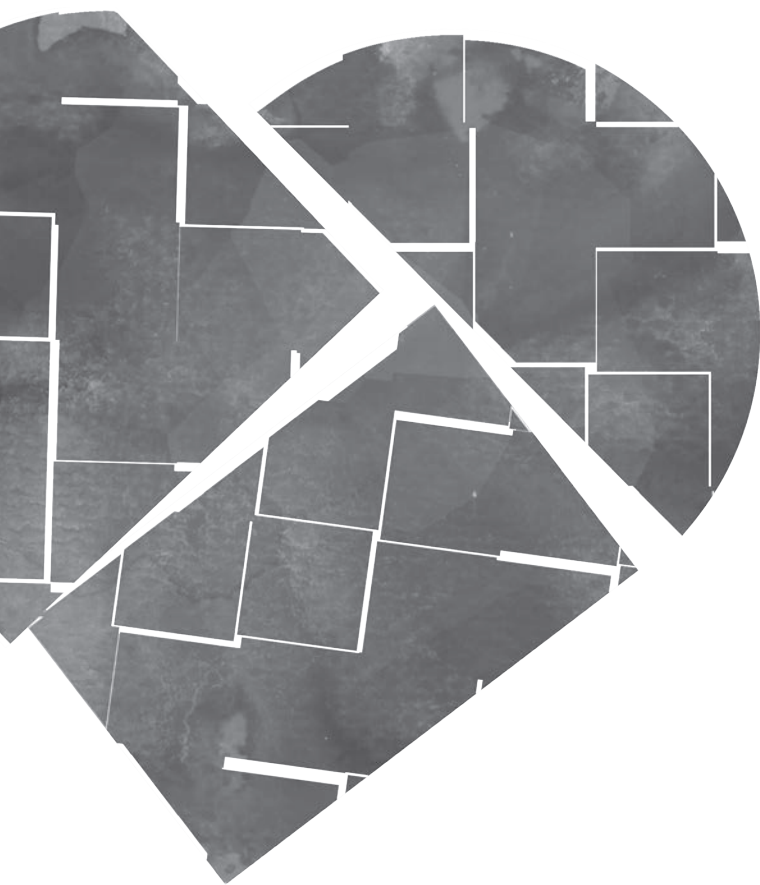


HEART OF A HUSBAND

CHAPTER ONE

WHY ME?

WHY AM I WRITING
A BOOK ABOUT MARRIAGE?



When a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.

Proverbs 21:11

So, why me? Why am I writing a book on marriage? I'm afraid that once I explain why I'm writing the book, you may find me even less qualified. I'm writing on this topic because I did almost everything I could to ruin mine. That's right; I'm going to tell you how to save your marriage by explaining how I almost lost mine. It seems almost hypocritical unless you look at it from the perspective of someone who has been to hell and back and is now here to help you steer clear of that path. That's definitely how I would describe it: I have been to hell and back.

It all happened a little over ten years ago. I was married to my high school sweetheart, Cindy, a little over six years. Our daughter was four years old, and our son was almost one. From the outside, it appeared that we had everything anyone could want. But like many marriages, we were going through the motions. At the time, I was traveling with a worship band and living my dreams. I was making music with some of my best friends, and we had the opportunity to lead thousands in worship. I allowed that ministry to become the most important thing in my life. Though it wasn't conscious at the time, constantly being away from the family to minister had become justifiable in my mind. Things had gotten to the point that Cindy and I couldn't get along because I was so busy with my job, the church, and the band. She constantly felt alone. Meanwhile, I perceived her complaining about me being gone so often as her not being supportive.

I'll never forget the day that I gave up. I was on my way out

the door to the last of four out of seven days on the road. Cindy was dealing with a colicky baby, and she had nearly enough of my continual absence. I was so consumed with what I was doing that I never stopped to think about how it might be affecting my family. I believed that I was doing God's will, and nothing was going to get in the way of that—not even my family. The van arrived to pick me up. The baby was crying, I was leaving, Cindy was not happy, and we exchanged harsh words. This is a moment that I still have etched in my mind. I remember feeling something crack. There was now a divide, and I was no longer interested in making anything work between the two of us.

