

## 4 marriage

Marriage personifies our covenant relationship with God. When we live this, He will bring us into the Promised Land, a place of peace and well-being. I don't feel like an expert in sharing on this topic. It's been really tough for me to stay the course. Please don't look at me as someone who has all the answers. It's God's grace that Michael and I are still together. I can't tell you how many times I've been ready to throw in the towel... or even worse. Ruth Graham said she never wanted to divorce Billy, but sometimes she wanted to murder him! We all have to face our feelings. It's been friends like Sandra who have been a step ahead and have said to me, "Um Hum... ok, keep quiet and keep moving forward." I'd be thinking, doesn't she understand what I'm saying? Doesn't she understand what I'm going through? But I do love God and want to follow His will. Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, **"He who endures to the end shall be saved. He who stands firm or perseveres to the end shall be saved."** Sandra was telling me to stand firm. This was my salvation. The word "sever" in persevere tells me I need to break off any ties that hold me back from staying the course. What ties are you holding on to that need to be broken so you can get to where you need to go? I'm not talking about adultery or abuse. There are situations where you need to get out. God knows your heart.

Marriage is a story of perseverance. Aesop's Fable The Tortoise and the Hare paints a great word picture for us:

One day the Hare ridiculed the short feet and slow pace of the Tortoise. So the Tortoise finally challenged him: "Even if you were as swift as the wind, I will beat you in a race."

The Hare, believing the Tortoise to be an easy match, agreed to the race. They agreed that the Fox should choose the course and fix the goal.

On the day of the race the two started together. The Hare raced off, leaving the Tortoise to choke on the dust left behind. However, the Tortoise never stopped for a moment, but went on with a slow but steady pace straight to the end of the course.

When the Hare was out of sight of the Tortoise, he lay down by the wayside and fell fast asleep. With his little short feet and slow pace, the Tortoise plodded on and plodded on. At last the Hare woke up, and hopped as fast as he could to the finishing line. When he got there, he saw the Tortoise had reached the goal, and was comfortably dozing after her fatigue.

Moral: Plodding wins the race. Slow but steady wins the race.

This is what I needed to do in my marriage. It wasn't about being the fastest, the best or the smartest. I needed to simply stay the course. This is what Sandra was saying, keep quiet, stay the course, keep moving forward. This is why Marriage personifies our covenant relationship with God. Living this out brought me to the Promised Land of peace and well-being. I married who I did for a reason and there were things in me that needed to be worked out. Let's look at Exodus 13:17-18 NLT. I heard this in my daily Bible reading plan. I love listening. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. I hear things I may not see. This was Rhema when I heard it and I knew it was for our Marriage commentary: ***"When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness toward the Red Sea. Thus the Israelites left Egypt like an army ready for battle."***

If the Israelites had taken the shortest fastest route, they would have lost the strength they needed to stay the course and get to the Promised Land. The road to Canaan was heavily guarded by Egypt and not a safe way to travel. God knew they might use up their entire arsenal for battle, they might use up all the strength they needed for reaching their destination. You don't want to use up all your strength before you get to where you need to go. This is what the hare did. Be willing to go through the refining process to get rid of the dross that caused the problem in the first place. Listen to God and go the way He directs you. **What looks good to you may not be what's good for you.** Pray and ask the Holy Spirit which direction He wants to take you. Pray for **discernment!** Discernment is the ability to understand something clearly and distinctly. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. **News flash: judgment is not a gift.** I had to judge less and love more. What I was judging him for I was guilty of. I've had to learn that my marriage is not about me. It's about God's will for my life. I have to wait upon God and His timing for answers to my questions and conflict. What are your battles? Are you fighting for what God's given you or are you just fighting what He's given you? I had to stop fighting with my husband and start fighting for him. God doesn't want us fighting against our marriages. He wants us fighting for them!

