

When LIFE turns upside-down

A late-night phone call startled their peaceful sleep and delivered the news that would alter their lives forever – their son had murdered his wife's ex-husband! In her book, *A New Kind of Normal*, **Carol Kent** tells how the unexpected completely upended her world and how God has brought her through the unspeakable tragedy to offer hope to others whose dreams are shattered. The following is an excerpt from the book ...

THIS MOMENT TURNED OUT TO BE THE

pivotal one between our "old normal" and the life that would never be the same again.

Jason had been arrested for the murder of his wife's first husband, Douglas Miller Jr. I was immediately overcome by nausea. Disbelief. Sobbing. Heart palpitations. Sick waves of reality mixed with despair. A nightmare of gigantic proportion. Impossible facts—that Jason shot the gun, four bullets in the back of the victim. A stray bullet hit a van with children inside. No one was hurt, but the possibility was devastating. Not our boy! "No-o-o-o-o! Please, God, let this be a horrible dream!" I felt as if I'd been kicked in the gut by a horse. I could not walk. Doubled over on all fours, I crawled to the bathroom to vomit.

The events that followed were surreal. Jason's mug shot on the front page of the *Orlando Sentinel*. Attorneys. The prosecutor. Necessary legal procedures. Then deep waves of sadness for the father, stepmother and sister of the deceased. While we prepared for a trial for first-degree murder, their family was planning a funeral. Our thoughts were a jumbled mess.

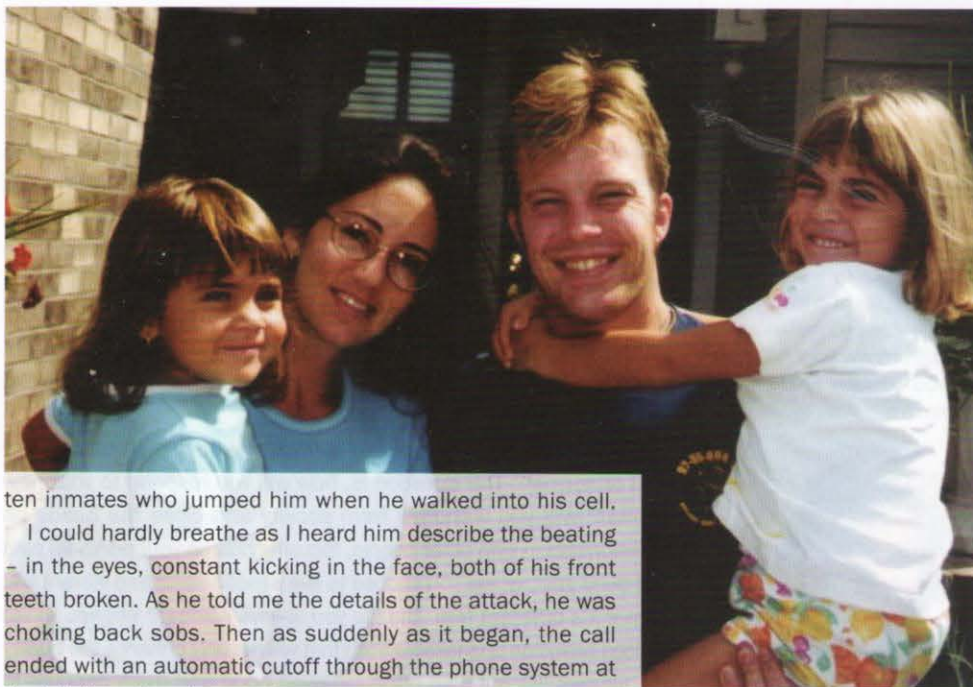
WANTING TO DIE

Gene [Carol's husband] and I stumbled through the next forty-eight hours in much the same way other people live one second at a time when their lives fall apart without warning. I literally gasped for air as I thought of my son in a maximum-security jail surrounded by rapists and thugs. The thought was more than my heart could bear. In between my sobs, I tried to help Gene make a long list of people who needed to be contacted.

Almost ritualistically, I went through the house, closing the blinds. I didn't want reporters at my door. I didn't want sunshine falling on my tears. I wanted to curl up and die. Breathing came with difficulty. Moaning cries choked words. I wondered if anyone had ever actually died of a broken heart.

Gene left for Florida to move our daughter-in-law and the girls from Panama City, where Jason had been in dive school with the navy, to Orlando, where he was now incarcerated. Soon after, a call came from Jason. I accepted the charges for the telephone call from the 33rd Street jail and listened while my son told me he had just been beaten by





ten inmates who jumped him when he walked into his cell.

