UNTIL DEATH.... AND THEN WHAT?

Reflections on the new path ahead

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NEW FIRSTS

There is one word in the English language which I have come to hate; the word is "widow". I know that sounds ridiculous, but for me it has always conjured up images that are less than pleasant. Even all 176 references to this word in Scripture make her sound like a pathetic, old woman who is totally helpless, dependent on charity for survival, at risk of being robbed blind and lumped with the poor orphans. I remember the moment after Paul died when I had to acknowledge this word for the first time. I was checking in to a medical appointment and filling out all the required pages of information that seem to go on forever. I came to the line requiring marital status. There were my choices: single, married, divorced, widowed. How many scores of times had I circled "married" and almost did again out of habit until I realized that I would not be circling that word ever again in my life. I saw "widow" as the last of the choices, and I felt the lump in my throat. The word stared back at me, the last choice, the end of the line. It was like it was describing my life. Was I at the end of the line? Did I really have to circle the one word that seemed like the least desirable word in the list? The answer was yes! I felt hot all over, felt my heart beating harder through my shirt and tears began welling up in my eyes, and I wanted to throw the papers back at the registrar and run out of the

room. How many more times would I have to acknowledge this new reality before it would not feel like a slap in the face? I turned in the forms after collecting myself, and just when I felt more in control again, she asked me without looking up from her desk, "And is Paul still the best contact person?" I choked back more tears as I tried to get out my response. "I wish he was, but he died recently." I guess I shocked her with the tone of my voice, and when she finally looked up and saw the tears rolling down my face, she added quickly, "Oh, I am so sorry." She hesitated uncomfortably before asking, "Whose name would you like me to list instead?" At that moment, I didn't care if I gave her the dog's name; if it couldn't be Paul's, I really didn't care.