

Hope for Hurting Women

by Jackie Kenaston

This sermon offers hope and courage to women who are struggling with childhood trauma, abuse, and shame, by sharing a personal testimony of healing and redemption.

Duration: 1:18:42

Scripture: John 9:25, John 15:4

Topics: "Conviction And Guilt", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a dream and a nightmare that he had before a meeting. In the dream, he sees his son and his wife sitting in his father's study, along with other people. He realizes that it's time for the meeting to begin and goes downstairs, but realizes he doesn't have his notes. He then talks about the importance of understanding conviction and responding to it instead of being condemned. The speaker also mentions how he and his wife made a list of upheavals in their lives and emphasizes the transformation that came with salvation.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Well, I had written an introduction about a week and a half ago, but the Lord so altered things in the last week and a half that I felt I had to redo my introduction.

So I want to begin by sharing with you a dream that I had this morning, right before the alarm went off. And then I want to share with you a nightmare that I had three and a half weeks ago, the day after these meetings were announced. I don't know why, who enters into your dreams, but this morning Vera Stumpf and I were walking along the road to this meeting, and we were just talking, and I had my little folder of notes, and I knew we had to turn left to get to where we were going, and we started turning left, and there were boulders and rocks, and we were climbing up to get to this real high building up here, and it seemed

like a rough way to get there.

I didn't know if there would be another lane that we could go, but we were just having a nice little talk, and we were on our way, and the alarm went off. Did you ever wish you could go back to sleep and make sure you got there? But I obviously got here. Three and a half weeks ago, I had a nightmare about this meeting.

My husband calls them preacher-speaker nightmares. Well, in this dream, for some reason, my son Daniel and his wife Christy were sitting on the floor in Papa's study, and Erin Hurst and Denny were there, and we were talking, and I realized why I should come downstairs, because it was time for the meeting to begin. And I came down, and everybody was chit-chatting.

I thought, well, I'll run to the bathroom, so I went to the bathroom, and it dawned on me. I don't have my notes. I haven't even looked at my notes.

How can I say I was burdened about this meeting, and I never, in all this three and a half weeks, I never even looked for my notes. I looked in the mirror, and I had a big blotch of something on my dress, you know, and I was panicking, thinking, what do I tell them? I don't even have my notes. Well, I'm glad to tell you that that is not true.

That was a nightmare, because I did prepare as best as I know how for the meeting, but more than that, I am just astounded at the support that I have felt, especially this last week and a half. It overwhelms me, the cards and the e-mails and the phone calls and the prayers. I just, I feel very unworthy, and I thank you.

It is nervous to stand up here, but to know that people love you like that, the Lord and you behind me, I can go on. Why is it that it's easier in some ways to speak to a group of strangers than it is to speak to ladies that you walk with week by week? Perhaps one of the reasons is man fear, in this case, woman fear, because it is a vulnerable place for me, and so I wonder what will you think of me after this time is over. Why is it easier to hear a guest speaker than it is to hear somebody who you see every week? Maybe because we're more easily critical of somebody that we see.

Maybe, well, I know them and they're just, you know, they're not so hot. If those two things are true, it seems like we both have a part in order to make this meeting a blessing today. I have to agree to shake those fears off and to speak unto the Lord, and you have to agree to put away your magnifying glass.

And I won't be bogged down with that. And perhaps, just maybe, in spite of myself, the Lord will speak to you and bless you. Why am I standing here today? Certainly not because I'm a public speaker.

I'd like to think the reason was because I have my act all together, but that's not true either. After all, isn't Denny my husband? Aren't I the wife of a godly home preacher? Does that put your expectations up here? Well, do me a favor and just lower them. Because that's true, but, like you'll hear this afternoon, I'm also the wretch who jumped out the windows and ran away in our early married life and many, many hidden dynamics behind 2004 in our life.

If I had a success story to share with you because of my own efforts, then I might be proud. And you might think, oh, wow, she had all these incidents in her life that led her to this place of success, and that wouldn't honor the Lord at all. So I guess it would be my desire that you would just let me be myself.

If anything that I share relates to you in my spiritual track that I've taken, wonderful, this is today. I'm not where I was yesterday, and I'm not where I'm going to be a year from now. And I trust that a year from

now I will have many more exciting things to say about what the Lord has done in my life.

I don't know specifically what each of you are dealing with, but I know in a group of women this size that there are some hurting hearts, maybe a very wide variety of needs, some hard circumstances, because this is life, and this is where we live, and we are facing obstacles. Maybe some of you are even where I was almost two years ago, burnt out, weary, desperate, so absolutely loaded, not knowing where to turn. Why do I think that might be true? Because I know as the Lord leads me to be honest and transparent, it's often because there are other people who are maybe very close to the same place.

In the natural, if you ask me to give a topic, I might want to give you some charts and some schedules and some organizational ideas and give you a how-to, and that's not wrong. There's a place for seminars. I think that those things are very helpful.

I have gleaned from some of them also. But this afternoon we'd rather go into the crux of the heart where it all begins. I'm a firm believer in using resources.

In my bedroom I have a bookcase about four feet high and this wide, and it's full of books. How-to books. How to be a better woman.

How to be a godly wife. Devotional books. Dieting books.

Homeschooling books. Child training books. Inspirational books.

Cookbooks. How-to. How-to.

How to be an exciting lover. I just have lots of books. Why? Because I've been a seeker.

Ever since I was born again I've been a seeker. Wanting to improve. Wanting more of what the Lord had for me.

Seems like I've had a lot of advantages. All those resources available at my fingertips. Sermons and seminars.

And besides that, I have the tremendous advantage of being married to Denny. And I say that in all honesty. He is one of the godliest men that I've ever met.

