

Watch 'Impossible' Miracles Unfold as You Follow in These 2 Biblical Women's Footsteps

"For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

It strikes me on Christmas Eve that the verse I've quoted so many times is found in the Bible in the context of two women God touched to make the impossible possible.

Neither of the two women should have been able to conceive a child. It was impossible.

Mary was a virgin.

Elizabeth was barren.

Yet, God had a different idea.

Mary was approached by an angel who told her she would be overpowered by the Holy Spirit and conceive a child. After asking "How can this be?" and hearing God's answer, she agreed with the promise: "May it be unto me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

An angel told Zechariah that his wife, Elizabeth, would have a child; in his doubting response, he described his wife as "stricken in years." The disagreement he spoke out of his mouth opposing God's message caused the angel to close Zechariah's mouth so he would not speak again until the child was born.

What is it you long to give birth to that seems impossible today?

Being a woman, I resonate with this powerful account because when a woman says yes to conceiving a child, it requires more

than lip service. It requires that she incubate a seed of life within her body. The seed of new life is within a woman for about nine months. The new life is carried, changing the shape of a woman's body, felt when the kicking starts, nourished with nutrients from her own physicality to grow the child until the day of birth.

In due season, the woman goes through a birthing process that takes over her body as the new life comes forth.

Giving birth to the dreams of a life require a similar yielding of all that we are and all that we have:

- Our lips must say yes.
- Our bodies have to cooperate with the favor of new life in the physical and do the work of bringing forth a dream, carrying a dream to fulfillment.
- Our mind and spirit are required to agree with the new life, bringing new birth into reality through prayer, pondering, contemplating, pushing past fear, and celebrating as new life is born.

These beautiful accounts illustrate what occurs when God makes the impossible possible.

The lessons of birth changing the impossible to the possible are the same for a man or a woman.

I had not noticed the context of the Luke 1:37 before this Christmas season.

I see now it's no small thing that Luke included this life-giving verse in the context of two women whose bodies hosted new life, which should have been impossible.

Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said, "Among those who are born of women, there has risen no one

greater than John the Baptist” (Matt. 11:11).

Mary gave birth to Jesus, the Savior of the world.

What impossibility do you see today that God would make possible?

Will you speak in agreement with God’s promises with your own lips, cooperate in the physical toil and work to grow your dream, think thoughts and pray prayers that will usher forth your now possible dreams according to the work of God and the Holy Spirit within you?

“For with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37). {eoa}

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Step Into This Radical Truth to Squelch Your Unnecessary Suffering

A clear understanding of the supernatural is necessary. For too long Christians of Western societies have denied its existence while Eastern societies have readily walked in the supernatural but denied God. Why did the Christians of the West deny the supernatural? Why did the East deny God but

accept the supernatural? Where is the truth in all this denial?

A failure to understand the true power of the supernatural results in confusion and corruption of the truth. It is this confusion and corruption that mystifies the supernatural and leads many to stray from God and into occult practices. And this same mystification of the supernatural causes some Christians to become wary and fearful and step back and turn away from it. But is this fear the correct response from Christians?

People fear what they do not understand. This fear stems from a lack of knowledge. A deficiency of knowledge, especially in God's Word, is destructive. God says through His prophet in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." He goes on to say that His people even reject it. They are unaware that everything that manifests in the physical world is an irrefutable result of spiritual occurrences around them.

When it comes to partaking of the Word of God, many are malnourished. They do not have the substance to live victoriously. This insufficiency of the supernatural power of God causes great damage to the body of Christ. It hinders God's miraculous intervention to reach His people. God wants us to understand His supernatural ways. And according to John 16:13 in the Amplified Version of the Bible, He sends His Truth-giving Spirit to guide us into all truth, including the revelation knowledge of the supernatural. Jesus shares the power source of this truth in John 8:31-32. He says, "If you remain in My word, then you are truly My disciples. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."

I met a beautiful Christian woman at a private meeting in Chicago, Illinois, who suffered needlessly for 25 years of unbearable pain from a tethered spine because she was not taught the truth about supernatural healing. But her healing almost didn't happen because she was afraid that perhaps God

would not heal her. After she heard the truth from God's Word concerning the Lord's will to heal, she was released from fear. Healing hands were laid upon her and she was instantly healed and delivered from all pain and suffering.

