

# MY BROTHER'S SHADOWS

*a journey of faith  
in the midst of tragedy*

Hayley Reynolds

  
ACORN PRESS

Published by Acorn Press Ltd, ABN 50 008 549 540

Office and orders:

PO Box 282

Brunswick East

Victoria 3057

Australia

Tel/Fax: (03) 9383 1266

International Tel/Fax: 61 3 9383 1266

Website: [www.acornpress.net.au](http://www.acornpress.net.au)

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First published in New Zealand in 2011 in paperback format  
(ISBN: 9780473186500).

Acorn's Australian edition is available in paperback (ISBN: 9780987428715) and  
eBook (ISBN: 9780987428622) formats.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

Author: Reynolds, Hayley, author.  
Title: My brother's shadows : a journey of faith in the midst of tragedy/  
Hayley Reynolds.  
Edition: 2nd edition.  
ISBN: 9780987428615 (paperback)  
9780987428622 (ebook)  
Subjects: Reynolds, Wayne  
Cancer – Patients – Australia – Biography  
Cancer – Patients – Australia – Family relationships  
Leukemia – Biography  
Terminally ill – Australia – Biography  
Faith  
Death – Psychological aspects  
Bereavement – Psychological aspects  
Dewey Number: 362.1969940092

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Original cover design by Lydia Cole.

Original typesetting and design work by Sasha McPherson.

Printed by Openbook Howden Design and Print, Adelaide SA.

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# 1.

## CALM BEFORE THE STORM

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MY DIARY

Jan 2004

Lord Jesus,

*Please heal Dad of his cough.*

*Please help me love Mum & Dad more.*

*Help me want to spend time with you.*

*Break my heart when it needs to be broken.*

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The year 2004 started on a very positive note for my family. Everything we had been looking forward to seemed to converge at the same time. In January my older sister Lynda married her fiancé Steve, and in February my younger brother Wayne celebrated his sixteenth birthday. A few months later Lynda, Steve and I graduated from The University of Auckland. Both Lynda and Steve had qualified as medical doctors, while I had completed a degree in engineering.

When graduation week arrived, Mum and Dad proudly came to both graduation ceremonies. Wayne came along as well, albeit reluctantly. On the day of Lynda and Steve's graduation Wayne was particularly hyperactive, so when my parents tried to take family photos he jumped in front of the camera the moment any photos were taken. He thought it was hilarious. When Mum had the film developed, however, she was shocked to find several of her beautiful photos had been ruined by a fuzzy image of Wayne running through them. As punishment, he was banned from driving Mum's

car for the next few weeks.

At the time I was busy planning a trip overseas. After finishing my degree I was unsure what to do next. All I knew was that I wanted to travel. Part of me felt that going overseas simply to see the world was selfish, so I decided to pray through the decision and asked God to guide me. After four separate plans fell through, and feeling as though God wasn't giving me any guidance at all, I settled on a six-month trip to Europe and the US. I would travel for three months through Europe then work for three months at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston. I looked forward to leaving at the end of May.

Little did I know that my plans were going to be drastically changed once again, when Wayne was diagnosed with leukaemia just four days before I was due to fly overseas.

It was a journey that would break my heart.

Throughout our childhood, Wayne and I had always had a close bond. I can even remember the day my parents told my sister and me we were going to have a baby brother or sister. I was almost six years old and Lynda was almost eight. We were both so excited. Although we enjoyed playing with each other, a new brother or sister meant there would be yet another person to hang out with. It was going to be great.

Almost immediately I decided I wanted a younger sister, whereas Lynda wanted a brother. When Wayne was born the following February, my initial disappointment that he wasn't a girl was replaced by an enormous feeling of pride that we had another member of the family. As Mum recovered in hospital, our grandparents came to look after Lynda and me. Grandad made us badges that declared, 'I have a new baby brother'. Dad couldn't believe it when we proudly wore them to school the next day.

