

On August 7, 2009 I committed my life to Zack and said the words, in sickness and in health till death do us part. I said those words yet didn't think I would live through them until we were old and gray with grandbabies and decades of marriage behind us.

On December 31 my world was rocked, as I woke up to my new reality, my husband had been killed and I was now a young widow and single mother to two my baby girls.

You don't think about death at 29, in many ways, you should never want to, yet there I was thrust into the worst nightmare that I could never wake up from.

I realize very quickly that I had two choices to make. I could spend the rest of my life wishing for what wouldn't be, denying my new reality and living in a very dark place, or I could try to accept this new life, heal as best I could, believe that my life is not over and that God is not finished with me yet. I had to understand that Zack's death would not define me, yet how I respond to his death will.

I have two little girls at home watching my every move, looking to me to set the tone in how we'll grieve the loss of our main man but also how we will celebrate the time we had with him.

I have days that knock me on my face and leave me exhausted, I have nights where I go to sleep with swollen eyes and a heart that is saying why, why God. But you don't see that.

You see me speaking at my husband's funeral on live television

You see me doing what you do, preschool drop off, Target runs for laundry detergent and fast food pick up. Everyone keeps saying you're so strong and brave, I don't know how you're standing right now or even functioning.

Can I just say if this is brave I don't want to be brave. This is hard. It's painful, horrific and at times paralyzing, but I have hope, I trust there is hope beyond the hurt, I believe that joy comes in the morning, I believe in redemption. My story is not over and God is not finished with me yet. There is a strength I have found that I didn't think I was capable of, yet it is not my strength.

I have heard countless stories of courage and strength that push me through that days that feel unbearable. It's the mother delivering her still born baby and going home to take care of her other children, it's the father who works 40 hours a week, so he can maintain health insurance for his son who is receiving chemo therapy at the hospital. It's the parents who work multiple jobs to put food on the table for their kids. That is courage and endurance and strength. I'm just like you.