



Group Study Guide for Hope & Healing in Marriage

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Introduction Session

Hope & Healing in Marriage is available (English version only) on Amazon in the United States, Europe, and Great Britain. Participants should bring their books to the first meeting, or the leader may pre-order for the group and hand out books. At the Introduction class, participants will take turns reading aloud sections of *The Better Strategy* on page V and discuss the following:

- 1) What is your overall reaction to this reading?
- 2) According to the first paragraph, what do most people seek after divorce?
- 3) According to the second paragraph, the human heart seeks unselfish love, and yet why is this nearly impossible to attain?
- 4) How do people often decide to “fix” their marital problems?
- 5) According to the third paragraph, what is the likely outcome of jumping into a new relationship?
- 6) According to the fourth paragraph, what is the better strategy?
- 7) According to the final paragraph, what standard do we need to apply to ourselves?

Class members are encouraged to read the entire *Introduction* later. Now, turn to page XVIII and begin reading aloud from the fourth paragraph, “In the past five years....” and take turns reading until the end of the chapter.

- 1) Discuss: God’s gifts/blessings often require surrender, and the cost of surrender is different for each soul. (found in last paragraph on page XVIII) What does this mean?
- 2) Discuss: it takes two people to make a marriage but only one to break it. (found in first paragraph on page XIX) How do you respond to this?
- 3) Discuss: believe and conceive that renewal of love is possible. According to the third paragraph on page XIX, what should you look for in each story as you read through this book?
- 4) Discuss: read the passage from Jeremiah at the bottom of page XIX. What is the promise and what is the command found therein?

Each week, have class members read the upcoming chapter ahead of time and then follow the study guide as a group. For example, after the Introduction session, participants should prepare by reading Chapter One, “Rose-Colored Glasses”. Allow 50 minutes to one hour for discussion.

Chapter One

Rose-Colored Glasses

Backstory: Mariel is anticipating attending her 10-year high school reunion with her husband Bob. However, as the dance approaches, she finds herself fixated on romantic thoughts about her old flame, Greg. Their picture-perfect romance ended when they were age 20, and they have not spoken for eight years.

Turn to p. 3. Begin reading at the top of the page and continue until the next break. (p. 4)

1) What was Mariel's problem? What was her relationship to God at this point in her life?

2) Why was she so vulnerable?

Turn to p. 5. Read from midsection (*The two couples*) and continue until the next break. (p. 6)

3) What happens after Mariel dances with Greg at the reunion? What does she wish for?

Summary Information: Mariel, age 21, had married Bob because she liked him and he offered a secure future. She was in college at New Mexico State. Things with Greg had ended, and Bob was eager to marry her, so she went along with it. But the marriage got off to a rocky start.

Turn to p. 12. Read from the midsection (*Mariel and Bob moved into an apartment*) until the next break. (p.13)

4) Why did Mariel find fault with the little things that Bob said or did?

5) How did Bob respond to her criticism? Was this behavior helpful?

6) In what way was the old boyfriend, Greg, a problem during Bob & Mariel's newlywed years? What can we learn from this?

Summary Information: Things settled down after Mariel started having children; she loved being a mother, and she stopped thinking about her high school boyfriend. She became friends with another young mother who introduced her to the concept of a personal relationship with Christ. She left the Catholic church for an Assemblies of God church.

Turn to p.16. Read from the midsection (*Bob was confused*) until the next break. (p.17)

7) What happened to Bob and how did it change him?

8) Despite their shared faith, Mariel had a problem. How did she combat it?

9) Were her defenses effective? Why or why not?

Turn to p. 19. Read from the break until *dredge up in that book* on p. 20.

10) What is the crisis that occurs?

11) Does it surprise you that Mariel hoped to find a Bible verse to justify leaving Bob?

Application point: What does this mean: **What the heart desires, the mind justifies, and the will acts upon.**

Our thoughts take us closer to God and his ways or they carry us farther away. We must pay attention to where we allow our minds to go, because an unguarded mind will persuade us that we are justified in following our feelings and desires to get what we want. Mariel filled her mind with romance novels and runaway fantasies, making her more vulnerable to the advances of her

old flame. Many people fill their minds with vulgarity, whether through pornography, popular movies and programming, books, magazines, or even conversation.

Consider the following verses:

For as a man thinks in his mind, so is he. Psalm 23:7

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, whatever is excellent and worthy of praise, meditate on these things. Phil. 4:8

12) How can you specifically apply this concept to your daily thought life?

