

MY PASTOR
— MY HUSBAND

*SMILES AND TEARS
FROM THE OTHER SIDE
OF THE PULPIT*

DIANA BRODHAGEN

MY PASTOR – MY HUSBAND

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by Diana Brodhagen

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FOREWORD

*F*or many years Diana has wanted to write a book in which she would depict insights and impressions of life from the perspective of a minister's wife. Originally she jokingly was going to "name names," however she chose not to because names and faces change, but what is really important are the observations of life, people, and ministry that she shares in her delightfully honest way.

What attracted me to Diana was her gentle pure unassuming heart toward God and her "what you see is what you get" honesty. Her "childlike faith" is refreshing, open, simple, and profound—never a dull moment! This is Diana Brodhagen; a gift from the Lord to me, our children Erin and Jesse, the many people the Lord has used her to care for, and the Body of Christ.

Diana has never desired to be on television or have a title. She says, "Her office is the third stall (bathroom) on the left." In a reflective moment she shared with me, "If I have accomplished anything in life it was to raise two godly children who love the Lord with all their heart."

I love and thank God for Diana. I know you too will enjoy and be encouraged by the truth shared in this book from her years of experience loving the Lord and caring for me, her family, and God's people.

– *Randy C. Brodhagen*
Minister of Jesus Christ and loving husband

GIVE IT TO GOD!

*Y*ou cannot force anybody to do what is right. Have you ever tried? People may kick and scream as you drag them along, telling them, “This is for your own good,” and the bottom line is they hate your guts, and eventually, exhausted and frustrated, you hate them!

My example of this is what happened with my father when he suffered a massive heart attack. They took him to the hospital (where he arrived alive) and they called me and Randy. By the time we reached the hospital, which was about seven minutes away, they said, “Go in and see him because he has had another heart attack, and he’s on his way out. Go and make your peace.”

In the meantime, he died. I sent Randy in (woman of faith that I am), and after he prayed for him, my father rose up from his bed. He walked out of the hospital five days later with no damage to his heart (ventricles, valves, arteries, etc.) whatsoever.

My father was about 70 years old at this time, and in his mind, since he had a heart attack, he came home and retired from life. He didn’t take out the garbage or do any

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of the things that he used to because he thought it was too stressful, even though he knew God had healed him when Randy laid hands on him. He gave his life to the Lord and was baptized. However, he continued to live as an invalid.

The medical staff at the hospital advised him to take walks and not lead a sedentary life. They told him to ease back into his routine one small step at a time. However, when my father returned home, their advice fell on deaf ears and all he did was to walk from the kitchen sink to the dining room table, to the sofa to the bed.

WE WERE BOTH STRESSED

My dad was always glad to see me when I would go over to visit until I started helping him for his own good. I would encourage him by asking if he had walked the dog, or I would suggest that he go for a walk with me. I kept offering things that we could do together so that he would get some well-needed exercise. He was not interested in doing anything that the cardiologist had suggested he do.

Eventually, every time I drove into the driveway, my father would run into the bathroom (for about 45 minutes) or retreat to his room to avoid me. He did not want me bothering him, trying to get him active. I stressed him out, and he stressed me out, so there was a rift.

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This was not of God. I eventually turned it over to the Lord and asked Him to deal with it, but then decided I had a better idea. If my father just wanted to sit around, that would be okay with me. I wasn't going to torment him any longer by trying to help. I also would not listen to any of his complaints. I tried to explain to him that if he got up and started to move around, his endorphins would kick in and he would feel better.

*Why couldn't he understand that once
God heals you, it is for keeps?*

He was still living like he'd had a heart attack.

THE 18-WHEELER

Then one night (around 2:30 in the morning) while my mom and dad were sleeping, some stranger started banging on their storm door, screaming and hollering, "Let me in, they're trying to kill me!"

My parents were shaken out of their bed, scared to death, and then the guy banged on the windows trying to get in. My mother was praying, and they called the police because they didn't know who he was. They live in a senior community where the sidewalks roll up at 4 or 5 P.M., so within three minutes a police car came down the

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end of their cul-de-sac and stopped.

This would-be intruder was a truck driver who had driven his 18-wheeler into the senior development. He could not get the truck around the corner because it was so long, so he drove across some woman's front lawn, up to her front door, and jack-knifed his truck. Then he ran around the block past about twelve houses and stopped at my parents' home. He was hopped up on drugs and hallucinating. When the fellow saw the police, he ran down to them and jumped in their car.

The guy was not going to hurt my parents because God has His angels around your family and friends when you pray for them (Psalm 91).



*He will surround your loved ones with
His angels if you believe—even with faith the
size of a grain of mustard seed.*

The Lord will do what He says He will. I had given my parents over to God a long time ago because even my best efforts couldn't persuade them to do what was right, although, believe me, I tried.

A VALUABLE LESSON

The moral of the story is my father had the jolt of his

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life, having been scared silly, yet his heart was fine. (He wasn't even on heart medication.) If he did not have a stroke when this occurred, nothing was ever going to bother him, and he finally realized this in his own mind. (God takes circumstances that were meant for evil and turns them around for good.)

Since 1990 he has slowly gotten back into life. But he lost many years sitting there thinking that he had to be careful. He learned a valuable lesson.

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

– Galatians 2:20

I TOOK HIS ABSENCE PERSONALLY

During the first few years of my marriage with Randy, we were ministering in a denominational church. They had so many meetings that he was gone all the time. There were finance meetings, committee meetings, school meetings, chorale meetings, missions meetings, etc. He was on the run all day long, and he was also busy in the evenings.

We had no children yet, and I had much time on my hands. I would complain, asking where he was and why I never got to see him. I took his absence personally. I

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thought to myself that if Randy really wanted to be around me, he would make the time. I figured it must be because of my cooking or my conversation because I was not as far along spiritually as he was. I had just given my heart to the Lord before we got married. (Randy taught me about a relationship with God, not a religion, which I had never heard before, and I liked it. I felt that I could have a relationship with God because this was more personal to me, even though I did not see Him.)

I told Randy, “Whatever you need to do, that’s fine, as long as it is in the Word of God.”

He was just starting the following kind of ministry: “I’m going to lay hands on people, and God is going to heal them,” and I would think, *Yeah, right.*

“LORD, IT’S YOU AND ME”

There was an empty lot behind our home. One day some kids were playing with matches and set the lot on fire. I looked over our six foot fence, saw the spreading flames and thought, *What do I do? Where’s Randy? Oh, God, help me.*

I said, “Lord, it’s You and me. If something happens, it’s Your fault because Randy’s not here, and You won’t

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bring him home.”

Don't pray like I did. That was in the beginning of my Christian walk and my heart was immature. It is a typical new Christian reaction. This is why I'm telling you to turn yourself over to God and let Him give His angels charge over you, which is the right way to pray. However, it did seem to me that whenever my spouse was gone, everything bad happened.

When we purchased our first house, we lowered the property value on the whole street, but this was how God enabled us to become homeowners. We didn't have any money. I was thankful because it was a really nice house, even though it was a “fixer upper.” There were bare wires hanging out of the ceiling because the light bulbs and all the lighting fixtures had been removed. There were holes in the door (someone had put a fist through it). We had a crawl space in the attic with an access door and further down from the door was an open hole. A previous owner had been walking around in the attic and did not know that you weren't supposed to step on drywall, and he fell through the ceiling.

However, I am very thankful for that house and the good memories we made there.

When we first moved in, every hour on the hour the police drove by and looked at our house. I thought, *This is great. What a nice safe neighborhood*, but they were looking at me like, u-hum. Come to find out, there had been three families living there before us, and the

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neighbors complained because the kids would jump off the roof.

In addition, there were people who would ring our doorbell and try to talk to us in the middle of the night. I would stand behind the door listening, but I didn't understand what they were saying. After they rang twice, and I didn't open the door, they left. I guess they thought that the former people were still living there.

WAS SOMEONE IN THE GARAGE?

On one occasion, in the middle of the night, I heard a long bang. I told Randy to get up because there was a burglar in our garage! I thought they were after our cars or whatever else was of value. I could not get Randy aroused because he was sound asleep.

I can remember another time when we had a big earthquake, I tried to awaken Randy, but all I saw was his arm going up, and he said, "Thank you, Father, you are going to calm this. Stop in Jesus' name." He prayed in a heavenly language, rolled over, and promptly went back to sleep. He gave it over to God. What did I do? I ran down the hall in the darkness!

Jesse, our son, was a little kid, and I grabbed him and headed for the door, but he smashed right into the wall. After that he told me, "Mother, when there is an another earthquake, please don't come and get me."

I GRABBED A GOLF CLUB

Back to the story of the “bang” I heard in the middle of the night. I figured, fine, if Randy is not going to go and see who is in the garage stealing our property, I will take a look. I grabbed a golf club (because they are always in a pastor’s house. Every preacher I know plays golf).

I took one of the woods because it is longer than an iron, and I went out the door. I figured that if something happened to me it would be Randy’s fault, and it would be God’s fault, because He did not make Randy get up!

I went out the front door and crept around to the side where I slammed open the garage door hoping to scare whoever was in there. I looked around the two cars, I bent down and looked underneath them, but saw no one. Then I noticed that a few items had fallen off the shelf—that was the source of the bang.

As I stood there, I heard a loud, audible voice—the Lord’s voice! There wasn’t anyone in the garage except ME!

It was like that old Mother Nature commercial. It was saying, “See, it’s just you and Me, Diana. I am your source.”

A LESSON IN FAITH

No disrespect to anybody, Randy was doing exactly

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what God had him to do. Nothing! Me, I gave it to the Lord and quickly took it back! I was worrying about myself, and I was freaked out, but God still used this negative situation. I felt like such a dummy because while the Lord was watching over me, I thought I could do a better job.

I stood in the garage freezing and feeling like a real idiot.

Thankfully, I have progressed enough that my faith is not based on whether Randy is home or if I can call him or another person on the telephone. My faith is between me and God. That is the relationship. When fear comes, I must respond in faith. The fear will disappear!

Every time you call on God and ask Him to help you, does He not do it? He is there in every situation. You don't need another person who knows more scriptures than you. I know the passages are in the bible, but I cannot always spout them off the top of my head. However, I can remember every blonde joke from the year one!

God has a sense of humor; otherwise I would have been dead a long time ago. He knows how I am; He made me, and I can't be something that I'm not. I can look scriptures up in my concordance, I can study them, and then I go blank. God does not want rehearsed messages. He wants words that spring from our hearts.

“OKAY, LORD”

I made a deal with the Lord because preaching from the pulpit is hard for me. I told Him, “I’ll take a shower, I’ll get dressed, I’ll go up front and open my mouth, then You must do the rest because I am not responsible for anything else.”

Even though I did not attend seminary, all I had to do was be willing. It’s not necessary to have a degree. God knows where your heart is. Just respond, “Okay, Lord.”

When I mess up, I often know it, but I just want to have that third glazed donut. Then I am sick to my stomach! Other times I have been stupid and walked into situations without thinking.

God will take you right where you are and help you if you ask Him. He will be right there and work through you.

Find out what the Lord wants you to do, if anything.

***“Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not to your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him, and
He will make your paths straight.”***

– Proverbs 3:5-6

You do not always have to *do* something—or always to be the “fixer.” You don’t need to be constantly in control. It is not your business; it is God’s business.

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Be honest and ask if you are trying to take it upon yourself to intervene or trying to control a situation. People may not want your input or always agree with what you suggest.

CAST IT ALL ON HIM

We all deal with stress in our lives at some point. It can show up in the physical realm with an infirmity. Maybe your job is tension-filled or you might have lost it for one reason or another, which may result in a financial hardship. Relationships with family members can also be a source of stress.

In my 30-plus years of being married to Pastor Randy, I have learned what I am sharing with you. And one of the major principles is to *give your problem to God*— and don't take it back.

Scripture tells us:

***“Humble yourselves, therefore,
under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift
you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety
on Him because He cares for you.”***

– 1 Peter 5:6-7

***“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:
Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The
Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything,***

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but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

– Philippians 4:4-6

TWO STRONG-WILLED PEOPLE

Let me take you back to the time in my Christian walk when Randy and I were first married because this is when I was first saved.

My mother-in-law taught me to go to God on my knees more than once, keeping me in the deliverance line for a long time. We are two strong-willed people who both speak our minds.

Randy's family lives in the northwest, and we don't get to see them often. We were married for six months before I ever met or spoke to Randy's mother. She did not like to fly and was unable to make it to the wedding. In addition, Randy's family is very tall. His mother and sisters are about 5'-10", his brother is 6'-5", and Randy is 6'-1".

There I came, 5'6", weighing in at 116 pounds back in those days. The first time I met his mother, she looked at me, squeezed my wrist, and asked me if I had been sick long!

We would go and visit them for a week when we had vacation time, or Randy's mother and her husband would drive down to us. They were there one morning when Randy was at church, and I had a Bible study to attend.

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I asked if they would like to join me, but they said they would rather relax at home and would see me when I returned. So I replied, “No problem. *Mi casa es su casa*. Take your shoes off, put your feet up on the coffee table and make yourself at home.”



My house is to live in, not to look at.

“LET IT BE!”

I was happy, thinking we got along well and had been having a really good time. I smiled and went on my way. I thought everything was fine until I returned home and found that my whole house had been rearranged. Remember, I was a new Christian working out my salvation. She was trying to bless me, but she majorly stressed me out!

My mother-in-law thought she was helping, as she had her own ideas because she is an artist and a free thinker. I was trying to go along with all of that but was having a very hard time with it.

I told Randy that I did not appreciate the way his mother had rearranged our furniture. I wanted to hit her!

There was Randy, bless him, caught between his wife and his mother. Ever the peacemaker with a wonderful heart, he said, “Let it be, and when she leaves, we will

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put it back where you like it.”

