



FROM MISERY 2 MARITAL BLISS

BY ETHEL RUCKER



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Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptures are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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PREFACE

In writing this book, my heart was to share my life's experiences and the lessons I have learned. It is my prayer that it will encourage, inspire, and strengthen your marriage relationship. I will share some principles and golden nuggets that God gave my husband and me to help us in overcoming the hindrances and obstacles we faced in our marriage. These principles will give you a clear picture of how you can move your marriage from misery to marital bliss. I truly believe that no matter where you start, you can have a fantastic ending. Nothing is too hard or impossible for our God.

CHAPTER ONE

Our History

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My husband, Donald, grew up in a single-family home, working in the cotton fields of Mississippi at the age of 8. His labor earned him \$35 a day. His mother, Inez Jackson, never married his father, who lived only a few blocks away. This left him searching for identity and led to him to be a very rebellious youth. He was also angry against the Jim Crow system that he experienced in his town. As a black male, if he looked at a white girl, he could be lynched, beaten, or jailed. Racism, rejection, and self-loathing shaped his outlook on life. Donald believed that women had a place: to be seen but not heard.

My background was more violent. At the tender age of 5, my biological father abandoned our

family. I was born in Shreveport, Louisiana; but my mother, Christine Mayweather, decided to move her five children to Pasadena, California. My home was female dominated. I had neither a father figure nor a positive male role model in my life.

My mother met and married Carl Mayweather. Along with gaining a stepfather, I now had a home that had a sense of financial stability. However, that which comes in the form of a blessing can also bring a level of pain. Our somewhat happy and stable home quickly escalated into a living nightmare of domestic violence. Carl had a drinking problem. He was what you would call a functioning alcoholic; he would drink, eat, and then go to sleep. This is not to say that he wasn't a good man because he was. He had a gentle nature and tranquil spirit. However, this nature caused him to be dominated by my mother. He was belittled, slapped, and physically assaulted

on many occasions, one of which caused him to be hospitalized because she had cut his throat. The police knew our home all too well. I remember the officer handcuffing my mother and dragging her down the driveway into the police car. Constant fighting, cursing, physical altercations, and gunshots surrounded my siblings and me. I would come home from church and hide in fear for my life. When the fights started, guns entered the equation. I would crawl under the bed and get into a fetal position so I wouldn't be hit accidentally by a stray bullet.

Due to the ongoing violence and verbal abuse, I developed severe low self-esteem. My mother would tell me that I was the ugliest child she had. All these things shaped my perception of men, which was warped to say the least. I lacked any respect for men. This was the mindset I developed prior to marriage. Isn't it amazing

how our environment makes a tremendous impact on our belief system?

When I reached the age of 18, I was kicked out of my mother's house. I remember it as though it happened yesterday: I packed my bags, tears in my eyes and nowhere to go. My mother drove in her car, as I walked on the sidewalk, yelling, "You bitch! You bitch!" I had nowhere to turn, so I went to my father, who had abandoned me. I stayed with him and his new wife and family for a few months. My father and stepmother increasingly argued, which I attributed to me. When I confided in a friend, Diane Franklin, about the situation at my father's house, she asked me to move in with her. She became my "ram in the bush."

CHAPTER TWO

Destined To Meet

I took myself out of the dating scene and dedicated myself wholly to God. I totally committed my time, talents, and resources to God; no more sex outside of marriage and no going out were my guidelines. I concerned myself only with pleasing God and being about my Father's business. I had refocused my attention from a husband onto The Husband, The Maker, and The Creator. I developed a serious prayer and study life. My prayer partner, Vicky Turner, and I would meet God at 6:00 p.m. like Adam.

Even after God spoke to me that Donald was my husband, I still didn't want to miss God. I didn't believe in divorce, so I went on a three-day fast. It was during that time that God showed me

in a dream my marriage finger glowing. As I continued to seek God regarding this matter, He led me to the scripture in Isaiah 62:4 KJV: “For the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married..” I still desired confirmation. God did that through my spiritual mother, Barbara Rivers, who told me “that he indeed was my husband.”

Prior to Donald manifesting in my life, God had given me a strategy to bring my desires into manifestation. Every day after my prayer time, I went to the door to greet my husband with a kiss, invite him in, take his briefcase, ask him how his day was, and run his bath water. I believe that faith without works is dead. You must have corresponding action with your faith and act as though your desire is already done. I know this may sound unconventional, but our God is unconventional. He stood out on nothing and called everything He needed into being. I

just followed in my Father’s footsteps. You must act on what you believe.

