

When Bad Things Happen to Good Marriages

I want my husband to love me unconditionally, even in the midst of my dumb choices.

But I'm human.

He's human.

And we both really stink at playing God. After 17 years of marriage, we started attending an ongoing Bible study group to guard our hearts because we knew how fleshly they can be.

We were only a few sessions in to a new couples' workbook when my husband and I hit a big pothole. After arriving home from class with clenched teeth, I quickly tucked our kids in and then shut our bedroom door behind us for our heated disagreement. I say *disagreement* because we don't really raise our voices anymore. Living with four intuitive kids who sense disharmony by any tone alteration nipped that. We have also learned voice-raising exacerbates whatever issue we are disagreeing over. But here we were, acting human.

I began my recap of exactly what he'd done wrong that evening. How in our marriage class he spent 20 minutes explaining a fake argument we never had because he felt like someone needed to break the ice since everyone was a little *too* quiet—a charade that embarrassed me.

"I told everyone it was a hypothetical situation," Jason said.

"Yeah, but when you start a statement by saying, 'HHHypothetically, when your wife decides not to ... ,' people assume you're bringing up a sensitive topic, albeit generically."

Not feeling loved, I chose—in a very mature way—to sleep on

the couch that night. When I woke at 4:30 the next morning, I knew God wanted to speak to me.

Me.

Not him?

Still unsettled about the whole thing, I needed a source of reason, a tidbit of truth to know I was in the right. I flipped through a section of Beth Moore's *Praying God's Word* and read, "Searching for perfect, unfailing love in anyone else is not only fruitless, it is miserably disappointing and *destructive*. I am convinced our hearts are not healthy until they have been satisfied by the only completely healthy love that exists: the love of God, Himself."

I forcefully wrote out this powerful quote on the inside cover of my journal while I mumbled under my breath, "Stupid Beth Moore." We're not allowed to say *that* "s" word in our house. Had the kids heard, Mom most certainly would have taken drops of vinegar on the tongue. But I knew what was happening. Beth's God-given wisdom pierced my heart so much I read further through her precious book.

I needed more of this type of wisdom at 4:45 a.m.

But God wasn't done with me. As soon as I attempted to shut my journal, the well-worn binding flopped open to the back page on which I had written one of my favorite sayings: "I have discovered that if I can change the way I think about something, I can change the way I react to it," Lysa Terkeurst.

Geez, I was getting a real beating—a long overdue heart check and a mini personalized Bible study the Lord tailored just for me.

The message was clear: I needed to change.

It took a whole day of discussions with Jason for me to

swallow my pride and fully surrender my hurt feelings. Finally, in my most monotone voice I said, "Will you please forgive me for my sarcastic remark in class about, 'If I knew what argument you were talking about, I'd be able to contribute.' I didn't mean to disrespect you. I'm working on this." This phrasing I'd recently adapted from the verse in Ephesians 5:33 about how "each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

That's an awful lot of "musts" in one sentence, I remember thinking. God probably wants me to pay attention.

Jason's face changed. "Apology accepted." He explained his logic behind the comment (it had something to do with making everyone feel comfortable), but he promised never again to repeat this action and followed up with his own apology for my embarrassment.

Huh, I thought. All I had to do was surrender and respect his opinion? Well, isn't that what I want? To be listened to and understood?

Abiding by God's mandate to change my heart and respect my man, although challenging at times, has benefits I have eagerly embraced. Like letting our dumb actions fall away with the erasing of our recorded wrongdoing. Because I really am human, he really is human, and we're so grateful we serve an all-knowing God.

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