So why is it, with all of these positive things, that I miss so much for so many years? Well, maybe today I can give you a glimpse of some of that in such a way that it will help you or somebody that you know. Before we proceed, I would like to ask you all to close your eyes for me. I love to look at you all when your eyes are closed.

And love you. You know, I didn't come this afternoon to pretend to be anybody that I'm not. And I didn't come to play games.

I came to bare my heart. In hopes that by sharing some of my miserable failures and debilitating pain, that you might do two things. First, that you glorify God for His miraculous deliverance in my life.

And secondly, that you might gain some hope and courage for your own difficult circumstances. One of the largest reasons that I'm sharing this afternoon is simply out of obedience to the ministry. They walk with God.

They love us. They watch for our souls. And they sense that this would be good.

I also come out of a personal love for you ladies. We have faced some incredible spiritual warfare in the last three weeks since this meeting was announced. And I'm just selfish enough and honest enough to tell you that I'm not willing to pay that price if I didn't see a measure of something on the other side.

That I know that there are some beautiful, attainable victories for some of you that you're not walking in the good of yet. That thought excites me. And that is worth any price.

As I look out at your faces, I have to say I know the stories behind some of the smiles. And I know that some of you are carrying a load. Honesty isn't always pretty, but it's so freeing.

Pretense is a terrible bondage and eventually a killer. Few of us have come through a lot of life together. Some of us go way back, almost 22 years.

We've born babies. We've raised children. We've married.

We've buried. We fasted. We laughed.

We cried. We had fellowship meals. We had Bible school.

Lots of water under the bridge. It's very special to me to have Rebecca here. She's walked the longest with me.

She knows my ugliness inside and out. A desire to seek all that God has for us will draw hearts together in fellowship as we pursue holiness. It's a solidifying agent to surrender to the Lord.

But I know that sometimes some of you are sitting through church services and meetings like this in misery. Your head nods in agreement, but your heart is far removed. You think no one can understand, that there's no hope for you to get any further than where you're struggling right now.

I know that the only way for you to receive anything today is to have an open heart. Perhaps you need to do something daring. Perhaps you need to personally make a decision.

It is a choice, you know, to respond to God. You need to say, yes, Lord, I'll take the plunge. I won't hide.

I won't pretend. I'm open. Lord, I want to go on.

If a piece of my confusion relates to a piece of yours, just admit it. If a chord of my pain strikes a chord with yours, it's okay for some tears to fall. Let's just be real.

My son-in-law, Andrew, once told me that he had decided to quit giving books out that had been life-changing and challenging to him because so many times people weren't ready to receive the truth in those pages. It wouldn't matter how earth-shaking what I say today might be, if you're sitting there with the arms of your heart folded, saying, I'm not going to let you in. I'm going to be stubborn and resistant.

So let's just end this season. I'm going to just be quiet for a couple moments. And you just ask the Lord to help you, to commit yourself.

Set aside whatever you are doing this morning and just think about where you are with God. Ask Him to take you the next step. All right? You can open your eyes.

Thank you. Whenever you're asked to share a personal testimony, there's a bit of a quandary as to how much to share. I turned 50 this year.

Obviously, I can't share everything that's happened in the last 50 years. And that's not the goal. I'm hoping that I can share enough to give you a window of understanding of where I'm coming from, just so as to glorify God for where He's brought me from.

And yet, I don't want to bog down in specific sin issues. I have no desire to shock you. I could shock you.

I could tell you some ugly stories. That's not the goal. It's not the purpose.

It seems fitting where you're innocent to evil, you should just stay innocent to evil and be grateful that you weren't exposed to some things that others were, possibly. I don't want to compare my testimony to somebody else's. This is my testimony, and this is where God has brought me.

It's only been in the very recent years that we've allowed our older children some intimate glimpses into my past, and I think wisely so, to protect them from that. But as they've come to understand several of the circumstances of my younger years, I've been amazed how beautifully they've responded. They've been so supportive and so forgiving.

It seems it's caused new respect levels in their heart as they realize what we've been through, how much we've had to overcome. Denny and I have apologized many times for the rocky moments that they saw in our early married days since we stumbled and fumbled along. And to our surprise, it doesn't seem that they judge us for it.

It seems rather that they encourage us because we kept going, and that it's a motivational factor to them even though, thankfully, they'll never touch or taste some of the things that we did. The enemy's after them. He may be more subtle in his attempts to derail them, but he's after them.

I don't know how many children would be represented in this room. A lot. Hundreds for sure.

Every one of them needs something that's real. They don't need a mom and dad that are pretending they come to church and are something else when they're here than when they're home. That is so confusing, so damaging.

Our children will walk in the benefits of the victories that we gained way before we ever did. They start at such a younger age and with a purer heart. It's not long before they're strengthening and challenging us.

As you know, if you have older children, as they become youth, how they bring their devotional thoughts and what God said to them and how very sweet it is. How sweet Rebecca, this week, as I said to you, feeling the load of expectation, and in such a simple one-liner, Rebecca said, Mom, they're not expecting anything from you. Their expectation is in God.

Oh, yeah, that's right. Duh. So simple, but so profound.

I grew up in what today is commonly referred to as an extremely dysfunctional home. Both of my parents were alcoholics, and that contributes to a very angry spirit in the home with lots of arguing. I want to mention a little bit of trauma of some of my abuse in childhood days, only so that you can see the load of dark secrets that I carried for many, many years.

I was looking for another word to express trauma, and when I looked up trauma, it's mostly a medical term. But do you know what trauma is? It's a wound. And I thought, how fitting.

