



Season 11: Episode 11 | Parkinson's Changed Everything: A Conversation with Lorna Dueck

Hello and welcome to Scripture Untangled, a podcast by the Canadian Bible Society. My name is Joanna la Fleur. I'm a friend of the Canadian Bible Society and I'm going to be your guide for today's episode.

Well, today I have the opportunity to bring you a conversation I had with Lorna Dueck, one of the regular voices here on Scripture Untangled. And today's episode is tender and a special one. Of course, normally Lorna is the one asking the questions, but this time we've turned the tables.

And Lorna Dueck, if you don't know, is a journalist and broadcaster, but for many she's someone we've watched over the years as she has helped others share their stories of faith, hope, and perseverance. Six months ago, Lorna's husband Vern passed away after a long journey with Parkinson's disease. And in this conversation, Lorna opens up her heart about walking through grief, what she and Vern learned about God's presence in suffering, and how Scripture and worship carried them both through the hardest days.

She also is reflecting on what life looks like now, this loss, joy, and the surprising ways God continues to meet her. It's an honest and faith-filled conversation about love, loss, and the God who promises never to leave us. Here's my conversation with Lorna Dueck.

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Joanna la Fleur: Lorna, welcome to Scripture Untangled. We've turned the mic around.

Lorna Dueck: It's a little bit different for me.

Joanna la Fleur: And it's because we have kind of a special conversation to have today. And you and I, in some ways, we do share a bit of a similar story from a different position in the family, but we've both walked a journey of Parkinson's.

It was with me with my dad, who passed away three years ago this month, but you with your dear husband, and you've had to say goodbye to him after a long battle, a long journey. And we wanted to talk to you today. We felt like you felt that it was something you were able to speak about now, and we wanted to talk to you about his life and your life together.

So, tell us a little bit about, as we dive in, about your marriage, those years, particularly walking through, you know, you found out this diagnosis of Parkinson's, and what stands out to you from that part of the story?

Lorna Dueck: Oh, thanks, Joanna.

Vern was 57 when he was diagnosed. We had been, not childhood, but we got married, you know, at 19 and 20, and he was 57 when he was diagnosed.

He was an active man. He was at the height of his career. We both were, actually, we'd raised two children, and we were in that free and independent season when you think, I've got the world by the tail.

I can take some time to earn. I can do the things I want to do. And, you know, this nagging thing of health started to come into our picture.

Joanna la Fleur: And was, you know, was he someone, I know some men, the story is they don't want to go to the doctor. You know, so was he saying, I think I need to,

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there's something here I need to look into, or maybe was that you who was saying there's something here?

Lorna Dueck: That was me. That was me.

Like, I guess that was, isn't that a gift that marriage has, a good nag in it. And, but he had been a very active person. He ran five to 10 kilometers a day.

That was a hobby. Not maybe every day, but that was, if he was at the happy spot on his day, he would go for a run and just be soaking wet with sweat when he came back. And he felt very good where he was at in his career.

He was a financial planner, helping people. But something started to happen in his running, and he couldn't get his times to improve because he loved to run in the Toronto Marathon weekend. And he would run the half marathon, which is 21 kilometers.

And he was like a machine on every year, getting his time to go down a little bit more. And here he had trained more than ever, but his time wasn't dropping. And so, that was his first flag that, gee, something is wrong.

And his friends in his running club had been bugging him that his feet were shuffling and, his energy levels were just down. So, after a little bit of pushing, he went off to see our family doctor, because I thought this must be a heart blockage because you're, you know, and it would start to get worse. He fell asleep at his desk at work and that alarmed him.

Anyway, we got in to see the family doctor who just diagnosed him. We'd done a number of tests for heart disease. We'd done a whole bunch of stuff, but after everything came back that it wasn't his heart, she did that test, which is a good doctor will do.

And it's just a test where she listens to your joints. She listens to how there's a certain clicking that can come that an experienced doctor hears, because there's no, you

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know, blood tests for Parkinson's disease. And even though 110,000 Canadians live with Parkinson's disease, you really are on your own to be alert to your symptoms.

You can't go off and get a blood test that would be so definitive. And she just gently told us, Vern, you've got Parkinson's, not, I think you've got Parkinson's, Vern, you've got Parkinson's disease. And discovering that, and that it's a disease that can't be fixed was devastating, just devastating at age 57.