When we walk in the revelation of the Word, the presence of the Spirit of Truth manifests with signs and wonders through us and draws the hurting to Himself. As we allow the reality of Christ to shine through us, their spiritual eyes see beyond the deadness of religion that quenches the power of the Spirit. And as His active supernatural power works through us, it shatters the spiritual darkness that holds them in bondage and escorts them into a living relationship with the one true God. By the supernatural ability of faith a man was saved just in the nick of time.

I met a certain Guatemalan man for the first time while he was in a coma breathing his last breaths. He was quickly slipping away from this earth. Now, religion would read him his last rites and hope he makes it into the sweet by-and-by, but there is no need to guess when the supernatural ability of faith is in operation and the gifts of the Spirit are activated. As I walked up to his hospital bed, I could see a spiritual cloud of darkness all around him.

I knew by the discerning of spirits found in 1 Corinthians 12 that he was not saved. I reached out and touched him and told him to wake up. He did, and he received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. What would have happened to this man had I not known how to operate in the supernatural power of faith?

What if I had been intimidated by the situation and walked away? He would have died and been lost for an eternity in hell. I thanked God I arrived just in time and that I had the courage to believe what the Bible said about the supernatural ability of faith. But how many people entered into their eternal destination without Jesus Christ because the brethren were either intimidated by the situation or did not know how

to operate in the supernatural power of faith?

Dear Jesus, As Your spiritual body, we repent for our part in the denial and rejection of the supernatural, for our lack of knowledge and for the unnecessary destruction that it causes in the lives of so many of Your people. Forgive us, for we do not realize the consequences that others suffer when we allow fear and ignorance to paralyze and override the supernatural ability of our faith. Holy Spirit, we need Your gift of discernment in these last days. Lead us and guide us into all truth that we may walk freely in the power of Your might. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. {eoa}

*This excerpt is taken from *Greater Than Magic*, pages 25-27.

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When You Don't Believe God Answered Your Prayer

During an ordinary day while Zechariah was performing his regular priestly duties, he was chosen by lot to minister before the golden altar of incense in the Holy Place.¹ This in itself was a big deal, but what happened next was something that was hard for even a man of God to believe. An angel appeared, and what he said made unbelief come to Zechariah.

A Righteous Couple

Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were advanced in age and

they were childless. Scripture also tells us “they were both righteous, approved in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in the commandments and requirements of the Lord.”²

In that day, many Jewish rabbis taught that for a couple to be childless was a sign of God’s disfavor. Perhaps the couple had a secret sin no one knew about. Whatever the case, barrenness was a stigma in their culture. It was such a big deal that Zechariah could have divorced her and married a younger woman with whom he could have heirs.

Instead, his decision was to make the issue a matter of prayer. We know this because of the angel’s quite crazy announcement. “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord.”³

He Couldn’t Believe

This should have been a time for Zechariah, a man who had longed for a son, had prayed for a son, had endured ridicule and gossip because of not having a child, to rejoice. He was a priest. He knew the story of Sarah conceiving Issac in her old age. He must have realized it was possible.

Still he didn’t believe it, couldn’t believe it. Elizabeth was old, at least over 60 and well-past child-bearing years. One source says she was 88⁴ when John was born. If that is true, it’s easy to understand Zechariah’s next words.

“How can I be sure this will happen?”

What Silence Does

The angel was not happy with his response of unbelief. "I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was He who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time."⁵

When he came out of the temple he could not speak. When he went home, though, Elizabeth became pregnant. Her response was "How kind the Lord is. He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."⁶

For Zechariah, the time of silence was a way to focus on trusting God completely. Now he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that God's word to him was true. Living in silence, though, was God's way to prepare him for more to come. He would be the father of the forerunner of Jesus. He needed unparalleled belief, faith and trust for the continued journey ahead of him.

When God Answers

We are all prone not to believe when we receive an answer to something we have been praying about for years. We get to the point that we don't believe God will ever answer our prayers. We begin to think our problems are bigger than God and that even God can't help us.

