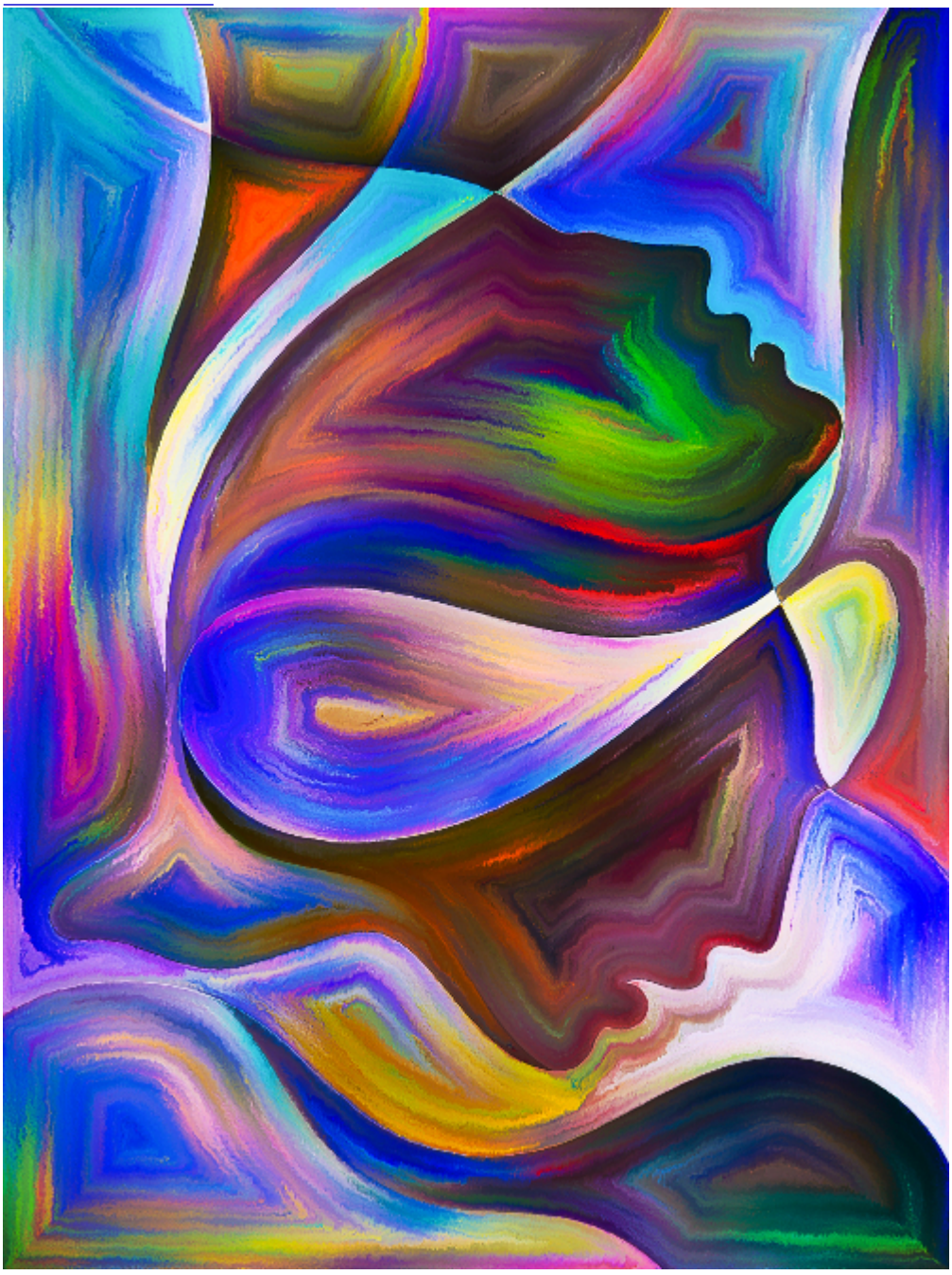
Opinion
Spirituality
Culture
Book Reviews



