



STEADY LOVE

WHAT *Every* HEART LONGS FOR

A.R. GRIMMIE JR.

A JOURNEY OF FAITH, LOSS, AND HOPE

Steady Love

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This book reflects the author's present recollections of lived experiences over time. Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of others. Some events and conversations have been compressed or recreated for literary effect.

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*To my family:
Tina, Marcus, and Christina,
for displaying a love for one another that remained constant through life's highest
joys and deepest sorrows.
Your unwavering love has been a gift, a witness, an inspiration, and a huge reason
this book exists.*

*And to my mom, dad, and sister:
To my mom, who modeled love all the days of her life;
To my dad, for his devotion to his family;
and to my sister, for her faithful loving kindness.*

Preface

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22, 23

Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Psalms 143:8

This book was born out of real life; shaped by love and laughter, sorrow and suffering, heartbreak and hope.

The stories in these pages are deeply personal, but their purpose reaches far beyond my own life or the life of my family. Two truths have followed me through every chapter of my life: God is real, and He created us for a relationship with Him.

These understandings did not come because I was inclined to believe without question. I have always been skeptical by nature, unwilling to accept anything as true simply because I was told it was so. I have wrestled deeply with the question of what is true. And through that very process, my confidence in the reality of God grew stronger. As I came to know His written Word more deeply, and as I saw the supernatural elements of His truth borne out in the events of my life, what I once examined from a distance became something I could no longer honestly deny. Again and again, Scripture and lived experience testified that God is not imagined, not invented, and not silent.

He has not left himself without witness. God the Father has revealed himself throughout history by the people He chose, through His written Word, and most fully through Jesus Christ, who entered our world, walked among us, and made him known.

The heart of the Christian faith is not merely that God exists, but that He has drawn near. He is neither distant, nor indifferent. He is the God who speaks, who enters into human suffering, and calls us into fellowship with himself. That truth has sustained me through seasons of joy and through valleys of death I never would have chosen. It has not answered every question, but it has given me Someone to trust who has beaten death itself.

Steady Love is not an attempt to explain every mystery of pain, loss, or providence. It is a testimony to the unwavering love, the loving loyalty of God in the middle of real life, where beauty and brokenness so often live side by side. I write with deep gratitude for the family, friends, and everyone whose love, prayers, encouragement, and faithfulness helped shape my life and these pages. In some places, minor details have been adjusted for clarity, privacy, or the flow of the narrative, but the heart of these accounts remains true to my recollection.

My prayer is that this book would do more than tell my family's story. I pray it would point beyond itself to the living God, who has made himself known and still invites men and women to come to him. If these pages stir even one heart to consider His reality, His nearness, and His steady love, then it will have served its deepest purpose.

A. R. Grimmie Jr.

Prologue

I pedaled my bike as fast as my legs could go down the twisty dirt road that went deep into the woods and farther from our house than any of us had ever been. I glanced back real quick to see how far behind my sisters, Loretta and Mae, were. It was 1935 and cars were as rare as a blue moon in West Berlin, the sleepy little town where we lived in New Jersey. My sisters always took their sweet time on the turns, but I just zoomed ahead.

The trees thinned on my right, and I spotted a little stream. I slowed up, and when the girls were within earshot, I yelled out to them. "Follow me!"

The tree line broke into a grassy field full of sunshine. I jumped off my bike and ran over to the water's edge. I grabbed some sticks and dug in the muddy ground.

I looked up, and there were Loretta and Mae, dropping their bikes by mine and half running, half skipping over to me.

"These are for you, slowpokes!" I yelled, laughing as I handed them each a stick. We kicked off our shoes and waded in the cool water, feeling the mud and grass squish between our toes. We dug little holes and watched them fill with water.

"I bet we're the only people who've ever been here," Mae said, lifting her face to the sun.

The sound of the splashing water and the sun sparkling on it made us feel like we were in a magical place. The dirt road was just beyond the trees, but here in the woods we felt like real explorers in a wild land.

A brick dam stuck out from where we were walking along the stream, and beyond that was a big pond where we could see frogs jumping in as we got closer.

