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Reclaiming Joy
**New Book by Corpus Christi Author Ella Prichard Offers Advice and
Encouragement to Widows Seeking to Rebuild their Lives**

Corpus Christi resident Ella Wall Prichard was unprepared for widowhood when her husband Lev Prichard died. Muddling through, she learned that there is no one way to “do” widowhood—she could write her own script. Part memoir, part survival guide, her new book ***Reclaiming Joy: A Primer for Widows*** (1845 Books, an imprint of Baylor University Press, \$24.95 hardcover, September 15, 2018) offers practical advice and spiritual encouragement for women seeking the strength to rebuild their lives.

The book is receiving attention from a broad range of media, including KEDT-FM, the local NPR affiliate, which will air an interview with Prichard the week of September 3; the Baptist Standard, which recently featured an [interview](#) with Ella; and *Publishers Weekly*, the bible of the publishing industry, which included *Reclaiming Joy* in a recent [review](#) of forthcoming spiritual memoirs. Prichard will launch the book with a talk and booksigning on Friday, September 28, 3-5 p.m., at the Neyland Library, 1230 Carmel Parkway, sponsored by the Corpus Christi Libraries, La Retama Club, and Baylor University Press. Copies of the book will be available for purchase.

Prichard came to Corpus Christi in 1962, arriving in June for a summer internship at the *Caller-Times*; she met Lev shortly after, and married him in December. They were married for 46 years, until his death in 2009. Fear and anxiety consumed her as she confronted the enormity of the responsibilities left to her, including becoming CEO of the family business, Corpus Christi-based Prichard Oil Company. She found strength reading Scripture, especially Paul’s letter to the Philippians with its message of love, encouragement, and joy.

Prichard acknowledges that every widow’s situation is different, and encourages readers to set their own path. Yet some aspects of widowhood are universal, including changing family dynamics, financial concerns, and loneliness. Just as she learned from the experiences of other widows, Prichard hopes her account will inspire and comfort others, letting them know they are not alone on this journey.

Prichard shares hard-won wisdom such as:

- **Take time to mourn:** “If I had addressed my grief head-on in the beginning instead of numbing myself with busyness, I might have healed more quickly.”
- **Accept invitations:** “Many of the books and blogs I read advise new widows to avoid social occasions while they are still emotionally fragile. That is a terrible idea for most of us. Isolation is a breeding ground for depression. When we keep saying ‘no,’ people forget about us and move on.”

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- **Build community:** The sisterhood of widows has played a significant role in Prichard's journey. "We can fall apart in front of our widowed friends. They understand, and they help pull us out of the sinkholes." The support of online community via social media and her own blog not only offered moral support, but led to the writing of *Reclaiming Joy*.
- **Leave your comfort zone:** Prichard pushed herself far out of her comfort zone. "Not every new experience was one that I wanted to repeat. Not every new acquaintance became a friend. In some ways I was like a teenager. No one else could tell me what would work for me. I had to take risks."
- **Seek professional help:** Whether in financial, legal, or medical matters, widows will need help from trusted professionals. Prichard's physician recognized her need for emotional help and prescribed anti-anxiety meds that helped her over a rough patch.

"The only way I could think of to bring good from the sad circumstances of Lev's death was to live my life with the faith, courage, hope, and expectation that I professed to believe," Prichard writes. "I found that I could do that only by living life in community, with the love, support, and prayers of others."

Reclaiming Joy is available locally at Barnes & Noble, and can also be ordered online from Amazon or the Baylor University Press.

About the Author

Ella Wall Prichard is the president of Prichard Oil Company. While learning the business and settling the estate after her husband's death, she poured out her grief and anxiety on Twitter and Facebook, which were the seeds of her book, *Reclaiming Joy*.

Born in New Orleans and raised in Texarkana, Prichard attended Baylor University in Waco, and spent her married years in Corpus Christi, Texas. She now splits her time between Corpus Christi, Dallas, and her "happy place," Nantucket. A mother and grandmother, she is a frequent speaker on the subject of widowhood and has encouraged and supported widows around the country. She is involved in her community, church, and many other nonprofit organizations. Ella blogs at www.ellawallprichard.com, where other resources on widowhood can be found.

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