(Dreamstime/Agsandrew)



by Amy Morris-Young

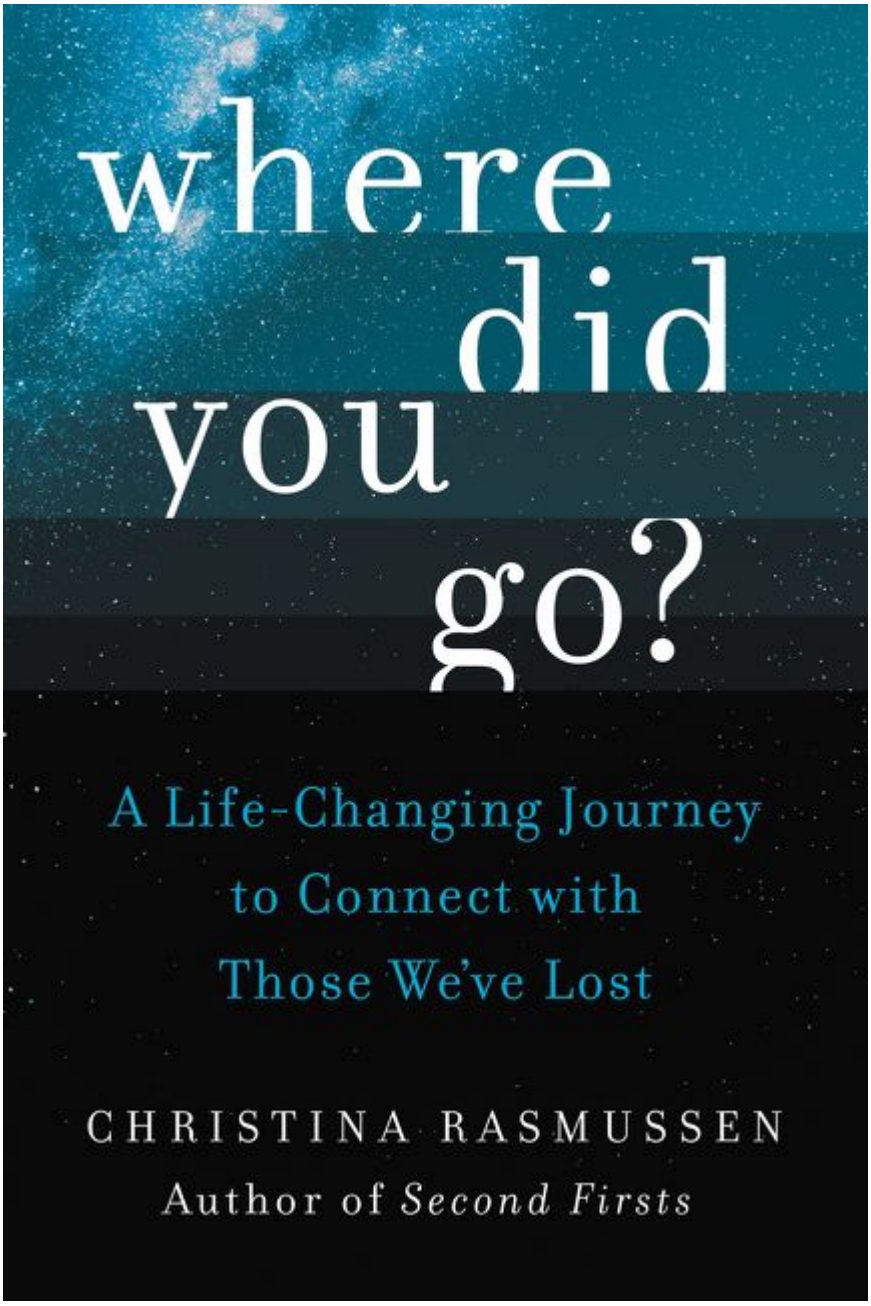
View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

April 10, 2019

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



WHERE DID YOU GO?: A LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY TO CONNECT WITH THOSE WE'VE LOST
Christina Rasmussen
240 pages; Published by Harper One
$25.99

I wanted to like Christina Rasmussen's second book, a follow up to her 2013 *Second Firsts*. After all, she says the catalyst for writing both books was the 2003 death of her husband, and her subsequent search for healing from grief, not just for herself and her two daughters, but for others.

However, I found this book and the entire grief-therapy empire that Rasmussen has established to be, at the least, astonishingly ambitious in its promises, and, at the most, possibly harmful for those who are suffering grief, and thus at their most vulnerable.



