

# REBUILDING A MARRIAGE BETTER THAN NEW

CINDY BEALL



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## **REBUILDING A MARRIAGE BETTER THAN NEW**

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*To my husband, Chris.  
You are the best representation of a strong, confident man  
who simultaneously walks in humility and brokenness.  
Thank you for allowing me to share your darkest hour with the world.  
I look forward to growing old with you.*



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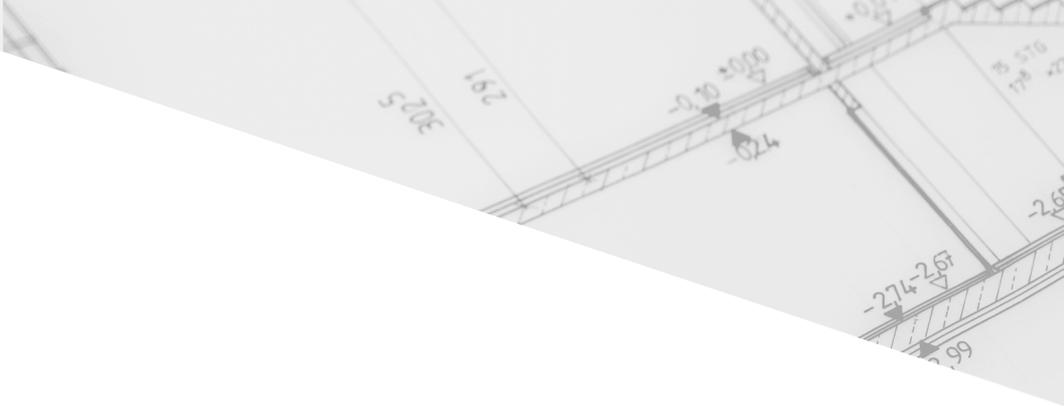
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# God Makes All Things New

*He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

Revelation 21:5

If God showed us a timeline of all the occurrences that would happen in our lives, we would most assuredly start hyperventilating and bargaining with Him to reroute the path ahead of us. In no way, shape, or form would we ever think we could survive such difficult circumstances. Death of a loved one, infidelity by a spouse, the loss of every material possession we own. It's more than our finite minds can even begin to fathom. And because of that, He doesn't show us. Instead, He gives us the grace we need to get through things as they come.

When you do a Google search using my name, a good amount of the results will have something to do with betrayal, infidelity, and sexual sin. Why, you ask? Because that is in my history. It's on my marriage résumé. My first book, *Healing Your Marriage When Trust Is Broken*, is about just that.

In the early part of 2002, my husband, Chris, and I had the opportunity to move to Edmond, Oklahoma, so that my husband could join the staff of Life.Church. It was truly a dream come true. He was a worship leader, and I led alongside him and had been doing so for nearly ten years. But one devastating February morning brought about a crushed heart, a wrecked marriage, and a demolished ministry for us because of my husband's infidelity and pornography addiction. My husband had been on the team for barely six weeks and could no longer live the lie he had been living for the previous few years. Within a minute, my heart went from joyful to devastated as I became keenly aware that the life I had lived with my husband was a lie. A big, fat lie. Or at least it felt that way then.

I share this part of my life with you so that you will understand where I've been. I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death and lived to talk about it...more than once. I have begged God to prevent painful situations from entering my path instead of asking Him to help me endure them...more than once. I have experienced seasons in my life where death would have been welcomed had I possessed the gumption to try...more than once. But alas, I am still on this earth because as promised in Romans 8:28, God doesn't waste one single bit of our pain. Indeed, He doesn't, friend. Indeed, He doesn't.

When something bad happens, you have three choices: you can let it define you, let it destroy you, or let it strengthen you. I don't know who first authored that statement, but I can assure you, that person has been through the wringer. You don't write that after living a life of comfort. You write it after you've walked through some dark days, years even, and lived to not only talk about it but also to encourage others because of it. On this marital hike Chris and I have been on for 14 years, there were times where our past could have destroyed us. While some may use our story to define us, we do not. We use our testimony and the power of God's renovation in our marriage to strengthen us. We don't have all the answers for

marriage restoration, but we do have some tried-and-true principles and advice to offer you on your own pilgrimage.

