

A Season of Surrender

IT WAS A WOEFUL TIME WHEN MY VISION FOR MINISTRY DIED. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE END OF MY MARRIAGE TOO, HAD I NOT LEARNED TO TRUST GOD WITH EVERYTHING.

Some years ago, before my conversion, my husband, Nestor, renounced mysticism and gave his life to the Lord. I filed for a divorce.

Though I had grown up in a denominational church, my eyes were blinded to the gospel. But Nestor continued to pray for me, even when we were no longer together, and stood in faith for the return of everything the enemy had stolen from him.

Three years after we divorced, I was born again. The following year, we remarried.

While we were apart, Nestor had become ordained and had been appointed to the position of associate pastor in a denominational church. However, when the leadership discovered that he was Spirit-filled, he was no longer welcome as part of the denominational "inner circle."

Soon after, a church was birthed out of a Bible study in our home. Two years later, God planted in my spirit the vision for a women's ministry that would reach women from all walks of life and all denominations.

The vision became clearer each week when I met to pray with a group of women in an intercessory prayer group. Soon, with Nestor's approval, the ministry was launched at a large conference of over 500 women.

Within a few weeks the ministry board established monthly fellowship meetings. Many women were mentored, saved, filled with the Spirit and delivered.

The annual conferences, along with our monthly meetings, were tremendously blessed by God. But the dream would last for only a short time.

THE COMING OF WINTER Three years into the women's ministry, Nestor said the Lord told him this was no longer the direction God was leading our family. Words can't describe the explosion of emotions inside me.

If Nestor were right, why hadn't the Lord given me the same revelation? Since I was a woman of fasting and prayer, I thought my ear was tuned to God. But I hadn't heard anything. Consequently, I believed my husband was deceived, jealous and threatened by the ministry's success.

I asked God to show my husband that he was deceived. And I told Nestor that I'd decided to continue the women's ministry because I had not heard from God to the contrary.

Initially, Nestor continued to attend the monthly fellowships, but his demeanor was hostile. I knew it would affect the spiritual climate of the gatherings if he continued to attend.

Finally, he informed me that he would no longer attend the fellowships and that he was removing his covering from what I was doing. Even though I knew his covering was important, I was relieved that he would no longer be attending the meetings.

I decided that the absence of Nestor's covering would not deter the ministry's success. After all, I was doing it for God, and He covered me.

In order to manipulate me to see things his way, Nestor began characterizing me as an unsubmitive, rebellious woman with a "Jezebel spirit." He used these labels in order to antagonize me and to cause the shutdown of the ministry.

Well-meaning people with "prophetic words" came to me,

attempting to influence the stand I had taken. One woman told me God had revealed to her that the remaining years of my ministry would be spent alone. While these persons meant well, I knew they were sent to me by the adversary.

Because of our love for God, Nestor and I agreed to come together to discuss the chaotic state of our marriage and home. We both had a reverential fear of God, so we would not break

our marriage covenant before Him by getting another divorce.

We agreed to allow God's Word to rule as the final authority in our lives and marriage. We prayed for God's guidance, grace and help.

I made the decision to shut down the women's ministry after our last conference. In tears, I reluctantly shared my decision with the ministry board.

The many months of marital contention had taken its toll on me. It seemed as though I were being punished because I wanted to carry out the vision God had put in my heart.

But I prayed, "Not my will, oh God, but Thy will be done in my life." As an act of surrender, I submitted to God's Word. Though I didn't understand all the dynamics, I knew I could trust Him.

TRANSITION BEFORE TRANSFORMATION My heart was broken because of the death of my ministry. Yet I knew that it was God's, not mine, and I had to trust Him.

In the weeks that followed, despair engulfed me. I felt like an outcast—displaced, rejected, unconnected, unloved, unprotected and hurting.

After shutting down the women's ministry, I planned to throw myself into other work at our local assembly. But my husband didn't trust me because of the saga we'd gone through. I was

not allowed to do anything in the church.

As the pastor's wife, I had no one to talk to who could understand my plight—no one but God. I began to experience deeper intimacy with the Lord.

One day after worshiping and praising Him I heard the words, “transition before transformation.” My spirit was captivated by this phrase.

He said to me by way of explanation: “To change the position of an object, you have to decide that the object needs to be repositioned. You first make a choice that is followed by an action. The change in position takes place externally.

“In obedience to My Word you made the choice to change your position about the ministry, then followed it [with] your action to shut it down. Now, I shall begin My transformation in your heart and life.

“While both of these words imply change, transition is external but transformation is internal. I will bring about the change in your life that I desire. It is My desire to bring you to another level of ministry and enrich your anointing. Just be still and know that I am God.”

Though I wanted to blame Nestor for my dilemma, God knew I needed to acknowledge what was in my heart. Lovingly, God flashed my life before my eyes so that I could begin to see and understand how the spirit of control had influenced me since early childhood.

There were a number of very strong women in my family background, and the influence of that spirit had attached itself to me. The Father wanted to deliver me so that He could advance me in ministry and anointing.

BROKEN BREAD, POURED-OUT WINE Since the first women's conference, I had been inundated with requests for speaking

engagements. Though I always had a full schedule, I never accepted an engagement before consulting God.

Over the course of the next four years, the Father would not allow me to accept any requests to speak. Each time I consulted Him, He responded, "Be still!"

Looking back, I can see that those four years, though painful, were the best years of my life. It was during this time that God healed, nurtured, and restored me and taught me about ministry.

God showed me that many believers operate a "candlestick ministry"—one which illuminates their gifts and calling and allows them a measure of success but leaves them devoid of the character of God. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29, KJV).

The Lord said, "I desire for [your ministry] to flow out of the 'broken bread and poured-out wine' that exemplifies My character." During those four years I learned God's character. He taught me how to trust Him with my life—my ministry, my marriage, my husband and everything that concerned me.

I witnessed the literal manifestation of God in turning my husband's heart toward me. God changed his attitude and behavior and enabled him to trust me again. He taught him how to cherish, nurture and honor me.

I knew without a shadow of a doubt that this happened only because I obeyed God and made a choice for change. I determined to submit to Him and trust Him with every area of my life, despite what I felt or how things appeared from a natural perspective.

THE RETURN OF SPRING Today I am still spiritually bold and assertive but also more compassionate and less controlling. God has given me a greater anointing as a minister and restored me as a loving wife.

I've been released to begin traveling and ministering again. The vision for helping women is still alive.

Psalm 138:8 reads: "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." I thank God for bringing my will into conformity with His own and for causing me to choose to make the changes that led to my transformation.

Now my husband and I love and respect each other, and I am blessed, covered and protected under his headship. I am his partner in ministry, and God has given him a deeper revelation of what it means to love me as Christ loves the church. He trusts me completely, knowing that I make him complete and have no desire to compete with him.

I've learned that when we surrender to God's ways and His order, we can confidently trust Him with every area of our lives.

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