I urge you to never become so consumed with yourself and where you think God is leading that you aren't willing to make adjustments to save your marriage. I once heard someone say, "Your 'no' needs to be as loud as your 'yes.'" I wish I had heard that before it was too late. There were certain things in my life at that time I really needed to say no to, loudly.

After I decided that our marriage couldn't, or wouldn't, be saved, I was an open target for what soon would prove to be an attack from the enemy. That assault would knock down everything I had built on what proved to be a shaky foundation. Of course, a lot of my revelation comes from looking back on what I've been through. As the old saying goes, "hindsight is 20/20."

A few months before I felt the crack, I began developing a friendship with another woman. Honestly, when we started our friendship, it was innocent. I would never have dreamed that I would wind up in a relationship with any woman other than my wife. I've always been a friendly person and had plenty of women as friends. It had never been an issue for me. I didn't feel like I had anything to guard against on that front. I realize now that as a man, especially a husband, you always have to be on guard.

HEART OF A HUSBAND

Now, listen to the way the enemy deceived me. At the same time I began feeling that my wife wasn't supporting me and things were at an end, I started to get support from someone else. I never really made the connection then. I was too busy enjoying hearing someone tell me that I was wise, I was smart, and I was perfect. The problem was that I relied on that praise as the kind of emotional support that should only come from a wife. I allowed myself to become a clean canvas for the other woman in my life to paint how I perceived myself.

It had been about a month since the day I gave up on my marriage, and I found myself in a relationship with a woman that was not my wife. Over the next five months, I lived a secret life that brought me to the brink of losing everything that I had.

Eventually, I told Cindy about what I was doing. I expected that she would give me what I deserved and kick me out on my butt. But through a broken voice and tear-filled eyes, she asked me to stay. I'll never forget how broken her voice was. I'll always remember how her face was so filled with pain. I had caused this. My selfishness and lack of concern for my wife had led us to this moment.

At that moment, the woman I had forsaken and rejected chose to forgive me. At that moment, Cindy truly modeled Jesus to me. Though she had every justifiable reason to leave me, she offered mercy and grace. We spent the next few days trying to figure out how we got to this place. Then about four days after I told her about the affair, I felt the crack that had developed only seven months before seal up. I can still remember where I was standing when the healing started. I came home from work and found Cindy on the floor, crying as she watched our wedding video. I immediately came face to face with everything I had done. I could see the pain that I had caused all over her face. At

that very moment, I felt the division that existed in me come together as the crack closed. It swallowed up every feeling I had for the other woman. Thank you, Jesus!

After realizing that Cindy was serious about staying with me, and with my heart no longer divided, I began to ask God, “Where in the Bible does it teach me to be a good husband?” I then remembered the scripture where husbands are instructed to love their wives like Jesus loved the church. Was this the answer to my question? Do I love my wife like Christ loves the church? I hustled over to Ephesians chapter five to find more instruction in the chapter that holds that verse, but that was kind of it. There were no super instructions on how to do it. It was simply, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25).

I began to pray and ask the Lord, “What does that mean?” This book is a collection of what was revealed to me over time. I have found that Jesus takes His relationship with us very seriously. Honestly, it’s why we exist—to be in relationship with Him.

That explains “Why Me?” as an author, but you may be wondering “Why Me?” as a reader. I know that the odds are that you haven’t cheated on your wife by having a physical affair. Yet one reason you may need this book is that maybe you’re tempted to be unfaithful. Another reason may be that you’re unaware that there are areas of unfaithfulness beyond that physical act. Two of the most significant areas are pornography and emotional affairs. Many men, in my experience, find these two traps to be innocent and not something to be concerned with. But that couldn’t be further from the truth!

