

Part I



The End of My Marriage

MY HUSBAND dropped to the floor from a heart attack on January 9, 2005, while preaching to hundreds of people.

How did I feel about it? The answer is long and complex.

At least I was spared from actually watching the incident. Earlier that day, I had called my friend Mary Ann, who was signed up to watch the nursery.

“Would you like me to replace you? I’ve heard this message three times.”

“I’d love that,” she said. “I don’t know when I’ll get to hear Jack preach again.”

While sitting in a rocking chair, holding an infant, I heard footsteps running down the hallway toward the nursery. I thought some kid was goofing off during church. A young man threw open the door and shouted at the woman next to me, a medically trained physician’s assistant.

“Darlene, come quick!” he said. “Jack has collapsed in the pulpit.”

The young man didn’t see me there. As they ran off, I said to myself, “Well, I’d better go too.”

My first thought was that I had fixed Jack a decent breakfast—eggs, juice, toast, and fruit. Our marriage had a pretty checkered past, but if there was one bit of consistency to the chaos, it was that I had always laid out the food on a regular basis. So why would he faint?

Our church met at the large, modern auditorium of Reformed Theological Seminary near Orlando, Florida. As I hurried to the stairs, the elevator doors popped open to my left, and several people gave me a serious, somber look. I began to sense that something more than a typical fainting had occurred.

On my way to the auditorium, a number of people were rushing out, talking on their cell phones in an urgent tone. When I entered, the rest of the congregation was bowed in prayer, except for a few people huddled by the podium surrounding a man on the floor. They were performing CPR.



FOR YEARS I had secretly resented my role as wife and “helper” to my husband. The resentment began two weeks after our wedding, when Jack would read at his desk, not in bed, to keep the light from bothering me. When I would try to entice him to come to bed, wearing a thin nightgown, he would just ask me to make him another cup of tea.

I got pregnant two months after the wedding—something we had not planned on. The understanding had been that I would work for four years to help put Jack through seminary. Now the future did not look like I had imagined. This crisis was followed by many more conflicts, and my resentment for Jack grew and continued for decades.

I reached the place where I was no longer in love with my husband. My desires were not to please him or to meet his needs. I was going through the motions of being a wife, fooling everybody but me and God.

Things were not so good between me and the pastor, but I was very good at being a pastor's wife. I taught a number of Bible studies. I traveled regularly as a featured speaker for the Christian Women's Club, sharing my conversion testimony at area country clubs. I got up early, studied the Scriptures, and underlined key passages with my special pencil—blue on one side, red on the other.

However, I was deceiving myself by thinking I could have a close walk with God when my relationship with my husband was terrible. I secretly resented my role as wife and helper to my husband.

Jack also looked as if nothing was wrong at home. Our church in Roanoke, Virginia, was growing, and building projects were underway. He spoke several times a week and even appeared on radio and TV at various times. But he was not getting his strokes at home, and many other formidable pressures closed in over time. The church split. Jack was hospitalized and diagnosed with clinical depression. He did not preach for several months. While he brought his own problems to the table, he was also the victim of difficult circumstances, but I had no compassion at all. "You need to snap out of it," was my general feeling, which I articulated many times.

I failed miserably in this relationship for many years, even though the first verses of the Bible say God created the wife to help the husband, to complement his weaknesses, to encourage and meet his needs, and to build him up.

One of the hardest lessons I had to learn was that I could no longer think of myself as a godly woman, filled with the Spirit and walking close to the Lord, if I was not being the kind of wife that God wanted me to be. I was willing to meet the needs of

everyone on earth except the one for whom God had specifically created me.

God had to bring me to a place in my life where I saw my marriage crumbling and my children distressed, where I was forced to acknowledge I was no longer able—or even willing—to be the spiritual woman portrayed in the books and magazines. I hated going to marriage seminars. When we did go to counseling, I was able to place all the blame on my husband.



THIS WAS the same man whom I was now approaching after he had collapsed in the pulpit. While he lay on the floor, I inched up close to his body to see what had happened to him. He looked gone. I stepped back a few feet and turned my head away while the congregation prayed silently. I looked up again as the paramedics rushed in and put the 69-year-old preacher in the ambulance. I rode in the passenger seat, alone with my emotions, not knowing at the time that he had died instantly.