Joanna la Fleur: Did it feel like, I mean, what's the analogy? Did it feel like when you say the word devastating, was it the bottom fell out from under you or the world was spinning or it went dark? What was that? Those early moments?

Lorna Dueck: Yeah, no, the world does go dark. Like you just feel like, how can this happen? How can, you know, of course you go to Google, and you just realize, oh my goodness, we're joining a community in Canada. And I really can't say enough about the Parkinson's community.

We'll talk about that later, but we, we also felt determined to keep living. We felt we are strong enough that we can figure out a workaround.

Joanna la Fleur: And do you mean by that as in like, yeah, like we will find a hack around this thing or him being a fitness guy, it's like, what's the fitness? What's the exercise? What's the diet? And did you, because maybe you had never really been connected to it before this disease Parkinson's, you began a deep dive?

Lorna Dueck: And so, for him, his deep dive, it was activity and plugging in. And mine was information, you know, so Google everything you can find and put together all the experts you can find.

And we did that. And we were fortunate to get onto a physiotherapist who had a specialist in Parkinson's disease. And I would just really encourage that you don't be passive about the physicality of the disease because Parkinson's can really be helped, never cured, but helped through exercise and activity.

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And yeah, he had no tremor. Vern didn't have the shaky, shaky, shaky, which some people get, which is a very difficult part of Parkinson's. So, he had a very still Parkinson's and he did have a shuffle in his feet. And he had a loss of sense of smell. If you have, get a loss of sense of smell, that's a really important medical flag, but he had that complete loss of his smell. He had small handwriting, he had failing energy, he had poor sleeping.

And so, we started to keep a health notebook of all of these things, writing everything down. And once that diagnosis was in, he set about to plan to sell his business because he just knew, you know, he was always a planner anyway, and he was realistic that this is not a disease that can be healed. And yeah, we used to tease that when the pessimist and the optimist get married, it's a good combination.

So, and I was so optimistic that we can work our way through this, but reality anchored him, Joanna, reality.

Joanna la Fleur: Well, and again, who was God to you both in that time? I'm sure if he was here, he might say a different answer, but for you, or for what you can say of him, you know, in those earlier days, was there a Scripture, an image, was there something about, or like just a characteristic of God, in those earlier times? Or you're, as you say, you're the optimist, he's the pessimist, the realist. Yeah.

What was that kind of a conversation?

Lorna Dueck: Vern was a wonderful memorizer of Scripture. He wouldn't be comfortable if I described him as super spiritual because he was above all a practical person and a realist, but he loved to memorize Scripture and he had tons of it. Um, hundreds of verses actually, whole book of Ephesians, Philippians was a favorite for him.

Uh, and so, yeah, we really did anchor ourselves in this big arc that we knew God would be faithful. We had this sense that God would be faithful and, he was disappointed with God. I just got to say, I think he was disappointed with God, but we

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both, I think we're quite anchored in John chapter 15, that God prunes us, that there are things that He will take off so we can be fruitful.

And we very soon, put a lot of our lifestyle through John 15 in pruning. So, you know, selling his business, then it came evident that I needed to quit my job. I should quit my job.

And I remember we had these wonderful friends of ours gifted us, a week at their home in Mexico, over Christmas. And we sat on this beach, and the Lord spoke to us, and the Lord spoke to us that this would be a good time to quit our jobs. Like just quit your jobs.

And He would take care of us just like we were sitting in someone else's villa that we never paid a mortgage on. The Lord would take care of us. And, that was a, you know, we were young and I just turned 60, and God spoke to us through John chapter 15, where he talks about pruning your life.

And, I'm gonna, I brought this, for this interview. This is what I call the Parkinson's Bible. And after he died, I had to put it away.

I had to put it away because this was the Bible that took me through. Um, and to get ready for this, I went through and highlighted some of the Scriptures, but as the goodness of God, it happened to be a Bible, which not happened to be, I had looked for a Bible that had a margin. I wanted a diary Bible.

Joanna la Fleur: Room, you mean room to make notes on the side. So yeah. So if people are listening, yeah, the Bible you're showing us, it has these big wide margins where you've written notes and there's post-it notes everywhere and, and yeah, well studied.