So I reluctantly said, “Fine,” which was a mistake. Perhaps I should have just said, “No, I’m sorry, this is my house,” because I’d heard that when you concede something like that, people will walk over you for the rest of your life.

When they left, we moved everything back and it was great, but I told Randy if he wanted to spend time with his family he would have to go and see them alone. I had committed to our marriage and to Randy until natural death do us part, but I didn’t know his mother!

Eventually his mother and I were able to work things out. She tells me something, and I tell her something, and we find a happy middle ground to this day, which is nice. I just love her. In the beginning, she was trying to bless me, but instead she created major stress in my life in more ways than she was aware of at the time.

THE EGG BASKET

Fast forward to when our granddaughter was 18 months old.

Erin, our daughter, is married and has a daughter, Natalie, and a son, little Giovanni. Erin is a registered dental assistant and puts braces on kids’ teeth. She did this work before she got married, and later returned to help in the office. It turned out that she went to the dental office every Thursday when Natalie was small. It was to

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my delight because I got to watch over and play with Natalie all day.

However, by the time 5 o'clock came around, I was dead tired. I would drive home, see Randy and say, "Hello and goodnight. I'm going to bed because your granddaughter has worn me out."



Natalie loved running up and down the steps all day. When I was 25 it was easy to keep up with my children, but now that I'm older, the spirit is willing but the flesh gets even!

Erin and her husband have done a great job with Natalie and Giovanni. They are wonderful kids. I thank God because they are such blessings in my life.

When I was babysitting at Erin's house, I would like to keep busy so if I saw a dish left over from breakfast I would put it in the dishwasher to help her out, or I might throw a load of clothes into the washing machine. I tried to be a blessing to her.

Erin had a double wide refrigerator. On the bottom shelf was the egg basket, and as soon as I opened up the refrigerator looking for something, Natalie would be standing next to me with the eggs in her hands. So I took the egg basket and moved it up higher where Natalie couldn't reach it. Wasn't I trying to help? Isn't it a better

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idea to have eggs higher so that the little ones can't get to them?

When Erin arrived home, she was always very gracious, I said my goodbyes and I left. Then a little later she called and asked me if I had moved the eggs. I explained that Natalie was into the eggs so I had moved them.

Erin then told me, “Yes, she does that, but she always puts them back.”

She went on to explain that Natalie had never broken an egg, or thrown one at her, so there was no reason to move the egg basket. I realized at that precise moment I was becoming like my mother-in-law! So I repented, and I learned my lesson. Even though I thought I was helping, I created stress in Erin's life, and I was stressed too.

DON'T LIMIT THE LORD

Christians are not perfect; they just ask for forgiveness.

You will never get indigestion admitting that you are wrong and need help. God loves to move when people ask Him. When I try to accomplish something by myself, I am limiting the Lord. I learned a long time ago that I would rather talk to the Lord a little farther up in the pit than way down towards the bottom.

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If you can change it, do so, but if you can't, give it to God.

When you are in a situation where you are being squeezed, the fastest way out of it is to say, "Lord, I'm feeling all this pressure. What am I doing wrong? Why am I losing my joy? Why am I feeling bent out of shape?" He will tell you, and if you are smart (and it doesn't have anything to do with you being an aged Christian. I don't care how many years you've been born again), you will make the change.

Regardless of the situation you face or the circumstance you are going through, remember, give it to God!

TAKE AUTHORITY

*O*ur home had a two car garage, and we built another two car garage in front of that, turning the original one into a studio apartment. When family came to visit, they could stay there and have a little privacy and would not have to share the bathroom with the kids.

Earlier, when Erin turned 18, after she graduated from high school and was going to dental school, she decided that she wanted to move into the studio apartment and become independent. Her bedroom was across from us and the apartment was on the other side of the kitchen, the total opposite end of the house.

We gave the kids a lot of freedom within reason. The rule of the house was when you went somewhere you had to tell us where you were going and what time you thought you would be home. We never had a problem with Erin. She would call by 10 o'clock and tell us where she was, what she was doing, and when we could expect her. We had a good relationship when she was aged 18 to age 21 ½. That's when she met her future husband, and

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became Miss Independent. She was engaged and planning to be married.

From January until April (when they tied the knot), I was frustrated with her. She was trying to spread her wings, and it was a difficult time because she wasn't a child anymore. We never told her that she could do what she wanted when she was 18. We just skipped over that part, but now she was 21.

*Erin decided that she was old enough,
engaged, and didn't have to let us know
anymore when she was coming home.*

“WHERE ARE YOU?”

I go to bed at about 8:30 or 9 o'clock. I read in my bed, get sleepy, and I'm out. But I rise early, around 5:30 or 6 o'clock. I'm an early morning person, while Erin is an evening person.

I would say to the kids, “When you get home, come in and let me know. Then I don't have to wake up and worry, ‘Oh, no, it's 1 o'clock. Are the kids home? Are they stuck on the freeway with a flat tire? Did somebody run them off the road?’” (We'd had that trouble with Erin once.) So when the kids would tell me they were home, I would fall back to sleep.

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The usual routine was, they would come on my side of the bed because Randy would give them to God, trust His angels to watch over them, and then he would get some sleep, but not me.

Not long after Erin was engaged I awakened at 1 o'clock in the morning and found that she was still not home. Anxious, I prayed and gave it to God, then called her on her cell phone. "Where are you?"

She replied, "I'm on my way home."

What happened that night was something she didn't expect.

A SURPRISE FOR ERIN

Our kids didn't give us problems; it was just me expecting, wanting, praying—then pulling it back again. Erin was attending night school. She would see John, her fiancé, and they would go out to dinner or catch a late movie. It was perfectly legitimate. They were with a bunch of people, but still she was not home.

Many nights, Erin began coming in without letting me know. She felt that because she was almost 22 years old and engaged, that was good enough. But I was still trying to exercise my authority.

I appealed to her, asking, didn't she want her mother to sleep well? She would reply, "It doesn't bother Dad. Why does it bother you?"

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I pressed on, telling her that I did not demand much. I only wanted to know when she was home for my own peace of mind.

About 11:30 one evening the Lord happened to wake me up. No Erin. So I waited and waited until 1 o'clock, and still no Erin. I finally got tired of walking around the house waiting and not having an answer on the cell phone, so I went to her room and climbed into her bed.

She finally came into her room late that night, shutting the door quietly, and turned the light on...and out of her bed the mommy rose! I sat up, threw the covers off me, and she screamed. She freaked out!

I was laughing so hard I almost wet my pants!

“What are you doing? she asked. “You scared the life out of me.”

I told her that I just wanted to make sure she arrived home safely. With that, I said “Good night,” and left.

She was still gasping for air. I think she must have been up for an hour or so because she had so much adrenaline pumping.

The next morning I told Erin, “You know what? Sleeping in your bed works really great for me because I’ll get some sleep until you arrive!”

She never did that again. She would always let me know what she was doing and when I could expect her. Then she got married—thank God!

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TAKE CAPTIVE!

Taking authority and doing what is right is a command of the Lord.

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

– 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

“Finally brothers [and sisters], whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

– Philippians 4:8

CUTTING THE APRON STRINGS

We need to take authority. It was not so much for her, it was for me, but she did not understand my emotions. I was going through the withdrawal of my little girl

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leaving, my friend who I hung out with. She was leaving me alone to fend for myself with all that testosterone in the house, for there were no other females. I was outnumbered, and I was no good because I can't play PlayStation. I don't know how to do that thumb stuff, and who wants to?

Have you ever watched your males in the house playing PlayStation? They move from side to side, and the foot goes up, and they are leaning, and I'm thinking, *Who wants to look like they're throwing a fit or being electrocuted?*

*All these things were rushing
through my mind as my daughter was
preparing to begin her married life, even though
I was trying to cut the apron strings.*

We love her husband, John. If I had done background checks on everybody and picked him personally, he could not have been any more wonderful, and I had nothing to do with it. It was all God and Erin.

Now as a mother she understands because she had a little one taking eggs out and going, "ooh." And now she has a little boy to do the same. Payback—it is so wonderful. I look at her kids and proudly say, "You know what they did today?"

Now at 8:30 P.M. my head is on my pillow at home,

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and I am in my bed reading, and she is dealing with her children.

FRIGHTENED ON THE FREEWAY

I remember another situation when I had to take authority.

Thursday nights when Erin arrived home from work, I would sit and talk to her for an hour or so, then leave her house between 6 and 6:30 P.M. It is 40 miles from her house to our house door to door.

One Thursday evening I was driving down the freeway (I'm not telling you how fast I was going) on my way home, keeping up with the traffic in the left lane, but I seemed to be passing everybody. The left lane is the passing lane, but there was a small car in front of me, and it was dark at that time of night, so I came up behind the car quickly. I was close, but I was not on their bumper. I was keeping a reasonable distance away, doing nothing wrong.

Finally, I flashed my lights so he would know that I wanted to go around him. The driver did not move over so I decided to pass him from the right lane, and as I did, I noticed with my peripheral vision that his windows were darkened and I could not see in.

When I reached a safe distance in front of his vehicle, I moved back over to the left lane, and the next thing I knew, I could not see his headlights. I could see only the

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top of his car because he was a half inch from my bumper! He had decided to speed up and hang right on my tail.

BOXED IN

My angels go with me even when I am out of line and doing stupid stuff. They give me grace and mercy. Still, I could feel myself getting panicked!

Then I suddenly realized he had moved over in front of me and slowed down. I was praying in the Spirit, asking God what I should do. I wanted to play “big monster truck” and run the guy over, but I knew I had to act responsibly and couldn’t do that. I may have been within my rights because what he was doing was wrong—but so were my thoughts.

If you are a Christian, the enemy does not tap the door when he sees that you are out of line. He kicks the door wide open so he can take the best shot he can.

God showed me what was about to happen and what the aggressive driver was going to do. It was slow motion in my mind. As he pulled in front of me, I pulled back and took my foot off the gas. The guy slowed down to

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the point where he was almost on my front bumper, and now there was more traffic. I could not escape or go anywhere because I was boxed in.

I kept praying in the Spirit, asking God to bless that jerk!

HE STEPPED ON THE GAS

You need to pray a blessing on such people rather than cursing them. When you pray and allow God to do what He wants to, you can accomplish things you don't think are possible.

Then I saw a hand coming out of the passenger side of the car in front of me, clutching a huge drink (I could see a straw sticking out of it). Then he reached over to the middle of his car and took aim.

What the Lord showed me was that the passenger wanted to throw that drink on my windshield so I could not see where I was going, and I would have an accident. If that had happened I would have surely taken out other people.

I watched the drink leave his hand and crash right over on the yellow line of the freeway, so I was thanking God. Although I could not see very well, and I don't know what kind of car it was, in the next moment it flashed into my head to get his license plate number, but I did not have a pen or paper. Just then, the guy flew forward. He stepped on the gas pedal and went from 0 to 60 in half a second. He was out of there!

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I was still praying because I was so upset. I asked the Lord what He wanted me to do. Then, knowing that I was not going to call the police because I didn't have the license plate number, I said, "God, you deal with him," which was probably the best thing that I could have said.

Even though the guy could have run me off the road, I knew the Lord would deal with him.



***Remember, you can't get away with anything.
I don't care whether you are a Christian or not.***

God saw the situation and He knew the intention of that person's heart—and would deal with him accordingly. The Lord's vengeance is far more severe than ours.

I prayed that the driver would not harm anyone on the freeway. I also prayed that he would be touched by the Lord and repent and see what danger he was causing. I realized there were other people in his car, and kids like to show off in front of each other. By passing his car, I did not mean for any of this to happen.

CHECK YOUR HEART

It takes just one second. I could have had a blow-out or endangered another person's life chasing him to get

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the license number, but it was not worth it. I turned it over to God and did not take it personally and tried not to overly stress because of the situation.

Take authority and don't let other people blame you. However, I could not have lived with myself if somebody else was injured. I have to live with me and the consequences of the things that I do.

Praying in the Spirit calms me down and gets me out of the flesh. Besides, I need to be a good witness. I need to answer to God, let alone my husband.

“Don't cut off your nose to spite your face” even though you may be in the right. Nothing is worth losing your salvation or your life.

A MATTER OF DISCRETION

*“Like a gold ring in a pig’s
snout is a beautiful woman who shows
no discretion [good sense].”*

– Proverbs 11:22

*D*iscretion comes from the root word *discrete*, which means “to discern; being careful about what one says or does; prudent, especially keeping silent or preserving confidences when necessary.”

When I read this, I thought to myself, *I’m almost like the one with the gold ring in the nose*. In fact, I had a gold earring that I was going to put in my nose when I spoke to the congregation, but I couldn’t find it so it must not have been of God!

Discretion is all about words—knowing when to speak, knowing when to be silent. I am sure you have been in a situation where you opened your mouth long

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enough to switch feet, and you wish you could pull the words back in again.

HIS PULPIT, MY KITCHEN

A good example of this lack of judgment is many years ago when Randy and I first started to pastor in a denominational church. It seemed he had gone to seminary his whole life, and I was a girl that went to church twice a year: on Christmas to see the poinsettias and on Easter to see the lilies.

Randy knew the Lord, and all about His Word, and I was just along for the ride. I was going to be a good wife, a good mother, and he was going to do his thing. In fact, we made an agreement that I was never to be in his pulpit, and he was never going to be in my kitchen. Well, he liked to be in my kitchen, so there I was. We always tease each other about this.

I was the silent partner and backed him up in whatever he said or did. He had such an infinite knowledge and recollection of scriptures. God has blessed him incredibly that way, and I was just going to be the dutiful little housewife that I knew how to be—and I was learning how to clean toilets!

SINK OR SWIM!

I was only 23 and Randy 25 when he accepted a pastorship. We moved to a small town in California, which was a shock because I am originally from a large city in Delaware. All of my family and friends, everybody I knew, were all back there.

I would get to talk to them on Saturdays when the rates were low. Other than that, I jumped in feet first and was going to sink or swim.