It would be a matter of hours before Jack's sensational death made national and international news. He had been preaching on heaven and had quoted his lifetime verse, Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." He also quoted John Wesley: "As long as God has work for me to do, I am immortal" and then Jack added, "but if my work is done, I'm outta here." Moments later he pointed upward and spoke his last words, "And when I go to heaven..." He stopped, grabbed the pulpit, swayed briefly, and fell backward.

"He was just all there, and then not there at all, like a hand came through the roof and snatched him out of his body," said an eyewitness who was sitting only five feet away from where Jack fell.

The story hit the AP wire and was listed by Yahoo as the most-read story of the day. A family friend from Sweden e-mailed

us after seeing the report on CNN. “Preacher Dies with Heaven on His Lips” exclaimed the *Drudge Report*. Even Paul Harvey mentioned it: “Pastor Jack Arnold’s last words were ‘and when I go to heaven,’ ... and he went!”

If my marriage had never changed, my thoughts during that ambulance ride to the hospital on that fateful day would have been very different. I would have been glad to see him go. While I certainly would have grieved the death of a human I knew intimately, a large part of me would have been happy to move on, my emotional side relieved.

How did I actually feel about it that day? I am happy to report that I was deeply saddened, grief stricken, and remorseful to lose my husband. By God’s grace, we saw great healing in our marriage during our last two decades together. I had grown to truly love him.



I KNOW what some of you are thinking. You are disappointed that the story ends well. As long as I was struggling, you could identify with my situation. I understand, because I once had the same reaction when told that I could love my husband.

What was my response then? You don’t know my husband! You don’t know my circumstances. You don’t know my lack of desire.

The purpose of this book, in large part, is to convince you that I do understand. I can relate. I know what it is like to be disgusted, to lose all desire for your mate, and to give up hope. To convince you, I have chosen to write a very honest portrayal of our marriage in the pages that follow. While some could interpret the candid details as embarrassing or even disrespectful to Jack and me, I believe the risk is well worth it. I have no doubt Jack would agree.

Mentors Needed

Love doesn't come naturally. And if it does come naturally, it often goes away naturally. Many wives think about falling in love again with someone else after they are married. I had my first fantasy after three years of marriage, about the butcher at the A&P. I don't think I ever spoke to him, but I thought about him a lot, for about four months, then my feelings for him vanished, and I wondered, "What was that all about?"

Love is learned. It takes work. And you need mentors to get there. The Scriptures charge older women to "train the younger women to love their husbands" (Titus 2:4-5). We cannot do this alone. We need help and encouragement. We need coaching. We have the same needs that women had 2,000 years ago. Loving your husband is not a feeling. It is something you must be trained to do.

My prayer is that this book will help in that process. The first section of the book chronicles the story of my marriage, and I hope it will serve as a helpful example for overcoming the enemy of resentment. The second section provides thoughts and insights I have developed over the years. These insights are intended to help you understand your God-given ministry and empower you to avoid the ongoing temptation to resent your husband.

Women's Lib is So Yesterday

I want to assure you that I am not naive about progressive views regarding a woman's calling. I am the product of highly educated grandparents who held lectures in Los Angeles in the 1920s promoting free sex, abortion, and socialism. My parents were married for sixty-five years—lovely people who held very liberal, progressive ideas. They marched for whales, attended many environmental conferences around the globe, and were arrested for protesting nuclear weapons. At times they gave each other permission to have affairs, and encouraged the free expression of ideas and behavior.

So I am thoroughly acquainted with the world's message regarding what will liberate a woman. But I firmly believe that only a commitment to what God teaches in the Bible about the roles of husbands and wives will bring liberation to the sexes.

Seven Needs of the Husband

Much of this book focuses on the importance of understanding these roles, a crucial element of a successful marriage. But let me add that there are many important components of a successful marriage. My book discusses the wife's role at length, but every couple should also commit to other things that are extremely important. They include (1) submitting to the authority of Scripture, (2) committing yourselves to the local church, (3) allowing counselors and godly friends to examine your marriage, (4) and sacrificing your own desires for the sake of your spouse.

But wisdom and understanding are also very important. Proverbs 14:1 says: "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." This doesn't say a *happy* woman, but a *wise* woman.

I believe a wise woman will understand that her husband has needs, that these needs are not sin, and that she has been perfectly created to meet those needs. It is very important for women to realize this, because if you look at your husband as sinful for being needy, you will not grasp the purpose of your calling as a woman. Instead, you will resent it.