Turn to p. 20. Read from midsection (*I spent three days searching*) until the next break. (p. 21)

13) Which Bible verse does Mariel lean on and how is this helpful? How did Mariel use God's word as a defensive weapon? Do you believe this would work for you when you struggle with temptation?

14) Was Bob aware of his wife's interior drama? How is this possible?

Turn to p. 21. Read from the break until *her desire for her old flame*. (p. 22)

15) When Mariel finally decided that God wanted her to stay married to Bob, how did she expect to be able to obey a command that was contrary to her passionate desires?

16) What happened when Greg called back again? Do you agree with Mariel that this was an answer to her prayer?

17) Despite this, Mariel continued to struggle with feelings for Greg. What specific things did she do to combat romantic longings for the other man? How are these behaviors helpful?

Turn to the middle of p. 22. Read from *before long* to the bottom of the page.

18) What finally ended the struggle for Mariel? What did this pregnancy tell her about God?

19) How did Bob feel when he discovered the hidden drama? Was Mariel correct to confess her behavior to Bob?

Reflection: Mariel's process of resisting temptation

- A) Initial stirrings: memorizing scripture, asking friends to pray, praying for strength
- B) Decision making: searching Bible to justify her desire to run away: what the heart desires, the mind justifies, and the will acts upon
- C) Turning point: surrendering to God and deciding to obey the Bible
- D) Seeing it through: during the struggle to stay away, Mariel gave up reminders or associations — music, romance novels, reveries — and focused on God through prayer and intentional returning to God throughout her day
- E) Answered prayers: when temptation returned, God helped out by ending the call
- F) Hindsight: Mariel understood the wisdom of having obeyed.

Chapter Two

His-and-Hers Secrets

Backstory: Lynn and Paul were good people but neither had an allegiance to any particular religion. Paul doubted God's existence and Lynn was more interested in politics as the path to truth. Their college romance was exhilarating, but their love life soured after graduation and marriage under the stress of Paul's medical career and Lynn's lack of purpose.

Turn to p. 25. After the break, begin reading at *The filthy mess*. Continue reading until the next break. (p. 27)

1) What made Lynn susceptible to getting involved with another man? What did her cyber boyfriend bring to her life that was missing?

2) How did Lynn feel when she met Josh in person? What was her initial reaction and why did she not act upon it?

Return to p. 27. After the break, begin reading at *Josh drove to the hotel*. Continue reading until the next break. (p. 28)

3) What happened to Lynn while she was allowing Josh to physically seduce her?

4) What had been Lynn's history of faith? At the hotel, how did she recognize the voice within?

5) Why do you think God would choose to speak to Lynn during a shameful moment?

Re-read the second paragraph on p. 28 (*For months she had been wandering*).

6) How did her encounter with God give her sudden clarity? In her deluded state, how had Lynn justified her behavior in establishing an extramarital relationship?

7) Remember our application point from Ch. 1: **What the heart desires, the mind justifies, and the will acts upon.** How have you seen this principle at work in your life?

8) Stay on p. 28. According to the last paragraph before the break (*Locked in the bathroom*), how did Lynn deal with the guilt of her mistake?

Consider how these verses apply to the condition of Lynn's heart:

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Psalm 51:2

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. Psalm 32:5

9) What happens to someone who receives forgiveness?

Turn to p. 39. Begin reading from the break, starting with *At the end of Lynn's dreadful weekend*. Continue reading until the end of the fourth paragraph, stopping after *don't tell him*.

10) How did Lynn change after she returned home? What did Paul think was going on in their relationship?

Read the following excerpt taken from p. 29:

Lynn wanted to reveal her sordid tale to Paul. It felt like the right thing to do. Yet whenever she prayed about how or when to tell him, Lynn would not receive clearance for take-off. An inner voice — whom she soon came to know as the Holy Spirit — told her to sit tight and wait. *Wait? Could this be right?*

Lynn felt as if she were living a lie. While she dreaded hurting her husband, she longed to get this secret off her chest and throw herself on Paul's mercy. Why must she endure this torture? Rather than explaining, the Voice would merely restate: *now is not the time*.

11) What did she hear when Lynn thought about confessing to Paul?

Consider how the following verses apply to Lynn's situation:

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Isaiah 30:21

The Lord said (to Elijah), "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

1 Kings 19: 11-12

12) How does the Lord speak to his people? What is required for a person to be able to hear the Holy Spirit?

Return to p. 39; find the second paragraph from the bottom of the page, starting with *Perhaps it was better*. Continue reading until the break on p. 40

13) What worried Lynn when she discovered she was pregnant?

