



# **Life After Breath: After Her Husband Takes His Last Breath, and After She Tries to Catch Hers**

*Susan VandePol*

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"Life After Breath" is a warm and honest companion and friend in the midst of a widow's darkness and seclusion that helps her face into grief when others want to look away. and sets in place the foundation for her future with insight into a sacred Biblical revelation that will take your breath away.

## **Life After Breath: After Her Husband Takes His Last Breath, and After She Tries to Catch Hers Details**

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Author : Susan VandePol

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# **From Reader Review *Life After Breath: After Her Husband Takes His Last Breath, and After She Tries to Catch Hers* for online ebook**

**Charlotte Anderson says**

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review Alex is a lost soul with destructive habits that have ruined her marriage and her journalism career. When Alex found Amy Stevenson, who was just someone from a nearby town, until the day that Amy was found brutally attacked and is now in a coma for the last 15 years. Amy is now forgotten to the world outside. She remains locked in her body paralyzed and she relives her past. Soon Alex is going to the hospital every day and spends hours trying to find out how you can solve a crime when the only witness lived, but can not tell what happened. As you read you will find out just what make Alex so set on the crime and will be surprised. The charters are complex. This was a gripping story.

I gave it 5 stars.

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**charles bennett says**

**Outstanding, comforting, encouraging and uplifting**

After 55 years of marriage I find myself a new widow - In the 2.5 months since his death I have read about a dozen books about being widowed. None compared to this book. It was flawless in its form, composition and editing. Her words were comforting and understanding. Her gentleness made me feel that with the grace of God, I can get through this.

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**Deb Haggerty says**

**Deb's Dozen: Keep breathing and learn how you can help other widows breathe too.**

Susan VandePol has written a gem of a book in *Life After Breath*. In its pages, she has bared her soul to help you who now follow her path. You women who loved, and still love, husbands who have died—you whom the world now calls widow. Susan writes from her heart and her great love for her Lord and Savior. She endeavors to give hope to you who now feel at your most hopeless. She provides sustenance to you who may have forgotten to eat in your grief.

Susan talks to the inner depths of you who are swallowed up in grief at your losses. She tells you with certainty that you are not alone—He has promised never to leave you or forsake you. He has experienced great loss and great grief. He will bear your burdens and lift them up if you will but let Him do so. We all should remember those verses from the 23rd Psalm, "... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me ..."

Susan writes, "As a widow, you have been called for a great and unique purpose. Because of what you have suffered, you know that His grace is sufficient and His power is perfected and strong in you weakness and limitations. The power of Christ rests on you, dwells in you, and steadies you. He is your hope, and He will not disappoint you." You do not grieve without hope.

Through deft use of word definitions and Scripture, Susan leads you through the grieving process—from the first days when you felt you could not breathe—to the days when sorrow has loosed its hold on you and you can again breathe deeply. She has walked the path and has come out stronger on the other side. Through story and personal example, she will teach you that you too can do the same.

I am not a widow—and I can't bear the thought of the day when I might become one. But Susan's book spoke to me anyway. You see, I lost my mom a few years ago and there was the tearing and grief in my spirit about which Susan writes so eloquently. My mom lived with us for the last few years of her life and we grew ever so close. In some ways, we'd traded places—I now cared for her as she once cared for me. I had regrets, but Susan taught me "if you are carrying the burden of regret, the cure comes with its abandonment." And also I was to "honor the one you have lost in godly grief, not in regret, because godly sorrow leads to repentance and produces life." I realize that I had never truly given Mother to God—she was truly His all along, but I didn't want to give her back. And truly, I can now see that she is in a much better place, whole and healthy and happy beyond measure. And I can rejoice in her happiness and truly find joy in remembering who she was and all she gave to me.

*Life after Breath* is indeed just that—a way to come through the darkness into the light and breathe again. If you are a widow, Susan's book will be a God-send to help you navigate the dark waters of your grief and arrive safely at the shore. If you are grieving for any reason, Susan's book, though written specifically for widows, will help you understand and heal from the wounds life has given you. I recommend this book highly—five stars.

When I spoke with Susan earlier this year I asked her why she wrote the book—why this topic. She said that the topic chose her. She thought she'd be writing about a teaching God had given her years ago about women and the art of speaking wickedness to ourselves, not others. This had been her favorite topic to teach. She didn't want to do this topic. She didn't want to self-publish. However, God had other plans—she feels it's quite the miracle how it happened.

She says she's learned so much about herself in the process. She's learned she had something to say that could help hurting widows. She learned that she, as a widow, had a calling to help other widows discover their callings. She learned she could come alongside those in pain from losing their husbands and help them work through their feelings. In fact, she's having her first retreat for widows this fall.