Because most of the trauma in our life does leave wounds. And if you don't know how to respond to those wounds, they get larger and more gaping and more damaging. An infection gets in them.

All abuse is ugly, whether it's verbal abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse. It's all ugly. But I think that probably one of the most damaging of childhood abuses is sexual abuse, especially if that abuse was administered by people in authority in your life.

The representation of who these people are supposed to be, and what they're supposed to be, and then in part, who God is. It's a quagmire of confusion to a young child. Children ought to be learning how to ride bikes and simple things, and to have to be carrying ugly loads of abuse.

It's very, very difficult. It's devastating. There came a time, after many instances of abuse in my life, where I grasped the reality that those laps that I crawled on, for a back scratch or a kind word, had ugly ulterior motives, time after time again.

When I was a little girl, I used to think, surely sometime my tear ducts will dry up, because I had just cried so many lonely hours. Because who do you go to? Where do you go? Where do you go for help? A little child, they won't believe you. It's your fault.

I'm sure you've heard others share that. During one of my parents' drunken arguments late at night, my father was permanently disabled in a fight that involved a chase and a butcher knife and a hard fall. He actually couldn't walk for a couple of years.

But that incident in itself became another dark secret to stuff and to hide, because my parents chose to lie and to say that he fell in another situation and therefore they made an insurance claim. I was very young, but I saw it. I knew where I fell.

But I learned to tell the same lie to protect my parents. It wasn't until I was a Christian many, many years that I realized in the middle of explaining one time, well, my father... I don't have to say that anymore. I don't ever have to say that again.

I had told it many years as a Christian because it was so much a part of me. I hope you don't ever, in any small way, cause your children to lie for you. Somebody comes to the door, the phone rings.

Don't cause your children to tell something that's not true, to hide or cover what you're doing or what you don't want to do. They shouldn't have to carry that load. This disability that my father suffered changed our home situation very fast because he had a good job, but it wasn't like in these days where you have anything available to you to collect money from.

He got a Social Security disability, but that was all. It threw us into a lot of poverty. My mother had been widowed at 22 with two little children, and she had come to the city where my father lived and married him.

He was 20 years older than her. She was a little country gal and didn't have any education, so the only jobs that she could get were bartending and all-night cab driving. Well, probably to protect herself, Mom gained a lot of weight.

She became a very large, tough, rough woman. She wore men's clothes. She could out-cuss, out-dirty joke tell any man, any truck driver.

And I think it was a protection for the rough world she had to face. She became very hardened. We didn't have any home life to speak of.

We never sat around the table to eat a meal. Matter of fact, to sit down at the table to eat, it was piled so high with things, junk, that it was a major chore just to clear a place to eat, so usually you ate in front of the television by yourself. Our house was so filthy, and I was so ashamed.

When I'd walk home from school, if anybody was walking with me, I would make excuses and walk other blocks so that they would never find out that I lived in that pink house. I didn't want them to know where I lived. I was ashamed.

My dad spent all day at the corner bar, and Mom was everywhere but home, and I was the youngest, so I didn't have the freedoms that my older brothers had to go. I was the baby of the family. So it often fell on me to put them to bed, to separate them from fighting, to clean up the vomit, to try to fix it, to try to make it all better.

I would plead, I would beg them to stop fighting. They were always threatening to call the police on the other. You know, that develops something in a child.

It's a very common trait of alcoholic parents. The children just think, if you could be good enough, if I could just try harder, somehow I could make this situation all right. Well, I soon learned that I didn't want to be home either, so I got very involved in after-school activities and community things and volunteered for this and that and pursued my studies to get good grades.

Seeing the two things back then pleased my parents. They were proud of my good grades and would take me to the bar and I'd get on top of the counter and I'd dance and they would tell how many A's I had gotten and people would give me money. That was a positive in my heart because there was some acceptance there from my folks.

I used to always try to get my parents to come see me in plays and musicals and that through my junior high years. One time my mom came and I was in the middle of my star performance. I was a Pink Panther in a dance recital and in comes my mom, drunk out of her head, hollering, bellowing, I wanted to die.

I didn't think I could ever face anybody again. But of course you do, you don't have a choice. I never asked him to come again.

I had a stepbrother who was my mother's son from her first marriage when she was widowed. They knew the home situation was bad. So he and his wife took me out of the home the summer that I was 13.

They weren't a whole lot older than me but they did the best they could. They tried to make me happy. And because they didn't have discernment in those specific areas, they just did it with money and things.

They had a new home and they bought me lots of fancy, immodest clothes. My brother was a CB and my sister-in-law worked at the Air Force Base which meant they knew lots of single fellas. So I had more blind dates than I knew what to do with.

At 13, not good of course. I remember sometimes feeling like Cinderella. I had red shoes and navy blue shoes and black shoes and a couple pairs of sandals and purple shoes.

I had purple shoes. And tennis shoes all at the same time. And I remember very clearly as a little girl if I had one pair of shoes, they didn't fit.

The shoelaces were missing. So that did bring some temporary happiness. That was exciting.

The popularity and the whirlwind of that. I lived with him a couple of years. We moved to California where I had my own red convertible between the mountain and the ocean on the beaches of California.

I thought I was it, you know. But even in the midst of that, quote, happier lifestyle, I was still very plagued with the past. I had waves of depression.

I had recurring nightmares. I had a nightmare a couple of times a month every month until I got converted. I have never had it since.

It was involving my parents and it was awful. I'd hyperventilate. It was so distressing to me.

I had a hard time opening myself up to friendships, male or female, in any deep sense of the word. Because underneath all the fluff and being president of the student council and all the activity, underneath there, I knew that I was dirty and I was no good and I never would be. The stains and scars that I was carrying really hindered me, haunted me.

