

Three kids; one husband; and, don't forget the dog. **Amberly Reynolds** enjoys living life with all of them, as she serves with her husband at Bethel Church in Hampton, Virginia. At church, she directs Beautiful Women, a ministry to women in and outside the church. At home, she homeschools two of the kids—the other one is at Regent University. At Starbucks, she enjoys a chai, while reading and talking to her husband. Along the way, the dog gets walked, dinner gets cooked, and she writes her blog at www.sweetsagelane.com.

In the Middle of the Ashes

Amberly Reynolds

I've done messy. Ministry is messy. Life is messy.

Ministry is best done out of brokenness. Folks don't relate to perfect and tidy. Their lives aren't picture perfect all the time.

Neither is mine.

Coming to the four year anniversary of finding out about our child's sexual abuse by a church leader and personal friend, we have known messy. Our lives were shattered into a million pieces, the pain often suffocating. Our family reeled and tossed like a tiny boat on a giant open sea. The doubts and questions rolled through my heart and mind. Our lives would never, ever be the same. There would forever be the before and after line in the sand.

With so many shattered dreams and hopes, I scrambled madly to gather up and guard all the pieces. My child was suffering. My whole family was suffering. My husband and I were desperately working to keep our little family together and afloat.

What do you do when all you know and believe is turned to ashes? Or, the broken pieces don't even resemble anything you thought you had? But, broken pieces are all you have left. My faith badly bruised, I couldn't feel or sense God anywhere.

Sitting in my counselor's office with my broken heart, I was in the darkest of places and certain God had left me. But, God used this servant to help me see something incredibly



important. She asked me where I might see God at work. I couldn't see Him for all the pain. She prompted me to look again. And I began to see the glimmer of something beautiful.

There, in the middle of all the pain, the broken pieces and dust, stood the Creator of the universe. He knew my pain. He wept with me. He saw my child and my family. He had been with my child, comforting him and strengthening him in the darkest of moments. He had been with me. His hand was visible in the ones who helped us carry our burdens - dearest of friends who grieved with us, walked through the legal journey with us, and the hard, ugly days of healing - Christ was in that. He had never left.

For reasons beyond our control, this private journey quickly turned public. Our church had to be told our story. This was a giant of Goliath proportions. The fear of rejection and accusation tormented our hearts. However, God's grace has taken our ashes and turned them into beauty. As our flock has watched our pain and healing, they have been strengthened and encouraged. Lives have been changed eternally.

Christianity doesn't make for non-messy living. But, in the ugly hard, God's grace and beauty is revealed. He gives beauty for ashes and turns our mourning into dancing. He reminds me He has seen and knows it all. He will make all things right in His good time. And He is already keeping His word!