*Healing Your Marriage When Trust Is Broken* was a book about healing. Many have referred to it as an emergency-room type of book. One you read to stop the bleeding and get hope and encouragement from. *Rebuilding a Marriage Better Than New* is about living. But in order to begin truly living in victory with betrayal in your marital past, you do have to walk through the appropriate valleys first.

My goal as a Christ-follower is to have my life testify to the greatness of my God. I want Him to use anything and everything to impact a lost and dying world. So that is why I tell my story and propose that you do the same. In order to help you get to that place, I've laid this book out in four sections: heal deeply, build wisely, live fully, invest generously. As you can see, the goal is to invest generously in someone's life out of our own deep aches. But we cannot invest generously into someone's life unless we first heal deeply, build wisely, and live fully.

As I've endured and flourished in my own life, I have done so by trusting in God and His perfect Word, the Bible. It is the only truth to stand on. In each chapter you will find Lie vs. Truth features that contain Scripture verses paraphrased in first person as a tool for you to combat the lies that often plague us after devastation.

I close each chapter with questions for you to further ponder and consider. I would love it if you and your spouse would walk through these. Regardless, these are meant to get you thinking deeper about your marriage and how you can learn and grow from your own experiences.

This marriage book is meant for the husband and the wife. My prayer is you will both use this as a tool to help strengthen your marriage in whatever way it needs rebuilding. I do believe that sharing about what Chris and I have endured and the victory we continue to walk in will provide hope to you and your spouse.

Hope in your gracious  
God defines you. Your  
circumstance does not.

Hope seems to be in short supply these days. Maybe that's because we are looking to the wrong sources to find it. It is not found in a possession or a human being. It is found in the One True God. The Creator of the Universe. The First and the Last. The Beginning and the End. Our Abba. Our Heavenly Daddy.

Let's seek Him like never before in our happy days and in our brutally difficult days. For He is always near and will never, ever, ever forsake us.

# HEAL DEEPLY



## Rebuilding from the Ground Up

At exactly 11:35 p.m. on June 29, 2013, something woke me from a deep sleep. I sat up instantly and wondered if someone was trying to break into our home. I sprung from the bed where my husband, Chris, was sleeping soundly and went to check things out. Our three boys were asleep in the theater room. There wasn't anyone or anything out of the ordinary to be seen when I peeked out onto the driveway through the service door. At that point, I was irritated and thought, *I'm going back to bed and nothing else better wake me up again tonight!*

I'm convinced that God woke me up some 25 minutes later. I heard *Wake up* in my mind. It wasn't a shout or a yell. It was a message simply, powerfully spoken to me. The clock read 12:00 a.m. on the dot. Immediately, I sat up in our bed and noticed an orange glow on the windows in the sitting area of our master bedroom. My initial thought was somebody's house was on fire. Without even gathering a coherent thought, I jumped out of bed, hurried to the laundry room, and looked out the service door again and indeed saw a fire. But the fire wasn't at *somebody's* house. No, the fire was in *my* house.

Upon seeing the flames shooting out of the attic vents down the side of our garage, I went into a full state of panic, the kind that was not going to be eased by any amount of self-talk, calming words, or even memorized Scripture. I went back to my bedroom and woke up Chris and then left him to fend for himself. My heart-beat rocketed. My mind was not entirely clear, but I had one coherent thought: my sons are getting out of this burning house.

The next events are a bit blurred. In seconds I was standing in the doorway of our theater room to wake up our three sleeping boys, lying scattered around the room. One was on the sofa, one on the oversize chair, and one on a partially deflated air mattress. I just remember flipping on the lights.

“THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE! THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE! GET UP! GET UP! GET UP!” I shouted as I tugged on their arms until the boys finally came to. I would have pulled their arms out of their sockets if I’d had to. Within a few seconds we were out the door to the backyard with our little Yorkie puppy, who thinks she’s a 100-pound German shepherd, following closely behind.

Once we were outside, we came around to the side where Chris was standing and saw the flames on the corner of our garage. My first impression was that it wasn’t too bad. As Chris got on his phone, he asked if I had called 911. Uh, no. No I did not. I had to get my babies out. I’m telling you, there is only one thing on a mama’s mind when jeopardy is nearby.

