

Hard Marriage, Soft Heart

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"Think for a moment of your heart as a greenhouse...and your heart, like a greenhouse, has to be managed. Consider for a moment your thoughts as seed. Some thoughts become flowers, others become weeds. Sow seeds of hope & enjoy optimism. Sow seeds of doubt & expect insecurity." ~ Max Lucado, A Heart Like Jesus

Our hearts are God's greenhouse. They are vulnerable gardens where we either plant roots of resentment & bushes of bitterness or we can plant seeds of fruit : *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* (Galatians 5:22). We choose whether we sow (and reap) to our sinful flesh or to the Spirit. The first leads to death, the other leads to life. Which will we choose in marriage?

In the early days of our marriage, I chose bitterness. For 19 years of marriage, our home was a war zone and our marriage was hell. Our home was ruled by my husband's anger and emotional abuse and my fear.

...But God was faithful and showed me the thorns of my bitterness. I was reaping a deadly harvest of withdrawal, distrust, vengeance, and depression. Bitterness is a root that pollutes and taints every relationship and situation. God revealed a better way to me in Ephesians 4:31-32—*Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.* He gave me my marital marching orders in Romans 12:21—*do not be overcome by evil (even in my house) but overcome evil with His good.* I could do positive things like worship, speak truth in love, & obey in spite of my feelings.

God provided me with bitterness blockers—His own plan to kill my bitter roots! We have already received it from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself at salvation. It is **GRACE!**

- I admitted my poisonous bitterness and confessed it to God.
- With His spade of grace and the gospel, I dug up my bitter roots.
- I forgave out of God's economy, not mine.
- I fertilized the gaping hole with God's mercy.
- I remembered I'm a sinner in need of God's grace too.
- I watered liberally with prayer (and tears).

God redeemed our barren, poisonous marriage into a garden of Grace. Don't keep mowing over those thorns and thistles of bitterness with denial. They'll only grow stronger. Learn to manage your heart and discover that God is more than enough for us in our hard marriages!

RESOURCES

The Meaning of Marriage by Timothy Keller

Letting Go: Rugged Love for Wayward Souls by Paul Gilbert & Dave Harvey

Finding the Love of Jesus from Genesis to Revelation by Elyse Fitzpatrick

The Attributes of God by A.W. Tozer

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