I had no doubts in my mind that Randy could do what he was trained and called for. That was not even a thought, but I was still working on my part. I cannot quote many scriptures from memory to this day. I can remember what they say, but I can't remember where they are in the bible, and I take liberties to paraphrase them. However, I can remember jokes—and could from the time I was in high school and college. I wondered how this was going to edify the Lord, and I did not want to embarrass Randy.



God knows that I have a sense of humor and there is a reason I am on this earth other than to be a housewife, a mother, and partner to Randy.

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I slowly began building a little courage. I trusted in whatever God said, that it was true and it would come to pass. Back then the only two scriptures that came to me were “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord” (that’s when I sing), and “If God can use a donkey, He can use me.”

I took the basic scriptures and said I was going to do my part and God was going to do the rest. With no biblical training, no anything, I accepted the Lord Jesus. I knew *about* Him, but I did not have a personal relationship with Him until I met Randy, and then I found out what going to church was all about. As I mentioned in chapter one, it was for finding a relationship. It wasn’t for a religion. And you didn’t have to prove it to me. I knew it because it said so in the Bible—and that God was not a liar.

*If it was written in the scriptures, it
was important enough for me to live by.*

JUST ME AND GOD

Here I was, 23, and Randy pastored at a church where the membership consisted mostly of elderly people. Not many teenagers or children, mainly retirees, 65 and up.

I don’t think they appreciated “whipper snappers”

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like me, especially since I was a woman of the 1960's. "I am woman" was an expression I used back then, and I was earlier on a path toward a career.

Now, in 1975, I walked down the aisle of the church looking for a seat with a rather short skirt on, and half the congregation were aghast. The following week I wore pants and the other half of the congregation went "oohh." Then they found out I couldn't sing, I didn't lead the choir, and I didn't teach Bible study. I was history!

So, I did not really have any friends. We did not have any dogs, no kids, I didn't even own a bird. Well, we had snails in the back yard, and I was careful not to step on them because they were the only ones that hung around me.

It was pretty crazy in those days. Coming from not being very sure of myself, not being very confident in the Lord, and with no friends and family to back me up, it was just me and God, which is the very, very best place to be. But at the time I was at my wits end. I did not have anybody to whine or cry to because if I went to my husband, he would say, "Don't worry, this scripture says..." and that was supposed to make me feel better.

I was emotional, especially at that time of the month, and I was going nuts. It was very lonely—in a new town, not knowing anybody. No one was really interested in what I did or said, and they were looking at me with one eye.

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A PAIR OF PAJAMAS

One day a woman in our congregation called and invited me to go with her to a shopping center. It was around Christmas time, all the decorations were out, and she offered to show me around our city and the surrounding communities. I immediately said yes and thanked the Lord for my new friend.

We headed down to the mall, making small talk. This woman was about 25 years older than I was, but she was one of the “young” ones. She had a teenage son. We were talking and shopping, getting familiar with each other, and I thought we were enjoying an excellent day.

We were buying Christmas presents, but I didn't know what to get for Randy—it seemed like he had everything he needed. I thought maybe I would buy him a pair of pajamas.

I was nervous about being with her and not wanting to make an idiot of myself and look bad for Randy. We found a nice pair of pajamas, and I bought them. This was my only purchase of the day besides lunch. I probably spent about four to five hours with this woman, and then she dropped me off at home. I told Randy I had a wonderful time

TWISTING THE TRUTH

The next thing I heard around the congregation was, “Pastor Randy doesn’t wear any pajamas.”

People were whispering, and the rumors were flying. Randy looked at me in dismay and asked, “Where did *that* come from?”

Shocked, I replied, “I don’t know!”

I was being myself with this woman, but she was gathering information—even more than I had shared. Through the discernment that I have built since then, I now realize she was one of those individuals who liked to drop names. Evidently this makes you feel important.

She was letting people know that she went shopping with Pastor Randy’s wife, which is how I was known then. I don’t think they even remembered my first name.

From our shopping trip she had a piece of truth that I bought the pajamas, and then she twisted and embellished it to make a better story.

Randy and I finally figured out where the untruth came from. I cried because I was so upset.

“That’s her problem,” Randy said, trying to comfort me. “But you have to learn when to say something and when not to. You have to find out who your friends really are and who are just hanging with you (for whatever motivation). Then you have to deal with how

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you will react to this person.”

I quickly replied, “That’s easy; I’m going to go rip her head off.”

He said, “No, you can’t do that.”

I continued, “Okay, I’ll just start a nasty rumor about her.”

“No, you can’t do that either.”

To say the least, I was very emotional and all fleshed out—totally not in the Spirit, yet I had to deal with her. The next Sunday I knew I had to walk into church with my head held high like nothing ever happened, and pray a blessing on this woman—when in reality I wanted to choke her. It was a tough learning experience for me.

QUITE A TEST

These are some lessons in life that you learn the hard way, that stab you in the heart, rip your insides out, and you have to ask yourself, “Am I a good Christian?”



You must decide how you will deal with another human being, and this is when you find out what you are really made of. In the beginning of your walk with Christ, it can be quite a test.

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On my part it was a lack of judgment and discernment. On her part it was violating trust.

From that time forward I learned to keep it at, “Hi, how are you doing?” for she is a child of God and He loves her. I can like her from afar. I don’t have to have a personal relationship with her, but I have to pray a blessing on her and move on.

I learned that if I wanted some important information spread throughout the congregation, guess who I would tell it to? She was my own personal PA System.

It only took one time, and I learned.

WATCH YOUR WORDS

Randy and I were out with some friends one evening. I think there were six of us in a car, and we were headed to a restaurant. Everyone was enjoying a lively conversation. I had just learned Ephesians 5:4: “*No idle jesting.*”

When there was a gap in the conversation, I had a tendency to fill it. Usually it was my flesh that wanted to break the silence. I felt it was my unspoken responsibility of the universe to interject some thought, but most of the time I did not have anything to say that was of God.

This was in the beginning, remember? Basically the Ephesians 4 scripture means that if you do not have anything godly to say, shut up. Therefore, I was quiet.

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I had thoughts running through my head about what I was going to say, and I wondered, *Is that edifying to God?* No, so I would forget it and would not say anything—and then another thought would pop in. *Is that glorifying God? Is that good? Is that worthy?* No? Be quiet, then.

I was not at a loss for things to talk about in the flesh before I asked for wisdom and discernment. Finally, about 20 minutes later, Randy got worried and looked over at me,

“Are you sick?”

“No, I’m not sick. Why?”

“You’re just so quiet. I’ve never seen you like this.”

I informed him, “I don’t have anything that is of God to say.”

“Oh,” he replied.

Then he gave me one of those one-eyebrow-up-in-the-air kind of looks. It dawned on me that if you don’t have anything to fill the gap, ask the Lord to give you the right words.

***“A word aptly spoken [a word spoken in season]
is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”***

– Proverbs 25:11

AT THE LUNCHEON

On another occasion I attended a national Pastors’

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conference with Randy. When wives were invited, I loved to go and talk with them. They have experiences that I am either going through or have already faced, and I can learn from them and grow in wisdom.

At one of the sessions there were probably 2,000 pastors' spouses at a luncheon in the hotel ballroom. We were sitting around tables that seated about ten women each. Many of the ladies in attendance preached on a regular basis and were introduced as Pastor "so and so." And some married couples co-pastor, which is nice for them.

I didn't do any of this. I stayed home and baked cookies, so I felt a little stressed out. I just sat there with my hands folded thinking about what was appropriate to say, and what was not. (I have gotten better through the years, though.)

Around the table, the women were introducing themselves, and I did the same. Then, I had to figure out which fork to use for the salad because they did not set the table like the one at my house. After I figured it out and didn't drink out of somebody else's cup, I felt pretty secure. I was sharing with a lady next to me, and we were asking questions and getting to know each other. Where are you from? Florida, Minnesota, wherever.

THEY WERE IN SHOCK!

During the meal there was another gap of silence. We had been talking about how to remember things.

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I was saying that as a helpmate, I had a knack for remembering phone numbers. I wanted to explain to the people that when I see something written down, usually a name or a phone number, I can remember it. I am blessed with being able to do this, and it came from learning jokes during my youth and college years.

Then we began talking about God. There I was sitting at the table with all those wonderful Christian women, and I wanted to share how the Lord had blessed me. Finally, I plucked up enough courage and spoke up, stating that I could remember things really well because, “The Lord had blessed me with a pornographic mind.”

The women at the table gasped! They sucked in all the air that was in the room, and I thought, *What’s the matter with them?*

Then I heard my own voice, it was all done in slow motion, and I could hear myself say “pornographic” instead of “photographic.”

I lamented, *Randy’s going to kill me!*

In the back of my head I was asking, “*What are you gonna do now?*” *Is that you, Lord?* I was waiting for a lightning bolt or something. Anyway, I just looked around the table, as the women were sitting there with their mouths open, and I said, “Oh, my gosh!” I quickly back peddled and tried to explain, but they were in hysterics.

They thought it was extremely funny. But if there

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was a hole I could have crawled into, I would have.

I finally recovered from my embarrassment. Fortunately, this took place as I was growing in God. The Lord was allowing me to discover that He can use me to help people to laugh.

***“For his God doth instruct him to
discretion, and doth teach him.”***

– Isaiah 28:26 KJV

We are all ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be willing to open your mouth and let Him give you the right words to say.

TOTAL FORGIVENESS

*Y*ears ago, Randy was driving home one evening, and we were supposed to go out to dinner. He was on the freeway and turned onto the ramp near where we live. As he was making the turn, a truck in front of him hit a six inch length of metal sprinkler pipe and flipped it up in the air. Like a missile, it came through Randy's windshield, hit the rear view mirror, which struck him in the face, and then blew out the driver's side window.

The police first thought that a sniper up on the hill had fired a shot. Later when I looked at him, he had a big cut in his cheek and a hole large enough to put your finger through and pull it out the other side. His palate was split in two, and the top and bottom jaws were broken. Blood was everywhere.

The first thing Randy did was try to save the car that he was in, so he rolled down the window and put his bleeding head out the window at the bottom of the off ramp. (I'm sure he looked like Freddy Kruger II.)

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A woman was just going toward the on-ramp. She saw him and immediately dialed 911 and then called the “700 Club” to ask for prayer. The paramedics arrived and tried to put him in the ambulance. Before he would agree to go, my husband prayed, “Father, am I in Your will?” And the Lord told him he was right in the center of His palm.

Randy continued to talk coherently, and he never lost consciousness the whole time. They loaded him into ambulance and shipped him off to the hospital.

MY HEART WAS POUNDING

Then they called me as I was waiting for him at home. I had two small kids, and the babysitter was still there when I received a telephone call from somebody who wanted to speak to Diana Brodhagen.

The man asked, “Can you come to the hospital? We have somebody here who needs you.”

I said, “Okay.” (I thought it was a member of the congregation.)

Then I asked, “By the way, who is it?”

“Uh, Randy Brodhagen.”

My heart stopped in my chest. They said he had been involved in an accident, and I needed to come to the hospital right away.

I don’t recall driving to the hospital, and my driving isn’t that good even when I *do* remember where I am going.

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I do know, however, that I prayed in the Spirit all the way. If I had stopped, I would have cried, and I would have flipped out because fear just rises up and grabs your insides.

When I reached the emergency room, Randy wasn't there. They said, "Oh, the ambulance is en route."

I made it to the hospital before he did! My heart was pounding, but through my praying, the Lord was calming me down.

"I CAN FIX IT"

The Bible says when you don't know how to pray, pray in the Spirit. But my natural mind began to question, "*What if he's dead? What if he got his head cut off?*" Fear was flooding my mind, and I did not want to hear it, so I continued to pray in the Spirit and immediately I felt better.



The Lord was telling me, "Whatever the enemy is trying to do with him, I can fix. I made him."

I said, "Okay, good," and I knew in my heart he wasn't going to die. I just knew Satan could not take him because Randy is too strong in the Lord.

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I was waiting in the emergency room, anxiously looking out the double doors, when the ambulance came rolling in. I suddenly stopped praying in the Spirit and thought, *He must be dead. Why are they not in a hurry? You're not in a hurry if the person is already dead.*

Fear tried to grip me again. I prayed some more, and all the while I had faith. I just didn't feel it. *He's dead.* No, that was not the Father's voice. I know God, and I went back to the original voice when He assured me, "Whatever the enemy is trying to do to him, I can fix. We can lay hands and pray over him."

I was bound and determined to take my husband's own hand and lay it on himself because I knew he had such tremendous faith.



***If I had even the slightest doubt about my own belief,
I knew his faith would be strong enough.***

TO HELL AND BACK

Then came the ambulance. They threw open the back doors and out came a gurney with a man on it. I saw the outline of the shoes underneath the sheet, but I couldn't see the face. My mind, brilliant as it is, still questioned if he was dead.

He was covered up. I took a deep breath and prayed

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again. *No, he is not dead because it's not his time to go yet.*

I couldn't stand it anymore, and I ran out the door and recognized his pair of shoes, and exclaimed, "Yeah, that's him." *It's him, and he's dead. No!*

I finally hollered, "Is that Randy Brodhagen?" The lady technician turned around and said, "Oh yeah, he's fine."

In my relief, I wanted to kill him! But not really. For those two long minutes of waiting for the ambulance to back in, I had made a couple of trips to hell and back!

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?"

I saw him laying on the gurney and he tried to bring his head up. He could hardly speak. He was bleeding, and every time his heart beat, blood would squirt out onto the front of his light colored shirt. He was a mess. They brought him into emergency, and I guess they had put a gown on him in the ambulance because the whole front of it was also soaked with blood. He was not able to talk audibly because of his injuries. He was talking to me like his mouth was full of food.

