

## THE MOUNT HOOD TRAGEDY

Kelly James, a landscape architect, and two of his friends were climbing Mount Hood in Welches, Oregon, in December 2006 when they encountered a blizzard.

James called his family on his cell phone, but the storm was too severe for rescue workers to get to the men, and all three hikers perished. James' body was located in a snow cave, 300 feet below the summit, but his partners were never found.

On the *CBS Evening News*, Katie Couric asked James' widow, Karen, if she was angry with her husband for climbing the mountain. Karen James replied, "I'm really sad our journey is over for a while, and I miss him terribly. But he loved life so much, and he taught me how to love. He taught me how to live. And I don't know how you can be angry at someone who loved their family, who loved God ... and gave back so much more than he took."



Asked how her husband would like to be remembered, Karen said, "Kelly had this little ornament, and he's had it since he was little. It's a manger. It's just this little plastic thing. And it's always the tradition that our son Jack and Kelly put it on the tree together. So I said this Christmas, 'We're going to put that ornament on the tree.'

"One of the things that we really understand about Christmas is how that little Baby born in a barn is the reason our family has so much strength now. And that is really important to Kelly," she added.

Couric asked if the family's confidence in God had been tested by her husband's death. "No, it was never tested," Karen answered.

"I remember one time we were watching TV, and Kelly said to me, 'I can't wait to go to heaven.' I said, 'What?' We were watching some show that had nothing to do with heaven. And he said, 'Yeah, that's going to be really cool.'

"And I said, 'Can you hold off? Can we wait?' But he wasn't scared. Those conversations are what I hold on to," Karen added.

When asked if there were any lessons to be learned from her husband's tragedy, Karen replied, "I've told a colleague of mine that men should hold their wives really, really tight, because you don't know when our journey's going to end. My journey ended with an 'I love you,' And ... for others, if their journey ends with an 'I love you,' it's a lot to hold on to."

(more)

Karen James' advice is right on point. We don't know when life for us can come to an abrupt end.

For us in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home, Karen James' counsel should extend beyond our families. The people entrusted to us deserve our attention and compassion.

And in virtually all cases, an *I love you* – spoken and demonstrated – is a lot for them to hold on to.



*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (1 John 4:7 NKJV).*

– Beecher Hunter