Lorna Dueck: Well studied in that. And so, John chapter 15, where Jesus sets about to prune. And you can see in my margins, PD is our pruning disease.

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And, in December 22 is this, our pruning is the gardener in charge. 90% of the branches of a vine have to be pruned off for fruitfulness, 90%. And I wouldn't say Parkinson's was our pruning, but I would say that was a reality in our life.

And so then spiritually we needed to prune a lot of things off so we could do Parkinson's well. I have come to conclude that death now that Vern has been gone for six months in heaven, death is not pruning. Disease is not pruning, but what you do with your lifestyle and what God asks you to do with your lifestyle around those realities that is pruning.

Joanna la Fleur: Wow. I love how you say that because it's this idea with a disease like Parkinson's there's others like it. I mean, there's ways we, some people might experience loss in a sudden way.

It's a heart attack. It's a stroke. It's a cancer diagnosis.

And the person has gone in a couple of months, gone in a moment, an instant. But Parkinson's is a disease that unfolds over years. So, loss is a constant companion.

Maybe it's how I would say, it's a regular part of life. So how did you, what was your relief? Like I think of Jesus, the man of sorrows acquainted with grief. How did you find getting to know grief? Because it was not one thing.

It was every month a different loss. Yes, yes.

Lorna Dueck: And so as being, you know, independent people to realize we can't do this disease alone.

We cannot do this alone. So here was a blessing in the loss is we had to reach out for new community. And I love the disciplines in the Bible of the one another's, you know, these 13 ways to bear one another's burdens, you know, support each other, love each other, bear with one another.

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You can do that across, you can do those disciplines, even if you're not in a community of faith. And so, we needed to move into the community of Parkinson's to do those disciplines because we needed to find people who understood this disease and could give us a bit of a roadmap for it. So, we have a great, like all across Canada, there are Parkinson's support groups out of Parkinson's Canada.

You can get your support group through the national office at just Parkinson's Canada. And so, we plugged into the Burlington group where we lived, and we would go two or three times a week with our Parkinson's people. We went to a wonderful charity called Passion for Parkinson's, which put exercise, free exercise in our life.

So, we could go boxing, we could go hiking, we could go dancing with Parkinson's, we could go, like we had all of these classes we went to, to keep mobility up, to keep learning life hacks from other people. You know, there's maybe 20 of us in the group, but we really, and just the blessing of, I don't know, some boat, somebody brought a beautiful boat where we could wheel walkers right onto it and go for a cruise on Lake Ontario. And, you know, that was really important to do the discipline of love one another in the community of Parkinson's healing.

And small mercies along the way, you know, like understanding, wow, when I couldn't handle it alone anymore, and I needed healthcare workers to come to the house. So, you know, the government health program asks you to do assessments, and they figure it out. And I began to realize they are as interested in keeping me healthy, as they are in keeping him out of hospital.

Joanna la Fleur: Because if you're not well, then, I mean, even if it's not altruistic, if you're not well, he's going to cost them more. Yeah, so they want you both to be well.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah.

Yeah. So that, that was humbling for both of us to realize we need help. I want to give a shout out in the Nouwen's book, *Hope for Caregivers*.

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It's just a little, little daily devotional, because sometimes that's all you can handle is just a short reading for the day. But his caregiver series on the Nouwen site in Canada, and they mailed it to me, they just knew, you know, because we knew each other from interviewing circles, and they just mailed it to me out of love, dear Karen Pascal. And it was so good to be fed as a caregiver, as were all these activities, you know, like, where you can be together and learn how to keep mobility.

It's so important to try to keep the physicality and the socialization that you need in Parkinson's. Because your regular life community, they don't know what to do with you. Like, they love you.

Joanna la Fleur: That's what I was going to ask. Was your, because you're talking about a new community, and a lot of people think, I don't want any new friends. I, you know, in sort of normal life, people think, I can barely see the friends I already have.

Now I have to make new friends. Or maybe people even have a bias towards, towards like, the depth, I think some people might not have experienced depth in connection outside of a Christian relationship that if someone isn't sharing your faith, can you have a real connection with them?

Lorna Dueck: Like these concepts of love one another, where the Bible tells us to suffer together, to bear with one another, to encourage one another. You don't need to limit that to just a little church group, you'll exhaust them.