This is exactly what happened to me on my journey. I didn't think God had an answer for my problem of extreme weight gain. At 430 pounds, I felt I was doomed. I had tried every fix imaginable, every single one. I had failed at every turn.

Just when I felt it was my darkest hour, though, God's power came to my rescue. It came at the moment I realized that on my

own, with my own strength and resources, I am powerless to overcome this addiction. I need Him. I need His power to activate in my weakness.⁷

¹Luke 1:8-9 AMP

²Luke 1:5 AMP

³Luke 1:12-15 NLT

⁴New World Encyclopedia: Elizabeth

⁵Luke 1:19-20 NLT

⁶Luke 1:25 NLT

⁷2 Corinthians 12:9 MSG

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Billy Graham's Daughter Prays This for Her Children

I have prayed without ceasing for my children throughout the years. One of the promises I believe God gave me for them, and a promise I have claimed again and again in prayer, is Exodus

15:1-2. This passage is the song of Moses as he exults in God's deliverance of the Hebrew children when the Red Sea was parted and they crossed over on dry ground.

As pharaoh's army pursued and sought to keep God's children from getting safely to the Promised Land of His blessing, the sea's walls collapsed, the enemy was supernaturally destroyed and God's people rejoiced: "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! He has thrown the horse and his rider into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation" (Ex. 15:1-2).

The promise God seemed to give me from this ancient hymn of joy was that He would supernaturally overthrow anything or anyone seeking to hinder my children from being in His place of blessing for their lives. God has a promise in His Word for your children, too. Ask Him to give it to you so you can claim it in prayer. {eoa}

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Prepare Your Heart to Receive the Impossible From God

To confirm to Mary the message of the Lord, Gabriel gives her a word of knowledge concerning her cousin Elizabeth. He says, "And listen, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month." (Luke 1:36, AMP).

This word of knowledge not only confirms the truth of the purpose of His visit with Mary, but it also encourages her to believe God to fulfill His promise.

In the natural it was impossible for Elizabeth to conceive a child. She was labeled "barren." Her womb was labeled with the words "forever empty and childless."

But God is the master at overriding natural impossibilities and transforming them into possibilities. He removes negative word labels that bind people to hopelessness and despair. He confirms this the next verse, "For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment" (Luke 1:37, AMPC).

What physical impossibility have you been labeled with? Is there an underlying hope within you to be free from this negative label? That hope is the precursor to faith to believe and receive your miracle from God today. Hebrews 11:1 puts it this way, "Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality—faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses]" (AMP).

Spiritually prepare your heart to receive. Just like a womb receives a miracle seed to produce life, you receive this message as your hope seed and witness the label impossible transform into possible. You start right now, and take the word "impossible" or the negative report, renounce it in the name of Jesus, transform it and say with God, "I am possible! {eoa}

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These 3 Common Lies Ruin Christian Marriages

Is your marriage turning out as you thought it would? Probably not. What you believed about marriage before saying “I do” has been seriously altered by reality. And some false beliefs about marriage can make your journey together much harder and more painful than it needs to be.

What word comes to mind when you think about marriage in emotional terms? Difficult? Disappointing? Easy? Violent? Frustrating? One-sided? Happy? The word or words you think of may give you a clue to what you believe about marriage, and that can be very enlightening.

Here are three false beliefs about marriage you may unconsciously think are true. But these are beliefs you need to guard against if you want to make your marriage successful.

1. You think marriage is primarily about you.

When have you been happiest and most fulfilled in your marriage? If you’ve had any really great moments, they almost certainly did not occur when everything was focused on you. Instead, it may have happened when the two of you were focused on something or someone outside yourselves and working to accomplish a goal together. It may have been when you had to sacrifice something precious for the sake of your marriage or risked a very hard and vulnerable conversation together.

Marriage is really not all about you.

- It’s not about getting your spouse to meet your needs; it’s about doing what you can to meet your spouse’s

needs.

- It's not about getting the kind of marriage you think you want; it's about looking with truth and honesty at your spouse as another human being and making decisions accordingly.
- It's not about looking inward for your source of fulfillment even as a couple; it's about joining your lives together to make something even greater that can benefit others in a bigger way.

