

My Sorrow Became a Joyful Dance

Erin Chapman will keep cherishing two things forever with her. Her last name not changed even after her marriage and her mom's wedding ring with Ruth 1:16 written.

Naomi's life in the Book of Ruth was miserable and hopeless as she had lost her husband and all children. Erin has gone through a similar loss.

Erin was a daughter of Robert and Alexa Ruth Chapman. She has two brothers, Timothy and Ross. The whole family went to Africa to do Bible translation ministries.

Timothy and Ross died out of Malaria. Her parents were killed by commercial airplane crash while they were traveling for the ministries.

Thankfully God sent Kevin Shideler to restore Erin's life. He was one of her best friends; they attended the same school in Cameroon.

They fell in love with each other and got married. They gave a birth to a lovely daughter looking just like them. She was named Alexa Ruth Shideler, after Erin's mom.

The Chapmans served as a missionary pilot and teacher for Bible translation ministries. They became the director of the whole Africa area and travelled over many places encouraging people working in Bible translation.

When the New Testament was translated in the Oku language, people thanked the Chapmans for their contributions. God is the Faithful Restorer.



Let's read the Bible

Judge 16:15-31
Judge 19:21-30
Ruth 1:11-18

We consider together

There are many children in the world who have lost their parents out of diseases, wars and accidents. Let us pray that God will restore their lives, too!



Erin Chapman married Kevin Shideler, but decided not to use her husband's last name. Instead, she kept her maiden name, Chapman. In this was a surprising, heart-warming secret, a secret of God. Now, let me tell you their story.

Erin's mother and father were both missionaries. When she was little, Erin lived in Cameroon with her parents and two brothers. The year she turned nine, her family had their sabbatical year, and returned to their hometown of Hamilton, Ontario. Only six days after their return, Erin's older brother, Timothy, and little brother, Ross, passed away because of cerebral malaria. It was hard enough for Erin to lose her younger brother and her older brother, but her mother Ruth was also diagnosed with hepatitis and had to stay in the hospital the same night her brothers died. After their year of rest, Erin's mother Ruth, and father, Bob, gathered their courage and went back to Cameroon, their mission field. This was because there were still many people that had not heard the good news of Jesus Christ, whom they wished to tell the gospel to.

Bob was a pilot, and Ruth served as a teacher to all the missionaries' children in Cameroon. They would go on to serve as area directors in the southern region of the African Sahara. Sadly, Erin soon faced another great crisis; her mother Ruth and father Bob passed away in a plane crash. Erin was filled with so much sadness, and had no strength. She had lost all her family members, and was left by herself, all alone.

Thankfully, God did not actually leave Erin alone. He had sent Kevin to be with Erin. Kevin was one of Erin's closest school friends when they had lived in Cameroon. Three years after the death of her parents, Erin married Kevin and was able to become a happy family together. God gave a beautiful daughter to Kevin and Erin, and they named her Alexa Ruth Shideler, named after Erin's mother, Ruth. Through her lovely baby daughter and newly-formed family, God comforted and healed Erin's heart from the losses of her brothers as well as from the death of her mom and dad.

One of the keepsakes that Erin had saved was her father's wedding ring. The Scripture message, "Wherever you go, I will go. (Ruth 1:16, NKJV)" was written on the inside of the ring. Like this, Ruth and Bob always served the Lord together. God was always with Ruth and Bob, and through them, He restored the hearts of many. A man by the name of K. E. Gwani had written the following words in memory of Bob and Ruth.

"Bob Chapman remains an everlasting pillar to the development of the languages of Cameroon. In the December of 1995, Bob and Ruth came through the dusty and bumpy roads to visit the Oku Language Society, a branch of Oku Bible translations and literacy. The Oku Language ministry has since continued to develop with a newfound strength, and the seeds that Ruth and Bob have scattered have bore great fruit."

The local Cameroon Bible translation organization, CABTAL, built their base building in 2007, and in order to commemorate Bob and Ruth, they changed the name to Chapman. Thankfully, the Oku translation of the New Testament was completed in 2013.

This was not all. The Hamilton church in Canada that had sent Bob and Ruth as their missionaries named their sanctuary after them, and Erin had her wedding right at that very sanctuary. Sorrow and troubles came often in Erin's life. But God, through Erin's family, gave the Word of God to the people of Cameroon, and made the fruit of the gospel fruitful and full of harvest. God also comforted Erin's heart. He gave Erin a joyous family that would let her dance a happy dance, not a dance of sorrow. God is the One who comforts and heals, and He is a good God who lets us have a fruitful harvest.

Children of God, let us love our good God even better, and not only receive His love, but also tell our neighbors and our friends about His love. Let us also pray for the precious missionaries and their families who tell people in faraway countries about the gospel, and let us bless them as we pray.

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