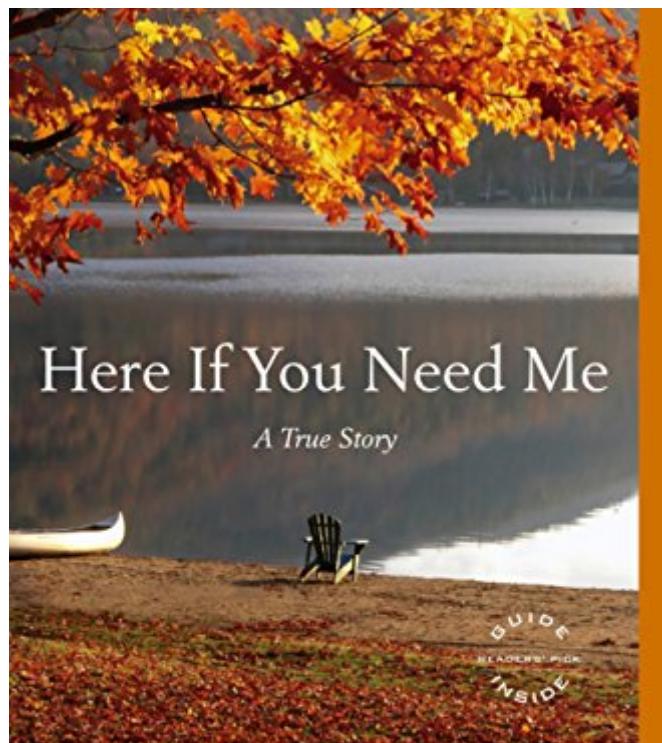


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Here If You Need Me: A True Story



Kate Braestrup

• N A T I O N A L B E S T S E L L E R •

"A superbly crafted memoir....The journey of a strong-minded, warmhearted woman through tragedy to grace." —Washington Post



Synopsis

Ten years ago, Kate Braestrup and her husband Drew were enjoying the life they shared together. They had four young children, and Drew, a Maine state trooper, would soon begin training to become a minister as well. Then early one morning Drew left for work and everything changed. On the very roads that he protected every day, an oncoming driver lost control, and Kate lost her husband. Stunned and grieving, Kate decided to continue her husband's dream and became a minister herself. And in that capacity she found a most unusual mission: serving as the minister on search and rescue missions in the Maine woods, giving comfort to people whose loved ones are missing, and to the wardens who sometimes have to deal with awful outcomes. Whether she is with the parents of a 6-year-old girl who had wandered into the woods, with wardens as they search for a snowmobile rider trapped under the ice, or assisting a man whose sister left an infant seat and a suicide note in her car by the side of the road, Braestrup provides solace, understanding, and spiritual guidance when it's needed most. *HERE IF YOU NEED ME* is the story of Kate Braestrup's remarkable journey from grief to faith to happiness. It is dramatic, funny, deeply moving, and simply unforgettable, an uplifting account about finding God through helping others, and the tale of the small miracles that occur every day when life and love are restored.

Book Information

File Size: 1413 KB

Print Length: 224 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company (August 1, 2007)

Publication Date: August 1, 2007

Language: English

ASIN: B000QRIGJE

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #297,053 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #69 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > New England #797 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Religious #826 in Books > Self-Help > Relationships > Love & Loss

Customer Reviews

As a mother of four and wife to Maine State trooper Drew Griffith, Kate Braestrup thought her life was in order as a wife, mother, and writer. Drew's plans though were to go to school to become a Unitarian minister. Suddenly though, Kate becomes a widow and then decides to pursue Drew's dream. She becomes a Unitarian minister and begins working with the Maine Game Warden department, mainly ministering to the families of those involved in search and rescue attempts - the hikers, the lost snowmobilers, the swimmers falling over a waterfall, the despondent young women, the lost children. However this book isn't, as I had first thought, simply full of anecdotes of Kate's involvement with search and rescue attempts. Oh no, it is much, much more than that. There, are plenty of interesting anecdotes that's for sure but it is a story of Kate's life as a single mother, as a spiritual woman, as a spiritual leader, and as a caring human being. It is a book full of the essays of a talented writer giving her take on life, death, and heaven, all in a gentle way where it is easy to imagine the skill in which she is able to minister to those in need. She does so without judging anyone be they a fundamentalist, atheist, agnostic, or of any other belief. There is the story of a young suicide victim whose brother she counsels and consoles as he is worried she will be unable to have a Christian burial because of the way she died, there is the story of the parents Kate spends the night consoling with after their daughter goes missing, answering the atheist mother who says, "It's so cool that the warden service has a chaplain to keep us from freaking out," by responding, "I'm not really here to keep you from freaking out. I'm here to be with you while you freak out.

Perhaps Unitarian Universalist chaplains don't pray for weather (a joke in the book, actually), but here's a prayer Chaplain Braestrup offered for law enforcement officers: " 'May you be granted capable and amusing comrades, observant witnesses, and gentle homecomings.' 'May you be granted respite from what you know of human evil, and refuge from what you must know of human pain.' 'May God defend the goodness in your hearts.' 'May God defend the sweetness in your souls.' "Kate Braestrup's *HERE IF YOU NEED ME* swoons, sighs, mourns, celebrates, and etches out new patterns of thought. In twenty beautifully written chapters that could be delivered as commencement speeches or sermons, tough-minded, tender-hearted Braestrup shines an examining spotlight into various corners of her life. She suddenly became a widowed mother of four. She studied for and was ordained to the U. U. ministry. She still is the chaplain to the Maine game wardens. Her vivid, visceral prose grapples with the physical realities of life (and death) on the one hand. On the other, it contemplates tenderly, lovingly, such spiritual subjects as whether an afterlife exists or how suicides should be treated by the church. Freely irreverent, and often funny and pithy,

Braestrup arranges glimpses of her various charges: her children, her game wardens, and the public she and the wardens serve with determination and full hearts. But the author excels best when she unabashedly shares her own individuality. For instance, unease (or even revulsion) vies with admiration in the reader as Braestrup tells of bucking the modern trend of leaving the newly dead to the ministrations of funeral homes.

HERE IF YOU NEED ME is a book that can be appreciated by many readers for a number of different reasons. Some may appreciate it as a religious memoir, others may relate to her being a single mother rebuilding her life after the tragic death of her husband. People thinking about a midlife switch in careers could find the book inspiring. New England enthusiasts, especially those who love Maine, will appreciate the book's setting. Those in public safety may believe that the author is telling their story, perhaps in a different setting with different situations, but still telling a story that only those in this line of work know in exact detail. For me, the connection to HERE IF YOU NEED ME was based in her ministry as a chaplain to Maine's game wardens. As a person who is also in ministry (a Roman Catholic priest), I immediately connected to Kate Braestrup's story, at first because she's a good story teller, and judging from the book a likeable person. As the book progressed, I saw her in situations I could understand even though the work we both do is different and are from areas that share few similarities: Boston and its suburbs are a but different than rural Maine. Still, I do face the challenges of being present to people in situations where there are no answers, life's rough edges become more apparent, and hoping that you're acting and speaking when it's appropriate to do so and just being present when a quiet presence is what is needed and hoping you have the wisdom to know what the best course of action for a situation happens to be. This is much of what we find in this book. My guess is that this is common in most denominations, and Braestrup has the ability to look beyond what could potentially divide and get to what we share in common.

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