When you realize marriage is more about your spouse (and others beyond yourselves) than you, you can see reality more clearly, give of yourself more wisely, and find greater joy in building something together.

2. You think marriage is about making you happy.

It's not if; it's when problems come. And they will come. Your spouse will disappoint you. Financial problems or illness or infertility will take up residence in your home. Your children will take more out of you and your marriage than you ever expected. Dreams will be broken. Some of your needs won't be met. You will feel a failure as a husband or wife in some way.

If you don't believe me, ask any couple who has been married more than a few months or certainly a few years. Life happens. My marriage to Al included an enormous amount of suffering, and yet our marriage was very happy. I wouldn't trade a moment of it for anything. But if I had based my decision to get married on what would make me happy, I would have been sorely disappointed.

If you want to get married in order to be happy, stop right now. Oh, marriage is one of the best gifts God gave to human beings. And chances are good that you can experience a huge amount of happiness. But the combining of two people into one is painful. The result is worth it. But only if you accept that you will have to grow and change and hurt and learn and

fail and get up again and bend and be stretched farther than you ever thought you could.

If you let Him, God will use your marriage to make your character what He wants it to be. And you will find more fulfillment than you ever thought possible in the process.

I invite you to give Him that chance.

3. You think you know how to have a good marriage.

How much time did you spend preparing for marriage? An afternoon in a pastor's office? A two-hour seminar such as the state of Texas offers to engaged couples? A couple of hours reading a Christian marriage book?

We spend years preparing for gainful employment, but too often, we think we should just know how to do this thing called marriage. I don't think there's any other single area of life that determines one's happiness or misery more than the quality of your marriage, yet we spend so little time in marital preparation or continuing education.

At whatever stage of marriage you are, you can learn more. Here are a few ways:

- Read a Christian book on marriage every year.
- Listen to podcasts or media programs on successful marriage.
- Study your spouse. Continually strive to learn what makes them tick.
- Attend a marriage seminar or retreat regularly (every year or two).
- Read the Song of Solomon again. Read it in a different version than you're used to.
- Pray. Every day. For your spouse, for yourself and for your marriage.

Only God knows best what your marriage needs. Be voracious in

your appetite to hear what He has to say about your marriage. He has an opinion. And He has a purpose for you together. Continue to seek His input.

Let me encourage you to stretch your thinking about marriage and invest in what it takes to make yours the kind of marriage God wants for you.

Question: Have you had any false beliefs about marriage? You can leave a comment by clicking [here](#).

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One Easy Way to Stop the Downward Spiral Into Despair

I was having some ridiculously petty thoughts yesterday, and do you mind if I don't tell you what they were? They swirled around disappointment and frustration, ending in a big pile of self-pity. (Just so you know, I'm 69 chapters into reading the Psalms and have noticed that David sings the same song over and over again, so I'm not feeling as bad about my repeat struggles.)

"What's wrong?" said that man of mine as I snuggled onto his chest. That's when I gave him a big earful of all my feelings (bless him), including my own self-chastisement.

"How I feel isn't right, but it's still how I feel," I said.

"I know," he said.

"I can hold onto good thinking about as long as I can hold a plank," I told him. "Three seconds."

"You could hold a plank longer than three seconds," he said.

"Nope. Look," I said, from my cozy place on the couch, "I can't even get into a plank."

Then I asked if he could remember when Caleb was little. We used to try to get our son's attention to tell him something, but that was challenging. So I would bend down and secure his cheeks in my hands. "Caleb, look at me," I would say. "Look. At. Me."

His lips would say, "OK," but his eyes could not focus on me for even one second.

"Look, Caleb. Look at me."

Nothing. Not possible. But the kid was so stinkin' cute, with his Coke-bottle glasses, that we finally just gave up on getting his full attention and took what we could get.

In Heb. 12:2a (NIV), we read "fixing our eyes on Jesus ..."

Yeah, I fix my eyes on Jesus about as well as Caleb could fix his eyes on his parents.

But I keep trying.