14) What did Paul think about Lynn's new devotion to God? What boundaries did Paul put into place in terms of his willingness to participate in her religion?

Summary information: Six years passed; Lynn and Paul had two children and were living in Texas. Lynn continued to grow in her faith while Paul continued to be agnostic. Lynn still had not confessed her affair. Turn to p. 41. Read from the top of the page to break on p. 42.

15) What prompted Lynn to finally tell Paul about the affair?

16) How did Paul react?

Summary Information: Paul had a secret. For several years, he had been nurturing a flirtatious relationship with a female doctor. Things had finally escalated to the point where Paul and his co-worker were ready to become sexually involved.

Turn to p. 43. Find the third paragraph. Begin reading at *Paul had an upcoming medical convention*. Stop reading after *he marvels at God's wisdom*, midway down on p. 44.

17) What does this tell you about God?

18) Why do people prefer to solve their own problems instead of investing time and energy into deepening their relationship with God Almighty?

Consider the promise found in the following verse:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Reflection: How was this proven true for Lynn and Paul?

Chapter Three

The Daily War

Begin reading on p. 46 at the opening of the chapter and continue until the next break (p. 47).

1) How did Melinda feel about her husband Rick? What was her initial reason for being angry?

2) What clues do we have about Melinda's childhood and how was this impacting her attitude? (see bottom of p. 46)

3) After having a baby, Melinda wanted to quit her nursing job. How did Melinda react when Rick told her that she needed to keep working? What was his reason?

4) Re-read Rick's statement on p. 47, "I used to dread coming home to Melinda", second paragraph from the bottom of the page. What does this tell you about the atmosphere in their home?

5) What role did religion play in their relationship?

Summary information: Both Melinda and Rick had been married and divorced before marrying one another. Melinda's constant anger had destroyed her relationship with her first husband. Rick had married his high school sweetheart; as the years passed, they had grown apart and had nothing in common. Lonely and single, Rick began attending a nearby church because he found the experience comforting. He still did not believe in God. When they became romantically involved, Melinda had hoped to convert Rick to Christianity. Yet he remained unconvinced. Over time, Melinda judged her husband as a moral failure for not believing in Jesus.

Turn to p. 53 and begin reading after the break (*Sunday mornings were tense*) and continue past the middle of p. 54, stopping after *that was what would get me out of this*.

6) Why were Sunday mornings so difficult? What was triggering all the stress?

7) Why did Rick cover up for his wife's behavior when she scratched his face?

8) Rick was not sure about God, yet he thought God might be punishing him via Melinda. Why did he think he deserved to be punished? What promise did he make to himself in an effort to make amends for his past?

9) Re-read the paragraph in the middle of p. 53 (*Many nights Rick lay in bed*). How would you describe Rick's reaction to Melinda's constant verbal attacks?

10) What kept Rick from doing something rash? What hope helped him hang in there?

Turn to p. 54; begin reading at the third paragraph from the bottom (*Most days, Rick tiptoed around Melinda*). Continue until the next break (p. 56).

11) How did Rick respond when Melinda challenged him about staying married to her? (see bottom of p. 54.) What was the real reason that Rick refused to leave?

12) Why did Melinda finally decide to ask for a divorce? What did she think was the best plan for their separation?

13) Why did Rick say, "I will never leave you, Melinda," when she asked him to move out of the house and leave her there with Billy? (midway down on p. 55)

14) After Melinda decided that she would move out and take the baby, what surprising thing did Rick say that rocked her world?

15) Why was this the last thing Melinda wanted to hear? What did she say to God? What did God say to her?

Read after the break on p. 56 until the next break on p. 58.

16) When Melinda finally had free time to herself, what did she do? What was the first thing that the Holy Spirit brought to Melinda's attention?

17) Next the Lord spoke to Melinda about Rick; what was she told to do? (see top of p. 57.)

18) Why did God start by opening Melinda's eyes to her harsh treatment of her co-worker before turning to the subject of her husband?

19) When she saw herself through God's eyes, what did she see?

Read this excerpt from p. 57:

Now she was so tired. She had fought with her father, she had fought with Jock, her first husband, and she had fought with Rick. Without knowing it, she had even fought God. She'd spent years feeling defensive, feeling angry. Using a mental picture, Melinda hoisted herself over the side of the boat and lay there, helpless on the wet, slippery fiberglass surface. "I surrender," she said. "I am flopping my big self into the boat. I am done. I have nothing left."

20) How did God use this image to break down Melinda's carefully constructed defenses?