He somehow managed to climb off the examining table because on his way in he saw some people he knew in the waiting room, and he wanted to pray over them! Blood soaked, as if out of a horror movie, he was going to lay hands on others and pray. I said, "Sit back on the

bed. You're going to scare them to death. What are you doing?"

He wouldn't take no for an answer, so bloody as he was, and as people were looking at him in horror, he made his way to the waiting room. They could not keep him long enough on the examining table to stitch him up or to find out the true extent of his injuries.

After he prayed for several people, he came back and allowed the doctors to examine and work on him. We did not have health insurance at that time, so they sent us to the county hospital. It was all in God's hands, because the specialist in the area of orthodontic surgery was teaching at the hospital that night, and guess who worked on Randy? It was this doctor, thank the Lord.

Randy was never in any pain, never lost consciousness, or took any pills. It was a miracle of God.

THE PHONES WERE RINGING

I was completely helpless in the hospital. All I wanted to do was to change the bed pan and tuck the sheet in. But I couldn't do anything. I was totally out of my element, so Randy finally suggested, "Look, go home. Answer the questions and tell everybody how I am doing" because so many concerned people were already calling.

He said, "Take care of the kids and you can come back later." And that's what I did.

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He was in the hospital five days, but he waited two days before they could do surgery. They had to open his mouth, even though it was broken, to make an impression. It was awful, but the Lord held him in His arms this entire time.



He was in perfect peace, and when I went home, so was I—because I knew God had taken control.

RESULTS OF FEAR AND DISOBEDIENCE

At the hospital I asked, “What about your family? Should I call them?”

“No,” replied Randy. “Wait until after my surgery, when I’m fine; then call them.”

I replied, “Okay.”

However, my fear and my disobedience kicked in. I convinced myself that since there was a lady visiting in the area at the time of the accident who was a friend of Randy’s mother, she would probably call her. (Now remember, Randy had told me, “Don’t call my family until after the surgery.”)

The operation was to be on a Wednesday, and he wanted me to call his family on Friday, and he was planning to be back in church that weekend.

I thought, *Oh, what happens if this woman hears*

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about it? So many people were aware of the accident and were praying. It was on the “700 Club” within five minutes. People we hadn’t seen or heard from in probably ten years called to find out how Randy was. I was at home fielding questions and making everybody aware that God was doing a good thing, telling them to keep praying.

SHOULD I CALL?

There were many lies being spread about the healing ministry at that time—that we did not believe in doctors or hospitals. So it was my opportunity to minister.

Many people needed to understand about faith healing, laying on of hands, and such things. When Randy had asked the Lord what to do, the Lord had told him, “Let them set the teeth, and I will cement them.”

I was convinced if my mother-in-law found out, she was going to go ballistic because the woman that was in the area was one of her best friends. I was sure she would call and let his mom know. But I did not want her to hear it from somebody outside of the family because we had the full information, and I didn’t want her to be upset.

I was convinced in my mind that I was doing the absolutely best thing that I could at that time. I even found scriptures to back it up, but I really wanted to call her because of fear—fear of her finding out, or fear of me not doing an adequate job of communicating.

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So I dialed her number and said, “Randy has been in an accident, but he’s alright.”

Those were the first words out of my mouth. I told her what had happened, and explained he was in surgery as we spoke, and we would call her tomorrow.

I let her know that everything was expected to go smoothly and we anticipated a full recovery.

OPENING THE ENEMY’S DOOR

To make a long story short, after she got off the phone, she began wondering why I had not called her the evening it had happened. She was a Christian too, so why had she not been notified so she could pray? Wasn’t her faith good enough?—all the lies the devil whispers.



***I had opened up the door to the enemy.
In fact both doors were wide open because of
my disobedience and fear.***

The turmoil rippled through the whole family—his two sisters and their family, his brother and his family, and his dad and step-mom. So there was a large number of people talking among themselves, each contributing different pieces of information.

The next morning when I received the report from Randy that everything was excellent, and he was coming

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home that night. I was so happy and grateful to God.

“WHY DIDN’T YOU CALL US?”

Then I answered a phone call from Randy’s mother. She ripped into me one side and down the other because the enemy, as I said, was not only in the process of shredding me, he was trying to break the relationship with all of our family up north.

She told me exactly what she was thinking: “Why didn’t you call us? We’re Christians too, and we can pray. Aren’t our prayers good enough?”

They were hurt and so misinformed, and the devil had taken advantage of the situation because I did not follow instructions.

Randy knew his family better than I did. He gave me the word, but in doing this “good thing” for everybody concerned, I ripped it all apart.

*“Better is a neighbor that
is near than a brother far off.”*

– Proverbs 27:10

Randy’s mother and I had a total blowup over who wears the pants in the family—about things that were just not of God. She hollered at me, and I hollered back!

I KNEW I HAD BLOWN IT

For two Christians, everything seemed to go up in

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smoke and out the door. Things we had known about each other for ten years, we dragged up and I was in a cat fight, big time, with all the claws bared. There was nothing held back. She spilled her guts, and I spilled mine, and finally I couldn't handle it anymore.

I knew I had blown it big time!

Right then and there I saw disobedience and fear, and I knew I had opened up a can of worms.

I said, "You know what? I can't talk to you anymore. I'm sorry," and I hung up.

This infuriated her even more, so she called back again, and I called Randy. I was in tears, and I was so upset when I finally saw the whole picture.

I had just been "played"—and I did it to myself. I thought that by telling his mother first before her best friend got to her, I was doing the right thing. I did not want her to hear it from anyone other than family. Nobody could convince me that what I was doing was wrong because I had talked myself into it based on fear.

Needless to say, Randy preached the next weekend. Even though he had his teeth wired shut, he came out and delivered a sermon, like only he can—and amazingly, everybody understood him. At the time our services were being held at a local high school auditorium, and we were all praising and thanking God. People that we hadn't seen for a long time came to the service to find out how he was doing. It was a wonderful day of thanksgiving.

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WE BOTH CRIED

On the other hand, my heart was broken and I wanted to die. I was so mortified over the run-in with Randy's mother. I was ashamed of myself, but the damage had already been done.



The Bible says when you mess up small or big, use the scriptural steps to make things right again.

I told Randy what had happened and asked for his forgiveness. I called his mom to do the same, and at first she would not answer the phone. When we finally talked, we came to an understanding woman to woman. We both cried and asked for forgiveness. She was up north, we could not do it face to face, and it took weeks before we were able to see each other and finally talk things completely through.

Since then our relationship has been 100%. She speaks her mind, I speak mine, and we respect each other for it. We give each other the honor that is due—her as Randy's mother and me as the wife and daughter-in-law.

We may not always agree with what the other has to say, but we no longer judge each other. She allows me to be who I am, and I give her the same freedom. She does the best that she can, and so do I. And as believers, this

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is what is expected of us.

The reason I am talking about family is because this is where the enemy tries to do the most damage. You may be able to dismiss a neighbor or casual acquaintance if they do something to offend you, but you have to deal with family members—and with your ugly un-Christian self.

It took time before we could honestly work the “forgiveness” aspect out. We did the lip service, saying we were sorry, but God had to work in our spirits.

We both knew we were wrong and said the right words, but it took a while until the Lord made us “feel” forgiveness, and we never have spoken to each other like that again. I love her, she loves me, and the past is past.

At the time, disobedience and fear overwhelmed me. If you think it is not going to happen to you as it did to me, just remember that what is common to one is common to all.

THE FALLOUT

I pray you can learn from what I am sharing and apply it, because the same enemy is working in all of our lives. The devil just uses different faces and different game plans. You know what is of God and what is not, and if you think you are going to have one foot here and one foot there, and be able to stand strong, you are only kidding yourself. You have to be responsible.

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All of the brothers and sisters and the rest of the family knew there was tremendous conflict, and they were fearful about what was happening to Randy because they were far away. It affected everybody. The enemy stepped in to shake their faith.

The family could not see for themselves that Randy was alright. Listening to what he went through was bad enough, but not seeing it for themselves was even worse.

Looking back, I opened up the door to the enemy and it was not a proud moment. Anyone can sin, but a pastor's wife carries more responsibility.

What you do has a ripple effect, and it will impact everybody. You learn from your own experience that God is so merciful.

HONEST BEFORE GOD

That incident was a long time ago. Randy and I have been married since June, 1974, and I have learned I cannot live off of his faith or his testimony.

I have also discovered that I am not Mrs. Anybody, I am me before God. I have an honest, open relationship with Him and when I blow my cool, He gets my attention, and I listen.

I seek not to willfully, knowingly do something that is not of God.

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“Nor shall there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking which are out of place but rather thanksgiving.”

– Ephesians 5:4

You don't have to fill in the time with what you think is funny, witty, or conversational. Allow the Lord to tell you when to speak and what to say.

WARM FUZZIES?

I know God's word is true because I have seen what He has done in my life, and the great works He has performed in others.

I am thankful because He has brought Randy and I where we are today. He is so merciful that when we do make mistakes, He is right there if we are faithful to ask Him to forgive us.

Even if you are on a diet and have just eaten a whole pumpkin pie, you knew it was wrong. You say you couldn't help yourself, or offer other excuses to justify your sin. When you are finished doing what you know is wrong, ask God to forgive you and thank Him that His Word says He will. Don't wait for the warm fuzzies or goose bumps, don't wait for some sister to come over and say, “God told me that you're going to do this.”

If it is the true Word of God, it will speak to you, but you have to take responsibility for yourself. Finish what

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you start, even though you may not feel like it. Do it anyway. Confess it so that the enemy can hear what you said. “I did wrong, Lord. I did wrong big time and I’m sorry. Make me right again before You. Forgive me and help me to mend those fences.”

Since giving my heart to the Lord, I can say with confidence and assurance that I have grown into a godly woman. Have I messed up? Yes, sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly.

A word of encouragement can change a person’s life for the better or for the worse. Make sure what comes out of your mouth is necessary and is of God. Pray before all situations. Every day we have a choice to do or be something. What are you going to choose?

A DIFFICULT TASK

One of the toughest things I ever had to do was to tell my best friend she needed to exert tough love and kick her son out of the house.

I sat there and cried, but I knew what God told me to tell her. I also knew what God’s Word said concerning the situation—whether she did it or not. And I had to say it.

At such times, many thoughts travel through your mind: *What if she is going to dump me as a friend? Am I a good friend or am I being a bad friend?*

Garbage comes into your head, but the bottom line is that you know what the Word says—line upon line,

precept upon precept.



***If you choose right you will receive the blessing.
If you do wrong, you will reap the consequences. Not
only you, but the rest of your family.***

I loved her family enough to say, “What you’re doing by letting him remain in your house is affecting the other children.”

I knew it would be devastating, but I had to communicate what the Lord told me.

To look into my friend’s face and tell her to kick her son out of the house because of what he was participating in (and his disobedience) was one of the single hardest things I ever had to do. We sat there and wept together. Whether they chose to receive and act upon my words was up to them.

I had to trust God that since this was a Christian family, and if they obeyed what His Word said, their lives would be blessed.

It happened. The whole situation turned around for good. Later the young man received a scholarship from a university and became an A student. He grew to become the godly man we knew he would be.

Again, I had to get over the fear of (fill in the blank). The fear of losing a friend. The fear of speaking out of turn.

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This is why we need to discard what our carnal mind says and deal with what the Bible declares. I don't ever wish to face a situation like that again, but I am available to God for whatever He wants me to do.

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

I always like to say that just by showing up at a gathering, I plow the field and Randy plants the seed. I am who I am, you are who you are. Do it God's way, and He will do the rest.

I learned from Randy's example of being who he is in Jesus. And I learned from the example of Jesus. We don't measure ourselves against others, but in comparison to Christ Jesus. He is the only One who counts.

Are you looking at yourself and asking, "Am I all that I can be in Christ? Am I doing, living, and acting the way God would want me to?"

If you're not, become totally honest with yourself.

Your enemies don't care how you act, but your Christian friends do, and are praying for you because they already know what is going on in your life. You don't even have to tell them—the Holy Spirit does. And this is why they are down on their knees interceding on your behalf.



Look in the mirror and say, “Self, you’re ugly, and you need to be dealt with”—then take action.

When you take this step, hold on! It will be like an earthquake because everything you hold near and dear may change, whether in blessing or cursing.

I couldn’t live with not being a child of God and wanting to do what He has planned for me. I could not take the responsibility just for my moment of being smart, funny, trying to be a good example of a pastor’s wife with my “pornographic” mind. (I hope you read the last chapter).

I wake up every morning and purpose to be the godly woman that God has intended me to be. This is what we all need to do. Just ask Him and He will answer.

THE WORD OF FAITH

When you mess up, ask for forgiveness in Jesus’ name. He forgets the transgression, and you must too. Stop beating yourself over the head, and learn from your mistakes, just as I grew from the experience with my mother-in-law. It seems ridiculous now when I think back on it, but it was a hot issue, and it took a long time before we truly felt comfortable with each other.

If it was the last thing I did, I was going to make it

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right even if I didn't feel it. I spoke it, and then God did the work in my heart because I am part of a bigger picture. If I want God to use and bless me and to bless all those around me, I have to be faithful and do my part.

Whatever the need in your life right now, be it a word in season, forgiveness, or whatever, God is there to meet you.

If you have not received the life of God, you can at this very moment. The word of faith is on the tip of your tongue. If you confess, "Jesus, forgive me. I say with my mouth and believe in my heart, Jesus Christ, You are my Lord. Just as You are raised from the dead, I am raised too. I am born again, saved, and have a new life with You. Thank You, Jesus, for saving and forgiving me."

THE TEN QUALITIES OF A TRUE FRIEND

*W*e all need uplifting relationships in our lives. I don't want to be brought down by others—I can do a good enough job of that all by myself! Neither do I need somebody else's verbal garbage. I want to associate with those who will elevate and uplift me.

Wouldn't you prefer to be around a person who is filled with vision and encouragement than one who vomits negativity over your shoes every time you see them?