What else can we do but just keep trying to get our thoughts to line up with Bible truth instead of wallowing in a pit of lies?

After 'fessing my feelings to my husband, a Bible verse came to mind that firmly set my thoughts back on the rail of truth. I shouted the verse from the kitchen like a warrior going into battle.

“That’s right,” responded Matt in a loud voice.

Bad feelings usually come from bad thinking, and bad thinking has to give the right-of-way to Scripture.

Are you overwhelmed by feelings you know are not based on truth? What can you do, at least in this moment, to fix your eyes on Jesus?

3 Reasons You Should Ditch New Year’s Resolutions

I am done making New Year’s Resolutions.

I am an expert at making resolutions—and immediately failing at them. And if there is anything I hate, it’s feeling like a failure.

But what I hate more than feeling like a failure is feeling like a failure all year long.

There’s something about a resolution that’s so immediate, so final. A resolution seems so A-Z, with no steps from B-Y.

But life isn’t like that.

Take what is likely the most common New Year’s Resolution: Lose Weight

There is no A-Z with healthy, long-term weight loss. Weight loss definitely requires steps from B-Y to be effective and long-term.

It is a long-term goal that, for some, takes years.

We watch re-runs of *Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition* and expect our journey to take us from obese to fit and thin in a matter of 12 months, but fail to recognize that in the hurry to shed the pounds, we've never really addressed the issues that led us to obesity in the first place.

And this is exactly why this year, I won't make New Year's Resolutions. Instead, I've decided to set goals.

Three Reasons I Won't Make New Year's Resolutions:

1. Goals lead me to create steps of action. By creating actionable steps to reach my goals, I am able to break down my giant goal into smaller goals that are easier to reach, thereby allowing myself to grow into the big goal.

The ability to break my goal into steps of action gives me a sense of accomplishment each time I step closer to the destination.

2. Goals make the journey as important as the destination. Take the illustration I've been using: weight loss. I've been on a weight loss journey for three years now. Some may wonder why my journey has taken so long. I wasn't obese when I started; I just had a lot of terrible habits. I have deliberately chosen not to rush my weight loss because I realized that if I was going to make it stick this time, I would need to make new habits a way of life.

The journey to losing weight has been as important as my destination. Along the journey, I've learned to stop and consider what I'm putting in my mouth before I munch down on it. I've learned that rest and sleep are essential and not to be taken lightly. I've also learned to value exercise, although I still don't always enjoy it.

These are lessons I hadn't learned the other two times I shed pounds in record fashion.

3. Goals allow time for personal growth. To be honest, if I don't meet every goal by December 31, 2017, I won't be disappointed in myself. Rather, what I'll want to see is how much closer I've come to my destination.

If I've made good progress, I'll be more than satisfied.

Friends, if there is anything I've learned this year, it's that when we expect perfection from ourselves, the only thing we'll get in return is frustration, stress and disappointment.

I know, because I've lived for years being frustrated, stressed out and disappointed in myself.

But if there is anything 2016 has taught me is that I don't have to be stressed out and frustrated. And I am certainly not a disappointment: to God, to myself or to those around me who matter.

There is something lovely about being comfortable with being perfectly imperfect.

There is something attractive about being in the presence of someone who is comfortable at owning up to their imperfections.

And there is something very freeing about giving yourself permission to be that person. {eoa}

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follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

What Joseph's Heartache Can Teach Us About the Father's Love

Love covers a multitude of sins." The words rang in my ears, and I couldn't get the six-word phrase off my mind. At 17, already an alcoholic and an addict, I was working at a summer camp in Lake Tahoe. Although I was raised in church, I had never been around Christians like these. They didn't tell me to change anything about my appearance, my attitudes or my addictions. "Love covers a multitude of sins," they said when I smoked cigarettes or dope or threw fits over doing my chores.

"Love covers a multitude of sins." Was God's love enough to cover all the wrong, illegal and immoral things I had ever done, including my alcohol addiction, lying, bad habits, promiscuity and even my drug-dealing? Was it true that I didn't have to clean up my act before coming to God and that He loved me passionately just the way I was?