After hanging up with the 911 operator, Chris said, “Uh, shug, you better get some clothes on, because the firefighters are on their way.” I looked down and noticed that I was doing all of this running around the house and yard without being appropriately dressed. For the love. Of all nights to not sleep in my shorts it would be this one. (This is the part of the story where you are going to shake your head at me.) Because the flames were only on the side of the house, I decided to go back inside and get some shorts.

(See.)

I figured I had plenty of time to find something to wear. And if I needed more fresh air, I'd just run out the front door, grab a breath, and head back in. Easy peasy.

Sweet honey molasses, there was no fresh air to be found! The smoke smell was so rank I couldn't breathe. It was horrendous. But, I remember thinking, in my muddled mind, *My family is safe. If I don't make it back outside, at least my boys are alive.*

I ran back to my bedroom, all the while hearing the smoke alarm that had started a minute or so earlier. The power was lost by then, so it was completely dark. I grabbed my phone from the nightstand and used its flashlight feature to make my way to the closet. My crazy mind recalled that the last thing I put into the clean laundry basket was my pair of black and pink Fila running shorts. I grabbed them and started running for the back porch. By the time I reached the kitchen I remember thinking, *I'm gonna make it!*

I met up with the boys in the backyard and we proceeded to the front yard. The fire looked to be contained to one small section, so my husband decided to fight it with our water hose. As we came near him, he said, "I got this," and he continued spraying the fire, fully expecting it to diminish with each drop.

(Not even kidding.)

Unbeknownst to him, the entire attic was engulfed in flames. Like *Backdraft* the movie flames. Dark smoke was rising from all of our attic vents. Once the firefighters arrived and looked into the attic, our deepest suspicions were confirmed: Our house was truly on fire.

I didn't know what to think and couldn't have told you how I felt either. It was such a surprising moment to be standing where I was, watching what I was watching. Sadly, it was the kind of scene you swear only happens in the movies.

In one fell swoop, everything was gone. Within four hours, nearly every material possession we owned was gone. Life was normal at 11:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 29, 2013, and then some five hours later, it was completely different. Life-altering different.

I'd like to say that kind of "this can't really be happening" shock has only happened once in my life. But as I shared in the introduction, I have faced such a moment before. When Chris shared about his infidelity and addiction, I also felt half-naked, exposed, and numb with pure disbelief. And that time, like this time, I was only able to stand by helplessly as I watched the thing I believed to be my safe haven go up in flames. All I could do was say good-bye to what I had known...and pray for a way through the ashes to something new.

### When Life Goes Up in Flames

Ever been here? To the place of life-altering change within a matter of hours or minutes? You're going about your day, doing your daily routine, clearly expecting to find what you normally find on that day, fully anticipating small delays in carpool lines, in grocery stores, or on expressways due to traffic, and then *bam*. Nothing is the same, and everything is different. The thought *This happens to other people* is in the forefront of your mind, and you are inching closely to the line of shock and denial. In fact, you are very close to hurdling over it and taking up residence.

You get that phone call that tells you you'll never hug the neck of someone again whom you love so dearly.

You spontaneously examine your body during your shower and feel a lump that didn't seem to be there two months ago.

You are escorted into a room to find your boss and the HR director of your company sitting at a table explaining to you your severance package.

You find a series of e-mails or text messages between your spouse and someone else indicating that something is going on that should not be going on.

Life isn't fair sometimes. Other times things happen to you of your own doing. You suffer the consequences of your actions, fully aware that you made the choice and, quite honestly, can blame no one but yourself for what is happening.

Other times, you suffer at the hand of another. Someone else's actions are causing your heartbreak. You hate them for what they've done, but even that hatred doesn't remove decades of love that you have for them.

At this stage, it is typical to want to get back to normal. To get back to the life before the lump was found, before the phone call came, before you were let go from your beloved company, before the realization came that your spouse has been cheating on you, before the house burned down. We want the old life. We want the way things were. We want to live in denial at times, or at least have the ability to make the choice to ignore our present circumstances. Our old life may not have been the most amazing life, but it certainly didn't hurt this bad.

In that moment, as much as we long for a different scenario to be our truth, we know we have to press on for ourselves and the people we care about. We have to find our way to the renewal and rebuilding that only God can provide.

