



CONVERSATION: DAVID AND MARIE WORKS

Finding comfort after daughters' murders

David and Marie Works and their four daughters had just gotten into the family van after a Sunday morning service at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Dec. 9, 2007, when 24-year-old Matthew Murray approached with a semiautomatic rifle and began firing from 10 yards away. Stephanie, 18, died at the scene. Rachel, 16, died later that day at a hospital. David, shot twice, remained hospitalized for nine days but recovered. The other family members, Marie, Laurie (Stephanie's twin) and then-11-year-old Grace, weren't hurt.

Murray, armed with 1,400 rounds of AR-15 ammunition, then entered the church intent on killing dozens if not hundreds of people. But he died quickly in a hallway exchange of gunfire with volunteer church security officer Jeanne Assam.

Less than four weeks later, New Life Senior Pastor Brady Boyd arranged a reconciliation meeting for David and Marie with Murray's parents, Ronald and Loretta.

The Works spent eight years

attending Grand River Assembly of God in Granby, Colo., before relocating to New Life in 2006. David and Marie spoke with TPE News Editor John W. Kennedy in January when their book *Gone in a Heartbeat: Our Daughters Died . . . Our Faith Endures* was released.

tpe: How did God provide comfort in the midst of your feelings of helplessness?

MARIE: After realizing what was happening to us, I called out to God, asking for His help, however He could bring it. Shortly thereafter I sensed God coming underneath us and carrying us. Whatever happened, I knew what my daughters' eternal destiny was going to be. It's comforting to know that God just wasn't standing by. Four of us in the family are left.

tpe: Stephanie and Rachel had been on five short-term overseas missions trips between them. How do you deal with the lives of your young mission-

ary-minded daughters being cut short?

MARIE: They are still missionaries. Because of their deaths, people have come to Christ. When Laurie went to a closed Asian country, we knew the danger involved of living out the Christian life.

DAVID: I never thought of being mad at God; I never blamed Him for it. Laurie and Grace have struggled with why their sisters got killed and they didn't.

tpe: How are you able to return to the site every week where your girls died before your eyes?

DAVID: How could we not keep going where God is feeding us and providing all our support?

tpe: The church has done a great deal of practical things: helping you find a new home, helping you move, offering counseling.

DAVID: We still go to counseling once a week. The church got together a gang of 30 guys to move us out of Denver to Colorado Springs right after it



happened. From the beginning, church people brought food. At church every week people come up and tell us that they're praying for us.

tpe: How did you come to learn that the healing process involves looking outward rather than being introspective?

DAVID: My sister, Linnaea, visited me in the hospital and questioned why I kept the lights low all the time. After that I just began processing the grief by writing everything down on a legal pad. God explained that I needed to live in the moment, not looking backward, but more importantly not looking forward. The sense of His presence in the right now is so real, even when

things don't go right. God was there at the van when the bullets were flying.

I can't answer why we weren't all spared. But we weren't forsaken. God isn't obligated to answer every question. I can live without knowing.

tpe: Talk about the role of forgiveness in recovery.

DAVID: We could forgive Matthew because he was an abstraction. There was no trial; Matthew was dead. But forgiving his parents brought it back to the real world in a surrealistic set of circumstances. They are strong believers and good people. If the Murrays had been real skunks it would have been harder. But we realized we had to break that pattern of wanting to recriminate in

order to find peace. Unforgiveness is a dead-end street.

tpe: Why are what-if scenarios and feelings of bitterness and blame futile?

DAVID: I don't like getting up in the morning without my girls. But the love of God will not separate us. Even though they're on the other side, they're not that far away. We have to keep walking our path for their dreams to be fulfilled. Any bellyaching, crying, anger or lawsuit wouldn't bring the girls back.

tpe: How has this ordeal shaped your approach to daily life?

DAVID: Our circumstances definitely are not what we would choose. Nothing will make the loss better until we get to the other side. But when you've experienced the worst that life throws at you, everything else pales in comparison. Going through the trauma has made us realize how precious life is — not just physical life, but also spiritual life. God reaches out to us. Each moment is precious to Him. **MARIE:** I still have some healing to do, but I'm content with my walk with the Lord. **tpe**

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Visit tpe.ag.org to read an excerpt from *Gone in a Heartbeat: Our Daughters Died . . . Our Faith Endures* by David and Marie Works.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

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