

Faith is remedy for grief while mourning loss of wife



Your Turn
Victor Begg
Guest columnist

We were married for 50 years.

As the reality of my wife's sudden passing settled in, I began to grapple with the prospect of spending my remaining years alone. As shock turned to grief, I also faced the heartbreaking task of sifting through her belongings, gathered in the course of a lifetime spent together.

My status shifted from married to widower, followed by endless implications, on social and familial relationships, living arrangements, my budget, my mental and physical health, and on and on.

No matter the preparations we made, sorting out life anew, while navigating grief as a senior, was far more difficult than I imagined.

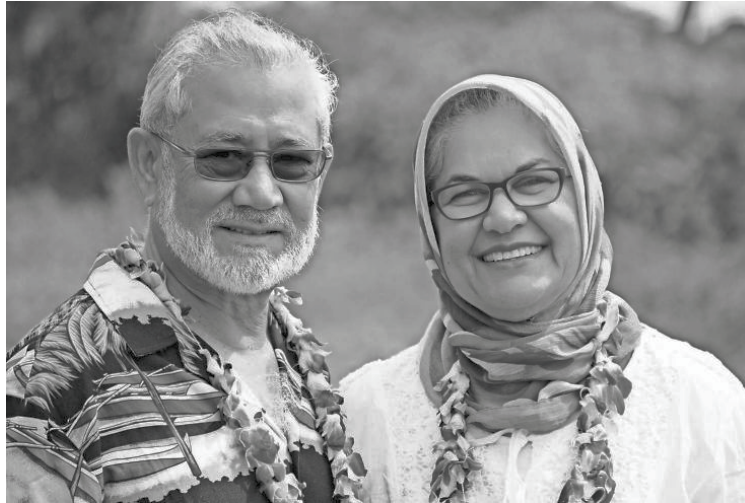
So, what advice do I have for coping with this arduous trial? It has been over a year since her passing, and I'm still trying to wrap my head around it.

Accepting the support and love of family and friends has been an important ingredient.

To that I add caring neighbors. Those who surround you help, but the empty space left by a lifelong partner cannot be fully replaced.

Faith has been the other essential ingredient for me, as a Muslim. It offered me a recipe for peace of heart and mind — to patiently accept the will of the Almighty in his promise of reuniting our souls in the next life.

Ancient Egyptians entombed the



Victor and Shahina Begg are shown in an undated photo.

PROVIDED BY VICTOR BEGG

dead with their belongings for use in the afterlife. Today, I found all major faiths offer solace for a believer and a concept of afterlife, beyond the grave. According to studies by the Pew Research Center, most Americans believe in an afterlife, but I was curious to know what members of other faiths believe about life after death.

We customarily hear: "The deceased is in a better place." What do they mean by that when the body is 6 feet under in the grave?

Bob Bruttell, former chairman of the Interfaith Leadership Council of Metro Detroit, related to me the beatific vision of celestial happiness upon a soul's passing as it leaves the mortal body uniting with the essence of God to dwell

happily in another domain joined by other souls — a concept that comforts those left behind.

Pew reports: Majorities of all Christian groups say they similarly believe in the afterlife. Robion Volsky, of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Vero Beach, quoted the church's website: "While we mourn for those loved ones we've lost, there is hope — death is not the end."

Howard Brown, the Jewish author of "Shining Brightly" and twice a cancer survivor given six months to live each time, related to me his thoughts about the life-after: The body returns to dust, but the soul goes on to live in the Garden of Eden where there is no cancer.

In my understanding of the Islamic

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teaching, death is the departure of the soul from the body to live in the *barzakh* or purgatory, where pious souls rest in peace until the day of judgment.

Swami Durga Das of Kashi Ashram on the Treasure Coast agreed on the concept of a soul and duality of life on Earth upon passing. Sikhs too believe the physical body dies and the soul lives on.

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Muslims dutifully recite a verse of the Quran upon the passing of a soul, and when remembering the deceased: "Verily we belong to God and to Him we return (2:156)".

Loss of loved ones can also cause some to question faith, but I found, like many of my friends of faith, it has been a source of hope and a remedy for grief.

Victor Begg, a former Michigan resident from Fort Pierce, wrote the 2019 book, "Our Muslim Neighbors — Achieving the American Dream; An Immigrant's Memoir."