At one time, when I was 16, I was committed to a mental hospital. I wasn't sleeping. I had undergone another severe trauma and they hypnotized me.

I became an inpatient and they hypnotized me so I would sleep. I've renounced all that. I have no idea what happens when they hypnotize you, but I know it's not good.

They put wires all over me and had me watch drama to see if my heart rate increased, to see if I hated my father, see if I hated... You know what? They're trying to see who you are and what makes you tick so they can help you. But even as a confused, ungodly girl, I knew that man was being paid to do his job, calling psychologists, psychiatrists, whatever he was. So I answered this way and I answered that way because I didn't know how I wanted to present myself.

Did I want to present myself as a good girl? Did I want to present myself as a needy girl? So they labeled me Manic Depressive Schizophrenic. That's quite a title for a 16-year-old girl. And they gave me three prescription drugs and sent me on my way, but I didn't receive any help.

I needed God, but they didn't know to tell me that. My years in California ended rather abruptly when my father suffered a severe stroke and I left school and left home. I was on my way to being a lawyer.

Can you imagine? Thank you, Lord. He delivers us from ourselves and our own goals. I returned to Nebraska where I was from, went to my father's bedside, and he did pull out of that stroke.

He was in a rest home after that until he died. Back in Omaha, I landed what I thought was just a fantastic job. High class, receptionist at a swinging singles club.

Back then, that's what we called them. It was a travel, dining, and entertainment club where they sold memberships and you got together with all these people at apartment complexes and you could go to Al Capoco for a cheaper price and it was the place to be. And that's where I met Denny.

Denny was five years older than me and fresh out of the Army and he came in with his buddy who was coming to get a job. The Lord had other plans than that. When I look back, I always marvel how sly the devil is when he camouflages sin in our life.

You know, as much as I despised my parents' drunkenness, my own drinking was sophisticated because it was done in nightclubs with bright lights and fancy clothes and somehow that was different. The end is the same, but to me that seemed successful at that time. I don't know what all the factors were that led to that spiral down there.

Old friends, trying to bury ugly memories, rock music, all of those things contributed for sure. My mother always credited Denny with my salvation and that's true, but before I followed him in his footsteps, the Lord, he did lead me into much more wickedness with drugs and deeper immorality. I was attracted to him for all the wrong reasons, absolutely, totally wrong reasons, but I marvel all these years later what the Lord gave me.

All of the character qualities that I would now seek if I were looking, they're already there. God's been good. During the time that Denny and I were dating, we had some very stormy times.

Of course, poor guy, I was a mess. He didn't know what kind of baggage I was bringing into our friendship, but I overdosed on these three drugs that they had given me and I was not desiring to take my life. I was just trying to cope.

It was a Sunday afternoon. I took a bunch of these pills and I went outside and started walking and I walked miles and miles and miles. I ended up at the office of where this Club America was, where I worked, and the office has outside doors that lead you into the hallways inside.

The outside door wasn't locked. I went in. All the offices were locked.

It was Sunday. They were not open. I would have died.

I slumped to the floor and some man, by God's grace, came in to get some paperwork that he forgot from another office and sent me to the hospital. I have no recollection of any of that. That scared me, gave me a good scare about drugs and it kept me from experimenting with other drugs because I don't have any recollection and that woke me up a bit.

Many of you have heard Denny's testimony about his godly aunt and uncle and where that all fit in our life and us coming to the Lord. So I'm not going to share all of that. I think you know that some months after we were converted, we were married and then we went off to Bible school, which is what you did if you love the Lord, back in our Baptist setting.

We jumped in with both feet, desiring to grow and desiring to be used by the Lord. Denny was very shy and introverted in those days, but he was very zealous and so he still succeeded in the Bible college there. We were in a mega church situation.

We ran over 20,000 on a Sunday morning. It was a mega church. He was eventually ordained and was an assistant pastor there with several hundred Bible college students under him, under his authority.

What I'd like to do is lump about 20 years into 5 minutes. I think I can do that. Because I want to relate to the subject at hand, not get bogged down in all the different things that happened through those years.

Let me just try to emphasize it for you. Here I was, this poor little girl from the wrong side of the tracks. Poverty, drunken parents, trying to get acceptance by following Hollywood and being somebody, wanting to make money, wanting to be successful, trying to find my way through the mess of my home life.

And then salvation comes to my heart and with it definitely some joy, a new lifestyle, a new wardrobe. I raised my necklines, I lowered my hems, I put on undergarments, gave up slacks. The church where we got converted, we were the big fish in the little pond.

You know, we were the little hippies. And everybody liked to tell our story of how we used to do all these bad things and now we're converted and isn't this wonderful? And it was wonderful. But they put us to work right away.

We didn't grow. We didn't get our feet planted. They were desperate for workers.

They put us on a bus route and teaching Sunday school. Teaching Sunday school. I knew the stories from my childhood.

But I was enthusiastic and young and that's what they were looking for. Then we whisked off to Bible school where we all of a sudden became little fish in a great big lake. And my insecurities multiplied there.

Because the standard of appearance was way higher than it had been in our little bitty church. I made the foolish, unwise mistake of comparing myself to others. Here were all of these hundreds of virgin, young Baptist girls with bright eyes and big hair and makeup.

They played the piano. The perfect preacher's wife, you know, in my mind. They were everything that I should have been.

And I just thought, oh, Denny should have married one of these gals and he stuck with me. But I learned. I learned how to put the look together.

I went to garage sales and I took wardrobe coordination and grooming classes and learned how to make up and tie and what to accent and what not to accent. So I was acceptable. And as Denny rose in leadership there, then I was Mrs. Keniston.