21) How did Melinda feel after her surrender?

22) What did Melinda do as soon as Rick returned from his trip?

Application point: Despite Melinda's decision to be nice, she still felt boiling mad when Rick was around. Being kind to Rick presented her with the emotional challenge of her life. God allowed her to experience this dissonance without taking away the pain.

Do not expect God to wave a magic wand over the mess that you have made and clean it up for you.

God is a god of processes. In creation and in reproduction cycles, things change gradually and sequentially. A baby elephant does not suddenly appear, wholly formed. We also see this principle at work in the material world. You must build the foundation and the load-bearing supports in order to erect a solid cathedral. It is the same within the human spirit.

Once the architect (the mind) conceives of a higher purpose, the construction crew (the ordinary will) must read and follow the blueprints. This human will must work daily to establish and persevere in new habits and Godly motivations if the goal is to be obtained.

As they say, Rome was not built in a day. However, a person who is sincerely pursuing God's will is never left without divine help. Read these verses:

There is nothing in us that allows us to claim we are capable of doing this work. The capability that we have comes from God.

2 Cor. 3:5

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father,...encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good word and deed.

2 Thess. 2:16-17

But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

2 Thess. 3:3

Turn to p. 58 and begin reading after the break. Continue until the middle of p. 60, stopping after *a softened heart*.

23) Had Melinda's feelings toward Rick actually changed? What did God promise her would eventually happen if she obeyed? (see middle of p. 58)

24) As Melinda struggled, how did God meet her at her place of need? (see bottom of p. 58 and top of p. 59) What does this tell you about God's character?

25) Why was it hard for Melinda to buy Rick the Bible? How did he respond to this gift? What might have happened if Melinda had refused to follow God's voice?

26) When Melinda was tempted to preach to Rick, what did the Holy Spirit say to her? (see middle of p. 59) Does this surprise you?

27) How did the Lord begin to soften Melinda's heart? (see p. 60, second and third paragraphs)

Turn to the bottom of p. 60. Begin reading the last paragraph (*One Sunday morning*) and continue until the next break (p. 61).

28) What happened to Rick during the confessional? What did he suddenly grasp?

29) How did Melinda's obedience lay the foundation for Rick's conversion?

30) How did God deliver on his promise to Melinda about changing her feelings for her husband?

Turn to p. 61 and begin reading after the break. Continue through the first paragraph on p. 63 (stop after *both in the hospital and church setting*.)

31) What else did God have in mind for Rick? How did He confirm the call?

32) Why was seminary so hard for Rick? What one thing helped him survive? Why is this ironic, given the history of their relationship?

33) What does this tell you about how God wants to work in our lives?

34) Near the bottom of p. 63, Melinda says, "It is a true miracle of God. Rick was the most unlikely man to have that happen." How does this encourage you to keep praying and hoping for those in your life who may be struggling? What can you do to encourage them?

Reflection: Apply the following verse to your own life:

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

1 John 4:11

Based on Rick and Melinda's story, what does it mean to love one another?

Chapter Four

Lessons in Violence

Read from the opening of the chapter on p. 65 to the break on p. 66.

1) How would you describe the relationship between Darius and Danielle during their high school dating?

2) What kept them together?

Begin reading after the break on p. 66 until the break on p. 67.

3) What was the reaction of Darius's friend when things got tense in the car?

4) What did Darius think about his tendency toward abusive behavior?

Summary information: Darius grew up in an impoverished home with parents who were often high on crack cocaine. At times His father could spiral into physical violence. Eventually Darius's grandmother took him to live with her, providing a stable home for several years. Despite her flaws, Darius's mom took her family to church and taught Bible verses to Darius. Her faith was sincere but her moral resolve was weak.

Danielle grew up in a strict Catholic family, yet unbeknownst to her parents, she and her two sisters were repeatedly molested by their maternal grandfather. Danielle grew up with a tough girl veneer, determined not to let anyone get too close. Darius and Danielle met in the ninth grade and eventually became a steady couple. When Darius was rough, Danielle would fight back.

Begin reading after the break on p. 77 and stop after the second paragraph on p. 78 (*that she was going wayward.*)

5) What did friends say to Danielle about her boyfriend? Why did she ignore their advice?

6) What did Danielle's parents think about Darius?

Several years passed; Danielle's jealousy was an ongoing a problem in their passionate and volatile relationship and things came to a head when graduation day approached. Begin reading at the third paragraph on p. 83 (*the remaining months*) and read until midway down on p. 85, stopping after *I can't do this anymore*.