### **Insisting on a New Foundation**

Within a few weeks of the fire, Chris and I not only had decided to rebuild on our lot but had also chosen a builder and a floor plan. We wanted to get started as quickly as possible on the rebuilding of our new home so we could move back. We were blown away with how good the insurance coverage was. Our two claims adjusters told us about benefits we didn't even know we had. Most companies want to spend as little as possible. Our insurance company wanted to give us everything they possibly could. And more.

Except a new foundation.

You see, the fire shot up into the attic, and our home burned from the top down. By the time the fire was out, everything was destroyed. But the inspectors from our insurance company said the foundation *probably* wasn't damaged from the fire. There were no markings that could be seen to show significant fire damage.

Chris and I were dumbfounded. We didn't understand why they would suggest building a new home on an old foundation. While there didn't appear to be significant damage to the concrete that once held our home, we didn't know for sure. And what if the waterlines and sewer drains in the foundation were damaged? Chris and I made the decision to refuse to build something new on something old. We felt there was too much risk to build our hope and home on something possibly compromised and weakened. Thankfully, there was enough extra insurance money to cover the cost of a new foundation.

Building something new on something old. Who does that? Hurting couples do it all the time. Most of the time they do it because it's less expensive relationally and emotionally or, quite frankly, because it's an easier route... temporarily, that is.

Our culture is obsessed with taking something old and worn down and improving it. Slap a coat of fresh paint on a wall and *voilà*, you have a new look. I personally love the HGTV and DIY cable channels. I have spent hours trying to figure out which house the couple will choose after hunting for some time, and I've waited with bated breath to see how a transformed room will look. I may or may not have thought about going down to my local Home Depot or Lowe's just hoping it was the day one of the DIY guys decided to show up and crash someone's house. I have even imagined what I would say to one of those show hosts to convince them that my house should be the next one to receive their design and construction expertise. Make no mistake about it, I am a renovation junkie.

While home renovation is usually much more cost effective than building from scratch, when it comes to God, He has a tendency to tear down the old and create something new. We might be uncomfortable during the process, but why would we settle for anything less than the new thing God is trying to build in our hearts and lives?

## God's Plan for Something New

Jesus often used metaphors to make a point about how we are to live our lives. In Matthew 9 Jesus answered the questions of John's disciples when they asked about fasting. In verses 16-17 He said, "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

First of all, what's a wineskin? Today a wineskin is merely a wine bottle, but back in biblical times, they used an animal's skin, usually that of a goat, sewn together to carry their wine. When new wine was placed into new wineskins, it was not yet complete. It would continue to ferment, which would stretch the wineskin.

If we look at the original Greek language we can better understand what Jesus was speaking about when He talked of old and new. The Greek word for "old" in this passage is *palaios*, which means "antique, worn out, not recent." The Greek word for "new" is *neos*, which means "fresh." So when we try to pour new wine into old wineskins, we are trying to put something fresh into something worn out.

New wine expands and grows, so it needs a new, flexible wineskin; not an old, worn-out, brittle one that will burst open. The only thing that could be put into an old wineskin is old, fully fermented wine that is through with its aging, maturing process.

So what exactly is the new wine and old wineskin when we're taking Jesus's truth and applying it to our lives and marriages? The way I see it, the new wine is the new desires and attitudes we have and want to act on in regard to our marriage. But the old wineskin is the typical, old way we react to and with each other. We want to act differently, yet we don't. Our old ways of being and interacting cannot handle the pressure and growth that the new behaviors and

goals bring. When we have new, healthy attitudes and desires (new wine) but try to achieve them by placing them into our worn patterns (old wineskin), we don't get the desired change we want. If you pour new wine into a brittle, overused wineskin, that old wineskin will burst.

We can't just want the change. We must make the change—inside and out.

God knew that we all would need this lesson on one or more occasions. We're human, so we still try to do things our way much of the time. But if you have also tried to get a new result by doing things the old, worn way or have attempted to create something new before tending to an old container or foundation, then you know how powerful this message is. If only we would remember it!

Every married couple finds themselves hitting a wall at some point in their marriage. Some experience it far more often than others. For many couples, a crisis arises before they realize that how they build their lives and determine the things they value, the way they spend their time and money, and the way they practice virtuous dishonesty (a concept I will refer to in the next chapter) have made the wineskin old and brittle. That wineskin has to be discarded and replaced with a new one.