You can do that in your workplace, you can do that in your gym, you can do that. And you can certainly do that in your specialty communities. Anybody who's had cancer will have experienced that.

And we experienced that in the Parkinson's community. 27 of us wrote our stories together in this book, *Diagnosed with Parkinson's*, because our wonderful Parkinson's couple, Charles and Liz, they authored this book together. And the stories, we took encouragement in each other's stories, like, how are you doing this? How are you doing with failing energy? How are you doing with poor sleeping? How are you doing

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with figuring out your medications? How many is too much? How many is not enough? You know, which healthcare team is good? How do I get into this? And, you know, I saw the one another disciplines, like our physiotherapist was the one who said, you need to put your name on a waiting list at the Baycrest memory care.

And so, we had another whole wave come and hit us. Physically, she could see the muscles were changing in a way that wasn't typical of Parkinson's. They were Parkinson's with dementia.

Joanna la Fleur: Same for my dad.

Lorna Dueck: Is that right? Your dad got Parkinson's with dementia as well?

Joanna la Fleur: Yes.

Lorna Dueck: It's another whole layer.

Not all Parkinson's gets dementia. Right. But we were so grateful for Baycrest memory care, because the neuropsychologist there, Dr. Verhoef, kind of just read us the reality of what was going on.

And he was the one who told us, you need to put your name on a long-term care list because this is where this is going. And we're like, are you kidding? We are never going into long term care.

Joanna la Fleur: And say more.

Could you say when you felt that maybe for those listening, when you say I never want to do long term care, I mean, what was your thinking behind that thinking we can handle this at home or this seems like a horrible place or it won't get that bad or where it's too expensive? You know what? Why did you say, well, we don't, we couldn't imagine that at first.

Lorna Dueck: Well, we can handle this at home. We can handle this at home.

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He belongs at home. We belong together at home. He's too young for a long-term care home.

And I just want to say about the love one another that is discovered in our health care workers. Two stories. You know, so first of all, you max out the health care system of what you can do at home.

And you have to, you have to kind of surrender your privacy and say, okay, I'm going to have workers come in and help me, help me with the shower, help me with breakfast, help me with all kinds of things that I can physically, as a caregiver, no longer keep up with.

Joanna la Fleur: And suddenly there's strangers in your home.

Lorna Dueck: A different one every day.

Joanna la Fleur: And you're having to trust that they would love or care for someone the way you would expect, like the way you want to love and care for him, that they might be able to, and they'll never do it the way you do it.

It'll be different.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah. You have to realize they're there to make you healthier.

Me, the caregiver, healthier as well. And so, I would type it out. I, you know, thankfully I had a good staff team in my working years, and I would just take lessons from that, and I would make a little list.

Here's our goals for the day. I could leave them on the counter, and I would go for my walk. I would get my exercise in, I would do my things.

And those three hours would just, you know, they would be what they needed to be. But I remember one time I opened the door, you know, it's a different person every day. And I looked at this person and I go, oh my goodness, you are a Kenyan runner.

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And here into our home came a guy named Gita. And when Vern ran in those half marathons, we would always watch the full marathon winners, of course. And it was always this beautiful pack of Kenyan runners that would win.

Joanna la Fleur: Known for their distance running, the Kenyans. Yeah.

Lorna Dueck: And we could just tell by his physique that he must've been a runner.

And you know what a small mercy that was, big mercy actually, that a caregiver could walk in and he had fallen in love with Canada on his runs on Canada and he had runs in Canada and his entry in had been to apply to become a personal support worker. And all he did in those early visits was just visit with Vern and they would talk running. They would talk.

And it was such a gift from God that he would send a caregiver in who could relate to what Vern had lost as a runner and you know, you got to be open to the surprises. I mean, to be open to the gifts that God wants to give you when you open up your world. I just can't say this love one another discipline enough.

Isolating yourself in disease isn't Biblical. And I hope nobody's listening who says, yeah, well, that's nice for you to say, but how do I get un-isolated? And if the church can't do it for you, which it is not a healthcare team. It's not a physical healthcare team.

Joanna la Fleur: And not an expert at each illness and its unique needs.

Lorna Dueck: No, exactly. So, you need to call upon the services that our tax dollars have paid for.