7) What prompted the big fight? How did things get out of control?

8) How did Darius feel afterwards?

9) How did Danielle feel? What changed?

Summary Information: Danielle refused to speak to Darius after graduation; she moved away to San Diego without speaking to him. Soon after, Danielle discovered she was pregnant. She refused to answer Darius's letters or phone calls and had an abortion without his even knowing she was carrying his child. Before long, Darius moved to San Diego, got a job and started attending a community college. Within a year, he had won back Danielle and they were as close as ever. They worked hard, fought hard, and partied hard until....

Begin reading on p. 88 at the last paragraph (*Since leaving home*) until the break on p. 90.

10) What attracted Darius to the Nation of Islam? Why did he eventually drift away?

11) How did Darius and Danielle respond to Pastor Miles? What did he offer that appealed them? How was he offering something different?

12) What was Darius's secret prayer? (See bottom of p. 89)

13) Re-read the section before the break on p. 90; where were Darius and Danielle in their faith journey?

Begin reading at the top of p. 91 and stop after the third paragraph, ending with *a bigger plan for us all*.

14) How did becoming pregnant change their relationship? How did it change Danielle's outlook?

Summary Information: Danielle began working in sales for Tony Robbins, the well-known self help guru. This enabled her to participate in a weekend conference with Robbins that gave her new tools for understanding herself and others. Meanwhile Darius was not adapting well to being a dad; although he had calmed down some, he was still struggling to control his anger. Eventually Danielle was able to send Darius to a conference led by Robbins. Darius would be surprised by what happened.

Begin reading after the break on p. 94 and end at the break on p. 96.

15) How did Darius's growing faith influence his response to the information presented to him during the Robbins conference?

16) What clarity did Darius receive (see top of p. 95)? How did this change his life?

17) In what way did Darius suddenly see evidence of God in his life?

18) How was his prayer to have a special God experience answered?

19) What did Darius realize that he wanted to be? See top of p. 96.

Begin reading on p. 98, second paragraph (*Our relationship since that time*) and stop after the next paragraph, ending after *for a reason*.

20) How did their relationship change? What helped them stay true to their new ideals?

21) How does the following verse apply:

For if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone and the new is here.

2 Cor. 5:17

22) Why do good intentions so often fail? What does it take to make lasting change? Consider the following verse:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Phil. 4:13

Chapter Five

Sickness and Health

Begin reading on p. 101 and continue until the break on p. 102. Then skip to p. 108 and begin reading from the second paragraph (*It was the summer of 1982*) and continue until the end of the page.

1) How did Beth and David determine that they should wed?

2) Their hearts will filled with romantic notions as they prepared for their nuptials. Yet according to the top of p. 102, what lay in store for them?

3) How would they manage to survive?

Summary information: Once engaged, Beth and David agreed on their future plans: he would serve the country as a U.S. Marine, she would raise a brood of their children, and they would seek to serve God as a team. After their marriage, they moved to a marine base in the desert of Southern California for 28 months of training. Next the Marine Corp ordered David to begin a two-year tour at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba; luckily, his young wife was permitted to accompany him.

Begin reading on p. 113 and continue until the break on p. 114.

4) What was the initial report on Beth's ongoing abdominal pain? See the third paragraph on p. 113, *after extensive tests*.

5) What did Beth wonder? What are your thoughts about this?

6) As Beth underwent a series of dangerous surgeries, how did she cope with the stress? (refer to middle of p. 114)

7) As a teen, David had been the main caregiver for his father, who suffered diminished health due to chronic kidney failure. How did he respond to his wife's kidney-related illness?

8) What further blow did the doctors hit them with? Why was this especially painful?

Begin reading p. 115 and continue until the break on p. 117.

9) What happened when Beth and David tried to adopt an infant? What happened when they tried to adopt an older child?

10) How did they each initially receive this news? (See middle of p. 115)

11) How did the prospect of being childless change their relationship? (see bottom of p. 115 and top of p. 116)

12) After several years of misery, what did Beth finally suggest to David?

13) David considered his options; what made him stick it out in his marriage? (bottom of p. 116)

Begin reading after the break on p. 117 until the break on p. 118.

14) How did the Church and its communities help Beth and David as they moved around the country with the military? Why did they eventually feel out of place amongst their peers at church?

15) Look again at Beth's statement near the bottom of p. 117, *some of this felt very mean.....* Have you ever felt left out or different from the expectation of others, and why is this especially aggravating in a church setting?

16) While Beth and David prayed and waited for a miracle, no child appeared in their lives. How did this affect their treatment of one another?