Having a younger brother gave Lynda and me fantastic opportunities to practice our mothering skills. We would make sure he knew what he needed

to do, when he needed to do it, and how it should be done. Finally Lynda could boss someone else around, other than me. My role in the family had now changed. I had become the middle child, and fulfilled the traditional peacemaker role by avoiding conflict at all costs. By contrast, Lynda's sense of authority as the older child often pitted her against Wayne's stubborn nature, with neither backing down during an argument. Fortunately their fights usually didn't last long, however, and they quickly forgave each other.

When Wayne was 14, Lynda left home and moved to Hamilton, a two-hour drive south of Auckland, to finish her last year of medical school in the local hospital. I was now the oldest child at home and Wayne and I grew closer. We enjoyed each other's company and mucking around together. Wayne had a wicked sense of humour that easily set me off as well.

Although Wayne loved to joke around, he also had a very serious side. Our family had always gone to church and we had both become Christians at an early age. Wayne's faith was at the centre of who he was, and we both liked having long discussions, challenging each other about what we believed and why. He was a voracious reader, and I'd often walk past his room late at night only to find him propped up in bed, reading his Bible.

This strong faith could be clearly seen in Wayne's bedroom. He had plastered a large banner across his wall that declared 'Jesus is the answer for the world today', and had typed out Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my Shepherd', and stuck it to the back of the toilet door to memorise it. He also had a number of Bible verses on his wall, including one on the ceiling above his bed, which he could read when he went to sleep and when he woke:

*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young,  
but set an example for the believers in speech,  
in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

**1 Timothy 4:12**

At his school, Westlake Boys High, Wayne was a talented student. Although he didn't study very hard, he was in the top academic class for his year.

He had a muscular and athletic build, measuring about six feet tall and weighing a healthy 70kg. He enjoyed playing sports, representing the school in basketball and table tennis, and playing interclub tennis for our local tennis club.

One week day when Wayne was in year 11 at school, I noticed he arrived home looking dejected.

‘Wassup?’ I said as I watched him walk up the stairs. ‘How was your day?’

‘Sup,’ he replied. ‘It was a bit average. I didn’t feel quite right all day, and then realised it was because I had forgotten to put on the armour of God this morning.’

He then told me he had got into the habit of mentally putting on the armour of God before school, as described in the book of Ephesians,<sup>2</sup> so he could rely on God’s strength for the day. After this bad experience, he made sure he didn’t forget again.

That same year, Wayne got involved with his school’s Christian group, called The Rock. One day he and a friend decided to approach the school Headmaster, Jim Dale, for permission to hand out small pamphlets explaining the gospel message. To Wayne’s disappointment, the Headmaster didn’t concede to their request, telling them their pamphlets were too blunt. Instead, Wayne was told off for having dirty shoes and they were both sent away.

Wayne was also actively involved at our church, Northcote Baptist. We both volunteered as leaders of Bolder, a group for kids aged 11 and 12. As we drove to church together, I would sing off-tune with the radio to make him laugh, as he tried his best to ignore me. One evening after church, however, the conversation turned a bit more serious.

‘Did you realise you’re a princess?’ Wayne asked me.

‘What?’ I said, as I kept focusing on my driving.

'You're a princess, Hayley,' he continued, 'because you're a daughter of the King.'

'Oh yeah, that's cool,' I said. 'You know that means you're a prince.'

Wayne, in typical form, was trying to encourage me in my faith. He also continually wanted to share his faith with his friends. A few times we even picked up a friend of his on the drive to church. As we talked, I was not surprised to find Wayne had been telling his friend about God and was impressed that he didn't sound overly religious or pushy.

Despite Wayne's encouragement I had started to become bored with Christianity and all the rules that seemed to come with it. At the same time I wanted to live with eternity in mind, but didn't know how or what that really meant. As I searched for answers, I felt God trying to tell me there was more to Christianity than I realised.

To combat my questioning faith, I decided to memorise different Bible verses that appealed to me. One verse in particular, from the book of John, caught my attention so I shared it with Wayne one sunny afternoon:

Jesus said: "In this world you will have trouble.  
But take heart! I have overcome the world."

**John 16:33**

Wayne thought it was a great verse as well and pinned it on the corkboard in his room. Everything in Wayne's life up to early 2004 seemed great. Neither of us could have known about the storm that was about to strike and change everything, and how important that verse would soon become.