This doesn't mean we give up on a marriage and start looking for a new life. What it means is, we faithfully and intentionally find a new way of relating to each other, a new way of spending time together, a new way of being open with one another, and new ways of nurturing and growing our marriage.

You see, the old stuff, the old marriage, must be replaced with an entirely new structure, including a new set of values, attitudes, and behaviors. You're still the same two people in physical appearance, who hopefully still like each other and love each other. (Don't fret if you don't like or feel love for your spouse; this can return.) But the behavioral and spiritual norms have to be replaced by priorities,

practices, commitments, and communication that can handle the pressure of the coming days, weeks, and months.

As difficult as this time of growth can be, it will encourage you to know these new norms will be the very things that will cause you to look back years from now and say, “I would endure it all over again in order to have the marriage that I have now.”

When our life was crumbling around us years ago, Chris and I knew that our old relationship foundation had to be removed and taken away so Christ could build a new one. There were too many potential risks and flaws in the foundation where we had built our old life. Just like new wine, our lives and hopes needed a new vessel, a new foundation capable of holding them. With great intention we had to pour in new ways to relate to one another, talk to one another, minister together, raise children together, do life together.

Everything has to be given to God to be made new.

## **Committing to Your Relationship Rebuild**

You may be asking how this works. What does that look like in everyday life? I’m glad you asked.

Maybe your marriage is really suffering. You may even be on the brink of divorce. You don’t like each other and aren’t even sure you want to stay together. Quite frankly, if your spouse came up and said, “I want a divorce,” you’d be more relieved than you are sad. You try to live your life in a way that honors God. You pray, attend church, and read your Bible. Even though your marriage is struggling, you occasionally have thoughts like, *Maybe God will give me the marriage I’ve always wanted.* So you stay. And you and your spouse decide to start seeing a counselor who gives amazing, godly advice. You decide to take her suggestions and try to implement them into your marriage. Maybe you decide that you aren’t going to be critical anymore about your spouse and instead try to be encouraging. Only there is still a problem. You are still clinging to some choices, habits, or even hobbies that keep you tied to the old.

For example, you hang around with the group of friends who badmouth your spouse and their own spouses because it's what all of you do. The new wine is your desire to make good changes; the old wineskin is spending time with the same group of friends who seem to lead you further away from Christ and definitely further away from a healthier marriage.

So what do you do with these friendships you've had for years, even decades? This is the hard part. You actually have to commit to working on your marriage. And you have to decide how much you are willing to sacrifice for it. How important is it to you to stay married? If these relationships do nothing to encourage you and everything to weigh you down on this new journey to save your marriage, then are they the best for you in this season?

You and your spouse could probably benefit from extended time together. Consider taking a sabbatical from outside relationships for a season so you can focus on your marriage. Not that you wouldn't talk to anyone at all, but if it was part of your routine to have dinner with friends once a week or play golf with friends every Saturday, it could be a good call to hone in on your marriage by devoting that extra time to your spouse. If your marriage is in a fragile state, you have to ask yourself just how much you are willing to let go of to make it healthy again.

Here's another example. Perhaps you have gotten so used to responding to your spouse in anger and defensiveness that neither of you wants to have a conversation, because it will almost always end in an altercation. You are tired of this way of communicating with one another and know that something has to give, because living this way is unacceptable for either of you any longer. So the desire is there. But instead of that new wine going into a new wineskin, one that is perfect for the new wine, it is sloppily poured into the old wineskin which includes hot-headed anger, a defensive tone, and several sarcastic comments. You want to make changes, but you don't. You might be able to identify with the apostle Paul, who said,

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15). You’re not alone. Even the godliest people struggle in this area. Don’t lose heart.

Practically speaking, you have to decide not to allow your emotions and negative attitude to rise up. You can’t let your emotions own your actions. When it comes to discussing things you and your spouse don’t agree on, you must be willing to truly listen. Not only that, you have to be teachable and willing to recognize your own fault in the issue. If your spouse says you tend to spend too much money or that you are hardly helping with the kids, instead of getting bent out of shape, consider stopping and asking yourself if there is any truth to what he or she is saying. It is easy to become defensive when our spouse is calling us out on something we do wrong while they do wrong things too. So we ignore what they say and throw their flaws and mistakes back at them. That only breeds further conflict.