I took the lead on our make-believe adventure, even though I was the youngest at seven. Loretta was nine, and Mae was ten, but since they were girls I got to be the captain. We lunged and swung our sticks, pretending to battle invisible bad guys.

Just when we were about to conquer the dam, I saw splashing farther out. I ran ahead and climbed onto the ledge, excited to get a closer look. "Abhh! Tadpoles!"

"Be careful!" Loretta shouted, her voice all worried. "You know none of us can swim!"

"I know, I know," I shouted back. Loretta and Mae watched me with big eyes from the water's edge.

All I could think about were those tadpoles. I crawled on my hands and knees along the ledge to the end of the dam. I leaned way over, gasping with joy as I watched the tadpoles zip around in the water. They were so close, I was sure I could grab one. If I just leaned a little more—

Suddenly, I slipped right off the ledge and sank into the deep water below. I kicked my feet and flailed my arms, but it just pushed me away from the ledge and safety. My feet couldn't touch the bottom, and my head bobbed up and down while I gasped for air.

"Help!" I yelled, but all I got was a mouthful of water and started to choke. I tried to scream, but the words caught in my throat and the swirling pond swallowed me under again. I sank deeper this time, and the water felt colder around me. It had been so warm at the edge. I could hear my sisters screaming, but it sounded far away, like I was in a dream—

Are our lives just a scattered series of random events? Or is there a day coming, a moment of revelation, when everything will come into focus? When what once felt disconnected will suddenly make sense in the light of something far greater?

Could it be that something exists, so unfailing and unshakable, so powerful that even our deepest aches and longings are woven into its purpose? A guiding hand that not only brings meaning to the past, but awakens a kind of holy nostalgia for something we've glimpsed but not yet fully seen?

Even in a world as troubled as ours, is it possible that we can catch glimpses of that wonder right here, right now?

Just when everything started to go dark, I felt strong hands grab me and pull me out of the water.

Later, I found out that my sister had run through the field yelling for help just as a man driving one of the few cars around was passing by on that empty back road.



Albert R. Grimmie Sr.

My father, Albert Raymond Grimmie Sr. nearly drowned in a pond in the woods when he was seven years old. He shared this story with me and my sister many times while we were growing up, mostly whenever he and Mom took us to the Jersey shore beaches or to swim in my aunt's pool. Dad never swam. The fear of water stayed with him all of his life after that day on the dam in 1935. Even so, the unlikelihood of anyone driving along that empty back road at the exact moment his life was in danger was not lost on my dad. To him, this wasn't just a childhood memory. It was a miracle.

It wasn't until I was in high school and got my driver's license that I found that very road, along with the stream and the pond where my dad's life had been spared some forty years earlier. It was still a back road with little traffic.

I wondered if it really had been a miracle that my dad was saved that day, or was it just chance? Either way, I would not be here if he had drowned. So, am I here by chance, or by a God-ordained miracle?



Chapter One

The End

I leaned over and wrapped my arms around my wife, Tina, as best I could. I rested my head beside hers on the pillow, cheek to cheek like we'd done for thirty-one years. But this time, instead of her waking and our eyes meeting, I knew she'd breathed her final breath as Jesus carried her home.

The room was quiet except for the soft rushing of nurses around her bedside. I stood by, watching, facing my own helplessness. Twenty-three years of the constant commotion of living with breast cancer, endless doctor visits, alternative treatments that offered hope but faded was over. Tina had been a trooper through it all. Most of the time if you saw her in the middle of the day, you'd never know anything was wrong with her. Only our family knew that she'd start slow in the morning, be full of life during the day, and fold up early at night. Over the years that window kept getting smaller and smaller. Silently, it had closed.

I saw more than heard the sound as the doctor's lips formed the words to say what I already knew. *"She's gone."*

The drive home afterward felt endless, a hollow road stretching out beneath me, carrying me away from the love and life I once knew.

In the days following that September 2nd morning in 2018, I drifted between numbness and obligation. Friends suggested that I cancel the fundraising event planned for the 25th, but my son Marcus and I both knew what Tina would have wanted us to do: push forward.

