



Equipping Christians
to live out their unique
God-given purpose

*Designed to Serve® Monthly Newsletter
December 2013 (Volume 5, Number 12)*

Joanna Harig

God gave Joanna Harig a very unusual assignment. Whenever a loved one dies, Joanna asks the family to give her as many photos of the deceased as they wish. She then makes photocopies - at her own expense - and returns the originals to the family. Using the reproductions, Joanna creates beautiful collages mounted on poster board, edged with colored matting, and displayed in a picture frame.

Her ministry began when her father-in-law died and the funeral home gave the family a felt board to attach and display pictures. It turned out that the board wasn't large enough for all the photos of their family and friends. To make room for more pictures, Joanna copied and cropped the photos, thereby increasing the number of photos on the collage. According to Joanna, *"It was wonderful to relive memories of happy times, and to see and remember all the significant people from my father-in-law's life."* Overall, the collage was well-received, but there was a problem. The family didn't want to give the board back after the funeral!

Several years later a friend suddenly passed away. Joanna was doing scrap-booking at the time, and agreed to put together a few photo boards to display at the wake. Joanna explained, *"I remember finding it such an incredibly intimate and moving experience."* It allowed her to process her friend's death by stepping "inside" the tender memories of her past. As Joanna looked at the photos, *"There was my friend as a little girl with her parents; then she was at the altar with her groom; later she was holding her newborn babies; and finally she was belly-laughing with her friends."* That was the moment Joanna realized how meaningful it was for a family to have photo boards. She knew right then that she would make them again for others in their time of grief and loss.

Over the past 12 years, Joanna has made dozens of boards for family and friends. As she works with the pictures, she finds herself moved to tears one moment, and laughing out loud the next. She concludes, *"It is a joy to be able to serve, and bring happy memories to others in their time of grief. It is a tangible thing that I can give, and know that it makes a difference in a very difficult time."*

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