You can’t want your way into a healthy action. You have to commit to doing it.

## Standing on a Foundation of Truth

You have a spiritual enemy named Satan, and he desires nothing good for you. He will trick you and oftentimes outwit you into thinking he is for you. He is not for you. At all. One of the ways you might become discouraged is by hearing and believing lies that actually feel like the truth. Our society has adopted and lives by copious numbers of great phrases, sayings, and mindsets. And it doesn’t seem dangerous until we stand on those principles instead of the Word of God, the Bible. For Christians, it is our only source of absolute truth, so we must believe what it says—not society and certainly not Satan. So why is it so important to base your life, choices, marriage, and hope on truth and not deception? There are dozens of reasons but I would like to share a few with you.

The Word of God is the only constant. It has stayed the same and

will stay the same. What else can make that claim? What else can be the absolute, certain foundation of truth? Nothing.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God stands forever. (Isaiah 40:8)

Your Word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. (Psalm 119:89)

Satan is a liar. Not only is he a liar, he is the father of lies (John 8:44). In order to recognize a lie, we must know the truth. We don't need to study the lies around us; we need to study God's Word. Satan is subtle and crafty. "No wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). He is always malicious about his deception. He is sneaky and twists words and throws in the occasional, "Did God really say that?" Just ask Eve. Ask Jesus while you're at it. After Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, Satan began tempting Him (Matthew 4). Jesus was vulnerable in every way after fasting 40 days and 40 nights. Each time Satan came at Jesus with a challenge, Jesus didn't say, "Leave me alone!" Instead, He responded by using God's truth. Satan approached Jesus two more times and Jesus responded with truth each time. Your spiritual enemy will come at you any chance he can, especially when you're vulnerable. Make sure your time in the Word is regular and strong, because when it's not, that is when our vulnerability increases.

Opinions change. Whether we listen to what society says or to what well-meaning people around us say, those opinions are not forever. I know I have changed my opinions about things over the years and I claim Christ! So even for someone like me who follows Christ, albeit imperfectly, even my suggestions, counsel, and advice, if not based upon God's perfect Word, should not be heeded. While it is wise to have godly advisers in our lives and pastors we can receive help from, we must rely first and foremost on God's Word. Allow the following scriptures to convince you:

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Psalm 119:105)

You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word. (Psalm 119:114)

Knowing God's Word and reading it daily is like putting gas in the car or eating breakfast each morning. We wouldn't expect our car to drive without gasoline or our bodies to function without food. Our souls and minds need the Word of God each day so we can grow, do what we are created to do, and be effective for God.

### Investing in Truth

For the past three summers I've completed a reading plan at YouVersion.com called "The Bible in 90 Days," and it is intense. A few years ago, one of the girls I mentored mentioned she was doing that plan and it took a good 45 to 60 minutes each day to complete it. My eyebrows rose, and I had to keep my jaw from dropping several inches. I was about to say, "I could never do that plan" when she said, "You know, I didn't think I could find the time for this, but then I realized I had a few hours a day to watch TV or browse Facebook. Surely I could give up one of those hours for the Word of God. So I did."

*Gulp.* Her words shot through me because her excuses were mine. But when the Holy Spirit truly convicts you, there is a sense of motivation and urgency. The very next morning I started the reading plan. I was actually excited about the challenge and ended up being truly moved and encouraged by reading the entire Bible in 90 days. There were books or chapters I didn't enjoy. Hello, Leviticus? But I pressed on and trusted God to do a work in me even when I didn't understand things or thought things were crazy.

Don't feel as though you have to read the Bible in 90 days. (Unless the Spirit is leading you to do so.) But if reading God's Word is not in your daily routine, implement it today. Even if it's just for five minutes. Start with reading a chapter in Proverbs a day. Or read a few psalms each day. Then as God begins to speak to you and show you things—and He will—increase your commitment and see where God takes you. Getting into God's Word will give you encouragement because it is living and breathing, and it will help you build a solid foundation on which to grow your life and your marriage.

The Lie vs. Truth feature in this book is my way of helping you stand on the promises of God from His Word even when everything around you is screaming for you to do the opposite.