(Dreamstime/Agsandrew)

In actuality, Rasmussen was a grief specialist before her husband's death — she wrote her master's thesis on stages of grief in 1998 — and is the founder of the Life Reentry Institute in Walnut Creek, California. It offers six-week courses onsite, plus

group therapy weekends around the country. Costs can range between $295 for a participant class to $3,600 for facilitator training.

This book advances her premise that grief after loss can not only be fully overcome but can be the jumping-off point for an entirely remade self and life.

An American born in Greece, raised in the Greek Orthodox religion, Rasmussen found no comfort in her faith: "In the church of my earlier life, death was feared and, of course, the place behind the veil has, accordingly, always been a little scary to me."

Rasmussen thus sought comfort through science. Cobbling together snippets from many far-ranging sources — including physics, metaphysics, psychology — she created her Temple Journey, a step-by-step program that not only promises to reconnect people with their dead loved ones, but "allows you to see your soul in ways that are impossible by any other method."

"Many people meet with them immediately, which, as I've said, surprised me. This rapid connection speaks to the readiness of our brain to allow for that to happen. It also speaks to how ready our beloveds are to be visited."

Rasmussen asserts, "The death of a loved one brings forth an opening just wide enough to squeeze in and seek our own truth, to seek the multidimensional world where you will find your beloved."

She says, "We visit them; they're not visiting us," and "those we've lost didn't just want us to visit them, they also wanted us to recognize our ability to create our life, to discover the connection points of the two worlds and master them."

Her five-step program requires closing one's eyes and picturing each stage that she describes, using pointedly nonreligious terms. One sees then goes through The Door, then meets the Super Watcher, who accompanies us to the Temple of Universes. There one looks into the Temple Mirror, and finally one exits via the Back Door and experiences the Field.

Readers are encouraged to download the appropriate sounds from her website to facilitate each step and are told one "must aim to spend ten minutes each day in the Temple World."

Rasmussen gushes, "I have tears in my eyes thinking of what a gift this will be for the rest of your life. This Temple Journey is going to be a part of you forever."

She also recommends joining a Temple Circle or having at least one partner so that one can better validate and remember the experiences. She says one's ego, renamed the Survivor, will discourage us from believing in this new reality. "Remember … your Survivor is going to do everything possible to scare you back into your comfort zone."

She continues, "You need to … reach out to those in your Temple Circle, visit your Temple daily to build your sense of faith. … If we can only select what best serves our higher self, our Super Watcher, then we create a different reality."

Her terminology is hypnotically repetitive and resonates of both science fiction — "We must get up and boldly travel to where we have not been before" — and *The Secret*, where "your brain does not know the difference between what it sees in your mind and what it sees in this 3-D reality. And when your brain becomes comfortable with a new vision … it brings more of it to your everyday reality."

Rasmussen's financial success indicates that she clearly taps into a receptive population. She says she discovered this vast opportunity accidentally — "I started writing this book to help people find the loved ones we lost and I stumbled upon a better life" — and credits her own journey with creating a situation of self-help: "I was stunned to find my body taking on the stronger physical presence of my Temple self. … I've let go of twenty pounds."

Advertisement

This remarkable promise of being able to commune with the dead, explore other dimensions, and remake our bodies and lives may help some people, especially those who, like the author, find no solace in religious or faith communities.

Since I have read most of the books she cites, plus am a survivor of a near-death experience in 1988, I was intrigued. So I followed her steps daily for a few weeks. I can testify only that I found the experience restful, not transcendent.

Books or programs that hold out incredible hopes could be damaging to those who are desperate in their grief, rocked to the core by loss and doing their level best just to keep breathing. Rasmussen's assurances can (and clearly do) induce the grief-stricken to lay out large funds in hopes of reuniting with those who have passed. If that reconnection is achieved, wonderful. But if not, what then? That could become just one more guilt, another failure and loss. To a grieving person, this could be downright dangerous.

Therefore, I would hesitate in recommending this book to anyone suffering deeply from grief. While Rasmussen says her Temple World is "almost like a prayer," its irreligious tone might easily insult, or even injure, the bereaved.

[Amy Morris-Young graduated from and taught writing at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.]

A version of this story appeared in the **April 5-18, 2019** print issue under the headline: Author invites us to irreligious realm.