

How God Healed This Woman After Her Tragic Divorce

LouAnn could hardly believe when her husband of 20 years walked out the door. Their marriage had never been one others would want to emulate, but she thought they had both resigned themselves to having the kind of marriage most people had: not bad, definitely not good, but good enough. Or at least *she* thought it had been good enough.

We had once been so in love. What went wrong? LouAnn pondered.

She couldn't pinpoint the exact moment their love failed. Rather, it was a slow unraveling over years of unmet expectations, unforgiveness and selfishness.

At first, when LouAnn's husband left, she had a long list of how *he* was the cause of their divorce:

- He worked all the time.
- He never spent time with me.
- He made me feel worthless.

And the list went on.

But now, several years later, LouAnn could see the role *she* played in the marriage's failure. She hadn't come to this place readily. No, she'd spent many years stuck in anger, resentment and self-pity.

About that season of her life, LouAnn says, "It was an exhausting, discouraging and horrible way to live. I felt so worthless and alone. The resentment I felt for my husband was constantly on my mind and found its way into most of my conversations. Eventually people avoided me. It pained me when even my children began avoiding me."

When LouAnn felt she was at her lowest, a woman she knew from

church said something that penetrated her calloused heart. The woman had also been divorced for many years. One day when LouAnn was sharing her list of woes, this woman stopped her mid-sentence and said, "LouAnn, aren't you getting tired of this? You're right, your husband shouldn't have left you—but he did. I know it's hard. I've been there. But it's time to find your way out of this hole and get the help you need to break free from your bitterness, so God can use you for His kingdom and His glory."

Wow! If anyone else had said that to LouAnn, she would have responded angrily. But the words of a woman who had been in her shoes pierced right to her heart. A heart that had become hardened even against God.

Sure, she still went to church regularly—it was one of the few places where friends hadn't abandoned her in her darkest hour. LouAnn knew she wasn't living the joyful Christian life her friends enjoyed, but she blamed her complacency on how wounded she had been.

Whenever any woman tried to address LouAnn's resentful attitude she thought, *Oh sure, I could be joyful like you if my husband hadn't left. You just don't understand.*

However, when the divorced woman confronted LouAnn, the Lord used her words to get through. She thought, *If this woman could break free, maybe I can too!*

Change for LouAnn didn't happen overnight. But slowly, the Spirit of God did a work in her heart. The Lord steadily changed her heart through the following resources:

- Mentoring by women who had survived a similar experience.
- Prayer.
- Bible study.
- Scripture memorization that God used to help her take captive her thoughts whenever they went down a dark

path.

- Fellowship with women who took seriously their walk with Christ.

As God helped LouAnn break the chains of sin that bound her, His joy became her strength (see Neh. 8:10). Finally, she came to a place where she not only forgave her husband, but she also realized her own contribution to their marriage troubles. And LouAnn was ready for God to somehow use her broken life for His glory.

As the Lord transformed LouAnn's life, her joy bubbled over as at no other time in her life. These days God is using her painful experience in ways she never could have imagined. She regularly warns women not to make the same mistakes she made in her own marriage.

Though she once thought God could never use someone like her, now her brokenness is what He uses to mentor women whose husbands have left them. As it says in 2 Corinthians 1:4 , "We ... comfort those who are in trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

Because LouAnn has felt their pain, she cries with them, holds their hand and prays diligently for them. And when God gives her a nudge, she's ready to say the hard words they need to hear to help them break free from bitterness and regret. Just as the woman at church did for LouAnn so many years ago.

LouAnn's story is not one she would have written for herself. But she will be the first to tell you her pain has not been wasted. God has truly made beauty from ashes and has used her to mentor others to find hope in Christ alone.

As a young bride, I (Rhonda) knew I was not the wife I had hoped I would be. I would buy books about being a better wife, but I soon learned the books did not have the power to change me. My husband and I were in youth ministry, so I looked to the marriages of the parents of the teens for help. The Bible

calls the older women to teach the younger how to love their husbands and their children, so I asked women with marriages I wanted to emulate to be my Titus 2 mentors. What I learned from these women transformed my marriage and my parenting.

In answer to God's mandate to be a Titus 2 mentor, I now write and speak to help women build "no-regrets lives." In *The Marriage Mentor*, I pass on the biblical principles toward a happy marriage I learned from these Titus 2 women.

Make friends with couples who have their hearts set on eternity and learn from their example. {eoa}

Rhonda Stoppe is the No Regrets Woman. With more than 30 years of experience as a marriage mentor, pastor's wife, author and speaker, Stoppe leads women of all ages to live lives of no regrets.

Stoppe is the author of *Moms Raising Sons to be Men*, which mentors thousands of moms to guide sons toward a no-regrets life, *If My Husband Would Change, I'd Be Happy & Other Myths Wives Believe*, helping countless women build no-regrets marriages and *Real-Life Romance*, a collection of real-life love stories. Her latest release is *The Marriage Mentor*, written with her husband, Steve.

Visit Rhonda Stoppe's website for more resources on love, marriage and parenting. She is also active on YouTube (Rhonda Stoppe No Regrets Woman), Facebook (RhondaStoppeNoRegretsWoman) and on Twitter (@RhondaStoppe).