

A Widow's Journey, Do I Need a Suitcase?

What do you pack to go on a widow's journey? When the day comes, you will realize that you haven't packed for this journey; you'll find that your suitcase is empty. A trip, a journey is something one looks forward to, plans for, and prepares for, but not for this journey. A widow's journey is not one we would look forward to, or plan to go on someday, we don't even know how we would prepare for it, it's not ever been a thought or part of our future plans. This suitcase was one we never wanted to look at or take out of the closet, we never thought we would need one, or take this trip alone.

We found that wonderful man, he walked into our life, a beautiful love story happened, a marriage, and that is the kind of journey as a young girl we had already planned out in our dreams. Someday that man will come along and the journey of husband and wife would begin. Our suitcase was packed for that precious honeymoon, a journey full of joy and anticipation. When this happened, it was a journey to share with someone, not like the alone the days we spent before marriage, but now we had that special someone beside us to travel with each day. We packed many suitcases, for weekend trips, overnight trips, or long anticipated vacations together.

Some days on the marriage journey were exciting, some adventurous, some days were washing clothes and making meals, while trying to keep a clean house. Each day we still had someone to wake up to in the morning, share meals with, and lay beside at night, this was a good journey, maybe it felt like a fairy tale at times, one we never wanted to end. It was our beautiful journey we never wanted to see come to an end, ever let our minds think about it, or let alone plan for it. The suitcase for that journey was never supposed to be taken out of our closet or packed.

Then the widow's journey started, we'll never forget that day and the days to follow. Maybe your suitcase now becomes so full of tears that they spilled out all over the bedroom floor or it became a place to tuck deep into the corners, precious memories you never want to lose. It might now hold his pillow case, the last t-shirt he wore, maybe a bottle of his favorite aftershave, so you could take it out dab it on your wrist and lay down with the fragrance and allow special feelings fill up your soul. You might have placed the birthday cards, valentine cards and love letters he gave you into it, touching each one and holding them close to your heart. Maybe a ticket from a favorite concert, a play or game you attended together will bring those precious memories back to enjoy as they're tucked into the suitcase. Just how much can it hold, when our life's journey was so full of the special days we traveled together?

This suitcase is going to be part of the widow's journey. As the days, months, and years go by, the content will change. Maybe someday laughter will push away the tears in it and happy photographs will start coming to the top bringing more smiles, of those cherished memories. We might add the 'I'm glad's into it! I'm glad we took that last trip together, I'm glad we laughed and teased each other so much, I'm glad we shared Christ's love together, I'm glad we raised our children together, and I'm glad we had each other. Maybe you're adding the I'm so very glad I put that ring on your finger as we became one, and now I'm tucking it in next to all the other beautiful memories in my widow's journey suitcase.

“Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again’ from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up.” {Psalm 71:20}

The journey will change, hope blossoms, and the acute pain begins to fade. We couldn’t find the U-turn and knew that forward is the direction we will have to travel. We will still let tears flow, our spirit will feel heavy at times, and we’ll see our life begin to change. We will see new sunrises, flowers again will bloom, and the crimson and orange sunsets will warm our heavy hearts. The suitcase will feel lighter and so will our grief scared hearts. It’s a journey of ups and downs, corners and crossings. It’s a journey where family and friends, and widows like us, will join our journey, and God will be our joy in our sorrow. We’ll soon realize we’re not walking alone on our new journey. We will find comfort and loving support when we open our hearts, allowing others in to travel beside us.

by reneé – my suitcase came out as my journey started that cold spring day on March 21st 2012

“I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord.” {Psalm 104:33-34}