Be cautious about allowing close relationships and emotionally deep conversations with women other than your wife. If you’re sharing your deepest feelings or confiding in a woman

HEART OF A HUSBAND

who isn't in your family or your wife, stop! Emotional affairs are the trailhead to a path that leads to pain and sorrow. It's easy for men to want to be affirmed by others, but there's a level of affirmation that should only come from the woman you've committed to be with the rest of your life.

Consider the way you interact with women who aren't your wife or a family member. I've found that many things I previously thought were just being friendly can be easily misinterpreted as flirting, or even worse, an interest in intimacy. Recently at a restaurant with my wife, she brought to my attention this kind of inadvertent behavior. I have a genuine love for people, so I often make conversation with my server. I honestly don't think much of it. As I asked for a refill, I reached up and touched the server's elbow and said, "thank you" as she walked away. My wife kindly asked me, "Do you always touch the servers when you ask for something?" Cindy wasn't mad at me. She was asking me with a sarcastic sweetness—but I got her point. What was innocent to me, could have been seen as something more, especially if I had been to dinner by myself. It's essential, as men, to always be aware of the impression we're leaving on the other gender.

While studies show that only 20% of men have reported having sex with someone other than their wives while married, the percentage increases significantly once you consider those who view pornography. Some studies show that as much as 60% of Christian men have admitted that they look at pornography. Jesus' words in Matthew 5:27–28 have something to say about this: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

I want to say this next part in the most loving and non-judgmental way possible. But I feel it's necessary to let you know

that if you're looking at pornography, you are cheating on your wife. You need to confess your sin to her and God to start on the road to healing. Thankfully, porn has never been a temptation for me, but I have friends who have struggled with it. I've seen them confess this to their wives, and I can assure you that the recovery is still a road of rebuilding trust and security. I pray that if this is your struggle, you find the strength to sit down with your wife and confess so that you can have the marriage that God intended for you. There is a Scripture that kind of sums this up. In John 8:31–32, Jesus encourages us to stay faithful to His teachings. If we do this, we'll know the truth, and it will set us free. In this case, I can assure you that the truth will set you free and set you on the path of healing. Bringing His truth into your relationship is the only way to experience proper freedom. Confessing to your wife isn't going to be easy, but it is the way to getting your relationship back on track.

You may have noticed that I mentioned that my failure happened a little over ten years ago, yet I felt the urge to write this book over eleven years ago. If I had written this book at that first urge, the part you're reading right now would be very different. But as I write this now, I intend to use the tragedy I endured to encourage you to avoid the snares that caught me. I would have much rather averted that tragedy, but having endured it, I pray that my story will help you avoid such a place in your life. God truly can take what was intended for evil and make something good. I pray that He encourages you as you read this book. But most of all, I pray you are inspired to obey God and His Word. That is the most powerful step you can take to affect your marriage positively. Whether it is through reading the Bible, through another sharing His Word, or just God's still, small voice speaking to you—listen and obey.

ASK YOURSELF

- 1.** Is there a crack in my marriage due to unfaithfulness? If there is, no matter how big or small, you need to confess. Truth can set your marriage free if you're vulnerable and honest. I realize that not every story may end up like mine, but your soul can't experience real freedom if you're living in a lie.
- 2.** Am I currently having an emotional affair? You may have never considered doing this, but you should assess every relationship you have with someone of the opposite sex. Look at the emotional reliance you have on that person compared to your spouses.
- 3.** Do I need to confess anything to my wife? If you do, pick a safe place for your wife to do this. She needs to be free to react however she needs. I would also recommend that you choose a safe place for you (no knives, frying pans, or blunt objects).
- 4.** Am I committed to the relationship God has intended for me and my wife? Will I commit to doing anything and everything I can to save my marriage?

LET'S PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for new revelations. As we pursue Your heart for our marriage, we pray for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. We ask for a soft and open heart to acknowledge where we can improve when it comes to loving our wives. Thank You for Your wonderful example of being a great husband. Please help us to live and love like You. Teach us to be like You. We commit before You to give up our will for Yours. Help me to love my wife like You love the Church. In Jesus' name, amen.