And I mean, I have a cupboard full, and I still haven't emptied it out. I mean, I just had a lot of resources and books and places we plugged in. And I remember my sister saying to me, you know, it's amazing where you guys all go.

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We did dancing for Parkinson's and we had; you can tell I like that because I've mentioned it twice.

Joanna la Fleur: It was these practical, practical things. But as you're saying, you're holding up these books or you're describing even dance classes, but these gifts along the way of, it didn't have to be a runner that showed up at the door, but the runner was one of those mercies from God.

Lorna Dueck: And I think the other thing which is important is the practicalities of letting God prune you so that fruit can come out of this disease. Okay. So, and for me that meant I had to quit my job.

I just, and it meant Vern had to quit his job, of course, but I had to quit it too. And I remember being counseled, I think you're going way too early that you're quitting your job here. But you know, I don't regret one day, you know, when he was still well enough, we could do things.

We called them wandering Wednesdays and we just got in the car on Wednesdays, and I drove and we went, because he lost his license very early into the disease because of the dementia that was coming, but he could still enjoy that. And you know, God was gentle with us on the journey into dementia and it was eventually dementia, which shut down more and more of the physicality, but Vern never lost his memory, which was very interesting. He couldn't speak anymore.

In the end, he couldn't even feed himself anymore. He lost so much through a very sad decline with dementia related Parkinson's, but he never lost his memory. So, he always knew who I was.

Joanna la Fleur: Wow.

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The Bible Course: I just want to take a minute out of this conversation with Lorna to tell you about The Bible Course, because whether you're a seasoned Bible reader or you're just starting on the the Bible course offers a superb overview of the world's best-selling book. This eight-session course is going to help you grow in your understanding of the Bible using a unique storyline.

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Joanna la Fleur: And you know, this sounds like you're not using the word, but I'm hearing you even that the grace in the midst of the loss, that God's grace is showing up in these practical ways, you know, that he always knew who you were to the end.

What were some other ways that happened for you where, you know, I'm thinking maybe if you can, we've talked a lot about the Parkinson's community, but can you speak to the church community knowing that they couldn't be all the things you needed, but could you share a little bit about the way Christians, you had a small group, you spoke about at the funeral.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah.

And you know, they stayed with us. Yeah. And I remember our small group, you know, they saw it all and they started to catch on as dementia started to layer in on Parkinson's, they would start to catch on.

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This is just four of us couples that if we ask Vern certain questions, he can contribute. He can do that. And as his speech started to decline, they always asked him to open the evening in prayer because that did not decline.

He could close his eyes and something in the neuro system about being able to verbalize prayer that continued for quite a while, for quite a while. And, but eventually it did not. And so, this is like a six-year journey from diagnosis to death.

And in the last year they, so what happened to Vern was his, his legs stopped holding him completely. And somehow the body, the messages just weren't going through. And so, he was hospitalized to diagnose that.

And it was while we were in the hospital. So, this is a year and two months before he dies, he gets hospitalized and he could still speak then. And it was in the hospital that he said, we can't do this at home anymore, Lorna.

I need to go into long-term care. So, he took charge of that. And I thought, oh, the kids need to hear this.

I'm not sure I heard this correctly and you know, have the family conference. And he says, I'm telling you, I can't do this at home anymore. He didn't feel safe with all of my systems and he just, God just took over.

Joanna la Fleur: But what, even that I hear that as grace, there are many who would say partly because of dementia, how dare you do this to me, put me at home, but in part, because they're not thinking clearly enough to understand the situation, but that he was able to help you.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah. And you, so you see that John 15 passage of pruning, you know, 90% of the buds have to come off of a branch in order to be fruitful.

So, we actually had a very fruitful season in long-term care. I can talk about that a little bit, but I want to just finish that story, but our small group, they took our Bible study all the way right into the long-term care home. And we had a beautiful facility, a

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Schlegel facility, which had, you know, library and common rooms and places I could reserve.

So, we could have a little bit of, you know, I could have the Bible study group in, we did all our Bible studies at the long-term care home in the library there. And I could have meals of friends. We could have a private room where I could bring food in, or the parents could bring food in.