Summary information: Next David was shipped out to Japan for a tour of duty while Beth stayed behind to work in the Washington, D.C. area. Beth's health reached a critical point. While David was still in Asia, Beth underwent a high-risk, two-stage surgery. In some ways, David was relieved that he had not been granted leave to return home for the surgery. He was worn out with dealing with his wife's worsening condition. Beth was left to face her fears on her own.

Begin reading in the middle of p. 120, *the surgery was successful.* until the bottom of p. 121.

17) What did David discover about his wife after he returned home from his tour in Japan? How did David react?

18) What additional stresses came into play for David and Beth? (see middle of p. 121, *next came the shock.*)

19) What ultimatum did Beth finally lay down? Why did she say this?

Application Point: Beth and David had tried to do the right thing by staying together. Each was a committed Christian, and yet their lives were full of suffering. Beth eventually realized she would be better off living alone than living with the negative and oppressive atmosphere of their broken marriage. The burden of David's resentment had become too heavy for her to carry any farther.

Does God want us to endure chronic hostility from a spouse in order to uphold the sanctity of marriage? Sometimes people have to establish healthy boundaries for themselves; emotional

well-being is part of God's plan for us. Love is what matters, not obedience to rituals or rules based on what others tell us we should do. Consider the following:

If I speak in the tongues[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

1 Cor. 13: 1-3

In Beth's case, her own soul decided that she would no longer live with someone who was unable to love and accept her. She did not know how David would respond, but she knew she needed to stop dancing the same dance of pain and shame.

Begin reading p. 122 until the break on p. 123.

20) David wasn't sure if their marriage could be saved; why did he agree to go to therapy? How did he approach his therapy sessions?

21) What was the result of therapy?

22) What final offering did God require David to make? How did this change his outlook? (See *only one thing remained* on the bottom third of p. 122.)

Begin reading at the bottom on p. 123, *Throughout their marriage*, and continue until the break on p. 124.

23) What work did God call David and Beth to undertake as a team? How did their years of suffering prepare them for this ministry?

24) Reread David's statement in the middle of p. 124, *a great marriage doesn't get handed to you*. How can this knowledge serve as key to opening deeper intimacy between a husband and wife?

Reflection: David and Beth endured their trials and worked to change themselves because of their desire to please God above all else. Likewise, if we lean into him, God will give us strength in difficult situations to grow in grace and love. Consider the following:

**He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.**

**Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.**

**They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.**

Isaiah 40:29-31

Chapter Six

The Pastor's Wife

Begin reading p. 126 and continue until the break on p. 128.

1) When Roberta felt anxious and unsettled enough to leave church, how did Roger respond? Did he manage to soothe her fears?

2) Yet what terrible secret did Roberta discover after returning home? Had she been suspicious of her husband before this moment?

3) What on-going issue had plagued their long marriage? Had they succeeded in fixing it?

Summary Information: Roger and Roberta met in high school and fell in love quickly. They married after graduation. After some initial reluctance, Roger gave his life to Christ and before long, the young couple was headed to a Bible college where Roger was studying to become a Pentecostal pastor. They started a family and began the process of learning to grow in their faith and in their relationship.

Begin reading after the break on p. 132 and continue until the break on p. 134.

4) As a young mother, how did Roberta train herself to love her husband unselfishly? (See middle of p. 132.)

5) Despite Roberta's concerted efforts, what was the problem area of their marriage? Why was Roger so needy of affirmation?

6) Reread the second paragraph on p. 133, starting with *Roger thirsted for affectionate words*. How did Roberta try and show her love? How did Roger react to this type of giving?

7) What exactly was Roger wanting that Roberta could not dredge up? (See second to last paragraph on p. 133, *my understanding of marriage*.)

8) How did they deal with this tension?

Summary Information: Roger and Roberta endured a family trauma as their eldest daughter suffered years of molestation from a relative and, in response, battled an addiction to Meth. Roberta worked hard to help their teenage daughter heal and recover. During this time, Roberta was less sympathetic of Roger's incessant need for verbal strokes. In a fit of anger, she even told him that if he could find someone who satisfied his yearning, she would release him from their marriage vows. Before long, Cherie, the young, pretty wife of their pastor, began paying too much attention to Roger, although Roberta did not realize it.

Begin reading on p. 135, starting with the final paragraph, *No longer an active pastor*. Continue reading until the top of p. 137, ending after *everything changed*.

9) How did Roger and Cherie's relationship begin? What made it grow?

10) What issue in her marriage made Cherie hungry for outside attention?