So then I had a position. Through a tremendously clear set of circumstances the Lord redirected our steps drastically to take a look at Anabaptist doctrine and lifestyle. And I want to say that much of the agony of rejection that I felt when I came into the Anabaptist circles was because of the junk that I was carrying.

A lot of the mess was inside of me. Some of those women did make big mistakes and I want to learn from them and not make them with someone coming in. The props of security that I found some comfort in Anabaptist setting, the cascading hair and the makeup, you know.

You could have just had an argument with your husband but if you put a little white and some black and a bunch of pink and all you could go to church looking very bright and nobody knew the debauchery in the

heart. Or maybe that you were even in sin, that you were living with unconfessed sin that very day. All of that was pulled out from under me and it was a shock.

Some of you others have experienced that and it is traumatic. You look in the mirror and you say, because there's no hair, there's no makeup, there's nothing. It's just you.

The way God made you. It's the hidden man of the heart and it's showing and if it's ugly, it's just ugly. There's nothing to hide it with.

No artificial props. So what did I do? I again compared myself. Here were all of these virtuous women who knew how to sew from the time they were this big.

They knew how to can from the time they were this big. And talk about being a second class citizen. I was less than half of a woman for sure.

I thought, then I should have married one of these women and stuck with me. You know those women had no idea in all their kindnesses to me, they had no idea the load that they put on me because of my ignorance. I remember one sister bringing me a big silver bowl full of cucumbers from her garden because the time of year that we moved we didn't have a garden.

She gave them to me to make pickles out of these cucumbers. She laughed and went on her way and I looked at these cucumbers and I cried. I might as well have been told to fly to the moon.

I had no idea how to make a cucumber into a pickle. I had no canning jars. I had no canner.

I had no knowledge. It was a mess. In my understanding I just went down lower my understanding of myself as a woman.

Then we moved to Lancaster County. Well, compound the problem and the expectations. Manicured gardens and lawns and flower beds and sometimes you look and you think that's all the women do.

But then you go in their house and they have quilts and cookies. Well, I have learned and I can put on a meal for 20 people now because I have meat in my freezer and I bake some things ahead of time. But back then, that just looked overwhelming.

Totally overwhelming. When we came into Lancaster County, I think that some of the rejection was even stronger because we were starting a church that wasn't quite going by the standard books of the other churches. So we were no longer Baptist but we weren't quite men and women.

We weren't in the lineage. Nobody wanted to help us. Nobody wanted to fellowship with us.

And it was lonely. So that was painful. And added to that time ever since Denny and I were first married nine months into our marriage when we went to the emergency room with my first migraine headache, I have had migraines for years.

Incapacitating migraines. Because if you've never had one, you don't know what you're talking about. Only once in a while have I ever wished one on somebody and that's when they're unkind and very uncaring.

And I just think, oh Lord, if they would just have one, they would never again be so insensitive. You can't stand light. You can't stand noise.

You vomit. You crawl to the bathroom. Debilitating.

Incapacitating. Fortunately, the Lord gave me Rebecca, who was a very good little baby. We blocked the door.

Denny was in full-time service, Bible school, had a job, and she would just play by the hour. But we had babies during those, you know, had more babies during those times. But we thought nutrition route.

We were anointed. I went on elimination diets. I tried this and I tried that.

And I kept thinking, if I was just becoming spiritual through all this pain, it would be worth it. But I didn't see any progress. And people didn't know what to say.

I took vitamins by the handful. I became known for being sick. Do you know that when you're sick, it makes you sick? You know, after you lay in bed so much time, your body doesn't function right.

Your bowels don't function. You get weaker. You're sicker.

You miss spiritual blessing. And so, I think even some of you ladies would remember back to the years when I was in church less than I was here. And even when I came, perfume or any smell would send me reeling.

The dear brothers put a special fan up there at the stairs for me so that I could try to breathe. But I spent many times in the study. I had to take my hair down.

I was just woozy with a headache. And I took so much pain medicine. We had spinal taps.

We spent thousands of dollars searching. Everybody had a contributing factor. You know, once your body is out of whack, I think you just continue to get more out of whack.

And the more they tell you that's wrong with you, the more it becomes wrong with you. Because each little thing, you start eliminating food and pretty soon you can only eat a few foods or you get sick and you think it might have been what you ate. It's horrible.

You know, during all of those years, I don't know many people who tried as hard as I did. But I bore so little fruit. Those books I told you about, I read them.

I tried to apply them. But something was missing. I'd get up early.

I'd beat my flesh. I'd go on long fasts. I read the how-tos.

But it seemed like the precious promises were not for me. I even believed that they were true. But they were for everybody else.

Not for me. What was I doing? I was reverting to that little girl who tried to get straight A's. Who was going to make something of herself.

And I tried to earn my sanctification. I tried to work for it. I was endeavoring to work for it.

I searched for why I've got this mumble jumble, cloudy feelings. Why all this cruddy stuff still under the table of my heart. After a while, it seemed like conviction just loaded on top of conviction.

I wasn't getting anywhere. So I just started dismissing them instead of adding them to the pile. So I started stuffing them.

I knew enough up here. I had a public position. I knew the right answers to say.

And I really wasn't trying to be phony. I was doing the best I could do. People expected me to be cheery and to have godly answers.

I was on overload. We had a lot of people come to the church back in those days. A lot of people came.

A lot of people went. With serious problems. Most of them could not be contributors to the body because they were so needy.

Financially needy. Their children were needy. Their marriages were needy.

And we got stretched so thin. Back in the beginning days there, Denny was working a job for \$7 an hour, if you can imagine. And things weren't that much cheaper.