I could hardly breathe as I heard him describe the beating – in the eyes, constant kicking in the face, both of his front teeth broken. As he told me the details of the attack, he was choking back sobs. Then as suddenly as it began, the call ended with an automatic cutoff through the phone system at the jail. I later found out the beating happened while corrections officers looked on, apparently enjoying the entertainment.

I was alone in the house when the call ended. I raised my hands toward heaven and could identify with Jesus as He said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34).

I flashed back to hearing a pastor say that those words, uttered by Christ on the cross, really meant, “My God, my God, why are you so far from the words of my guttural groaning?” I now understood what Jesus meant. *Guttural groaning* was the only way to describe the sound coming out of me. I wanted to die. Quit. Leave the agony behind and skip the rest of life.

And then the “mama” part of me kicked in. I realized our son needed his parents more than he had ever needed us. The next day, I left for Florida to see Jason. As he rounded the corner and faced me behind a Plexiglas window in the visitation area, he was in wrist and ankle shackles, connected by chains to each limb, and he was fresh from the beating that could have taken his life. As our eyes met, I noticed the jagged front teeth of my broken and bruised son.

Through fresh tears of my own, the words tumbled out.

“Jason Paul Kent, nothing you could ever do would stop my unconditional love for you, Son.” That meeting was mostly about tears. Being there for each other. Knowing we couldn’t fix what had already happened. Realizing that nothing about the future would be normal. The fifteen-minute visit ended far too soon. I walked to the parking lot and sat in my car for a long time, weeping, unable to see enough through the torrent of tears to drive away. A piece of my heart stayed at the jail – a part I felt was vital for my heart to continue beating at all.

Nothing about this emerging journey was familiar, comfortable, or desired. It was like a trip to another country – to a foreign land





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Carol Kent's life changed forever when her son shot and killed his wife's ex-husband. Carol's candid retelling of her emotional and spiritual agony will touch your heart. The principles she learned during such unspeakable circumstances will bolster your faith, renew your hope, and challenge you to new levels of personal commitment.

Award-winning Christian comedienne, Anita Renfro, recently posted her song Total Momsense on both YouTube and Yahoo and has had a total of twelve million hits...and still counting! Her messages will resonate with you, engage your heart, and supply truth in one vibrant, hilarious package.



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where our family didn't belong. I wanted to return to my old normal. But there was no going back.

GOD'S POWER IN YOUR NEW KIND OF NORMAL

At some point, most of us will encounter a challenging situation that permanently alters the rest of our lives. For you, it probably won't be having a child arrested for murder, but it might be a knock at the door, a middle-of-the-night phone call, or a diagnosis from the doctor that changes the future as you envisioned it. It could be that your married child gets a divorce and you will no longer have opportunities to spend time with your grandchildren because they will have moved away with the other spouse. It may be that all of your friends are having babies and you've been told you will never be able to carry a child.

What you once thought of as "normal" will be adjusted to a "new kind of normal." The question is, *how will you respond to your new normal?* Will you withdraw from society and close the blinds on communication with other people, focusing only on your personal pain and deep grief, or will you choose to live a meaningful and vibrant life, even if it's different from the life you always wanted? Will you make choices based on unshakable truth that will not only enhance the quality of your own life but also bring renewed hope and fresh courage to people in your sphere of influence? **T**

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A New Kind of Normal

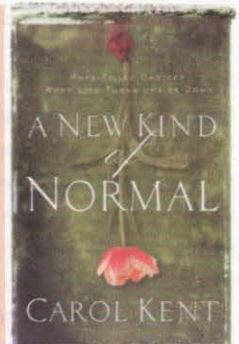
What do you do when life takes a sharp turn to the left? What if you can't get it 'back on track'? Carol Kent knows better than anyone that sometimes you cannot force life to meet your expectations. Instead, you must adjust to a new kind of normal.

With gripping honesty, Carol weaves together her own dramatic story with the stories of others who have learned to live the lives they were given, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. The result is a compelling treatise on hope and survival, as Carol shows again and again that it is possible to persevere against despair, to hold on to hope, and to trust God's faithfulness in an upside-down world.

Note: Carol Kent is one of the keynote speakers at this year's Beauty For Ashes women's conference, where she will share the principles she learned from her horrible family tragedy.

GIVEAWAY!

We're giving away ten copies of *A New Kind of Normal* by Carol Kent with the compliments of Today and Struik Christian Books. Please send your details to Today/New Normal giveaway, PO Box 100, Century City, 7446 or fax 021 555 1508 or e-mail info@todaypublication.com with Today/New Normal giveaway in the subject line. Closing date: 26 March 2008



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