After all, if we are to model Jesus and follow after Him, then this is a wonderful practice to incorporate into our lives just like Jesus did in the wilderness with the father of lies.

As a follower of Christ, you will be bombarded with lies. And the only way to stand on the truth is to know God's truth.

So what does it look like to replace a lie with the truth? Well, first of all you have to know what the Bible says. I love getting into the Word. And I love to hear what my good friends learn in the Word. My dear friend Natalie Witcher knows the Word. Not in a haughty I'm-kind-of-awesome way though. She dives into it headfirst

and doesn't come up for air for a long while. We have to dig into the Scriptures to truly know what they say and begin to understand them. Friend, you will not understand every single thing about God, but you can learn more with each moment spent in God's Word. God loves to show us new things when He sees how hungry we are for His truth!

One of my favorite things to do when I'm reading God's Word is to highlight verses that state a promise. My online Bible

at YouVersion.com has hundreds of verses highlighted. For example, if I am reading chapter 10 in the book of John, I might highlight verse 10, where Jesus says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” This verse will prove effective when you hear the lie that your life is pathetic and will always be that way. Not so. The enemy wants you to believe that lie, but the truth is, Jesus came to earth so you could have a fulfilling life in Him. See how easy it is to put this concept into action?

I’ll start with a particular lie that people believe every single day and the truth to combat it. *Combat* is a hefty term, but, friend, that’s because we are in a spiritual war, like it or not.

## LIE vs. TRUTH

**Lie:** I can’t change. I will always be this way.

**Truth:** I am in Christ, and I am a new creation. The old me has gone and the new has come. (see 2 Corinthians 5:17)

This process of replacing the lie with God’s truth can be draining because it is easier in the moment to believe the lie, even entertain the lie and take that lie out to dinner than it is to stop and take that thought captive. But a few seconds of doing something difficult yields a lifetime of good fruit. In fact, the more you do this, the less you have to. Your mind will be inclined to walk in the truth of God’s Word as a first option instead of a last. With each lie you catch and replace with God’s truth, you are taking back ground that the enemy stole. When you replace deception with God’s truth, Satan is going to regret even messing with you. You are showing him who’s in charge and not the other way around. You are putting him in his place.

## Renewal Is a Daily Choice

Chris and I had a decision to make in the spring of 2002. Either we were going to truly change from the inside out and from the foundation up, or we were going to risk the downfall of all of our hopes. We chose to do everything in our power and embraced a whatever-it-takes mindset to become not just restored but better than new. My pastor, Craig Groeschel, says, “It’s often the things that no one sees that result in the things that everyone wants.”

We placed piers underneath the footings of our new marital foundation. We have an amazingly healthy marriage now because during the process of getting a new foundation in our marriage, we did things that no one will know we ever did. We sacrificed in ways that only the two of us will know about. We made choices to act honorably, respectfully, and honestly when the other wasn’t around. We chose to let go of defensiveness and hear the other out when

I promise you this: the more you surrender your rights and needs to God, the more freedom and hope you’ll find.

something was brought to our attention. We made many difficult choices to get where we are today. And we still have to make them. These choices weren’t a one-time event where we checked certain actions off of a list. Was it difficult and is it still? Heavens, yes. It is so very challenging to deny the flesh when the flesh wants to lash back. It is a daily choice to do the

things that need to be done to have what we want to have.

But you can have it. You just have to step into it. And you have to step through the pain and difficulty, through the sacrifice and discomfort that will be present on this journey.

For yourself. For your marriage. Loosen your grip on the old so that He can bring in the new. It’ll be better than you ever imagined.

TO HELP YOU **HEAL DEEPLY**

1. Write down the most significant loss you've ever faced. Take some time to describe how you felt when you experienced that loss.
2. What is the progress of your healing? Do you feel God has healed you for the most part, or do you feel you are still in the thick of the pain?
3. How do you and your spouse relate to one another on a daily basis? What are your normal responses to one another? (Defensive? Sarcastic? Rude? Hateful?)
4. Recall the discussion about new wine and old wineskins. Taking some of your answers from the question above, how can you adjust those responses by turning your old behaviors into new ones?
5. What are some lies you have believed in the past? List a few of them and search Scripture to find the truth to battle the lies when they appear in your thoughts.