

From my heart to yours...

Jennifer Richmond ~ June 16, 2017

This was a hard week.



A little background...

In 2013, my husband sobered up after nearly 20 years of alcoholism, rage, and addiction related issues. Up until that point, our marriage had been severely damaged by his violent outbursts and abuse. Through a gut-wrenching, potentially devastating incident, God reached into my husband's heart and mind on the evening of May 5, 2013 and Glen fully confessed, repented, and truly surrendered his heart back to his Savior. I had married a godly, Christ-centered man in 1988 - on May 5, 2013, I got him back. Actually, I got a more mature and humble man back.

Since that night, we have been on a steady path of healing and restoration. We have joy again, peace again, trust and hope again. It's been hard - don't get me wrong - but it has been blessed nonetheless.

There are many difficult bumps along a road to true healing. One of the most difficult of mine has been dealing with the scars of trauma that Glen's past

violent behavior left on my heart. As much as I have fully forgiven him and as thoroughly as we have been restored, I have had to deal with anxiety and distrust when something comes up that gives me a flashback.

This past week, hours before I was to speak and share my testimony at our Monday night Coffee Talk, Glen, who works from our home, had a difficult setback. He didn't fall off the wagon and drink, but he lost his temper over a business situation and the angry words, while not directed at me, still swirled and echoed around the house as he processed the issue and dealt with the other person involved. I listened from the other room hoping for him to regain his composure and calmness, but the situation escalated, and I began fearing that not only was this situation unraveling, but my husband was as well.

I realized that it's not just darkness trying to overcome us. but that there was love and hope and power the ultimate power of God to vanquish this darkness.

I had to leave to get away from the sounds of anger, but I had to leave to get ready for my talk that night. I gathered my Bible, notebook, and computer, backed out of the driveway - trembling, worried, nervous - and made it around the corner. The post-traumatic response of panic and anxiety was coming

over me as I quaked under the stress of hearing Glen's furious tone. I decided to pull over and breathe and pray for him and for myself. "Oh God. Please don't let us lose so much. Please help Glen hear your voice through this. Please help me breathe and move and trust you..." I cried there in the car feeling powerless and concerned that in a few hours I would be standing before you women at Coffee Talk, sharing my testimony of how God had delivered my husband from alcoholism and abusive behavior and yet, what would I come home to? Would it all be gone? Would he have done something reactionary and foolish? Was this it? Had we made it to the four-year mark only to lose it again? My imagination was flooded with panic and fear for our future.

Getting back on the road, I headed for my study spot and just prayed and drove. I pictured each of you women who would be coming to Coffee Talk in a few hours. I thought about the food and the lights and the table settings...I imagined the fellowship and laughter and the openness to what you would be hearing and experiencing...and I became distinctly aware that there were spiritual forces at work – to rob our joy, destroy our lives, kill our hope – not just mine and Glen's but yours too! In the same moment, still sensing the spiritual nature of this incident, I realized that it's

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not just darkness trying to overcome us, but that there was love and hope and power – the ultimate power of God to vanquish this darkness.

Do you trust me?

As clear as the street light switching to green in front of me was the voice of God to my anxious heart. "Do. You. Trust. Me?"

Yes. Yes I really do. I was so scared and still shaking, but, yes – I totally do trust you, God. You are the only reason why I'm alive today. You are the only reason why our marriage is beautiful again. You are the creator of the universe and you can heal and restore this again. I. Trust. You.

I breathed in His peace in that moment. I wiped away a tear. I reached out to His truth, recalled how far we had come and how deeply He had healed Glen and me. I rehearsed victory instead of imagining defeat. I opened my mind to the Words of God that I had memorized...

"...trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding..."

"...the joy of the Lord is your strength..."

"...Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid...."

*I'm just a regular
woman with regular
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Here's what happened...

I reached out to key prayer partners with no specific details, just a request for covering in prayer, and I went to do my writing and preparing for the Coffee Talk. I had several hours to be with God and in the Word of God and just write and pray. In that time, rather than feeling consumed and distracted by the looming darkness of the morning's incident, I felt free, focused, and peace-filled. My thoughts were not on the stress but on the blessing of the evening ahead and the words that God wanted you women to hear that night.

Both Coffee Talks went well. We had a great group on Monday night and again on Tuesday morning. Women related to my testimony and shared their tears of hope and relief that they felt someone could relate to their story too. This is what we want – real community. Honesty. No pretense. I prayed with several of you on those days, and throughout this week I've prayed with even more. I know that God is doing a healing work in our lives as we all truly trust Him and surrender our deepest hurts and greatest longings to His will.

The next day, a dear friend reached out to Glen to be a sounding board and helpful beacon for what he knew in his heart needed to happen. Glen was able to step back and ultimately restore the situation both at work and with me. What in the past would have

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meant a total derailment and weeks of drinking and depression, was restored in hours. I reached out for help to talk through my panic and PTSD response as well. The remainder of this week has been a time of healing and remembering the

goodness and grace of God who is strong when we are weak.

What's interesting is, once again, I lived out the theme of my talk: "Unexpected Hope" and the crux of my message: God's Word is the key to our true healing. From the panic and fear in the beginning of the week to the total peace and hope as the week progressed, it was God and His powerful, living Word that kept me strong, brought hope, and enabled my husband's restoration.

As I shared in the Coffee Talk this past week, never think that "so and so" has it all together. Tomorrow morning I'll be at church, and I'm sure there will be those who will be completely unaware of the battles Glen and I have faced in our life and this most recent and difficult week. Most will never have heard our story or read this email, and many will simply assume that the lady who gives the Communion or Offering meditation each week and pastors the women's ministries must have it all together.

But you know differently. You know the truth. I'm just a regular woman with regular challenges and regular fears who regularly

gets on her knees before God to ask for strength and peace and hope again and again.

I pray that you will see the power of that hope found only in God and His Word today. I am praying for you as I write this that you will be transparent with others in our church about what you are going through. Reach out for help and prayer. Get support in your desire to really trust God. Let us all truly be the church as it was meant to be – community in Christ.

Know that you are loved and prayed for and that you have a special place in my heart as I seek to honor God as the women's pastor and your friend at LMCC.

Your sister in Christ,

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p.s. You can join the women's Bible study daily at 7am live on Facebook or through the archived videos on our Facebook page and website. You can also listen to the Bible study, meditations, and messages by getting the podcast on iTunes or any podcast app. Just search "Dwelling Richly." Not sure how to connect? Call, email, or text me. I'd love to help.

*Yet I will exult in the LORD. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
The Lord GOD is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet,
and makes me walk on my high places." Habakkuk 3:17-19*



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