And yeah, so, and we learned a whole new community in, in long-term care. You know, it was as hard as you expect it to be because at 66, when he entered long-term care, you don't, you're young. Although Vern's neighbor was a 32-year-old young woman, there was a 42-year-old guy on the floor.

Like there are people in long-term care because their disease cannot be cared for at home. And then of course there are the very elderly and there are many people with dementia. You know, there are 48,000 people on the waiting list in just the province of Ontario for long-term care.

We have no idea the caregiving that is going on behind closed doors in our communities. And it's not all being done in a long-term care home but thank God for a long-term care home.

Joanna la Fleur: Well, and particularly part of that system is you go on the list, the waiting list, and when it comes, you may or may not be ready to go, but you, if you don't say yes, your spot would be given to somebody else.

And then you're at the bottom of the list again. So, it's sort of like, you have to trust when the spot comes, this is the time. You may not have as much choice as you hoped over.

You have some choice, but not a lot of choice over where, you know, it could be close to home. It could be far from, and I know Vern was not too far from you. He was able to be nearby.

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Lorna Dueck: Okay. I'm going to make everybody envious. He was an eight-minute walk from my house, from my house.

And I used to go, I used to pray over that building and say, if he ever needs long-term care, Lord, please let it be that. And I also, in prayer, when Vern was hospitalized and it was in a crisis, you know, 10 o'clock at night, pulled the car, my car to the parking lot there and just prayed. And I sensed the Lord giving me strategic advice for how I could navigate long-term care.

And yeah. And so, you know, we need to really contribute to that part of the, I was happy to become the family council chair at long-term care, and you learn different pieces and it's a community that really needs our support. And there are some churches who take ownership of long-term care because the government is looking to build long-term care homes in provinces, and churches can raise their hand.

The Christian reform, the Dutch community does a huge job of this. They can raise their hand and say, we will take that funding envelope and we will administer it. The Christian Missionary Alliance has a long-term care home.

The Catholics of course are awesome at this.

Joanna la Fleur: What I'm hearing underneath is that, I know you talk about the pruning of, of stepping away from your professional work, but yet you're describing how you entered long-term care in, you couldn't help but have your professional hat. What I mean is the way you got involved was with the skills and the gifts you had.

You're serving and caring for your own husband, but also you have, you're a natural leader. You understand the systems and the administration.

Lorna Dueck: I'm also a natural neighbor and because we lived so close and I would say the best long-term care home is the one closest to your house, closest to your house.

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That's the best long-term care home. And I could go, I was there at least five hours every day because I wanted to be, and we kept it going. Like we were married until he died holding my hand.

Like what a gift to be able to say goodbye that way. But I want to tell you saying goodbye is really hard. It's really hard.

I'm in a grief recovery group now with 12 other widows and we're just the oddest bunch, you know, but at the coping center in Cambridge, Ontario. But it's really important to, again, do love one another now in this new season of grieving. It's just, you just can't do this journey alone.

Joanna la Fleur: When I think of the journey you've been on and how that was thoughtfully displayed at the funeral, I think of your kids and what they said.

Lorna Dueck: It's still online. You can watch it.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah.

I think all the things where all these resources, we're going to link everything in the show notes if people want them, these books, you know, the funeral as well, but the music is something I don't want to pass by before we're done. Music and worship has, I often think of, you know, when people have trouble memorizing Scripture, it's much easier to memorize song. And it's something that can carry; it's the take home box.

I often think you may not remember what the sermon was, but the songs we can sing all week. And they carry us. Tell us about that piece as you bridged to eternity with your husband, you know, how was music, Christian music and hymns part of it? Yeah.

Lorna Dueck: Four Canadian troubadours that really held me through. Of course, Mike Jansen, who played at our funeral and his series, the Psalms, like putting the Psalms to music. Brian Doerksen, Steve Bell.

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So, so important. These songs that were so deep and meaningful. Uh, the work out of the collective at Crossroads, their songs, Royal Anthems.

And so in order for music to hit you, you have to be still, not like it can hit you anytime, but being still with the deep Psalms of the music that gets put to the Psalms with some of the, the way Steve and Brian and others have put their songs together. You have to be still. And I've had a practice for a long time of carving out at least an hour in the morning, early morning to be with Jesus.

And that was more necessary than ever through the entire journey of caregiving. And, yeah, you're right, Joanna, you have to be still. And, of course playing these songs all the time.