One of the key turning points in our marriage was when I finally accepted the fact that it was good and right for me to meet my husband's needs. In fact, it was my calling and ministry, and I was specifically created to help this incomplete man who was simply the same kind of person that Eve found in the Garden of Eden, before sin had entered the picture.

Even in a perfect environment, with a perfect body and a perfect relationship with God Almighty, Adam was lacking. We

read in Genesis 2:18, “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”

After studying Genesis closely, I saw that Adam was created with seven specific needs that were met when God created Eve:

1. The need for *relationship*
2. The need for *authority and respect*
3. The need to *provide*
4. The need to *protect*
5. The need for *sexual fulfillment*
6. The need for *companionship*
7. The need for *domestic help*

Mothering My Six-Foot-Three Husband?

I believe that number seven, the need for domestic help, is perhaps the most resented need in our time. Think about what is implied here: Man has a need for “mothering.”

Man’s needs are met by his mother and father as he grows up. He is nurtured, cared for, loved, fed, and clothed by his parents. He is cared for when he is sick. He is encouraged to do well in school and told they are proud of him. When he is discouraged, they comfort and encourage him. They do all they can to make him the best person he can be.

When he marries, he is to leave his mother and father behind. Does his need for these things disappear? Do they go away now that he is married? No, they are still there, but many of them are now to be met by his wife.

Remember, these are the needs of perfect, sinless man, before the fall. These are needs created by God for the man to have as part of God’s creation. How much more are the needs of our husbands.

So here we have the Creator’s design for wives: to be a helper, to complement that which is incomplete without her. This is the biblical relationship that God created.

For years I resented my husband for having these needs. I refused to help Jack, ignoring my calling as a wife. While there were many layers to our recovery, the following pages will show you that my ability to overcome resentment was largely related to gaining a better understanding of my Creator's design for me.

Eve Deceived

I have also come to understand how easily I can be deceived, just like Eve was deceived in the garden. This deception leads to a corrupted idea of my helper design. Chapter 13 details how women so eagerly think they are doing something “good” when, in fact, our good intentions are like Eve's.

Another “Helper”

I never liked the word “helpmate”* to describe the woman. The term seemed subservient and demeaning, like a slave, like the kitchen help. But God impressed upon me one day that someone else in the Bible is called the helper.

Jesus said, “I am going to send you another Helper.” This helper is the Holy Spirit, who is equal with the Father—truly God—but who has a unique and different role. This analogy between the Spirit and the woman is explored in Chapter 14.

The remaining chapters provide hints for married couples, advice for husbands, and a compilation of Bible verses to help you in your struggle to achieve a godly marriage.



AFTER RIDING in the ambulance to the hospital, I received the official word. Jack was dead. Thanks to the insights shared in this book—along with the help of supportive sons, close friends,

*“Helpmate” evolved from the old King James rendering of Genesis 2:20: “an help meet for him”—“meet” being an archaic word that means “suitable.” Eventually, “help meet” became “helpmate” in colloquial usage.

gifted counselors, and many prayer warriors—my feelings and emotions that day were filled with love and compassion for my husband. I longed to be with Jack.

After many years of struggling as a pastor, Jack had turned a corner. He led a vibrant and growing church in Orlando and founded a ministry that sends teachers to train pastors in third world countries, especially Africa. This is a far cry from the depressed, hospitalized, perhaps suicidal man that you will read about in the following pages. I believe the fact God had changed my heart toward supporting and encouraging my husband rather than tearing him down was a major factor in the turnaround he made in his life.

Our new ministry had us traveling the world as husband and wife, working together regularly on meetings, mailings, and strategy sessions. We had become quite a team. When we taught together on marriage and the family, it was always a huge hit. We played cards together on the plane—usually cribbage or gin rummy—and we visited exotic beaches and ancient cities. We donned our African outfits and spoke to church groups. Back in Orlando we would go to the movies, go fishing together, and visit Sea World and Disney. At home I pulled the weeds while he planted flowers and cared for our two citrus trees.

I grew up with scores of pets and had always dreamed of going on safari. Jack's main boyhood memory of animals was being rushed to the hospital after two German shepherds bit him. Had you told me as a young pastor's wife that one day I would travel the world and regularly go on safari, I never would have believed it. I also never would have believed that my animal-fearing husband would be so excited to see the animals.

In our later years, Jack would talk with me over dinner about who to take next on safari. He wanted to make sure they saw all the big ones, he said, like the elephants and rhinos and lions. That might mean going to two different parks. He would talk about being the first to see a leopard in a tree, which is difficult