

## March 2009 Week 4 TEACHING

# Will He Come Back?

### Encouragement for Dealing with Spousal Abandonment

I often wish that there was an easier, less hard hitting way to talk about marital restoration, but the truth is--this is a serious subject. There is no other way than to hit you with the meat, because the time for milk has long past. It is almost impossible to sugarcoat this thing because it can be such a devastating matter.

I have so much love in my heart for those of you who are dealing with the pain of a broken marriage, and so much compassion for your plight. But I want you to know something, for every bit of pain and hurt that you are feeling, it will take that much strength and more to reverse the situation or move past the pain. You have to be strong enough to hear some strong talk. So if you are not ready for the truth, if you are not prepared for change, very little I write in this teaching will be of much use to you.

*"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm..."* this verse in Joel 2:25 KJV is often what people recite as encouragement to those who have lost something precious. *"God is going to give you back everything that the devil has stolen from you!"* they say. The truth that very few have the gumption to face is that if indeed the devil has stolen it from you, then you had to provide an entrance. When the thing that was stolen happens to be a spouse, well....that's an even harder pill to swallow.

As hard as it is to accept, it is true that *"the devil hast no foot hole lest we provide it."* which is a fancy way of saying that he can't get in unless there is an opening. When your spouse abandons you, that's the last thing you want to hear, but hear it you must if restoration is in your sights. Anything that has been done by the devil can be undone by our Heavenly Father; there is no question about that. But we have to understand that when God steps into the picture, there's a whole new and powerful dynamic that must be considered. God is interested in you finding out where that *"opening"* is, so that He can help you close it.

You might ask the Lord, *"Father, why did You let this thing happen to me? Why didn't You prevent it?"* We ask questions like these because our hearts are breaking and we know that the Lord is the only one with medicine to treat that kind of pain. But that's just it, strong pain requires strong medicine, and with any good medicine-- serious rehabilitation is always needed.

The kind of rehabilitation it takes for marital restoration is no joke. Some require years and years of therapy before the trust is even halfway restored. And often couples just don't make it

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because one or the other lacks the required patience and they just give up on each other. When it comes right down to it, it really doesn't matter whether infidelity is involved or not, the fact is that a union that was sanctioned by God has been broken, and that's rather serious spiritual business.

If you never considered your marriage to be something God put together, then that maybe part of the problem, but don't be too disappointed, because it can definitely be part of the solution. Believe this; absolutely everything under the sun is spiritual. In order to restore and repair, you may not have to go all the way back to *Christian Basics 101*, but some revamping is unquestionably necessary. To shed some light on this subject, let me share a story with you.

Lula had fond memories of the summer vacations she spent in Chicago with her aunt and cousin over twenty years ago. For a 10 year old girl who use to live in a small country town with one stop light, this was a dream come true. Her Aunt Bettie was a police woman who stopped working after she married a doctor. She had incredible taste and Lula thought she lived the most glamorous life. She had fur coats, lots of them, and absolutely beautiful clothes. Lula thought of her aunt as her very own *Cleopatra Jones*, and her aunt always made her feel as if something exciting was just around the corner.

Lula's Aunt Bettie had so many girlfriends and *play cousins* that Lula couldn't keep up with them, but there was one particular couple that stuck out in her mind. They just seemed so mysterious. They were probably in their late thirties, and each of them had a distinctive quality that made her remember them until this day. The man had a deformed arm that was always bent and rested on his chest, and the woman seemed to have an indescribable glow about her face. She was so pretty, and Lula had never seen a person as at peace as this woman seemed to be. In Lula's eyes, this woman had a heart of gold. She treated her husband and everyone else with such kindness, and Lula swore light beamed from her like an angel.

She was deliriously happy whenever this couple visited her aunt. The husband would be sure to bring her and her cousin a treat, and his wife, unlike her Aunt Bettie, would adoringly gaze at the shenanigans of two ten year old little girls with such amusement. Lula later found out that the couple had been unable to have children of their own. The wife prayed all the time her Aunt Bettie said, and Lula figured that was the reason why. She had a "*hallelujah*" for everything good and a "*praise the Lord any how*" for everything that wasn't.