For example, if you ask some people how they are doing, get ready for twenty minutes of a detailed medical report. Maybe they are growing older and feeling their age. But don't inquire about their health unless you are willing to listen for a long time.

If somebody doesn't want your help, you cannot force it on them. However, there are times when people need one small word of encouragement from you, and this can change their whole outlook.

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Here are some of the qualities I would like to see in a friend—and also in myself:

1. Enthusiasm

I really like to be around happy people. It's great to have friends who are optimistic and smile all the time. Even if they see you and admit, "My back is killing me," they follow up with "But praise God I'm going to be prayed for"—and their healing happens.

None of us are without aches and pains whether as a result of stupidity or old age. But thank God, we can go to Doctor Jesus.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength."

– Nehemiah 8:10

To me enthusiasm is expressing the joy of the Lord with my spirit. It means wanting to be around positive people and desiring to be a person who communes with God and is filled with confidence even while walking through a trial.

I don't want to be climbing up the mountain one minute and then plunging to the depths of the valley the next. Such a person is difficult to live with.

Instead, I want to be on an even keel. Even if I am going through the valley of the shadow of death, God is always with me. Being a Christian should not hurt, so

there's no reason to walk around wearing a long face.

Spirits are catching—whether they are good spirits or evil spirits. If you continually hang around with people who are constantly whining and negative, before long you will act just like them.

THE TUG OF THE WORLD

It all begins with you. It should be your objective to be the kind of person you want somebody else to be toward you—whether face to face or even behind your back. Do not wait for your husband or your wife to change—start with YOU.



You will be judged by the friends you associate with. If you are spending time with believers and “up” people, you will be blessed, and most likely their positive outlook will rub off on you.

However, if you say, “I’m ministering to these unbelievers, so I am going into their environment to let my light shine,” their wicked ways may swallow you alive, even if you think your faith is strong.

I told my son, Jesse, that there would be no “missionary” dating. In other words, he wasn’t to chase after people in the world, hoping he could influence

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them. Why, because it often turns out to affect the saint more than the sinner.

I advised him that if his friends needed God, they should come to a youth group or attend church, and his father would talk to and counsel them. Jesse was not the counselor. Furthermore, there was to be no dating of girls who did not share or build his faith.

THE BATTLE RAGES

If individuals are going to detract from your Christian walk, you'd better consider finding new friends. You want somebody who will strengthen and encourage you.



If you hang around certain people long enough, there will be a “soul tie”—something that is of common interest, and you may lose your First Love.

I have seen this happen over and over again—even with believers who appear to be on fire for God. Why? When they were ministering to others, they picked up wrong spirits.

The people of the world don't know what is going on in their own heart. They just figure it was bad luck that they fell into something negative. However, we know the spiritual warfare that is going on and how everyone

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around them suffers.

I have seen men and women who thought they were making spiritual progress, but they were already slipping away from God. In their mind two hands were on the rope of righteousness, but in reality one hand was in the world. The enemy was deceiving them saying, “Yes, you’re still on fire for God. It’s okay if you missed church; you will make it up next week.”

Then the following week there would be a whole new set of excuses that allowed them to justify their absence from God’s house.

They still believe they are excellent Christians, but take a look at the people around them, look at their spirit; they are no longer filled with the Holy Spirit as they once were. No, the “critters” in the world are hanging on their back. If believers fail to be nourished, delivered, and receive the Word of God on a regular basis, there will be danger ahead.

SLIP-SLIDING AWAY!

Don’t be surprised when family and friends laugh in your face when you share with them, “God says this and this and this.” If you are dabbling in the world they may look at you and say, “Why don’t you practice what you preach?”

There are too many Christians whose words sound right, but they live far from what they are talking about.

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I have been there myself. Why would you want to be around such people? They are an example of how *not* to be.



Be careful. When you think you are right with God, take a look at what is happening to your life. When you are slipping and sliding away, you will try to take everybody with you.

It's time to return to your First Love, and renew your zest, zeal, and enthusiasm for the things of God.

2. Order

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

– 1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV

To me being in order means preparing myself and my surroundings so that the greatest efficiency will be achieved. I hate to run around like a chicken with my head cut off. I would rather sit still and figure out what is happening next.

I was so excited about being a grandma, and I tried to help Erin get ready to be a mom. I had to take it one step at a time. I learned not to tell her what to expect when she went into labor until it was the right time to talk

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about the subject. To do otherwise wasn't in order.

The first thing for her was to be a person who loved Jesus, a good wife, and eventually a loving mother. She was still working on the wife part and being pregnant.

I know a woman whose house is spotless all of the time. She has no life, but she sure has a picture-perfect home! We must learn not to overdo things, but be flexible and make sure we make time for the Lord.

If you are busy working on a project when the telephone rings and it is a friend or a neighbor who needs a word of encouragement or perhaps prayer, don't get upset or annoyed at the interruption. Lighten up and get out of your flesh. Pray, "Lord, what do you want me to say to this person? How can I help her?"

Our purpose should always be to direct people to God.

WHAT'S YOUR PRIORITY?

As a wife, I have found that when you sacrifice your time for somebody else, your hours will be stretched, and you will still be able to vacuum or do whatever you need to do. This is not to say we are called on to be counselors every day of the week, and when dad comes home there is no dinner and everything is stacked up. No. Get your affairs in order and have a priority list of what needs to be done.

I have Post-It notes in the kitchen, in the hallway, and

then in the back part of the house, because by the time I get from the kitchen to the back, I've forgotten what I was going there for!

Whatever works for you is best. Normal is the setting on a dryer. What is normal for me may not be normal for anybody else.

Use whatever works to help you get your priorities in line.

3. Alertness

***“Watch ye and pray, lest you enter into temptation.
The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.”***

– Mark 14:38 KJV

Been there, done that! Speaking of flesh that is weak, I cannot pass a candy jar without putting my grubby fingers in, especially if it's chocolate.

Be aware of what is taking place around you so that you can have the right responses. I do not want to react emotionally, I want to respond. When I pray and make a request of the Lord, why am I surprised that He answers my prayer just as I asked Him?

Reacting is being out of faith and out of control, which means you are not doing what God would have you to do. If you have ordered your day according to the Lord and asked Him to help you get ready for what lies ahead, you will respond and you will think about things.



***There are no emergencies with God.
Everything is planned out.***

Let's say your child was riding his bike, fell off and cracked his head open. As a child of God you know to pray over him first, then quickly call for medical help. Take it one step at a time.

Being back in the "baby room" at church was such a special time for me. I thought I was there because Randy needed help in this area. After 20 years I returned and saw things from a different perspective...like on my knees.

I learned how to talk to the children, where as before there were times when I felt like saying, "Get away from me, kid; you're bugging me!"

THEY'RE WATCHING YOU

I have watched the toddlers learning how to walk. When they get a little excited with their first tentative steps, they trip and fall. They look at me and I say, "oh." If they are watching their mom's face, and she is panicking, they will cry. I would cry too!

Since God has it all figured out, you only need to be alert and respond to situations. If the children fall down; ask them if they are okay. Don't frighten them. Act like

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you did walking down the hall in high school when everybody was staring at you, and you were wondering *What's happening? Zipper? Hair?*

You may be nervous, but don't react. You're cool. If there is something wrong, you meant it that way. After all, what do they know?

4. *Gratitude*

“For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”

– 1 Corinthians 4:7

Gratitude means making known to God and others the ways in which they have benefitted and blessed your life.

There are some days when it is difficult to find anything to be grateful for—and I don't even have a hard life! Still, it is not easy living with a preacher. You do not have anybody to argue with. He just takes authority, and you can never go to bed with a headache!

I am grateful for everything, but in reality I have it easy compared to what many others have gone through.

When expressing my gratitude, I start at the very bottom. *I'm thankful that you made chocolate, Lord, and it's in the drawer, and it's on the left side of my underwear!*

Then I can move on to more spiritual things.

“DO I KNOW YOU?”

List what you are grateful for. For me, it’s much more than chocolate, but sometimes it’s the only thing that is important at the time.

Don’t use PMS as an excuse, or this menopause stuff, or any other excuses.

There are times even Randy will say things that are too strange for me. I think to myself, *Do I know you?* He is just having one of those days. But he is a man who is seeking to live in God’s Spirit and achieve the Lord’s best.



Find what you are thankful for. It is the result of God’s Word being true and always coming to pass.

The best examples are your own testimonies—what you have gone through “that you know that you know that you know,” and no one will be able to talk you out of your own experience.

You have walked through the fire, and you made it to the other side. (If I can, so can you!)

Don’t be embarrassed or afraid to find a friend and tell them you need prayer. They will be grateful for your

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confidence in their ability to go to God on your behalf.

You don't even have to share with them what your problem is. Just say, "Agree with me that God is going to have victory over this situation in my life because obviously I need more prayer."

Both of you will be grateful for the opportunity to touch the Throne of God.

5. *Virtue*

***"And beside this, giving all diligence,
add to your faith virtue."***

– 2 Peter 1:5 KJV

When we first began to use television cameras to televise our services, I thought it would be fun to be behind one of them and operate it. I wanted to zoom in on people when they were talking to their neighbor or doing something weird. I'm sure it was because I have a tendency to stray off and have a little fun.

Randy wouldn't let me work the cameras, and I asked him why. I had taken care of the kids for many years, and now I was ready to move on. I watched other cameramen, and if they fell off the platform, I would say, "I can do that!"

I asked Randy, "What am I supposed to do? What does God want me to do? I don't know."

Randy answered, "Pray," but I wanted *him* to tell me.

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Wisely, he wanted me to find out for myself.

I now call myself the roving ranger. I would rove around even before I was able to minister in the kids room, and that is what I wanted to do, but now I see that ministering to a variety of people is God’s direction for me.

MORE THAN A HUG

As a Christian, there are many virtues we can display—including being truthful, showing mercy, treating others with dignity, even showing love and concern.



Virtue is moral excellence that radiates from our lives as we obey the Word of God. We show it on our faces and demonstrate it by our actions.

I like to hug people, because I feel at that moment I can tell what is going on in their lives.

I would tell my husband, “Randy, I don’t know about this person. I think she’s struggling with a problem” because she would come in the door and try to slide along the wall to get past me.

Then there are the sprinters who wait until I’m talking, then they sprint by me. I want to be able to bless

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people, so I would wait until they walked past, then call them back because I wanted to get a hug from them.

God has been able to use me in this way and it has become my calling. Often, I have said to my husband, “Did you talk to so and so?” and he would respond, “Yes, I saw her in the prayer line and I know she has a special need.”

God, in His own miraculous way, spoke to both of us concerning that particular person.

When I’m frazzled, I think I can count on one hand the people who seek me out and give me a hug. I like that, and I know I need it. Yes, everybody else may be praying for me, but sometimes I crave that extra hug.



*A word or a hug in due season is like apples
of gold in a silver setting the Bible talks about—
and we all appreciate this as humans.*

I am a touchy-feely type of individual. If people stand there talking to me, I have my hand on their arms or I’m touching their shoulder. It is my way of connecting.

TIME TO TALK

In day to day living, our spouses and our friends often get hung up in what they are doing, but we women who stay around the house would like an opportunity to talk.

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I read that everybody is given 5,000 words a day to say. People go to work and do their jobs, and they spend 4,000 words talking to their co-workers, and they have 1,000 words left when they come home. Since I am around the house all day, I usually spend 1,000 words there, so I have 4,000 left when my husband walks in the door.

On occasions he feels like a bull with a red suit! He comes in, and there I am. I need to have that time to talk, but I also realize that he needs to have a quiet space to unwind and lighten up.

On holidays Randy just wants to sit in his sweats and relax because he deals with people so much. I'm sure others feel this way too. I never feel like that unless I have to be the one to cook, and everybody comes to our house! That's when I need a break.

Practice what you preach and be a 24/7 Christian, not just on church days. It is easy. Once you start on Monday, then go over to Tuesday, and if you slip, ask God to forgive you and help you to get back on the right track. It is a sin to remain in a place you know is wrong.

Your mate is a good example of someone who knows what is going on in your life. He can look at you, and he knows. Personally, I cannot lie when those big, bulgy, blue eyes look at me. That's it. I confess.

Besides, it is better to confess halfway down in the valley than at the bottom. It doesn't choke you to repent or to ask for forgiveness. It's virtue, but you must make

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the first step.

6. *Initiative*

***“Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.”***

– Romans 12:21

Do you recognize what needs to be done and start the work even before you are asked? This is called initiative. It’s also maturity in the Lord.

Children have to constantly be reminded of things. Did you take out the trash? Did you do your homework? Did you make your bed? Is your room clean?

But as adults, we are to just “do it.” We have been through rehearsal and we know what is needed and expected of us. Since God is always watching, who do we think we are kidding?

Regarding fellow believers, the people we think we are fooling know what is going on if they are led by the Spirit. God is not going to let us get away with anything. There is a day of reckoning ahead when we will give an account.

THE FLEXIBILITY FACTOR

When our children were small, everybody knew

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where we lived and would drop by constantly, needing this and that. I had my two little ones, and I hardly got anything done—and felt bad about this at the end of the day.

However, I did have dinner ready on time. It was normal for us to eat at 5 o'clock so that we would have some order in our schedule, even if Randy was out making his rounds. Some days I would be on the phone with this one and that, plus caring for the two children I would feel way behind because I couldn't get my housework finished.

I wanted to be flexible, but not *that* flexible. So, I used to take a disinfectant cleaner and pour it into the toilet bowls because it smelled strong and fresh. Randy felt he knew when I had cleaned the bathroom. He would comment, "Everything looks so clean, and then I would feel guilty, because I hadn't really done anything. I thought, *Wow, he doesn't know when I clean or when I don't clean!*"

I learned to put orderliness in my flexibility, even though I wanted to help people. It wasn't so easy back when everybody came to the pastor (or his wife) instead of going to God. Then Randy would ask, "Have you asked the Lord about this?" "Well, no, I'm asking you!" they would say.