And I remember, you know, *The Blessing* came out. That was a huge song at that time. *Rattle*, by Elevation was, you know, huge encouragement to me.

Yeah. I just, you know, the Psalms tell us to, you know, lift our voice to the Lord. And I sometimes needed others to do that for me.

And so, I played a lot of music.

Joanna la Fleur: I asked because I found this, uh, are there, are there lines in songs that mean something different now? Or are there lines that you can have, you can, you almost can't quite get through because it brings emotion to your throat. Uh, I think about songs about heaven or songs that have a promise of, you know, when we're all there together or surrounding the throne of Christ or the, I say that because that's my own experience, but is there anything like that for you that there's a line that is a different level of meaning now?

Lorna Dueck: Yeah.

The *New Wine*, the song *New Wine*, you know, "in the pressing, in the question, He's making new wine." Yeah. Like to picture, like I've always, you know, fruitful is a bit of a

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passion for me, but to take fruit and crush it and then to age it, to age it, to bottle it up and put it away and age it.

Yeah. That, that was a real, you know, and let it bring something new.

Joanna la Fleur: We're pruning, crushing, waiting.

Uh, what is this something new? I mean, I think when you described, I believe, I didn't know this. You, you said you got married at about 19. Yes.

So, your entire life, your identity has always been wife to Vern. Yeah. Um, and you now have, that doesn't have to totally go away.

That is still true. But as a widow, uh, you're also single.

Lorna Dueck: Many people in the church are single.

And so, learning the community of how to be a follower of Christ as a single person, that's a big deal. That's a big deal. It's a, if you've had, like you said, so many years.

And so, learning how to do love one another as a single, where to press in, how to organize it for your life. Like, I'm very careful and thoughtful and trying to be prayerful with my scheduling, you know, that I push into this long list of love one another. And, and if it's not happening, I'll request it to happen.

I'll, and I want to engage in it myself. I want to do it for others, but I want to be able to be on the receiving end of it as well. So, yeah, I mean, I'm not alone in learning a new identity, a lot of, but we've got to get on it.

Don't be passive. Don't be passive about your life. Like, okay, now you're this status, figure it out.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah. Figure it out. Well, for those listening who, um, this might not be their, their current story.

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I think at some point we all will go through a journey like this with ourselves or someone we know, but, um, what would you say to those listening who are just the church, the community? Maybe there's someone in their circle of friends, in their wider family. Um, you've shared some encouragement, some reminders of those who are going through this directly, get a community. You need the one and others to do this with, but those who are beyond sort of in the extended community, um, what's your encouragement to them very practically? How can they help? Um, whether it's Parkinson's or something else, how can they help a person like Lorna and Vern?

Lorna Dueck: Well, I think, just asking, how is it going for you? How's it going for you? And then, um, to check in regularly.

And I can't tell you that as the crisis worsens, how much food helps. And it was interesting because our community was, you know, over a few different bodies. Cause when he got very sick, we had to switch to a smaller (church), we belong to the Christian Missionary Alliance.

We had a lovely 200-member church in Burlington. And then we had to switch to a smaller 30 member Alliance church because we couldn't manage, the distance and chairs and so on anyway. And it just blew me away how much practical food support.

And my daughter said to me, this is really unusual, mom, what you're getting. And she said, you got to realize people are busier than your age demographic is and stuff is more expensive. Families can't afford always to give another meal away and on and on.

And so my advice is it's actually super helpful to phone in and ask practically what you can do for somebody like the cancer meal train, all of those things. When the church puts those up, that really makes a difference.

And, the whole volunteering thing, uh, offering to drive, offering to, to lift, like, can you help me get Vernon to a car...

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Joanna la Fleur: Or things around the house? Even when you say lift, I think there were things you can't lift. Literally. I can't lift this. I need this couch moved.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah. And you know, we had to move furniture in the house as the disease progressed, we had to make all kinds of changes.

We had to even move houses. Yeah. All of that.

Like when people are sick, you need labor. You do need, you need to feel well enough for a while. One of our churches had a, I shouldn't say one of our churches.

We went to the same church for 30 years. Uh, they had a men's work committee, you know, that just like women call to make, sorry to put it into categories, but that's how it was. Women did the cooking, and men did the heavy lifting. That's a great idea to have a committee at church where like, who's got the truck. It shouldn't always be the same guy with a truck.