Lula held this couple in her heart so tightly; they were perfection to her. She didn't want anything to shatter the image of them in her mind, but deep down she knew that something would, just as it had shattered the marriage of her own parents. There was something unspoken about the couple, and her aunt made sure it wasn't unspoken for long. A notorious story teller, she loved to talk and no secret would stay a secret if it were left up to her aunt.

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One day Lula overheard her Aunt Bettie tell someone on the phone that there was a period in this couple's marriage when the husband drank heavily and had been very abusive. The wife would come to church black and blue and fall down at the altar, and there she'd stay all during service, her aunt said. No one bothered her...she was on a mission and they knew it. Well one Sunday night, this husband raised his arm to strike her and something happened to him. Whatever it was, it left him with an arm that would not move. After that, he never drank again, and he was as kind to his wife as any man could be.

I first heard this story in the company of a few women. Immediately after hearing it, one of them remarked, "*Uhh, Huh!!! That's what he gets....God don't like ugly.*" Most of them agreed with this sentiment concerning the husband. I cannot vouch for how true the story is, but it stuck with me. It bothered me because unlike everyone else, I could not see the wife as a complete saint nor the husband a complete villain. I saw them both as wounded people, one who almost lost his life and could have taken someone else's as result of substance abuse, and another who was so obsessed with another human being that she either forgot that God was her sufficiency or she never learned it.

The wife would fall on the altar, laboring in prayer for a husband who was out of control. She didn't think of all the young single sisters...all the young girls in church who saw the bruises on her body, and because of them may have thought it was acceptable for a saved daughter of the Most High to be someone's punching bag. She just did what she felt she had to do to preserve her marriage; she took it to the Lord in prayer. This was at a time when women didn't have nearly as many options as they do now. Now, we know better, but do we DO better?

We may not labor before the Lord over an abusive husband, but most Christian women who have been abandoned by their spouses will spend an enormous amount of time begging God to save their marriages. Should you pray to God about it? Unequivocally Yes!!! God honors the marriage as a blessed union. He wants us to be married because as married couples we can learn so much about His love. But while you are spending time in the Father's face about your marriage, be sure you put a few things in check first, namely your own spiritual growth.

Was the issue that made the woman stay in an abusive marriage resolved just because her husband changed? I don't think so. We have to understand that pain of any kind is a wake-up call. It's an attention getter, and if you don't address it from the root, the situations and circumstances that keep you in pain will continue to cycle back over and over again.

The story tells us that the woman seemed to have such peace. I don't think the peace she had is the one that most of us are looking for. We might think it is, but trust me, it isn't. It's the kind of peace that a person has when an addiction has been fed. It's the kind of peace we experience when someone has given us their permission to gobble them up and pack them inside that big gaping hole in our inner being. The peace that this beloved daughter had was

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one that allowed her to remain a spiritual infant. It may have been ok at that time, but we no longer have this luxury. God demands that we make our spirituality in Christ our first priority.

As hard as it is for us to hear, the question is never "*will he come back?*", it's "*will you love God greater if he doesn't?*" It's about a shift not only in your priorities, but also in your thinking as well.

Every time you think you're beginning to feel okay, something happens...a word is spoken, or a memory is triggered, and you are right back in the dumps. Your whole being sinks to the depths of your soul, where the pain knocks you out of the driver's seat and begins to drive your life further down. I'm not going to tell YOU to get back in the driver's seat, because you are not capable of steering yourself where God is going to take you. Put Jesus Christ in the driver's seat. Call on his name and ask him to come into the deep wounds of your pain.

You have to grow up unto Him in ALL things, and you don't get to decide when the requirement for "ALL" has been fulfilled. If the husband is gone, you have to let him go in your heart, mind, and soul, because you are trying to hold on to him with fear rather than with the love of God. The fear tells you that you can't be whole without him, that you need him to make you sufficient. You are expecting God to coddle your fears rather than strengthen your weaknesses. That will not happen. The fear must vacate the premises because its taking up space otherwise occupied by God's love. Trust Him! He loves you. Let go and trust Him!

You can cry, yell, and wrestle with that thing all you want, but make sure you are doing it with your spiritual elevation in mind. Wrestle with it until you know- that you know- that you know- that God will see to it that you are wonderfully blessed. Be fully persuaded that He is going to bring you out and know beyond a shadow of doubt that He will heal your wounded heart. He'll take of your family and He will see to it that your life will be so much greater than you ever thought it would.

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