As time has passed, I have realized that keeping a

home requires more than desire, it takes personal initiative to set priorities and stay on schedule.

7. Justice

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

– Micah 6:8

What is justice? It is personal responsibility to God’s unchanging laws. I am held accountable for every moment of every day, and so are you. Let’s face it. You are not fooling anybody if you are not treating others justly and fairly. Children pick up on this big time. They know who is the favorite of mom and dad, but in reality we all are equal in God’s sight.

I remember when the children were young, and we were living out the authority messages. We were having devotions one night, and Randy was explaining how God is over dad, dad is over mom, and mom is over Erin and Jesse.

Well, Jesse interpreted that. He said, “If Erin is over me, who am I over?” Erin chimed in, “The dog.”

He didn’t realize that he and his sister were equal. I was over both of them, but when Mom wasn’t around, Erin was over Jesse because she was the oldest. He didn’t

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like that, but as soon as he found out that he was over the dog, then it was okay. He was cool with that arrangement.

Everybody wants to be treated fairly. Erin would ask, “How come my friends can go to the mall, and I can’t?” We said, “God works in our house the way He tells us to and maybe He didn’t tell the lady down the block what she’s supposed to do.” Then we added, “Concerning what you’re not supposed to do, you’re not allowed to go and hang out at the malls.”

So as Erin was growing up, we told her, “Blame mom and dad. You don’t have to say you can’t go to the mall, but you can say your mom won’t let you go. You don’t have to lie and say you don’t want to go. Put the blame on me, because then they’ll say ‘Your mom’s a real meanie.’ Guess what, I have broad shoulders and I can handle it.”

Youngsters don’t need to handle such pressure personally.

A WORRIED MOM

Make it easy on yourself. Let God be the authority.

There is nothing worse than somebody growing up feeling that they are not equal or they are not loved by their brother, sister, mother, or father the same way. Erin may have been the first child, and I worried more about her because she was a girl. I mean, she heard the same

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words, she grew up in the same house, she had the same parents, but she was so trusting that I was concerned for her safety. I feared some smooth talker would come along and say, “I really like you,” and then she would fall for it.

She would take what we said as the truth, and she would naturally assume that everybody was going to be like us.

In Erin’s eyes there were no guys who were liars. After all, dad spoke the truth.

Therefore, Randy and I did a number on all of her little boyfriends. I smile when I think of the night I told one young man, “You know, she’s a virgin when you pick her up, and she’d better be a virgin when you bring her home because I have a knife! Then Randy will pray over you.”

I was only half joking!

EQUAL TREATMENT?

Both of our kids had a personal relationship with the Lord and lived godly lives, but with Jesse it was a whole different matter, yet I could not treat him any differently

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than I did our daughter.

Erin would grill me, “Where’s Jesse? What’s he doing?” I was thinking, *Hello, he’s your brother, don’t worry about it, he’s 20 years old. I’m the mom, remember?*

I had to watch over her but she wanted to make sure that she was not being slighted.

Randy once said, “Sometimes the way Erin has her moods, if somebody wanted to snatch her up, they would bring her right back, I guarantee.”

But what a wonderful wife and mother she has become. She is a woman of faith and can handle her own life.

One day the phone rang and she took a long time answering it. Of course she had a good excuse—she was nine months pregnant.

The voice on the other end of the phone said, “What took you so long?” Not recognizing who it was, Erin replied, “Well, if you don’t like how I answer the phone, don’t call me.”

Dead silence, and then her father-in-law said, “Oh, hi.”

Thankfully, he loves Erin enough to over look her bluntness.

8. Joy

“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me...for when I am weak then am I strong.”

– 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 KJV

I love to be around joyful people. Maintaining a spirit of cheerfulness despite physical limitations, outside pressures, even soaring temperatures that have reached 128 degrees where we live.

A joyful spirit is like a muscle that has to be worked.

I tried to keep my spirits high when Randy had his accident even though I wanted to cry every time I saw him. When his jaw was crushed, I was like a Suzie “nutcase” nurse, wanting to be there and do everything I could for him. Do you need this? Do you need that?

“It’s okay,” he would tell me.

I felt so powerless after the accident, but instead of becoming a basket case, continually crying, I took a different approach. I deliberately was joyful: “Oh, this is so cool; God is going to heal all your body.”

I even joked with him, “You’ll like drinking everything through a straw. Also what you eat will come through a straw and it will be in all colors. I’ll even chew

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your popcorn for you if you like!”

Well, we needed to find joy—but maybe not to a toxic level!



***Do you remember reading about the
apostle Paul when he was thrown into prison?
Even though he was in chains, he was joyful,
singing praises to the Lord in his cell.***

Think about Jesus. When He walked through a crowd and the onlookers were spitting and throwing things at Him, He did not revile them—even though He had every reason to. Instead, He prayed that the Father’s peace would be upon the people.

YOUR CHANCE TO WITNESS

Too often, we take our cues from others, even Christians. And they let us down. The only true role model we need is the Son of God. Measure your life against His standard.

As Paul says, “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of me as I follow Christ*” (1Corinthians 11:1).

At a women’s retreat we studied different levels of friendship. Level one is a casual acquaintance, like the grocery clerk, where you say, “Hi, how are you doing?”

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You are not supposed to give or receive personal information, but you certainly can be an excellent witness to them. For example, they might want to know why you are always smiling. They may wonder, *Is it because everything in your life is wonderful?* No. *Is it because you have lots of money and your husband is gone all the time and you can do what you want?* No.

You know the answer—that regardless of what you are going through, the Lord can fix it. He is in control of everything.

The grocery clerk may never have met anybody like you before, so this is your chance to respond, “The reason I can smile is because of what the Lord has done for me.”

This simple conversation may be all it takes to open the door to witness—either at that time or later.

At level four of the friendship scale is a very close relationship, but this only comes after establishing trust and confidence that may take months, even years to build.

In the process, along every step of the journey, let your heart, soul, and mind be filled with rejoicing.

9. *Endurance*

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we don’t give up.”

– Galatians 6:9

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At this point, I have hung in the race of marriage for more than three decades. For both Randy and myself, it has taken inner strength and withstanding stress in order to accomplish God's best for our lives.



God squeezes the earth, the dirt and the chemicals in the ground. He does so with such pressure that He produces a diamond.

When I am being squeezed by God, I have learned to say, “Alright, Lord, I know I did something known or unknown, willful or stupid. Show me what it is because I don't like this squeezing!”

When you are a Christian, your conscience pressures you. Personally, I can't do something wrong and not have God talk to me regarding my moral sense of what is right or wrong. In those situations, when I can't enjoy what I am doing, it shapes my behavior.

WE NEED EACH OTHER

When we pastored a denominational church, there were one hour services on Sunday. You walked in at 11 o'clock and you walked out at noon—and the hour included announcements and music.

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It was a rather easy routine for the church members. All they had to do was show up, sit in their chair, smile, say hello to a few friends, and you were on your way.

I can remember coming into church and people would comment on the outfit that I was wearing, or would say just about anything because they were not filled with the Holy Spirit. They were working out of their flesh. Consequently, I didn't enjoy those services and sat in the back of the church.

There didn't seem to be a Spirit-connection or worship element to their attendance. It seemed so perfunctory.

During the week, when I went to the grocery store, I would often see a woman from church who hadn't been attending services for a period of time. She would be so uncomfortable and try to avoid me.

Once, there was a woman coming up the aisle with her cart, and when she spied me, she turned around and bailed out the other way. So, if people deliberately didn't notice me, let's say they were pretending to look at items on the shelves, I would come up behind them and exclaim, "Oh, hi, how are you doing?"

The first thing out of their mouths would be, "You know, Billy has been sick, and we've had to stay home with him"—or some other excuse.

I wasn't as bold as I am now, and I would respond, "Really? No problem." But what I was thinking was: *If you aren't concerned about being touched by God, that's*

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your problem.”

You should have seen the guilty look on their faces!

Today, as we pastor a church with a body of believers who are fed and led by the Holy Spirit, it is totally different. I genuinely miss people who are not there. I miss them because we minister to each other.



*It is easy to sit back and watch TV and say,
“Praise the Lord,” but when you physically come to
church and have people who are both worshipping
the Lord and reaching out to the needs of each
other, it is wonderful and refreshing.*

A NEW DIANA

There are times when I have been asked to minister from the pulpit, and the congregation sure knows the difference between me and my husband. My presentation is on the lighter side, but I do have a spiritual side—and will take spiritual authority when God tells me to. I, too, lay hands on the sick and pray for deliverance in the name of Jesus.

The Diana in the pulpit may be the same person who loves chocolate, plays in the kids’ room, and walks around in bare feet. But now there is an anointing which produces the “new and improved Diana.”

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In the natural, I am scared to death of speaking publicly, but when the Lord speaks through me I find myself listening to my own words. It's not me, it is Him.

TOTAL CONFIDENCE

Randy is the counselor—and he keeps what is told to him in strict confidence. Even if I wanted to know and begged him to tell me, he wouldn't.

On many occasions, after he has counseled with a member of the congregation, the person may come up to me and talk about what is going on, assuming he has shared a confidence with me. I think, *What? I don't know what on earth you are talking about!*

If they confide in Randy concerning a personal matter, unless they specifically tell him to share the details with me, he never does.

If I really need to know, God will tell me.

If I'm supposed to minister to a person, the Lord has His way of revealing it to me. It often happens through the words He allows me to speak. Half the time after I say something to the individual, it is only then I hear what I am saying. It is God working through me to bless that individual and meet their need.

POINT THEM TO THE LORD

To accomplish God's best, we need to learn to

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withstand the stress. There are many situations in the ministry that can break your heart—and just think of the countless circumstances of which we are unaware.

We are responsible to point people to the Lord rather than to ourselves.



If you are self-centered and set yourself up as the one with all the answers, people will be like a bloodhound, following you everywhere, wanting you to do everything for them. This is why you need to constantly direct them to God.

I have sisters and brothers in the Lord who are hurting because their spouse has chosen a different way to live. I want to tell them “Let them leave if they want to,” but that is not what the person wants to hear. In truth, it’s not what either spouse wants. It is the quick, easy solution.

Instead, I believe I am to encourage husbands and wives in their marriage, no matter how difficult their situation. This is easy for me because I don’t have to walk in their shoes, but I know it is heart-wrenching for them.

Resolution comes when we convince men and women to desire the best for each other—without taking their eyes off of the Lord.

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YOU'RE ACCOUNTABLE

Personally, I have many activities in my life, but they are meaningless when compared to my relationship with the Lord. *Oh, God, I ministered to this one and I talked to that one, and I did this.* It is nothing.



Never compromise your principles for what God wants you to accomplish. Do not be so flexible that you are willing to copy the world for your own pleasure.

You've heard the arguments: *Everybody's doing it. Why can't I? Why do I have to keep on the straight and narrow?* Remember, you are still accountable to God.

It is important to stay with people through the good times and the bad. I rejoice just as much with them when there is a breakthrough in their crisis as when they are shouting on the mountain top.

When a person has a fine home, cars, jewelry, vacations, etc, I rejoice for God's favor, but I also find comfort in spending time with those who are hurting.

There are many situations where individuals in the congregation can reach others more than I can. As a pastor's wife, when people are around me there is a

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tendency to paint a bright picture. “Oh, everything is wonderful. It’s as if they are saying, “I’m Mr. or Mrs. Christian, and it’s cool.”

But the other sister or brother sitting next to them may know exactly what is going on in their household, and they can be the one who is able to minister to that person.

You don’t earn any brownie points from me or from anybody else for coming to church and doing what is right. You get rewards from God, and when you are working for the Kingdom, you don’t even need the reward. Your actions are because of a desire to bring glory to the Lord.

WHATEVER IT TAKES

God never beats His children into submission. The enemy would like to put symptoms on our bodies and make us come on our hands and knees, crawling and begging, “Oh, please, please.” This is not the way the Lord operates. He says, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28).

I know of a mother whose sons were into all kinds of trouble, sneaking out of the house and running around. There was evidence of alcohol and drugs.

This was a good Christian family and I would pray with her and give her encouragement. Finally the mother

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fell down on her knees and cried, “God, whatever it takes to bring them back to You, short of death, let it be.”

I was in agreement with her.

It’s hard for a mom or dad to watch their children going down the wrong path and not do anything about it. With the power of prayer you can give them to God.

There are times, however, when we may have to turn them over to the devil first so they can see the error of their ways. To the believers at Corinth who were dealing with a man who had committed a sexual sin, Paul counseled, “*Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord*” (1Corinthians 5:5).

NEVER GIVE UP

In certain circumstances, I am the only link between people and the Lord. What they are doing is not of God, but with His help I can play a part in turning their situation around. When believers make major blunders, pray, “Thank you, Lord, I’m interceding on their behalf and I’m standing strong so that they will come back to You.”

This is scriptural, because the Bible says, “*If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life*” (1 John 5:16).

I’ve heard all the reasons you can imagine for spiritual failure, but excuses are no more than sin

wrapped in a lie. As I like to say, “Anyway you slice it, it’s baloney!

Regardless of the situation, whether it involves a son or daughter, a spouse, a friend, or you personally, never give up. Ask the Lord to give you the endurance it takes to reach the goal.

The closer we come to the finish line, the more the devil wants to trip us up. We have run and run, then all of a sudden we are exhausted and think to ourselves, *I’m so tired. I don’t have the strength to take another step.*

This is when we must call on God to take over—to give us that extra push, the endurance to win.

10. Patience

“We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience.”

– Romans 5:3 KJV

The older you get, the more patience you have. *I wanted to be healed yesterday.* Guess what, I am not a baby believer, I am a long time card-carrying Christian, and I have learned that God has His own schedule.

I have been through it on both sides. I’ve experienced moments when healing came quickly, and then there were times I have had to wait and wait.