Left: Albert "Bud" Jr. and Tina on their wedding day



Bud and Tina

Working through the Christina Grimmie Foundation had been therapeutic for our family. Before Tina died, in the eighteen months after Christina was killed, we served everywhere we could. We were on a mission to offer a real pathway to hope through financial and emotional support for shooting victims and their families. We poured our hearts into helping people whose lives were torn apart by a pain we knew all too well.

The night of the fundraising event, carrying on without Tina, I felt as though I were wading through mud. My body was present, but my spirit was far away. Almost too weary to feel God's nearness, I made it through the presentation, often feeling like I was at a loss for words that nevertheless kept coming. In the quiet aching of my battered heart, I sensed myself being carried along on familiar rhythms; but I felt more like footprints being blown away in the sand than someone being held by God. I breathed a long, shaky sigh of relief when the event was over. Driving away from Los Angeles that night, I felt like a shadow of myself, emptied, alone, unsure of how to face the next day.

October sped by in a blur of going through the motions. Meetings at the Foundation's command central—our dining room—with our small team of my son

Marcus and good friends Sue Procko and Tony Scott answering emails and going on with the business of running the Foundation. Most days I felt overwhelmed, a tide of emotion crashing over me in wave after relentless wave. The second anniversary of my daughter Christina's death had been just a few months earlier on June 10th, and the shadow of losing Tina on September 2nd still hung heavy.

I opened another email and pushed through the ache in my heart. The age-old question of how a good God could let this happen kept eating at me. Yet, I couldn't help but remember how cancer had ravaged Tina's body, but never her spirit.

Back in May, Tina's oncologist at UCLA had given us hospice papers.

"The cancer will take you," he said.

Quick as a whip, Tina corrected him. "My Lord and Savior will take me when He is good and ready."

And just four short months later, on September 2nd, my Boo, my beloved Tina, was gone. I hoped helping others who had suffered tragic loss would fill the void she left behind.

Then, as if the world itself mirrored my brokenness, on November 7th, a mass shooting at the Borderline Bar and Grill shook our community in Thousand Oaks. Twelve people were shot dead, and many more were wounded. The very next day, raging fires forced Marcus and me to evacuate our home.

We got busy doing all we could, reaching out through the Foundation and connecting with the County Victim Service to help. We wanted to be there for people, to offer a pathway to hope in the wake of the shootings. It felt good to serve others, but I couldn't shake the weariness I felt gnawing at me. If I were to continue this work, I knew I needed to slow down, to breathe.

It was in this swirl of tragedy and disorientation that Tony placed an early Christmas gift in my hands: *The 100-Day Goal Journal - Accomplish What Matters*. At the time, I thought it a strange gift to give a man whose heart was shattered. I had no idea what mattered most to me now. Yet that journal became a small reminder that I was still here, still moving, still searching for how to move forward, or at times, how not to utterly collapse.



Tina Marie Grimmie

When my father was seven years old, he nearly drowned. One moment he was flailing in the water, and the next, strong hands pulled him out and onto dry land. That brush with death became one of the defining moments of his childhood, a story of being saved when all seemed lost. It was only years later that I began to understand how moments like that, where life and death hang in the balance, can shape the way we see God's hand at work, even when we don't fully recognize it in the moment.

As I flipped through the pages of the journal, I thought about my father being saved and Tina and Christina both being gone. In that collision of memory and loss, all I knew was that I needed solitude. I needed time alone with my thoughts and with God. I wondered if He'd still be there for me, without Tina. I needed space to let the numbness sink in, to wrestle with the silence of God, and to search for what Tina and I had experienced many times in our thirty-one years of marriage. She called it, "a God thing," or a divine encounter. Would I ever feel God's love again through this apathy? I remembered bible verses about God's love for me. I needed Him now more than ever in the face of everything that had

changed. I had suffered one tragic, traumatic loss in an instant, and a second that was twenty-three years in the making.

Mercifully, some empty blocks had appeared on my calendar at the end of the year. I was heading home to New Jersey for Christmas and New Year's, hoping two weeks in the familiarity of home would help me reclaim the peace of mind I so desperately needed.