One night, in the quietness of my cabin, I submitted to the overwhelming love of God. I agreed with him about my condition and allowed His grace to cover my multitude of sins. That was June 1974, and God hasn't let go of me since. He delivered me from my drug and alcohol addiction.

"How quickly we forget God's great deliverance in our lives. How easily we take for granted the miracles he performed in our past." –David Wilkerson

God's name "Deliverer" reminds us He will rescue us if we call on Him. He will give us victory over the most difficult circumstances and will see us through. "He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hate me; for they were stronger than I" (2 Sam. 22:18).

When you need deliverance, read Ps. 107, a beautiful song written about liberation. It was sung to celebrate the Jews' return to freedom from bondage in Egypt and from their exile in Babylon.

Remember Joseph's story? Through his brothers' jealous mistreatment, God allowed Joseph to be taken away as a slave to Egypt. He ultimately became Pharaoh's right-hand man and planned ahead for years of famine. He led the country to become the world's economic leader. Through Joseph, God provided for the Israelites to thrive in the land of Egypt. Decades later, there was a pharaoh on the throne who didn't know Joseph; God allowed the Israelites to be oppressed by the Egyptians. The Israelites grew in numbers and power, and the pharaohs began to eliminate them. Moses was sent by God to lead the Israelites to freedom:

"Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for His mercy endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord speak out ..."
(Ps. 107:a-b).

Thankfulness to God should always be on the lips of those he has saved. This verse is a beautiful picture of the response of the Israelites after they had been freed, though they deserved only judgment. They had been in bondage, yet the Lord heard their cries, and He freed them. A definition of redeemed found at says "redeemed means to extricate from an undesirable state: reclaim, recover, rescue." God rescued His people. The Israelites experienced the God who redeems.

Another definition is to "restore the honor, worth or reputation of." You botched the last job but can redeem yourself on this one. What about you? Have you truly

experienced what redemption means? We can trust God to redeem us in impossible circumstances and claim his promises:

“Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses” (Ps. 107:6).

God the Deliverer heard the cries of the children of Israel; He knew their situation: “... the children of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out, and their cry came up to God on account of the bondage. God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant ... God looked on the children of Israel, and God had concern for them” (Ex. 2:23-25).

God promised deliverance in Exodus 6:6b, “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage ...” God also said in verse 7, “And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”

God’s people had cried out to God. They were in anguish because of their oppression. He heard them. God delivered them; he brought them out of slavery. He freed them from captivity. Have you cried out to God in your trouble?

When I was given a diagnosis of stage 4 non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, I prayed to God for my healing, and so did others around the world. We prayed nights and days; we anguished in prayer for my healing. I was delivered from disease. I thank God for delivering me from cancer.

God wants to deliver you.

Are you worried about the future? Is. 40:31a is for you: “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength” (NIV).

Are you worried about the unknown test results, finances, a prodigal child? Is. 54:10 is for you: “For the mountains may be removed, and the hills may shake, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed.

And when the Deliverer carries you through, thank Him and praise Him for the satisfaction He brings: "Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love ... for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things" (Ps. 107:8-9).

Hope in things = Distracted

Hope in people = Disappointed

Hope in myself = Devastated

Hope in Christ = Delivered

–Rachel Wojo

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we give thanks to You, for You are good. "Your love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story" (Ps. 107:1-2, NIV). Thank You for hearing my cries, as I cry out in time of trouble. Thank You for delivering me (v. 6). Thank you, Lord, for your unfailing love. Thank you for satisfying the thirsty and filling the hungry with good things (vv. 8-9). Thank you, my Deliverer, You are so good. Thank You, my God. In Jesus' name, amen.
{eoa}

*Exchanging hurt for hope is **Sheryl Giesbrecht's** focus—a message she shares with audiences as a radio personality, author, speaker and global influencer. A dynamic teacher and motivating leader, she has endured many changes and challenges, moving her to a deep faith, trust and dependence on God. Giesbrecht's radio show, "Transformed Through Truth," is nationally syndicated and heard daily by more than 21 million listeners on networks around the world. Her latest book is Experience God Through His Names.*

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Divorce-Proof Your Marriage With These 5 Rock-Solid Truths

Recently I talked about the 3 biggest false beliefs people hold on to when it comes to marriage. What you believe about marriage will affect how you approach the challenges that come to every couple. So it's time to look at the things you should believe about marriage.