11) What pushed their flirtatious friendship to a new level?

Begin reading from second paragraph on p. 137 at *Roger and Cherie yearned* and continue until the break on p.138.

12) Roger felt guilty about his emotional entanglement with Cherie; how did he reveal this? Why didn't Roberta pick up on it?

13) What happened after Roger and Cherie began meeting for lunch?

14) What does Roger say near the top of p. 138 about how it felt to be passionately embracing another woman?

15) What made Roger slow down?

16) What was it about Cherie that made her irresistible to Roger? Can you relate to how he felt?

Summary Information: Roberta and Roger's daughter found the steamy emails on her father's computer and she showed them to Roberta. When Roberta confronted Roger, he confessed. Roberta's heart was shattered; she could not stand to look at Roger and told him to leave the house. He spent a tortuous night in their garage apartment, crying and begging God to restore their marriage.

Begin reading in the middle of p. 140, starting with *the next day* and continue reading until the break on p. 141.

17) What did Roger do in an attempt to reconcile with Roberta? How did she respond?

18) How did he reach out to Pastor Jim? How did he react?

Begin reading after the break on p. 141 and continue until the break on p. 143.

19) Why did Roberta decide to keep silent about her husband's fling? Was this the right thing to do?

20) Why did the family avoid returning to church? How did this absence make Roberta feel?

20) Reread the last paragraph on p. 141, *each week*, and read until the paragraph ends on p. 142. How did the Lord help Roberta cope with her anger?

21) How was Roger conflicted? What happened in his final personal conversation with Cherie?

22) How was Roberta treating her husband? What did the Lord say to her about this?

Application point: God gives us free will and holds us responsible for our choices. He does not force us to obey or believe in Him. Likewise, we should not guard our loved ones as if they are our property. After a betrayal, it takes time to rebuild trust. However, acting as another person's moral conscience usually makes everyone miserable.

We should pray about our anxieties and place our fears in the hands of God and then allow our loved ones the freedom to make authentic decisions. How does the following verse relate?

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:36

Begin reading after the break on p. 143 and continue until the bottom of p. 144, stopping before the final paragraph. (ending after *while still on earth*)

23) What did Roberta do to release her sorrow and bitterness? Did this help?

24) What verse gave Roberta strength? (See middle of p. 143)

25) How was Roger able to mature and overcome his emotional dependency? How did God bring good out of this painful mistake?

Reflection: What do you base your sense of security upon? How could you learn from Roger to place more of your security and sense of self-worth on the fact that God loves you beyond measure? How does your belief in eternal life impact your view of what is important in your life?

Consider the following verses:

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.

Phil. 3:8

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matt. 6:33

26) What message do these scriptures speak to you?

Chapter Seven

Gambling on Love

Begin reading on p. 146 and continue until the break on p. 148.

1) Describe what happened when Alice and Clint met.

2) Did Alice and Clint give much thought to their spouses before launching their affair? What was the immediate result from their employer?

3) As time passed in their marriage, what was the state of Alice and Clint's relationship?

4) What was Alice's internal struggle? (see middle of p. 148)

Begin reading after the break on p. 148 and continue until the bottom of p. 149.

5) How did Alice decide whether or not to leave Clint? How can you explain her experience?

Summary Information: Alice separated from Clint and went to live for several months as a guest at a nearby monastery. During this time, Alice tried to receive forgiveness for her past mistakes of committing adultery and breaking up two families. Yet Alice felt unworthy of God's forgiveness, in part because she had grown up shunned by her Appalachian community in West Virginia for having been born a bastard. During her formative years, Alice was told that God was stern and quick to condemn.

In contrast, Clint wasn't burdened by religious baggage; he had grown up in a comfortable home in Virginia as an athlete and a playboy whose motto seemed to be "let the good times roll".

Begin reading after the break on p. 157 and continue until the break on p. 159.

6) What happened to Clint's relationship to his kids after his marriage to Alice?

7) How would you describe the lifestyle of the newlyweds?

8) How did Father Billy work his way into their lives?

9) What impact did the priest have on them?

10) Why was it surprising when Clint stood up at the revival and asked for God's help?

Begin reading on p. 159 after the break and continue until the break on p. 161.

11) What did the two couples offer to one another? Why did their friendship click?

12) How did Alice and Clint begin to change after befriending Father Billy?

13) What happened after Father Billy and his wife moved to another city? What does this tell you about Alice and Clint's relationship with God?

Begin reading after the break on p. 161 and continue until the break on p. 163.