Joanna la Fleur: But if you're the guy with the truck, you don't want anyone to know you have the truck. Yeah.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah. And you know what? I wanted to just maybe close the other practical advice is I would encourage people to really think about Ecclesiastes chapter 12. Ecclesiastes chapter 12, it's a beautiful chapter, which tells us to remember the Creator in the days of our youth before, and then picture aging as it goes on.

Like what you can see here, this is, an analogy of aging where the author of Ecclesiastes writes down before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, that's like your eyes aren't working anymore. Like, you know, you need your glasses. So remember, like enjoy your spiritual life, enjoy the ... Ecclesiastes was a great, great book for Vernon and I in grief, that you need to take joy.

And we were glad we had taken joy in those seasons, because old age and death, Ecclesiastes 12 will tell you it's coming. Ecclesiastes 12, one to seven was certainly our

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journey with Parkinson's disease. And the beautiful reality that the words of the wise, the words of Scripture is how Ecclesiastes ends, are like goads.

They're collected sayings, like firmly embedded nails, like a goat is like, that stuck in me, like that goaded me on, like you pushed me on and that nail won't move. That's what Scripture can be like for you on the journey of, of disease.

Joanna la Fleur: Wow.

Well, I, there's so much to take from this conversation. There's, how do we, you talked about community, you talked about your hope, you talked about this, you allude to things like, oh, the hour in Scripture, or when you don't have time for that, here's this Henry Nouwen book with a little nugget. If all you have is five minutes and you're talking about the music, the Christian hymns and songs that carried you through, you talked about practical things Christians can do, whether organized, like creating long-term care facilities.

That's the power of a Christian community or simply bringing a meal. It almost sounds like you were in like a new, this new discovery, even in Scripture, it was like a treasure chest.

Lorna Dueck: Completely left broadcast journalism, everything left that all behind in those six years of just learning how to live with disease.

Joanna la Fleur: Yes. Yeah. And it's a reminder to everyone, you know, whether we're in it, we have been in the past or we, it will come for us in the future, uh, that God meets us in the most difficult, vulnerable times.

And grace might look like a Kenyan runner at your door, but that God, can care for us in every season.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah. And we need to give a great shout out to those caregivers, you know, the long-term care homes, the hospitals, the nurses.

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I have great compassion for the whole healthcare system. It needs our prayer. Yeah. And those workers need our cheer.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah. Difficult job, caring for those they don't even know, caring for those who aren't their own personal loved one, but that they would treat them like their loved one, talking about the one and others, as you've said, John 15.

Lorna, thank you, for the conversation, for being willing to have it. Um, this is still a fresh thing in your life. So, I appreciate the, finding you in the middle of it, in the middle of the pruning that continues and this new definition of who you are that you've walked into in the last few months of your life.

Lorna Dueck: Well, I remember how often I reached out to you, right? Because your dad had passed from Parkinson's.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorna Dueck: I thought, is this, what?

Joanna la Fleur: Well, and the other way I think of these little texts I would send you just every once in a while, as you came to my mind and I was praying for you, but I wasn't the wife in the journey, I was the daughter, but I know the journey.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah.

You even moved to be closer to your dad's long-term care home, didn't you?

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah. Well, a whole part of the story. Yeah.

Well, your kids too, your kids made some, some lifestyle decisions.

Lorna Dueck: Yeah. Our kids were amazing and family has a purpose, and be there, be there for your parent when they need you to be there.

Like you were Joanna, like mine were for us. Whoa. Huge.

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Joanna la Fleur: Yeah. Well, Lorna, thanks so much, uh, for the conversation and you know, how you've just reminded us again, how does Scripture, how does your faith anchor you in? It doesn't take away the grief, but that God meets us in it. Um, and I just, yeah, we do pray that this conversation would be of use to others who are listening.

Maybe somebody wants to pass this on to a friend or someone they know who's going through the same thing, that it might be an encouragement to others that what we have gone through, but I mean, what we go through in life, uh, would be so that we could also comfort others going through the same thing. So, thanks so much for your time, Lorna.

Lorna Dueck: You're most welcome.

Bye-bye.