Like so many, I have begged the Lord to move

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instantly, but He had His own plans and was working something out in my life.

In our microwave society, we want everything done in the snap of a finger. *God, make my life wonderful right now.* However, the longer you wait for what you desire, the more you appreciate it. As a Christian with patience and endurance, you will see it come to pass.

*To have patience means to accept a
difficult situation from God without giving
Him a deadline to intervene.*

There is a difference between dealing with two-year-olds in the church nursery and teenagers, but in many ways it is the same because teens are often like the little kids. They have a hurry-up attitude and want what they want right now.

BE A FRIEND

One of the proudest moments that I can remember is when Erin said she didn't need to go to a school dance with a date. When I asked if she was going by herself, she replied, "Yes, I don't need a guy to validate me." *Right on, girlfriend.*

We do not need another person to verify or certify

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who we are in God.

God is patient with us and will mold us into one of His treasures if we will only let Him. A scripture we read today, two months ago, or five years ago, means something different to us every time. Why? Because we are changing and need a special word for a specific moment.

When I turned fifty, I had a new appreciation for life—or perhaps I should say a new revelation on life. Maybe it was because my kids looked at my age and said I had been going on the upswing, and now I was on the downside. But I did not receive that!

As a mom, patience with my daughter involved letting her find out things for herself. I moved out of the place where I was mother, teacher, and disciplinarian, and now I have entered into a position where I am a friend. At least I would like to hope so.

Being her friend is an entirely different matter. I love her, but I no longer have any of the worries over where she is or what is going on in her daily activities.

I don't have to tell her things such as, "I think you should put a little more sage in that dish." It isn't important. I am her friend now and this is the way we treat each other. However, if she ever gets "an attitude," then I quickly become her mom again!

This has required patience, because she doesn't have to do what I say anymore, and neither does her brother.

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LOVE, PATIENCE, AND MERCY

Randy and I have both trained our kids by doing our best to instill godly character and values. Now I can let go and watch their lives develop. Erin and Jesse make wise decisions, but how can they do any less. They have a solid foundation and have believers praying for them.

Let me encourage you to look for the good in people and always try to understand where they are coming from. Deal with them in love, patience, and mercy—the way you would want to be treated

I wanted to close this chapter with patience and endurance because many times when children reach their 20s, so many parents are quick to shove them out the door, saying, “I’ve put in my time. Now they’re on their own.”

But they are still your children and you have a responsibility to God to love and care for them—for as long as you live.

May the Lord give you these special qualities to be the kind of friend others are searching for.

LET’S PRAY TOGETHER

I am asking you to pray this prayer with me:

Thank You, Lord, that you will help us to grow in these characteristics. Right now, Father, in

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Jesus' name, if anybody has anything going on in their life, help them to deal with it. Send Your ministering angels to them and break the enemy's grip. The blood of Jesus covers all of these situations.

We thank You, Father, that we will see a breakthrough if we are patient, have endurance and integrity, and are the kind of people that You want us to be. We thank You that we are Your people, even though we may not always see ourselves or act as such, but we can get to that place with your help if we desire it.

Please be with us in every breath that we take so that we may respond properly, and let us be the kind of friend that we would want to have.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

MARRY A MINISTER?

*J*ust because I'm a pastor's wife doesn't mean I get any special treatment. I still have to pray and ask God to forgive and help me do what I'm supposed to.

Everybody faces challenges. It's not always a bowl of cherries on this earth, even if you are a Christian. And being married to a minister can be "doubly" difficult.

One of my biggest hurdles was to overcome the opinions of others, because every person alive has their own unique expectations.

THE WAY IT WAS

As a little background, before marriage I lived in Wilmington, Delaware, and I was the office manager at five BF Goodrich stores, which included handling the bad debts in the million-plus dollars they took in annually.

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I'll go ahead and admit it: I was pretty efficient at what I did, and I was also good at being single, earning my own money, and trying to figure out what to spend it on.

I was still living at home with my parents and my brother, and life was great.

One morning when I went to work, the manager at the service counter said, "Before you make the rounds at the other stores, would you please watch my counter for a minute because I have something else to attend to."

"No problem," I responded.

So here I was, standing behind the counter looking really busy and efficient when I noticed a fellow sitting in the waiting room. He had blonde hair and blue eyes, and he was wearing a sports coat with a pair of plaid pants. (They were "in" in those days.) He was dressed rather casually.

As for me, I ignored him because any time I had met a blonde with blue eyes, they thought they were God's gift to the world. My purpose in life was to not give them any attention so they would try to figure out why.

A PICKUP LINE?

I think you've guessed where I'm headed with this!

If you know Randy, you are aware that he will have a conversation with anyone or anything—be it a person

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or a fence post. You just have to stand still long enough.

So, he started a conversation.

After I heard him speak, I responded, “You’re not from here (Wilmington, Delaware) are you?”

He explained, “I’m the assistant pastor at a local church.”

I stared at him (and at that time I had hair down to my waist) and replied, “Right, and I’m Lady Godiva.” (I thought that was the weirdest pick-up line I had ever heard in my life.)

He looked at me and responded, “No, seriously, seriously.” I went along with it, “Yeah, okay. Well, anyway.”

Fifteen or twenty minutes went by, and he asked for my phone number because he wanted to take me out to dinner.

I said, “No, I don’t know you from anybody, and I’m not going out at night with you, period.”

*Then I relented, “Perhaps
we can to lunch sometime.”*

He quickly replied, “Okay, give me your number.”

I gave him the phone number of the store. If I didn’t want to give out my number, sometimes I would give them the number of a cab company I had memorized.

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This may be good advice if you're a single gal.

“GUESS WHO’S COMING?”

Randy and I went out, and I found him fun to be with. He wasn't like any of the other guys I had known.

I was 21 at the time, having graduated from high school in 1969 where the class motto was “Sin, sex, booze, and wine—that’s the class of ’69.”

Everybody smoked a joint, and they all enjoyed their beer and their whatever else. So being a single girl, I always had to wonder what they had underneath their seat or what they were pulling out of their glove compartment. I wasn't into any of that stuff because I figured it was hard enough for me to stay straight than for me to be “on” something.

Randy was a gentleman in every sense of the word.

*Before long he was coming over to
our house. My mother would announce,
“Oh, guess who’s about to arrive?”*

We lived at the bottom of a hill and she could see his car approaching.

In those days he would make his rounds and do

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visitation for the church—which usually took until about 8 or 9 o’clock in the evening. Then he would stop by.

BACK TO SAINT LOUIS

One night I asked him, “Randy, why are you always over here?”

Smiling, he replied, “Because if I’m here, nobody else is here,” which was true.

I liked his company so much that some nights when I had another date scheduled, I would go into a different room and call with some flimsy excuse of why I couldn’t make it. Then I’d stay home and talk with Randy.

It wasn’t long before we knew we were in love. However, Randy had made the decision to return to Saint Louis, Missouri, in August to finish his last year of seminary.

Why wait? So we were married in June and I went with him to St. Louis.

“WHY ARE THEY LOOKING AT ME?”

The trip from Delaware was one for the books. We took both of our cars. I followed his old station wagon that went through 24 quarts of oil on the way. So what I was looking at while driving my non-airconditioned car

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was blue smoke—and I was nearly knocked out by the fumes.

We made the journey non-stop and by the time we arrived I felt sweaty and yucky. Randy is the type that buys four hamburgers and keeps driving until he's out of gas.

That's not me, however. I had to signal him to stop several times for potty breaks. I don't have a camel bladder!

When we pulled up in front of the seminary housing, a number of students quickly gathered and I was thinking, *What is the matter with these people? Why are they looking in the car at me?*

The word was out that Randy Brodhagen was now married and they wanted to give me the once-over.

There I was—a sweating dirt ball, probably high on oil fumes from driving forever. They must have thought he married a real mess.

So I rushed in and cleaned myself up. A little eyeliner and lipstick can do wonders. But I have to admit I wore more makeup than the other seminary wives.

Now on campus, I soon learned that Randy was the BMOC—Big Man on Campus. He's great putting events together and running things—such as arranging dances between the single seminary students and the girls at the nurses's school which was located next door.

THE “FRUIT INSPECTOR”

My greatest challenges in those days—and probably to this day—are Christians themselves. Especially those who claim the name but don’t walk the walk. This is why I say, “Just because a mouse is in the cookie jar doesn’t make him a cookie”—which means just because people show up in church every week and sit there does not mean they are a Christian.

I have been the “fruit inspector” that Randy says *not* to be. As the Bible says “by their fruit ye shall know them.”

I judge people by their actions, not by what comes out of their mouths. As I mentioned earlier, before being married, I only went to church a couple of times a year, at Easter and Christmas. I had a friend who was a Presbyterian and we really just went to have a good time. That was the extent of my religious experience—except at school on Fridays when I prayed, *Oh, God, help me pass my spelling test.*

I had no relationship with God or any idea about organized religion. But before we were married, I attended a new Christians’ class that they offered at the church where Randy was an associate minister. It was there that I learned that Christ died on the cross for me and desired a personal relationship with me.

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This gave me the keys that opened the door to the wonderful walk with the Lord I enjoy today.

It was during this time that I accepted Christ as my personal Savior and asked Him to cleanse my heart and forgive my sins. Oh, what a wonderful experience and a new beginning that was.

THOUGHTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Many of the seminary wives in St. Louis were right off the farm—from Iowa, Minnesota, and the Midwest.

They probably looked at me and thought, *Oh, we understand why he married her; she's probably pregnant.* (Because of my makeup they most likely thought I was a girl of the world.)

Let's face it. I was different from what they were used to. They were all freshly scrubbed, beautiful farm girls, while I came from the big city.

I had to work hard to overcome many of their thoughts and expectations. But I must admit, I didn't know how to be a wife, let alone be a Christian, and then become a pastor's wife.

FEELINGS OF FAILURE

Randy graduated from the seminary and was called to a little church in a small city. We had been married for a year or so when we moved there. The people at the church expected me to play the piano, lead the choir, be a nursemaid—or whatever. Musically, however, all I can do is play a tambourine (which, of course, they wouldn't allow in that church). I can't carry a tune in a bucket, but I live by the psalm that says, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."

When God says it, that's all there is to know. I don't need to have any other head knowledge or interpretation.

Randy was the pastor and I considered myself a housewife. I didn't attend seminary, and didn't marry him because I wanted to co-pastor. No, I wanted to be a wife, support him, have his children, bake cookies, do my thing—and that was it!

At one point I said to Randy, "I can't do this. People expect too much of me, and I feel I am a failure."

He responded just as he would to any member of the congregation. He tells you what the Word says, gives it

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to you straight, then lets you decide what you want to do. If you want to take God's word and run with it, he is praying for you, and is right behind you.

If you want to protest, "No, I want to do it my way," he lets you do that until you run so far that you hit the wall. If it happens too many times it becomes insanity—which is doing the same thing again and again expecting different results.

IT'S REALLY SIMPLE

I found out that there are two ways to do things—God's way or God's way! No, that's not a mistake, because there is only God's way.

He talks to me if I am quiet enough to listen. He not only tells me what to do, but how I am to do it. It's really simple. And if I can get it, anybody can.



God loved me right where I was, and He did not expect anything more of me than I could cope with. Sometimes I wished He didn't trust me so much.

If you have willful, known sin in your life, and you refuse to deal with it, He will let you wallow in your own dirt. But if you will own up and repent, God will help

you and show you the way.

PEOPLE PRESSURE

There were expectations, thoughts, and opinions from people, but most of the time they did not leave it at their opinions. They tried to pressure me into doing what *they* wanted. For example, until I was 45 I had long hair because I liked it that way, but nobody else seemed to. They would make comments such as, “You’re over 40, and you still have long hair?”

This didn’t make me feel too good, and they tried to convince me to change. But I knew that with short hair I looked like zippy the pin head. Yes, short hair would have been easier to keep, but at the time I just shrugged my shoulders and thought, *Who needs these kinds of opinions?*

Many times we are pressured by the comments of others, even those who are close to us and are supposed to be Christians. You are searching for the truth, but in reality others may be sabotaging you.

You will find pressure in your marriage, in church, or in your business because people have a need for attention, a need for recognition, self-importance, and control. Those who have no goals may decide to choose you as a target. If they don’t want to have the light shining on *them*, they will pick you apart or show you

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your faults and make you can feel uncomfortable.

A TOXIC FRIEND

I once had a friend who would continually look at my face when I was talking to her. While we were sitting there having a conversation, she would scrutinize my every wrinkle, freckle, and imperfection. If I talked about a particular book, she would say, “You know I found this really cool wrinkle cream.”

By the time I was through hanging with her, I was so depressed I wanted to go in a corner and hide. She was even looking for grey hair! I felt so awful.

Such is a toxic friend. You do not need friends like this. Instead, you only need to know what God thinks of you.

According to the Bible, all the hairs on my head are numbered. The Lord knows each and every one of them, but I have to admit, I have an issue with Him. When I get to heaven I’m going to ask Him why I have grey hair. Randy doesn’t care if he has grey hair—I do. He looks sophisticated, but I look old.

SERMON MATERIAL

Accepting pressure is a big bag of worms, and you

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have to overcome it. In the early years of our marriage I would feel pressure if Randy and I were with people who didn't know who I was, or if I was having a conversation with a casual acquaintance. Since I like to use a lot of humor, some people may take it the wrong way—as if I'm not spiritual enough.

To this very day I can remember jokes I learned when I was a teen. If I told my father a humorous story, he would let me use the car, and then he'd go over to the Elk's Club and repeat the same funny story. It was a good trade-off. He would be really popular, and I would have a car to drive.

Randy teaches “off of me” all the time. Many of his sermons use examples about what I did or didn't do. This is okay because what is common to one is common to all, and I'm more than willing to be the example.

