

Your Christ-centered Key to Unlocking a Marriage That Feels Like a Prison

“That’s it, I’ve had it!” Sue exclaimed as her husband stormed out the door. How long was she supposed to go on living in this difficult marriage? Almost from Day One, Sue knew she’d made a mistake. Throughout their courtship, her husband had seemed to be a kind and patient person. Within weeks after their honeymoon, that all changed.

Sue knew God wanted her to honor her vows, but over the years they had been married leaving was always in the back of her mind. Once children came, Sue found joy in raising her kids. Now that they were older and ready to move away, her thoughts often drifted to what life might be like if she were to break free from the chains of her difficult marriage.

Can you relate to Sue’s story? I know a woman who found herself in a similar situation, but after spending some years in misery, she decided to surrender her disappointment to Christ. Do you know what happened? Although her husband changed very little over the years, she changed. Her determination to trust God to make good from her difficult marriage is what God used to draw each of her kids to Christ—because her selfless Christ-honoring love for their father showed them that pressing in to knowing and loving Jesus really does bring joy even amidst life’s disappointments.

When your life’s purpose is to know Jesus more with each passing day, the natural outcome will be for you to see life’s ups and downs as opportunities to make Christ known to those around you, especially to your children. The more time you spend with Jesus, the more His character will spill out of

your obedient life and thus create in others a desire to know Him too.

You Are an Ambassador for Christ

The apostle Paul often found himself in circumstances much worse than any you and I will likely ever face. Yet he never lost sight of his mission to proclaim Christ. Listen as Paul pleaded with the believers in Ephesus. He urged them to “Pray in the Spirit always with all kinds of prayer and supplication. To that end be alert with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Pray for me, that the power to speak may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may speak boldly as I ought to speak” (Eph. 6:18-20).

If you were in prison, would your prayer request be, “Hey, guys, I’m in chains for telling people about Christ. Could you keep praying for me to have additional opportunities to speak the gospel more boldly?”

You won’t likely find yourself in chains anytime soon, but sometimes a difficult marriage can make you feel like you’re in prison. What if God has you right where He wants you? What if, as in Paul’s life, the Lord knew you would be most effective sharing with others—including your children—the hope of salvation because of your pain?

Let me put it to you this way: if the only way God can bring your kids into the kingdom is by showing them how faith in Jesus is real through your struggle, is it worth it? My friend Tina thinks it is. She said, “If my husband’s controlling bent is what drove me to my knees and my son to Christ, it was all worth it!” Wow. Isn’t she right?

I meet women all the time who say they would do anything to help their children grow up to reach their fullest potential, yet those same women often stop short of working to build a

strong marriage. Sadly, the connection they fail to make is how the length a mom will go to love her spouse with Christ's selfless love is an incredible contribution to their children's stability and well-being. Her positive influence has the potential to impact not only her own children but their children and even their children's children.

Your kids' security lies in the health of your marriage relationship. When you live with your eyes focused on the mission God has called you to—to know Christ and make Him known—you will have learned the key to building a no-regrets marriage. When you determine to live in a manner that reflects a genuine love for Christ—no matter how smooth or difficult your marriage relationship may be—you will do far more to draw your kids to salvation than any words you could ever say. Isn't that your ultimate goal? {eoa}

Rhonda Stoppe leads women of all ages to live lives of no regrets. She is the author of *Moms Raising Sons to be Men and If My Husband Would Change, I'd Be Happy & Other Myths Wives Believe*. Her latest book is *Real-Life Romance* (February 2018), and *The Marriage Mentor* will be releasing June 2018 from Harvest House Publishers. Rhonda lives in California with her husband, Steve. They have four adult children and nine grandchildren.

Visit Rhonda Stoppe's website for more resources on love, marriage and parenting. She is also active on Facebook (*RhondaStoppeNoRegretsWoman*) and on Twitter (@RhondaStoppe).