, to undo what cannot be undone and to make things right in the way I thought they should be. Through my trials, I have come to learn that Christ is not only the master healer, but also the master builder. He takes the broken pieces of my life and shapes them into something I never could’ve imagined.

Looking back on the hardest trial of my life, I have often reflected on one specific question: ‘How much more difficult would this trial be if I did not have a relationship with Jesus Christ?’

It is a heartbreaking thought because, truthfully, I could not get through my trials without Him.

In moments where answers did not come, peace did.

Not loudly. Not dramatically. But quietly, and consistently enough to notice.

As I reflected on these experiences, I was reminded of something I came to understand through my own trials:

“There are moments when life is overwhelming... I have pleaded with the Lord to take away the pain... “

“I have come to understand that peace is not the absence of trials, but the presence of Christ.”

The world tells us that peace is found in distraction, in numbing the pain or seeking validation from others. But the Savior offers something deeper. A peace that remains, even when the storm does not pass right away.

There was a woman in Relief Society who once shared that before we came to earth, we stood beside our Savior. We knew the trials we would face, and with full confidence in Him, we chose to come anyway because we knew we would never face them alone.

That thought has carried me through some of my darkest days. No matter what I face, the promise remains: I do not walk this path alone.

Because He carried His cross alone...

We will never have to.

One woman reflected,

Claire said, “I didn’t get answers right away, but I felt peace in a way that I can’t really explain.”

In those moments, faith was no longer theoretical, it became something lived, something relied on, something personal.

Peace did not come as an answer to every question, but as a quiet assurance that they were not walking through it alone.

The atonement of Jesus Christ reaches into every form of pain, not only sin, but sorrow, loss and brokenness (see Alma 7:11-12).

“There were days I didn’t think I was going to be okay, but somehow, I kept going, and I know now it wasn’t just me doing that,” Claire added.

And in turning towards Him, they began to find something steady, even when everything else felt uncertain.

CHAPTER SIX: HELD IN THE HEALING

Healing isn't linear and does not arrive all at once, nor did it come in the way that these women had hoped.

There was no single moment where everything made sense, no clear line where grief ended and peace began. Instead, healing unfolded slowly, often in ways that were almost unnoticeable at first.

Avery shared, "Nothing was magically fixed, but I didn't feel alone anymore, and that changed everything."

Bostyn said, "I still hurt, but I feel like I had someone walking through it with me, I know that was my Savior and Redeemer."

Lauren reflected, "I didn't feel healed overnight, but I felt held and comforted. I knew everything would be alright in the end."

What once felt unbearable slowly became something they could carry, not because it was lighter, but because they were not carrying it alone.

It was not the absence of pain that marked their healing, but the presence of Someone who stayed with them in it.

Sometimes the Lord rides out the storm with us, other times He calms the restless sea around us. Most of all, He calms the storm inside us," said Lloyd John Ogilvie.

These women have come to know this truth firsthand. There were times when they prayed for the storm to pass, but instead, the Lord stayed in it with them. He didn't remove the trial immediately, but He gave them enough light to take the next step.

And somehow, that was enough.

And slowly, that made all the difference.

CHAPTER SEVEN: BEING WHILE BECOMING

Slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, something began to change.

Not in their circumstances, but within themselves.

“I had to learn who I was again, but this time in a way that didn’t depend on anyone else,” Claire remarked.

Bostyn shared, “I started to see myself differently, not as someone who failed, but as someone who is still growing.”

Avery said, “Choosing to be happy wasn't easy, but it was something I decided to do anyway.”

They began to see themselves differently, not as someone defined by loss, but as a daughter of God with inherent and divine worth that was unchanging.

Worth is not determined by relationships, outcomes, or the opinions of others. It is eternal, infinite, and unchanging.

“The Savior is not waiting for us to be perfect... He is waiting for us to turn to Him.” said Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

We are not trying to earn our worth, we were born with it.

They were not returning to who they once were, they were becoming someone new.

And as they began becoming who God needed them to be, they discovered a version of themselves they may have never found otherwise.

CHAPTER EIGHT: WHEN FAITH MEETS REALITY

These experiences reveal something important.

While divorce may be less common in church culture, its impact can be deeply complex. It challenges expectations, identity, and understanding.

But it does not dismantle faith, in many ways, it refines it.

These women did not lose their testimonies and relationships with Christ, they strengthened both.

Their stories reflect one central truth:

The Atonement of Jesus Christ reaches into every form of pain.

Not just sin.

But sorrow.

Loss.

And brokenness.

Faith, in this context, was not about having all the answers, but trusting God, even without them.

CHAPTER NINE: LESSONS LEARNED

As I conducted these interviews, I was struck by the strength of each woman, not in the absence of pain, but in the way they chose to move through it.

Their stories felt deeply familiar.

Because I, too, have wrestled with the weight of this trial.

I came to understand that healing is not always immediate, and it does not always look the way we expect. Sometimes, it comes quickly, through small moments of peace, through the strength to keep going, or through the simple assurance that we are not alone.

There was something sacred about being trusted with these stories. Each conversation felt like a reminder that pain is not something we are meant to hide, but something that connects us to both each other and to Christ. I began to see that healing is not about returning to who we were, but about becoming someone new, someone stronger, more compassionate, and more deeply rooted in our faith.

This project changed the way I see both trials and the Savior.

CHAPTER TEN: FLOWERS GROW IN THE VALLEY

A song that deeply resonated with me through the process of this project is “*Flowers*” by Samantha Ebert. Its lyrics reflect the quiet truth that growth often comes in the hardest moments:

“Child, I’m planting seeds...
I’m a good God and I have a good plan...
And someday you’ll see that flowers grow in the valley.”

The Savior sees what we cannot. He understands that the storms we face are not meant to destroy us, but to refine us. What feels like breaking may actually be the beginning of something being built.

Divorce may mark the end of a relationship, but it does not mark the end of a story.

For these women, what began as an ending became something else entirely.

Growth.

Strength.

Faith.

Claire shared, “I wouldn’t have chosen to go through it, but I wouldn’t change who I’ve become because of it.”

Their stories are not stories of endings, but of transformation, and what can grow in something once thought permanent comes undone.

It is easy to believe that growth happens on mountain tops, when life is clear, steady, and whole. But more often, it happens in the valleys. In the quiet, unseen places when hearts are stretched, faith is tested, and something new begins to take root.

And sometimes, it is in those very valleys, the most beautiful flowers grow.

The One who walked the road alone to Calvary walks beside us, and because of Him, even the deepest valleys can become places where something beautiful begins to grow.