And he usually got in about 20 hours a week because of counseling and well you know pretty soon that was a financial pressure added to compounded by all of the other things and we weren't good enough and couldn't make it. So my health deteriorated more. I developed other things.

We sought answers for them. I would get temporary relief. Which you often do when you go on a cleansing program or something.

You'll have temporary relief. But as the years went by, I developed something in my shoulder. Severe pain.

It started going down my arm. My breath was short. I couldn't breathe deeply.

We had no idea I was going to a chiropractor. Godly man. After a few months he wouldn't let me pay anymore because he knew he wasn't doing me any good.

I wasn't sleeping at night. It was not too many months after the time that our brother Vernon had died from cancer that had begun by ganglion cyst on the shoulder. And I think that because of that experience the ministry here decided on an emergency measure fast.

We were in the midst of almost ready to divide the churches and I think the fear was cancer. It sounded like cancer. There must be a growth.

Why is this doing all that it's doing? Better have it checked out. So the decision was made to send me to Mexico which was a very fast decision. A day and a half later I was there.

I was in so much pain and so doped up on pain medicine I think that's the only way they got me there. To be talked into going to Mexico without my family for a month I had to be in pretty bad shape. I could boggy down with all the treatments.

I was a pincushion. I received so many treatments there. Lots of uncomfortable things.

We spent a lot of money. The church spent a lot of money. After I came home it was very discouraging to find out that I had more pain than before I went.

New pain. We tried a couple of more treatments here thinking well maybe I just need to get over a hump. I did benefit from the spiritual time there.

I had purposed in my heart not to turn on the television in my room being alone for a month there not even to look at the news but to concentrate when I was alone to be in the word. I listened to tapes. I think that God used all that as a preparation time for the next step in what he would bring us to.

We were feeling very desperate as my pain intensified. I remember one day going to Walmart and I had to throw my leg I was leaning on a cart and I was feeling very old and we didn't know what to do. We had sought the answers.

We were feeling pretty desperate because I was incapacitated not functioning at home. Through a course of reading and listening and asking questions of people and out of desperation Benny and I began to wonder is it possible that there is any connection between all these years of physical things one after another and spiritual roots. We tried everything else it seems possible maybe even logical as we would find out later but what we found out literally changed my life to say the least.

Why we had to search so long to find answers I don't know I have no idea as a matter of fact it's not even healthy for me to go there to think about it you know why? It would be very discouraging to me to think of the wasted years, the lost time. Instead I need to be rejoicing for what God has done and maybe I can help somebody else to not have to go all those years maybe I can help them find some answers sooner a year and a half ago after my healing I was in Africa with Rebecca and Daniel and their family and Daniel sent the youth workers out and just had Sammy was there and Rebecca and Daniel he said mom how can this be how could we have missed these things all these years you've ministered to other people you've helped other people you've walked the walk you've talked the talk how could it be that we could miss these issues you know I'm so sorry for the lost fruitfulness and the failures but I'm so happy to be on the other side that I can't stay there very long and the children are very happy Daniel wasn't saying that in judgment he was just saying it in amazement you know it's torture it's torture to not be able to grasp God's love especially when everyone around you is walking in the good of it and you wish you could understand it's agonizing to not know how to forgive yourself Daniel used to say to me honey if I had your theology I'd go crazy I wouldn't know how to live with myself well that's where I was I wasn't doing a very good job of living with myself getting out of bed it had become a major chore dread put one foot down you have to get up you have to face life I look in the mirror and I hated what I saw who I was and you know the image of who I was supposed to be compounded that and made it harder but I was Mrs.

Kinniston I compounded my guilt I'd get up early I'd sit there with my Bible open on my lap dumbfounded knowing this is what I should be doing it didn't seem like anybody else was facing what I was facing so that made me feel all the more foolish and ashamed couldn't talk to anybody about it but I was Mrs.

Kinniston aren't the preacher's wives supposed to have all the answers deliver us from that I don't know the correct theological terms to describe exactly what was happening maybe five years from now I'll be able to say it much clearer but it was a long season of darkness I don't know hidden forces strongholds, demons this I know I was blind and now I see I longed for freedom and truth but it just seemed out of my grasp not for me the scriptural truths of abiding and resting and trusting they seemed so elusive they sounded so beautiful my young people would share things with me and I was so glad for them but I knew nothing of what they were talking about I want to quickly and strongly say that I do not believe we're supposed to wear our abuse on our sleeve or use it as an excuse for sin

hard time you've had the circumstances of your life but you know I also learned that maybe just maybe you need to get it out and you need to dump it and you need to deal with it so that you can go on sometimes folks who have never experienced any serious trauma accuse you that you're just wanting to use your circumstances to dodge personal accountability but let me say I did not find it that way at all we found it to be exactly the opposite once we faced these issues in my life and we dealt with them I became free to flow and to grow I'm learning how to walk and to be clear moment by moment every time a new conviction comes to my heart I can look at it as that fresh respond to it individually before I was so blocked and clouded spiritually my perception was so hopeless that it was like

what's one more thing just dump it on my ugly pile I don't know what to do with any but anyway so learning to walk this way has been marvelous and freeing and exciting I often feel like a new babe in Christ where the whole world is brighter you hear people say oh the sun's brighter and the water's clearer being able to understand conviction clearly and respond to it instead of being condemned is wonderful while Denny and I were seeking for answers and reading and listening and hunting after we'd spent lots and lots of money a suggestion came to us to make a list of serious upheavals in your lives like divorce and your parents sickness, accidents abuse, trauma emotional anything like that just make a list of them well because I wasn't sleeping at night hardly anyway I stayed up late to