14) Alice's departure forced Clint to take stock of himself. What dramatic change happened when Clint went to the weekend retreat with Father Billy?

15) What happened when Clint asked Alice to give him a second chance?

16) Alice tried to create a new life for herself, but was she happy?

17) What surprising twist happened to Alice after two lonely years of divorce?

Begin reading after the break on p. 163 and continue until the break on p. 165.

18) What made Alice decide to acknowledge Clint's letter?

19) What happened when they spoke on the phone? What happened when they got together in person?

20) How had Clint changed?

Summary Information: Father Billy remarried Alice and Clint on Nov. 4, 1989. This time, they put God at the center of their relationship.

Begin reading on p. 166, third paragraph — *Afterward, Clint and Alice drove to a cozy mountain cottage.* Continue reading until the break at the bottom of the page.

21) How did Alice finally allow herself to receive God's grace and love?

22) In this second season of their marriage, what new skills did Alice and Clint employ when they would disagree?

Summary Information: Alice and Clint enjoyed another 24 years together, growing in love and in their faith, until Clint passed away after an extended illness in 2013. These had been the happiest years of Alice's life, and she did not know how to carry on without Clint.

Begin reading at the top of p. 168 and read until the break on p. 169.

22) What does Alice and Clint's story tell you about God's mercy? About redemption?

23) Why does Christ warn us against judging others?

24) How was Alice finally freed from shame?

25) What image did Alice receive to help her during her mourning for Clint? Would she have been able to receive this type of reassurance earlier in her life?

Reflection: Consider the following verses:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;

2 Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive

to my cry for mercy.

3 If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,

Lord, who could stand?

4 But with you there is forgiveness,

so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

5 I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,

and in his word I put my hope.

6 I wait for the Lord

more than watchmen wait for the morning,

more than watchmen wait for the morning.

Psalms 130:1-6

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Cor. 5:17

Therefore where do we place our hope? And what should be our response to God's mercy in our lives? Is anyone beyond the help of God?

Chapter Eight

Her Tiny Casket

Begin reading on p. 170 and continue until the break on p. 173.

1) What was Veronique's life like before the tragedy?

2) How did she respond when she was called away from her acting class and told to go to the Children's Hospital? In what way did her faith help her?

3) After seeing her daughter, how did Veronique respond?

4) What happened at home that night on her first evening without Axelle? Why did Jean's snoring bother Veronique?

5) Instead of taking a sleeping pill, what did Veronique do on the second night to help herself before she went to bed?

6) What was Veronique's experience during the visitation and funeral?

7) At first, Veronique was in a daze. What happened when she woke up?

Begin reading after the break on p. 173 to the bottom of p. 174

8) What did Jean confess to Veronique about the details of the tragedy?

10) How did she respond to the news that her husband had left the children home alone?

11) Who does Veronique turn to for help as she walked along the beach?

12) How did Veronique feel about Jean when she returned to the beach house?

13) Do you think Jean's sister was right or wrong to speak to Veronique about forgiving her husband? How did her words affect Veronique?

14) It is not uncommon for parents to divorce after the death of a child. What can be done when "a chasm of heartsickness" separates a married couple?

15) Consider what the following Bible verses tell us about God's response to our sorrows:

**Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
Psalm 34:8**

**The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
Psalm 34:18**

**The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

Psalm 23:1-4

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

What do you find reassuring about these verses?

Begin reading on p. 175 and read to the end of the chapter on p. 177.

16) Why did Veronique feel like a robot when the family returned home to Paris and carried on with their daily life? (see middle of p. 175)

17) What was her constant prayer?

18) How did God answer her prayer? What clarity did Veronique receive and how did it change her attitude?

19) How did Jean respond when she reached out to him?

20) How did their common faith help Jean and Veronique move forward? How did turning her thoughts to the Virgin Mary give courage to Veronique? (see middle of p. 176)

22). The power of positive thought and visualization can move mountains. How did Veronique use this resource?

22) What is significant about the name Raphael?

Reflection:

23) What do you think about Veronique's closing statement:

No matter how much time passes, you will never forget. But with the presence of God, the tenderness of the Holy Virgin, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you can convert your pain into acceptance and refill your heart with hope and confidence.

24) Why are so many people unable to forgive after a tragedy?

25) How can you offer comfort and strength to someone who is in pain without sounding hollow or self-righteous? Why was Veronique's sister able to offer comfort compared to Jean's sister?

Author's note: If you would like to contact us, look for our Hope & Healing in Marriage page on Facebook or leave a message on the blog Living on Jesus Street.