*Mothers, teach your children
with life lessons based on what is going
on around you, which includes situations
both in and out of the church.*

“NO, THANK YOU”

I mentioned earlier that when our children were in

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their early teens, we didn't allow them to go to the mall without supervision.

The next thing you know, we heard that some of Erin's school friends were at the mall smoking. (Peer pressure, no doubt.). One girl decided she wanted to light up a cigarette, and the others didn't want to look like jerks, so they took a hit and passed it around.

Someone saw the girls, recognized them, and called their parents. If my kids had been with them, who knows? I believe they would have had the courage to say, "No, thank you," but the pressure of the world is enormous.

GET BUSTED?

I used every experience that happened in the community, in the media, and in church, as an opportunity for a teaching lesson for our son and daughter. When there was a negative headline, we would discuss it, and I might say, "This is what can happen if you're not careful." Then I would add, "I'm not with you all the time, but God is watching and He sees everything. Whatever you do that isn't pleasing to Him, He's going to bust you—and I pray that He will."

One day, after one of those heart-to-heart's, Erin looked at me and asked, "You're praying every day that I get busted?" And I said, "Yes, because let's say you

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shoplift candy and you get away with it, then a couple of weeks later it will be easy to shoplift a lipstick or mascara.”

If you don't get caught the first time, you will think, *Oh, I'm pretty smart and cool. Nobody will find out..*

You'll harden your heart towards God, and before long your conscience will become immune to your deeds. This is how the enemy works. Then I added, “Yes, I do pray that you get busted.”

Erin and Jesse thought that was horrible for me to say, but they never stole anything. In addition, they didn't drink or smoke? Why? Because we put down the rules early and talked openly about what was expected in our household.

I told them, “If people are going to give you a ride home (this is when they couldn't drive), and all of a sudden there is alcohol or beer, or somebody is smoking while you're in the car, get out and call me. I don't care if it's 11 o'clock at night, I will come and get you. However, if you are in the car riding around, and they are doing something like that, and they get pulled over, and you get busted and taken down to the police station, don't call me because I'm not coming to bail you out. You had your chance, and you blew it.”

Make children responsible for their actions. It starts at infancy. Don't rationalize, “Oh well, he had a bad day, or the baby is throwing a fit because the baby is

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teething.” No, the baby is throwing a fit because the baby wants to throw one. He knows that you will put him down, and he doesn’t want to sit in his chair. He wants to be held in your arms all day long. Ladies, do not be one of those mothers who carries the baby on her hip while vacuuming.

WHO’S AT FAULT?

While growing up I was raised in blame. If something went wrong, I was made to think I was partly responsible. Maybe I made it happen by not participating or by overlooking some information.

When you blame yourself, then you naturally receive blame from everybody else.

As time passed, the enemy had me wound around his little finger, believing lies. For example he had me thinking it was my fault because it snowed during a retreat. It was my fault because a lot of people didn’t turn their clocks back.

I finally said, “Enough of this! I want to have less of me and more of God. If the Lord is in me, He will tell me what He wants me to do. So why am I so concerned about it being my fault?”

WE GROW BY SHARING

At one of our retreats, there were 45 to 50 women in attendance, so I broke them up into small groups of five. Everybody was sharing and it was wonderful. As soon as we finished with the groups and all sat down together, I announced, “Okay, let me hear some feedback so that every one who wasn’t in your group can benefit.”

Nobody said a word. There was complete silence. I had to let them know that we grow by sharing personal experiences, whether it is ours or someone else’s.

CLAIM THE PROMISES

One of the major factors I have learned about problems is that if I can name them, face them, give them to God, and do my part, the Lord will do His, and I will overcome them by the blood of the Lamb.

If I am anxious, worried, fearful, or afraid, but can name what I’m feeling, then I can say, “I bind you, fear, in Jesus’ name. Get off me! I thank you, Father, I’m not born of a spirit of fear and I claim Your promises.”

Go ahead. Cast fear off of you on the authority of the Almighty—and He will. Then ask the Lord to help you stay in victory.

I am like a little child with my hand up in the air

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reaching out for my heavenly Father. He reaches His hand down, grabs me, and says, “Okay, daughter, let’s go.”

Sometimes I think He is saying—“Yo,” or “Hey, you,” but that probably is just me. Randy hears the word “son” when the Father is speaking to him.

ONE STEP AT A TIME

If we involve God in our problem areas, He is always faithful to guide us through. I have learned that if I adjust my attitude to half full instead of half empty (to a positive instead of confessing the negative), I can overcome the barriers with God’s help.

If you say you have to climb 858 steps up a hill, you’re already defeating yourself. Instead say, “I’m going to put one foot in front of the other and keep going until I can’t go anymore, and then I’m going to involve God.” *You and I are going to do this.*

One step at a time sounds a whole lot better than 858 steps.

For many, the greatest barrier is their weight. But saying “I’m going to lose one pound this week” sounds better than “I’m going to lose 5 or 10 pounds this week.” Small increments and a positive attitude makes a difference: *Thank you, Lord, my temple is getting pretty chunky and for me to be healthy, active, and useful for*

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the Kingdom of God, I want to be the best that I can be.

On the other hand, maybe you are getting too thin and have to address the problem. Do it. Yet, stay accountable to God, not to anybody else.

SPIRITUAL OPTIMISM

Stop worrying over what anyone else thinks, because it is not their problem. When you go to bed at night, it is between you and God. Put your head down on your pillow and say, “You know, Lord, I hope I did everything that you wanted me to do today. Show me if I missed something. Help me to be a better person tomorrow. Help me not to eat eight pieces of chocolate. Let me eat only four!”

If you talk to the Lord and are determined to do better the next day, you will get a peaceful night’s sleep and be armed and ready to face the new day.

Keep your spiritual optimism. *I will do it even if my flesh doesn’t want to. I can do it through Christ Jesus.*

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

I used to run away from problems or obstacles. I knew they were there, but in my mind they did not exist until I was almost smothered by them. Then I would take authority at the last minute. I know that sounds ridiculous, and it was.

The problem didn't bother me until it was almost overwhelming me. It was like being in the ocean treading water, when you see a huge wave coming and you decide to swim—or, as the surfboarders do, just try to ride the curl of the wave. But you may be overcome by the force.

Why take authority at the last minute? Why wait so long? Why open the door and let the devil come in, sit on your sofa, aggravate you for a week and then decide that you are not going to put up with this anymore?

Take charge of the situation and tell the enemy to get out of your house in Jesus' name and stop bothering you.

You must deal with it. You will have to face the issue

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sooner or later. So stand on God's Word:

***“Be not weary in well doing. We will
harvest a good crop if we don't give up.”***

— Paraphrase of Galatians 6:9

If you give up, you're defeated, and the enemy has you.

WHY CRY?

Be careful of the words that come out of your mouth. Watch your confession. Trust me, ladies, crying doesn't do anything except mess up your make-up. It does not move God.

The enemy loves to hear you weep and wail because he knows he has you wrapped around his little finger, and you will be defeated sooner or later. Besides, you are not the only one who will go down. Your whole household will suffer because “if mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.” And you are responsible.

Now that our children are grown, if they see me throw a hissy fit or become upset about some issue, they look at me and remind me of what I taught them.

Jesse had cause to tell me something one day because I was out of line. I was getting worked up over a situation. But instead of praying about it, I was having a meltdown and was totally in the flesh.

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Be thankful when your kids come back and tell you what you need to hear. After all, when they needed help, they learned the lesson from you.

“Be on your guard against men...for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

– Matthew 10:17, 20

I once gave a message to our church with this scripture in mind. One of my obstacles is that I am not a preacher like my husband (who was trained as a minister and has 24 years of education). This was not what I wanted as a future for my life. What I desired was to be a good Christian, a wife, and a mother.

“YES, YOU CAN”

Years ago when we had church at our local high school, Randy told me, “You can lead the kid’s Bible study.” There were approximately 35 children and all the desks were filled up. Their ages ranged from very young to 15 years old in this one room. I replied, “I can’t do this, Randy.”

He wouldn’t take no for an answer. “Yes, you can,” he insisted. And God will help you.”

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I thought, *Right, that's easy for you to say.* I knew the kids would give me a headache and drive me nuts.

Well, I showed up, even if I took the assignment with the wrong motivation. I wanted to show Randy, *See, I really am going to get a headache. I can't do this. And the parents will hear about it and tell everybody. It will be a disaster!*

I thought the complaints would start pouring in and I could tell Randy, "I told you so."

It didn't happen that way because I committed the entire project to the Lord, and He helped me and my attitude—even though at the start I didn't know what I was doing. I stood on the promise of scripture that "It is not me speaking, but God's Holy Spirit speaking through me."

A NEW EXPERIENCE

To be honest, I really enjoyed working with those kids. In fact, they listened, learned some divine principles, had a good time, and looked forward to the class week after week.

I asked the Lord to use me any way He could. At the sessions, I presented the Bible stories with a lot of enthusiasm and drama—using different voices and hand gestures. My young listeners sat at their desks and hung on every word.

*It must have been God, because this was
such a new experience for me.*

The reason I mention this is because if you are asked to undertake a role that seems out of your comfort zone, don't automatically say "No." Who knows what hidden talents you have that are waiting to be uncovered—or skills that can be used for the Kingdom.

Through Christ you can overcome your shyness, your inferiority complex, and your self-doubt. As the scripture states:

*“They overcame him by the blood of
the lamb and by the word of their testimony.”*
— Revelations 12:11

Your testimony helps me, and mine will help somebody else, but I can only talk to others about what I know to be true in my heart and what I have gone through. Earlier I stated that the people who have hurt me the most have been Christians, but this is because I looked to them to be perfect. I expected them to be people of their word because that is what I wanted for myself. I looked to them for support and guidance.

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“INSIDE KNOWLEDGE”

I can still remember the time a minister in our area stood in his pulpit and told his church members not to go to my husband for counseling, even telling them that Randy Brodhagen was not of God. That’s stepping into dangerous territory, especially since the Bible warns not to touch God’s anointed.

Since the title of this book is *He’s My Pastor – He’s My Husband*, I think I have a little more authority and “inside knowledge” than a critic who does not know how the Lord is working in our congregation and beyond.

I have told more than one person, “Randy has more of God than any person I know.” I have even gone as far as to say, “If I ever went insane and divorced my husband, I would still come and sit under his ministry because he tells the truth—whether people want to hear it or not.”

As believers, we need to be builders, not destroyers—to repair bridges, not tear them down.

*When one member of the body of Christ
is attacked, we all are attacked.*

I pray you will never develop a spirit of envy or criticism. And when a negative word is spoken about another Christian, don’t respond or pass it on. Cut off the

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conversation and let that be the end of the matter.

Thank God, we are being taught well. Christ is our example.

“WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO SAY?”

Randy is the counselor, but there have been many times the Lord has used me in the same capacity.

My first “counseling appointment” was about 24 years ago when Randy wasn’t home, and a woman called to say her husband was drunk. It was a Friday evening. The man had no money because He had spent his entire paycheck on alcohol. They had four children, and he was sprawled out in a stupor on the patio of their home. I wanted to say, “Go open the patio door, kick him a couple of times, go through his pockets and see if has missed a dollar or two, and then shut the door.”

In the flesh, that’s exactly what I would have told her.

But God convicted me of such thoughts and I knew I was responsible for the counsel I was about to give. I prayed and asked the Lord, “What am I supposed to say?”

Then I told her, “What God would have you to do is to open the door, help him to get up, bring him into his bed, take his clothes off, put him underneath the covers. And don’t say one word tomorrow morning about the money, what he did, or what happened.”

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She did what God told her to do through me. The Lord must have been speaking because they are still together. Their four children are excellent; her husband stopped drinking and came to the Lord, and they are mighty witnesses as a godly Christian household.

What would it have accomplished if she had gone out and kicked him in the gut? It would have been two minutes of personal satisfaction, but that would not have drawn him to the Lord. It would not have taught their children how to respond in Christian love.

We must treat others the way God sees them, even though they are not that way yet (Romans 4:17; 5:6). Believe me, it works.

This wife hung onto the Word of God, first for herself and then for her husband and children. And as a result of her being obedient, the whole household is saved to the glory of God. She overcame and her husband defeated the enemy.

“Rejoice in the Lord always...Do not be anxious...And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

– Philippians 4:4-7

HE HAS PROVIDED A WAY

Regardless of what comes your direction, whether it

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be in the form of hateful words, or temptations, with the help of God’s Son, you have the divine power to deal with it. Remember:

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

– 1 Corinthians 10:13

If you claim authority and take steps to deal with the situation, you can overcome whatever burden is placed upon you. Plus, the Lord will walk by your side and carry the weight.

“Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.”

– Psalm 68:19

God knows what you will experience the rest of this very day and is ready, willing, and waiting to help you. The same Christ who bore our sins on the cross of Calvary is alive this very moment—ready and able to hold you in His loving arms. All you need to do is ask, and He will answer.

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IT'S YOURS!

The provision has already been paid for.

Let me give you this example. Let's say you receive a department store catalog, and you're browsing through, looking at your favorite items. Then someone makes you this generous offer: "Get whatever you want, and I'll buy it for you. You can pick it up later, just wait until it comes in."

If that happened to me, I'd say, "Wow!"

Excited, I would read the catalog carefully and place my order.

Then, a few days later, the phone rings and the customer service rep at the department store says, "Your order is in. And I see here that it is already paid for in full. All you have to do is pick it up."

What if I put the phone down and never collected the items somebody was trying to bless me with? Would that make any sense?

Of course, not. But we do the same thing with the Lord when we don't take action on what He has offered. His provision has already been given. All we have to do is claim it "in Jesus' name."

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song."

– Psalm 28:7

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A FINAL WORD

I pray that the words of this book will let you know that God can take you, me, or anyone—and use them for His purpose and glory.

I am thankful that He has given me a role model and a godly example for my life—Randy Brodhagen.

He's My Pastor – He's My Husband.

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