make my list and he went to bed then he got up early the next morning to make his list he had to stretch and strain and he came up with one item on his list something that was said to him as a child that probably wasn't wise, probably caused some damage after he wrote his one down he opened up my notebook and he found my list now I was still hiding many of the things on my list but the list that he found was columns long and I think that somehow looking at this list reading one after another after another somehow it broke his heart and God gave him a new perspective how to view me and how to nurture me when I woke up he took me in his arms and he said to me the most tender hopeful words that I had ever heard in my life that ministered to my crushed heart he said sweetheart I am so very

sorry I never realized the magnitude of what you've been carrying I felt a stirring of hope in my heart I can hardly explain it something cracked it's as if I received a manifestation of my heavenly fathers love and acceptance through my earthly authority it was awesome it was beautiful I referred to it as my benefit of the doubt moment I guess I got the assurance that all of this mess was not totally my fault I treasure it I will probably never be able to exactly describe it because that's how God things are it would actually be several months before I came face to face with dealing with these issues but I knew we were on the right track God was ministering something and we were seeing something for the first time so there was a major preparation for what was going to happen later that

happened to me that day you know Denny had put forth so much effort trying to unlock my heart for all the years he was not an uncaring man but his most gallant efforts discouraged me when he would say he loved me I didn't believe him how could he care for me I was despicable I was unlovely I was worthless so when he would say something kind I blocked it yeah sure right poor guy I had such a warped self image that I twisted all of those things into negatives because there were so many authority related issues and the abuses I just had never been able to trust him I took steps I read marriage manuals, I tried I made efforts several months later after us endeavoring to follow through on the beginnings of what God had showed us the Lord brought everything to a head for me in a 12 hour session

with two very godly sisters where I painfully dumped my bucket I wrenched and I wept and I moaned and I confessed and I acknowledged sin I recognized where I had been a victim so I forgave I forgave my

abusers I forgave myself and I forgave God it was very painful I went into the session out of obedience I didn't have faith of what any outcome would be you know at salvation I had believed God, I had trusted Christ to the best of my understanding I had blanketly forgiven people people dealt with me about what I need to do and look at these issues but it must have been on the surface because the pain didn't disappear and I never got any freedom it was again some months after this time that Denny's sister called me up and we were chit chatting on the telephone she had talked to Denny's

father who Denny corresponded with about my health all through the years of our married life and she said to me Dad says that you're not having any headaches anymore I had to think when did I last have a headache and I said you know I'm not I haven't had one in a long time I was only beginning to recognize it and then she said and Dad says that you're not having any muscle and leg and joint pain anymore and again and I well when did that disappear and Dad says you're able to sleep at night you know now the three of these all together Denny had been watching this all transpire in my life but to have somebody else say it and put it all together and acknowledge it I realized that was true but you know the healing in my heart had so superseded the physical and it had taken place gradually I

didn't have a hot flash over me and the pain was gone we had just dropped off the pain medication I wasn't taking any vitamins and I was well it was a marvelous realization as my inner body had come to peace I was sleeping soundly and I was without pain you know just not sleeping will lead to serious problems God made our body to rest the nerve endings if you ever read if you ever study it which we did lots of all those little nerves that put off whatever they put off they have to sleep they have to rest or your body can't heal itself your immune system will go down and you'll develop all sorts of problems so here I was not taking any environmental cautions I was going everywhere in buildings with terrible smells and new carpet and paint here I was I was free and I was able to do as they

did in Acts 3 I was able to be filled with wonder and amazement not understanding it all but rejoicing you know I have always been characterized by physical sickness a few weeks ago I had a phone contact with somebody I hadn't seen in 25 years and then somebody I hadn't talked to in 2 years and the first question out of both of their mouths how's your health? because they knew me for being sick and they were very sweet and I thought it's wonderful but they had to be thoughtful because every time they talked to me or seen me I had been sick so why do I share all this confusion with you? you didn't walk the same path that I did your path is uniquely yours as mine is uniquely mine I didn't have your parents you didn't have mine I didn't have your home I don't have your husband I don't have

your personality but hopefully our end goals are the same our desire to glorify God with our life what are the hindrances? as I said before we have all those teachings what is it that holds you back if something is holding you back do you examine it? do you think about it? aren't you getting tired of week after week not knowing? are your children if you have older ones are they home today thinking I wish mom could get something at that meeting are they hurting? are there wounded ones around your table? it won't just go away you know somebody told me the other day that hurt people hurt people does that make sense? if you're hurting and you're stuffing then most likely you are hurting most everyone you come in contact with not because you want to but because you don't know what to do with

it and it comes out the more that I open up and share the more that I find out that a lot of other sisters are also stuffing hiding, pretending I don't know if there's spiritual bondage involved sometimes I think so strongholds that have never been broken it's like it's a half salvation what a sadness to our lord knowing that he already paid for it all not walking in the good of what he's already paid for I think on the natural side

women are very good advice givers and that's good if we find a new product or a new food that's good we'll tell everybody about it we're kind of walking commercials I think that I have literally sold gallons of oxyclean once I discovered it because it was a good product and I tell everybody how it takes out stains and how it worked for me but if you have a

stain that you're trying to get out and you've never had that particular problem before, you ladies remember our couples night problem on the new tablecloth and the candle wax well everybody was, what do you do for candle wax? and we talk about it and we try to find and save money by not buying everything on the shelf because all stains aren't taken out in the same way usually you do something different for blood than you do for grease than you do for ink in the Old Testament we're given the example of the Lord being as a refiner's fire and as Fuller's soap in the process of purifying and what is he purifying and why is he purifying? that we might bring forth righteous lives back in Bible days the Fuller was an expert at removing stains if you had a problem that you can't get rid of you