Uniting two broken people to be as one takes a big investment of time and energy, divine intervention and a lot of prayer, patience and practice. These beliefs will help give you a foundation that makes that investment successful.

1. God can do anything. God can restore anything.

There's nothing too hard for the Lord. (Genesis 18:14) That includes growing, saving or restoring your marriage.

I know people who experienced God restoring their marriage after infidelity, violence, addiction and more. I know marriages that have survived loss and grief, infertility, chronic illness, financial hardship, disability and other obstacles. My own marriage with Al was strong and successful in spite of a super-sized helping of suffering.

As the old gospel song says, "What He's done for others, He will do for you." It doesn't matter how traumatic, broken, disconnected, unhappy or hopeless your marriage may seem, God has an answer. Nothing is impossible with Him. (Luke 1:37)

God can. Although you may struggle a little with this belief, you probably hold it to be true. The bigger question you probably wrestle with is, will He? And that's where the following four beliefs come in.

2. My choices and behavior affect the outcome.

You are not powerless. The health, happiness and success of your marriage depend in part on you.

How you treat your spouse, how you take care of yourself, the quality of your character (good or bad), your willingness to learn and grow and forgive, the degree of investment you make in your relationship, your openness to risk challenging conversations with both sharing and listening—these and more will make a real and lasting difference in your marriage.

Some people become immobilized when facing marriage misery, begging God to change things while taking no action. You can always do something. You always have choices. You cannot control everything, but you can control yourself. You can choose to confront or let it go, forgive or become bitter, leave or stay, clam up or risk being vulnerable.

Will your choices or behavior save your marriage? No—God does that. But He cannot and will not do it without you.

3. Tomorrow can be different than today.

Walls, apathy and conflict can feel never-ending. Marriage misery can feel like a prison you have no way out of. But that doesn't have to be your future.

Psychologically, we humans get overwhelmed and paralyzed when we feel there is no hope of a different future. But that's simply not the case, especially when you have choices, your spouse has choices—and God is with you.

There is no guarantee of what tomorrow will look like, but change is possible. Other marriages have been transformed; why

not yours? You or your spouse can overcome an addiction. You can together learn about communication, intimacy and friendship. You can learn to love well in the middle of suffering. As the Scriptures say so many times, "But God ... "

Do your part, especially in working on your own character. And give God a chance.

4. My spouse's choices and behavior affect the outcome.

This is perhaps the hardest of all beliefs to live with. Marriage is truly about two people. Although your behavior and choices do affect the outcome, so do your spouse's. Trying to either control or ignore this reality will leave you frustrated, disappointed and probably angry.

Your behavior affects your spouse, but they still have the choice about how they respond. They can choose to invest or not invest in the relationship, to allow the Holy Spirit to change them where He needs to—or not, to learn to love well or walk away.

Loving means making yourself vulnerable to another person. And that's always a risk. You cannot remove all risk and still love.

That's why you must develop and maintain your own reliance on God. He's the only One who will never change, never let you down, never disappoint you. From that place of security you can look at your spouse honestly, choose to love well and make decisions you will not later regret.

5. The benefits of marriage are worth the investment.

If marriage is such a risk, why would anyone want to jump in? It's no wonder many people choose to remain single, or settle for "friends with benefits" or living together. It feels safer. You can always leave, right? You don't want to get hurt.

I can tell you without reservation that the benefits of a godly marriage far outweigh any suffering or risk involved. Yes, you will be hurt and disappointed. But the satisfaction, growth and fulfillment you can experience through loving well are priceless.

Those benefits can only come from a permanent commitment. Nothing short of an eternal "I do-till death do us part" can make such fulfillment possible. Truly knowing and being known, being vulnerable and having someone else make themselves vulnerable to you, seeing God come through when you didn't see any future for your relationship- nothing less than a permanent commitment in marriage can even come close.

Will your marriage be saved, restored? I don't know. But remember, your vote-and your spouse's vote-counts. {eoa}

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