She comes from a mixed family: her dad was a Russian Jew and her mom an Irish Catholic. Her family was quite dysfunctional. Her mom was an alcoholic and her one brother has "no need for God, but he will." Susan was saved at a little Christian coffee house called "Jonah's Place" in the '70s revival in California. Her parents divorced. She married Bob Ortega in 1981. One month after her daughter, Jennifer, was born, her mother committed suicide on Halloween. The rest of her story is in *Life After Breath*.

Susan loves sports, reading, horses, bike rides with her husband, gardening, birds, fireflies, and creative house spending. She's a social introvert although you wouldn't know it to talk to her. Her favorite books of all time are C.S. Lewis' *Space Trilogy*, *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanauken, and all the Dick Francis mysteries. My kind of gal!

Her formal bio states that Susan VandePol is known for the Families of the Fallen protocol for fire departments and its partner protocol, *Life After Breath*, for churches. "The protocol is now being used across the country and endorsed by experts in the fields of grief, crisis, trauma, suicide prevention, CIR, PTSD, and CISM. Susan is certified in grief, crisis, and trauma counseling; grief coaching; master life coaching; individual crisis intervention; victim response; and basic and family mediation." She is a frequent speaker at

women's retreats and conferences as well as various firefighter and church events. She homeschooled Jennifer, Samuel, and Benjamin and now lives in Michigan with her second husband, of whom she says she "shamelessly manipulated into falling in love with her." To learn more about Susan and the Life After Breath protocol, go to [www.mattersoflifeandbreath.com](http://www.mattersoflifeandbreath.com) or [www.familiesofthefallen.com](http://www.familiesofthefallen.com). You can follow her on Facebook or e-mail her at [lifeafterbreath@hotmail.com](mailto:lifeafterbreath@hotmail.com).

Morgan James Publishing gave me a copy of *Life After Breath* in exchange for my candid review.

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### **Katherine Jones says**

To be honest, I really had no business reading this book. I felt an impostor and couldn't help but think I didn't belong there. Because I am not a widow, and therefore I could not relate in the way this luminous expression of grief deserves.

And yet — *Life After Breath* is so powerful, so moving in its insight that I felt I must read it in order that I might now share it with you—however much that privilege is not mine by rights.

What I offer here, then, is an outsider's perspective, though I do believe that if I were to find myself a widow (a thought that nearly steals my breath), this book — Susan VandePol's story — would provide the balm of perspective.

From its opening lines, I learned that the author understands the inestimable power of story, and thus she captured my attention from the first. Intimate. Deeply personal. Wise. Compassionate. I could imagine each topical chapter read daily, piecemeal, as a devotional of sorts. I could also imagine the book swallowed whole in one, searing gulp.

In these pages, Susan VandePol offers hope, and encouragement (by which I mean she inspires one to take hold of courage), and something I'd never before considered as attached to widowhood: purpose. She writes,

"You will see ... that you are meant to be one of [God's] greatest allies in these times of faint hearts and tribulation. As a widow, you have been called for a great and unique purpose."

Called for a purpose — really? What a gift, for one suffering an unspeakable loss — to be shown that the pain of that terrible severing might not be for naught.

Maya Angelou famously said, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." But I see a corollary here: There is also great agony for those waiting to for someone else's story to be told.

The beauty of this book is that one widow did not allow her story to remain untold — so that it might lessen not only her agony, but another's as well.

Thanks to Veritas Communications for providing me a free copy to review. All opinions are mine.

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### **Susan Walker says**

True story of a woman's relationship with God after her husband dies. This story is very emotional and may have the reader in tears at times.

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### **Gina says**

As a Christian widow, I was prepared to soak this book up. It left me a little cold, though. Everyone has a journey through grief, a very individual one, and I guess I'm still looking for the book that will speak to me and my experience. I appreciated all the scriptural references, but I wanted a little more recognition of the earthy, grinding day to day misery of being a caregiver and then being left alone.

Finally, this is certainly ungracious, but why are the women who write about their experiences as widows usually happily remarried, glamorous, and surrounded by loving family and friends? That is not the case for the majority of widows I have met during my ordeal. They are often left financially ruined, abandoned by family and friends, and physically altered by their experience. I think these women need a voice as well, but they don't have the connections that these writers do.

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### **Lisa DeWaard says**

I absolutely LOVED this book. The author has an absolutely beautiful writing style as she carries you through the horrible struggle of losing a husband and father and how to come out whole on the other side of such a tragedy. It is incredibly sad and yet encouraging and uplifting at the same time. She's been there. She knows the incredible challenges and what it does to the partner and family that are left behind. I am fortunate not to have lost a husband or a father yet, but this book helped me deal with the recent loss of my grandmother and I plan to keep it around to re-read if I need it in the future. You don't necessarily have to be a spiritual person to appreciate the book, but the author does rely heavily on God. It was sad and wonderful at the same time. I found it very inspirational and comforting. I'd highly recommend it to everyone.

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