Let's look at Ecc 9:11 NLT: ***"I have observed something else under the sun. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the***

***strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise sometimes go hungry, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives. It is all decided by chance, by being in the right place at the right time.***” Solomon is saying to enjoy life while you have it. My marriage isn't perfect, I'm not perfect, my husband isn't perfect, but I'm committed to God and doing what I can to love everyone He has in my life. When you let God put you in the right place at the right time He gives you what you need to get to where you need to go. We are at the right place at the right time right now! You're meant to be here to flourish in joyful living. Even when it looks like a roundabout way, we're going to get through the desert to the Promised Land. Your Promised Land is a place of rest, peace and well-being. What are the issues you see that need to be worked out in your life?

Listen to wisdom from others. Listening to Sandra and other women of God who had more experience enabled me to go through the desert and get to my Promised Land. The Promised Land is God's rest for you. I needed to stop struggling so much and trust God more. Let's turn to *Isaiah 28:12-13 NLT*. We are reading lots of OT verses. Jesus' Words open the door to the world of the Bible. What He says in His Words He has already said somewhere else in the Bible. He tells us to persevere in His Words. Here He is telling us why to persevere and how to persevere. The Bible contains all the answers we need: ***“God has told his people, “Here is a place of rest; let the weary rest here. This is a place of quiet rest.” But they would not listen. <sup>13</sup> So the LORD will spell out his message for them again, one line at a time, one line at a time, a little here, and a little there, so that they will stumble and fall. They will be injured, trapped, and captured.”*** God tried talking simply to the Israelites in ways they would understand but they were so stubborn and hard headed that instead of listening they took offense and refused God's Words. Because they refused to listen, Assyria invaded them. Refusing to listen is idolatry saying, “I know better than God.” Don't let the enemy take what God gives you. God gave me my marriage and children. God gave me my friends. God put precious relationships into my life to cherish, nurture and respect. If I complain and refuse healthy conflict resolve when it occurs I may lose the gifts God's given me. God's Word says in 1 Samuel 15:23 NLT: ***“Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols.”*** If I don't let God soften my stubborn heart, I am giving the devil a foothold and permission

to pass that same sin to my children. Whatever I'm angry about, I'm guilty of. Don't agree with the devil. Let the Holy Spirit soften your heart.

How do we enter the Promised Land? Turn with me to Hebrews 4:6-7 NLT: ***"So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts."*** God wants you living in your Promised Land through belief. I've learned to re-shift my sight from my circumstances on to my faith in God and His Word. Put your faith before your circumstances. This land is a place of rest and peace in your heart. God made the Sabbath for man not man for the Sabbath. He gave us a day of rest for our well being, not to put us in bondage. He has you where you are to learn the lessons you need to learn, to turn issues over to Him and trust Him for the answers. Give God your problems and let Him replace them with His peace. This is what God did for me and I know He will do for you.

Let me tell you, my husband can be tough. But he's met his match! I've had to learn to lay down my life to learn the lessons God has for me. Don't feel badly about being divorced. I was divorced. It's not the unforgivable sin. We just need to understand why marriage is so sacred. Then we need God's grace and mercy to repent and keep moving forward into the Promised Land. ***"So then [God's gift] is not a question of human will and human effort, but of God's mercy. [It depends not on one's own willingness nor on his strenuous exertion as in running a race, but on God's having mercy on him.]" Rom 9:16 AMPC.*** Let God's mercy bring you into your Promised Land through your faith. Let Him bring you into a place of rest, peace and well-being. He will take you by the hand and lead you like a child. God is bigger than your circumstances, more loving than the hatred you've faced, wiser than your worst problem and more consistent than the world around you. He is an ever present help in time of trouble. Leave it at the cross where Jesus died for every sin, problem, hurt, trouble and opened the door to reconciliation, redemption, hope, joy and love. Let's pray. *"God, thank You for bringing every one of us into the Promised Land right now. You are bigger than any of our circumstances. We give You our trouble, leaving it at the cross. Replace with Your hope, love, joy and peace. Lord we enter into Your rest right now through our belief in You. We praise You and bless You in Jesus' name, Amen."*