took it to him, he was the expert and he could get out even the hard ones the Lord Jesus is still the expert at getting out the stains even the hard ones we're supposed to take all of our spots to him I'd like to try to make an analogy for that analogies always break down but just follow me a little bit and see if you can understand what I'm saying let's take our personal white robe of righteousness it's already been washed in the blood sometimes I think one of the problems with us ladies with our spots on our garments is that we like to talk about our spots we like to compare our spots we moan and groan about them we even say well look at this one, I've got a big one here and then you'd say how yours is bigger and all the hard time that you've had and how rough your life has been you

know we're a mess in ourself just in the course of a normal day we get dirty happens in different ways maybe you're near a mud hole you get mud splattered on you you rub up against something greasy sometimes there's a smudge, you don't know where it came from maybe somebody purposely took an ink pen and scribbled on you gossip, something that hurt, something that made a mark doesn't really matter how the spots get there at the end of the day when your dress is dirty have you ever just taken your hands and wiped them because you're going to change anyway so out of carelessness you put those spots there yourself well the need is the same no matter how the spot got there you need to get clean maybe you even let some of your stains sit there a while like mine had way too long maybe you just

added more on top of them those might take a little bit extra scrubbing you might even need some help somebody might need to help you get those stains out you know the Lord might use somebody's book or somebody's tape to apply a scriptural truth to your life often times he does but you know you have to start out right if you're carrying a load of unresolved conflict and guilt in your heart if you're downright dirty maybe you're not under authority if you're not being submissive maybe you're crumpled up in despair or maybe you're taking those dirty rags and you're stuffing them up your sleeve and just hiding them all those dirty rags, you're putting them under your robe your way will not prosper when you hide sin, your way will not prosper the scriptures are very clear on that we have to

walk the same way that we first came to the Lord we have to believe by faith we have to obey oh the wonderful freedom that comes from getting clean and then staying clean you know fresh dust brushes off real easy if you get it right away it brushes right off I would like to challenge you to dump your bucket if you have never dumped your bucket you need to dump your bucket quit holding on to your spots and saying poor me I had a rough life and everybody's been mean to me and you just don't understand you can't keep wasting your life your children need you they need to see something real how the household suffers when

mama's spirit is not right by example what you're actually saying to your children is God's not big enough is that what you want to say to your children God's a liar you know

it's a miracle when children who come out of a home that's pretending turn out to serve God hypocrisy damns them they can't find their way clear very easily I want to come around this one more time and give you an illustration from my everyday life that I hope will help you to see clear what I'm trying to say I'm a walker I like to walk it's good for me to walk I feel better when I walk I try to take walks several times a week my most faithful walking partners here Mary Jane and I have literally logged thousands of miles in the last 20 years walking together because we lived three miles apart and then we moved and they moved and we still live three miles apart so we take walks on country roads where there are often little ditches along the side it must be for drainage because a lot of

times they're muddy you know while we're walking along the road there if we would happen to stumble or slip or trip or walk too close to the edge we might find ourselves in the ditch well if you find yourself in the ditch you have a choice to make number one you can continue to walk in that ditch even though it's rocky and muddy because after all you know you're not a very good person you really don't deserve to walk on that nice road anyway so just stay in the ditch and condemn yourself and feel bad and awful about it number two you could choose to beat yourself how could you be so stupid to fall in the ditch you get muddier and more miserable with each step if you're in condemnation number three you could choose to become angry and bitter at that fellow who just sped by that caused you

to slip into the ditch there's probably going to be somebody come around the corner in a few minutes and do the same thing again so you might as well just stay there and wallow or number four you can recognize him in a ditch step back up on the road and start walking and end up where you were going cleaner and happier I think we need to quit blaming the way that we are on the things that we've suffered the way that we grew up, the people that hurt us I think that once you deal with those things once you repent where you need to repent you need to get on the highway of holiness and walk and see how much more progress you'll make in faith as you stay fresh and as you keep current and you walk in freedom you know God wants to use each of us to bless others once we have our issues of our life

settled I used to wish when I was condemning myself that I could just get saved again because then I could start over but I realize now his mercies are new every day and I do start over actually moment by moment many times a day I start over the most wonderful words that I hear my husband say these days are mama you are so different now to you on the outside I think I look the same I act the same, I talk the same but it's because you don't know all the inner struggles that's why those words are musical to me because I know what he means and I know the freedom here the actress isn't playing her part anymore in public it's the same Jackie here as it is at home and that's a wonderful freedom my healing has applied to absolutely every area of my life my outlook is so different my responses

are so different everything that comes my way I sift it so differently than I did before because I'm not condemned I have the freedom to respond in faith and I'm amazed my children are amazed a compliment will come my way and I just accept it I have to practice that because I have put myself down and rejected anything possibly being good in me for so long that I developed a very bad habit and you probably are aware that I joke when I'm uncomfortable and I'm trying to pitch off a compliment, I'll joke my way through it so I don't have to accept it you know when you live in a self-condemned state just normal circumstances send you into a tether something breaks, well it's your fault anything that happens anything that comes your way, you blame yourself well you know we live in a world where

moth and rust corrupts you might run out of gas things happen to you and if you're beating yourself and taking the blame for all of that you're going to be miserable when you're on the other side of drinking of God's goodness and mercy it's marvelous I know that some of you have walked there from day one and I've always admired that and wondered how you did but I also know that some of you aren't and for you that haven't it's my prayer today that you will take a serious look at that and make a choice to get out of your ditch there's a much better way to live

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