Donald and I met at a church in Pasadena. When he walked through the church doors, God spoke to my heart and said, “That is your husband.” I could barely believe it because to me he was so fine. I thought to myself, “God, You would bless me like this. Wow!”

Donald and I went out on the first of three dates. Yes, you read right. We went out three times. I posed the question to him, “Who do you think that I am to you?” He stated, “You are to be my wife.” All of this was without any prior discussion regarding marriage. However, after this discussion, Donald decided he was not going to obey God in regards to marrying me. For a year, he walked in disobedience to God’s will. God wanted him to marry me, but he didn’t want to. Donald brought woman after woman

to church with him. He moved in with a girl named Trish, who he really cared a lot about. She was what his flesh desired: light skinned, bow-legged, virgin, and petite.

This was a challenging and painful time for me. I was again battling rejection and pride. I lost weight and my hair. However, I knew that I had heard God and I had to stand on His Word while my soon-to-be husband was in disobedience. God visited him in a dream. Donald said that God asked him three times if he loved Him. Then He said, "If you love me, then do my will. My will is for you to marry Ethel."

God will talk with you in the bed of fornication. He will go to great lengths to see His will is accomplished in our lives, but we still have to submit and obey. When Donald decided to obey God in 1983, we went on a turnaround trip to Las Vegas on December 23. We were married

on December 24 in a small chapel called the Hitching Post. When on vacation years later, we looked for the chapel for sentimental reasons, but it was no longer there.

I came into my marriage looking for a knight in shining armor. I had to overcome rejection, low self-esteem, abandonment, and lack of self-worth, just to name a few of my issues. Along with those, I had a lot of unrealistic expectations. Ladies, we must rid ourselves of this Cinderella syndrome. The false media perceptions we receive from reality shows, I Love Lucy, and Leave It to Beaver plague our mindsets. These shows cause us to reach for fantasy instead reality.

My husband, on the other hand, thought that all women knew how to cook and clean like his mother. To his dismay, I had not acquired those life skills. Being born in the South, his mindset was that all women had a place and that

their value was low. The first three years of our marriage were the worst. Donald had his own set of issues and I had mine. We both realized the honeymoon was over and that we needed a lot of help.

We had three physical fights in our entire marriage, all of which were started by me. The rest of them were verbal, emotional, and psychological. I thought physical fighting was the way to gain your respect. After all, this is what I saw my mother do with her husband. Needless to say, I was wrong.

We were both Christians. We loved God and wanted to obey Him. We attended church faithfully. We were in leadership. We cared for one another. We just didn't know how to live together and to get along. It boiled down to the fact that we lacked the tools and skills to make our marriage a successful one.

CHAPTER THREE

Practical Principles

Marriage is work; but equipped with the right tools, you can make it work. Although God has purpose for our marriage, it is up to us to make it work.

I was tired of the fighting, arguing, silent treatments, out bursts of anger, adult temper tantrums, and financial difficulties. One day in my prayer time, I cried out to God: “Father, I know that you didn’t mean for me to live my life like this. I hate the day that I said I do to this man.” The Lord met me at the point of my desperation. He said to me, “‘The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.’ (Jn. 10:10

KJV). You choose.” I chose to have God’s life exemplified in my marriage. I chose to have the kind of marriage God wanted me to have.

Then God began to teach me. On the next few pages, I share some of the principles He shared with me to help turn my marriage from misery to marital bliss.

Principle 1: Submission

The first area God began to deal with me about is submission. When I heard the word submission, it made my skin crawl, “Submit? I don’t think so. Especially not to a person that I feel doesn’t deserve it or who hasn’t earned my respect.” I will never forget while I was working at World Vision, a group of ladies and I would eat our brown paper bag lunches and listen to tapes on submission. I believe this was the beginning of my transformation.

I truly believe that my belief system initially rejected the word because I thought it meant that I was to become a doormat. On the contrary, God taught me that submission is His way of bringing order. Order is a set of rules or guidelines to follow.

The first rule or guideline to move from misery to marital bliss is submission. Submission doesn’t mean you don’t have a voice in the decision-making process. Dialogue must take place between both parties in order to bring about the agreement and unity necessary for the relationship. There can be no agreement or unity without proper dialogue. The Bible says to submit one to another in the fear of God. Wives, we are the help meet. However, helping does not mean that we are just “yes” persons. We must hold each other accountable unto righteousness.

Donald and I established a rule for those

times we could not agree on things: agree to disagree. Whenever we cannot come to mutual agreement, we table the discussion of the item until further dialogue can commence. It helps to keep things moving forward. Donald and I have intense fellowship, which is healthy for a growing relationship.

