

Why Even a 3-Year Separation Didn't Keep This Couple From Their 'Happily Ever After'

Marv and Linda Rooks had a fairytale start to their marriage, spending five months in Europe as an extended honeymoon and doing what Linda says were "all kinds of fun things." "For the first six years, I thought he was wonderful," Linda shares with host Marti Pieper on the *Hope for Your Marriage* series on Charisma News, recalling how their love endured even during the season of her working to help put him through law school.

And then, like so many other couples, that fairytale marriage became less and less captivating. "Once we had children ... your lives kind of go in different directions sometimes," Linda says. "And so he was building the law career and focused on that; I was focused on the children. And we really did have a good marriage—he was very good with the children, and we had a lot of good family times. The problem with us was that we didn't resolve issues. And so, when issues would come up, problems would come up, we would just tend to kind of shove them under the rug, and we didn't resolve them and move on."

Within a few years, she and Marv were starting to argue more and more, Linda says, though she didn't really know why. They had also established an unhealthy pattern, she adds. "What would often happen is that we would have an argument and he would leave the house, and then he'd come back an hour later, and we would both act like nothing happened."

Linda expected them to follow this pattern one Easter afternoon when the couple had yet another argument and Marv walked out. "I had the ham on the table and the silver and the china, and everything was fixed up, and yeah, [I thought he would] come back, and we'd have dinner. But he didn't come

back.”

“It was devastating,” Linda says. “My whole world started falling apart.”

She’s never forgotten that feeling—or the tools God used to guide her through what became a three-year separation before God restored her marriage. For many years now, the Rookses have led a “Marriage 9/11” ministry at the Orlando megachurch they attend, and Linda has written two books focused on helping couples with troubled marriages, including her most recent, *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated*, which recently won the Nonfiction Book of the Year award from the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association.

So how did Linda and Marv move toward their “happily ever after” despite their struggles? Linda shares three key tips:

1. **Give it time.** “So often, a person feels so devastated,” Linda says. “They don’t think there’s any help, and so they rush to different conclusions.”
2. **Put your spouse on the back burner.** A wise friend gave Linda this unusual counsel near the start of her separation: “Focus on God, and let Him show you what He wants to show you.”
3. **Surrender your marriage to God.** “Just completely give it to Him, [put it] in His hands. I have a lot of stories in my new book, *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated*. And in every one of those stories, it’s like there’s a common thread,” Linda says. “... And each one of them, before their marriage got back together ... they really let go and surrendered to God. They were doing everything they could; they were doing a lot of the right things. But until they totally surrendered to God, it didn’t turn around.”

To hear more of Linda’s wise advice on fighting for your own happily ever after, listen to this podcast.