Principle 2: Temperament

The second principle that helped our marriage is learning each other's temperament. I was led to read a book on temperaments, *A Spirit Controlled Life* by Tim LaHaye. This book helped us to learn and understand each other's temperament. There are four basic temperaments: melancholy, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic.

Learning our temperaments helped us to put things into perspective. It helped us to understand how God had wired us. So instead of trying to change one another or fix each other,

we began to celebrate our differences. These difference help to balance us. Where he's weak, I am strong; where I am weak, he is strong.

Principle 3: Respect and Honor

The third principle is respect and honor. Respect and honor are very important to men. To them, respect equates to love. Because God is so wise, He tells wives to respect the husbands and for husbands to love the wives. I began to treat Donald as a king, not based on his actions toward me but out of my obedience to God. God said, "Do this as unto Me. Treat him like you would treat Me." When I couldn't honor my husband, I learned to honor the position.

I loved God and wanted to please God, so He strengthened me to be able to do this. The Word of God says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13 KJV). This scripture came alive in my life through operating

in the principle of respect and honor.

Principle 4: Practicing the Word

The fourth principle is practicing the Word on a daily basis. If you want God's power in your marriage, it does not come by osmosis. The power of God only comes after you have done the Word. There can be no real marital bliss without the practicing of the Word. You must do the Word you know in order for God's manifested power to be displayed. This doesn't mean that I never miss the mark; but when I do, I ask God and my husband for forgiveness.

Principle 5: Seeing Your Husband as God Sees Him

The fifth principle is recognizing your husband as God sees him. He is a child of God first and then your husband. I had to learn to treat and entreat him as a son of God and my brother in the Lord. This was a big obstacle for me, to see him as God sees him. I had to learn as a wife to

accept him for who he is and to celebrate our unique differences. I had to take my focus off of him and put it on Christ, allowing God to change him from the inside out.

God spoke to me one time when I was trying to change my husband and said, "You can constantly nag or badger him to change. He will do it temporarily to appease you; but if you allow Me to change him from the inside, the change will be permanent [heart change]." I had to learn in the early part our marriage the importance of not talking him down, berating him, or belittling him to my friends, co-workers, and family. Doing such things is character assassination. Instead, God will give you someone that you can trust to talk to.

Principle 6: Confessing Your Desired End

The sixth principle is confessing your desired end. Confession is a powerful principle that you

cannot afford to ignore in your marriage. The Bible says that death and life are in the power of your tongue. So as wives, we have the ability to create our reality in our marriage. Nagging and complaining will not bring you to your desired end. You cannot make your spouse love you the way you believe you should be loved, treat you the way you believe you should be treated, or give you the affection and attention you know you deserve. You must, by faith, release the Word out of your mouth for the desired end. Begin to cast your vision of your marriage with faith-filled words of your desired end. As you release the words of your desired end, you will watch God turn the heart and affection of your husband towards you.

I wrote a daily confession to speak over my husband that was in agreement with God's Word. I highly recommend that you do the same. God watches over His Word to perform it.

Principle 7: Prayer

The seventh principle is prayer. Prayer is the method God has given us to invite His presence, power, and purposes into our earthly affairs. Always remember that our first ministry is to God and then to our spouses. The Bible says “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (James 5:14 KJV). However, you must take the first step, which is to pray. To move from misery to marital bliss, you must be a person committed to the principle of prayer. I have found prayer to be the key to a successful marriage.

Pray for your spouse daily. God taught me to pray for my husband Instead of complaining to God about him. When I did, God did a strange thing in my prayer time with Him. He began to talk to me about me. You see, many times we are the problem, not our spouses. I learned to accept

Donald for who he is. I took my focus off of him and put it on Christ.

As we set our hearts and minds to seek God for His will in our marriages, God always give us the solution. God will share insight, wisdom, secrets, and strategies. God spoke to me in the earlier part of our marriage via The Discovery Channel. In one television program I was watching, the lioness was getting in a lion's face. The male lion proceeded to defend his pride. The Lord spoke and said, "When you are in your husband's face, he no longer sees you as a woman. He views you as a threat and will defend his manhood." I was blown away at how God takes something so simple to teach life-changing principles.

There are times in your marriage when it will be necessary to confront, to pray, to fast, to be silent, to stand, and to show love. When you have a relationship with God, He will tell you what

strategy to use. It may be as simple as cooking a home-cooked meal, buying movie tickets and going out on a date, or planning a getaway. Whatever the directive is, follow it. You will be glad that you did.

Principle 8: Due Benevolence

The eighth principle is to not withhold your due benevolence. Sex must never be a weapon used to deny, delay, or bring death into your marriage relationship. Sex is a big part of marriage, and the enemy would love to get us to participate with him by using it in the wrong way. Withholding yourself from one another has devastating consequences to the relationship.

The Bible says, "let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26). Intimacy must always remain intact even when you are upset or angry. This deserves repeating: Intimacy must always remain intact even when you are upset

or angry. Donald and I agreed, years ago, that in our marriage we would not allow our emotional status to dictate our intimacy with each other. So, even if we are angry or upset with each other, by faith, we still allow due benevolence to take place. We have discovered that when we do, the act opens the lines of communication for dialogue.

Principle 9: Listening

The ninth principle is listening. We must learn to listen to each other and not feel (emotionally react) each other. Communication is a strange animal. It requires listening and talking. However, for most people, communication in a relationship is talking. Somehow, we fail to hear what the other person really is saying. Jesus always said, "Let him who has ears, hear what the Spirit is saying." (e.g. Revelation 3:22 KJV). I had to learn to see things from my husband's perspective. That meant truly listening to

him and quieting my emotions. Many times in our dialogue, I would feel his words and not hear them. Feeling his words allowed all my insecurities to resurface: abandonment, rejection, and past issues. Learning to wait until he finished his argument became a turning point in our marriage, moving us from misery to marital bliss.

Communicating openly, honestly, respectfully, and affectionately is a process that takes a level of maturity and purposeful effort. The Bible says, be quick to listen and slow to speak. Doing so helps to create a healthy dialogue and establishes the importance of both parties being heard. We have learned to talk about things that bring mutual satisfaction in the relationship and not to leave them unsaid, trying to read one another's mind.

Principle 10: Seeking Help

The tenth principle is seeking help. As I stated previously, any successful marriage requires work. Ask yourself these questions: If your marriage were a business, would it be operating in the red or the black? What are some of things you would do to make it successful? What would be your theme or the product you would sell? Donald and I learned that if we were going to be successful in this thing called marriage, we needed to change our perceptions of it. So we began to see our marriage as a business investment.

As you know, any business investment requires research and planning. The first thing we did was realize that what we had was not working. We began to seek successful married couples and follow their examples. The Bible says, “be followers of them who through faith and

patience inherit the promises.” (Hebrews 6:12 KJV). We did not discuss our marriage problems with unmarried or unsuccessfully married people or in public settings. We sought unbiased mediators when needed, people who we knew had our best interests at heart and people who stood for righteousness.

We set rules for ourselves and we obeyed them. God said it was important not to go to bed angry. We read books, viewed videotapes, and stopped listening to the advisor who had no proven track record. We removed from our vocabulary words of destruction like divorce and separation. There was no more sleeping in separate areas of the house, no more going to a mother’s house or friend’s house when intense fellowship had not been resolved, no more name calling.

We established boundaries to protect the integrity of our marriage. There was no more speaking

negatively of one another. We also established our rules for engagement with the opposite sex. We had no friends of the opposite sex. If they were of the opposite sex and wanted to be friends with one of us, they had to be friends with both of us. We decided not to look to the opposite sex for affirmation.

When we first married, I asked God to give me an understanding heart. I didn't want to seek to be right. I didn't want to seek to be understood. I sought to understand. I learned to appreciate small things and to be thankful for them. Taking out the trash, washing the car, watching the kids, cleaning the house, changing diapers, and working tirelessly at home for the first seven years of our marriage afforded me the opportunity to instill values and core beliefs into our three children. I am so grateful. In all your getting, get understanding.

CONCLUSION

These are just some of the principles that helped to move my marriage from misery to marital bliss. I hope that you are inspired and encouraged to fight for what God has given you because marriage is a gift from God. I exhort every married woman and those contemplating marriage to develop a serious prayer life and an ear to hear God's voice. Know who you are in God: valuable and precious.

I have come to learn that everything I need is in seed form. I have to become a cultivator and help to bring it to its fullest potential. The relationship is cultivated in prayer and watered with seasoned words to edify my husband. I had to become more secure in who I was as a woman. I truly believe that this is a good thing; for when

a man finds a wife, he finds a good thing and obtains favor with God. This is not to say there isn't room for improvement because there is always room for growth.

I hope this book aids and strengthens you in your marriage. The lessons I learned and applied have changed my life from misery to marital bliss. I am now reaping a marriage of mutual respect and honor. I adore my husband. I love him with all my heart. We are a tremendous example of what God can do when a man and woman submit to His lordship. We are best friends and partners in ministry and life.

I salute you, my lover, priest, and king, Pastor Donald Rucker. You were truly a diamond in the rough. Now your insight, wisdom, intelligence, and humility shall bring you before great men. Thank you for allowing God to use you to mature me in the Lord. I am forever grateful.