



Responding Biblically In the Midst of It...

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. --Proverbs 1:6

*For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you,
--Proverbs 2:6-11*

It is my prayer that through the careful study of this chapter you will better understand that **you** and **your responses** matter to God. It is this God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who will one day make plain to you the meaning behind every tear you have shed and any sorrow your heart has suffered.¹

God has something He wants you to know beyond the shadow of a doubt. He wants you to know that you are loved, that you matter to Him. He wants you to know that He is with you now in the midst of whatever you are going through and He will be with you always. You are His child; He is your Father.

In this chapter I hope you will be encouraged to pursue God for a deeper, more satisfying relationship with Him; for more wisdom and understanding; for a better way to respond in **all** of your life's situations (not just the ones related to your loved one and his addiction).

There are no promises, nor are there any guarantees that you will **feel** better if you do everything that this chapter suggests. In other words, you may not have any warm fuzzies. But, with absolute certainty I can tell you this: if you seek Him, who is the God of your salvation, you **will** find Him. In Him, and Him alone (not your husband, fiancé, etc.) is your hope and your future and in that there is a **feeling** better, a **being** better, an absolute joy that you can experience in your inmost parts, and express in your daily life. You can begin to know and experience the joy of the Lord or the *Lord's joy*.

¹ paraphrased Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Estes ,When God Weeps, 1997.

This joy is such that you can do as the writer of Psalm 30 penned centuries ago:

Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. --Psalm 30:4

All you saints! Sing your heart out to God. Thank Him to His face! --Psalm 30:4 (The Message)

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. --Jeremiah 29:11-13

Most of us know that we are made up of two or three parts, depending on how you look at it. We are body, soul and spirit, material and immaterial. Once we come to faith in Christ, change takes place. Our spirits are born anew in Christ; our souls (mind, will and emotions) begin the process of change and as our minds are changed, we are transformed more and more into the image of Christ. Over time our will and our emotions will follow.

As we grow we are less bent, less compelled by our flesh to live self-centered lives. Instead, as time passes we are more and more drawn by the Spirit to **want to** live and do life according to our new nature in Christ. Our renewed spirits exert an irresistible pressure on us and we turn from our old ways, drawn to do life as the Holy Spirit guides us to.

Thus, our journey begins toward a God-focused, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-empowered life, where we will bit-by-bit learn what it means to **respond Biblically** (God's way) to all of life's situations.

Even if your journey began many moons ago, and you are just now wanting to get the bigger picture; to really want to do life God's way, know that:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. --Romans 8:1

How do you believe/think/feel the Bible is related to your everyday life?

Do you believe that every situation you will encounter has an answer in God's Story, the Bible? _____ How so? _____

What would a Biblical response actually look like anyway? How do you begin to think, or understand the “how?” Your everyday reality may be so far from a Biblical response that you aren't sure what it means or how to get there. I'm going to start with the bottom line. The bottom line for this chapter begins...ends...and is summed up in Jesus' answer to the Pharisees in Matthew 22:36-40. One of them, a lawyer, asked Jesus, “*Teacher, which command in God's laws is the most important?*” Jesus said, “*Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence. This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: Love others as well as you love yourself.*” *These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them.* ~~The Message

Write out Matthew 22:37-40

Think about this for a moment. What could Jesus possibly mean by His response to these religious leaders? Well, let's look at it seriously. Because our desire is to respond Biblically to a person with life-dominating sin, we have to understand these words. God never gives us permission to be mean, ugly, hateful or indifferent. He commands us to love Him with our whole being and to love others as we love ourselves.

I think we'd all have preferred the Lord to just give us a specific to-do list for how to be the wife of an addict. Unfortunately, God didn't inspire any writer – Old or New Testament – to write a special chapter for the wives of men trapped in the life-dominating sin of drug abuse and misuse, alcoholism, pornography, gambling, people pleasing or any other way that a person can be in bondage to himself or whatever this fallen world has to offer.

And nowhere in Scripture are we given any special instructions that will exempt us from the whole counsel of God's Word as it relates to responding Biblically to a person with life-dominating sin...or anything else.

Probably the most difficult thing most of us have done is try to live relationally with an addict. Nothing about it makes sense and we desperately want it to. Living day in and day out with someone who is walking contrary to holiness and godliness (especially when it twists and violates all the rules that make living together in unity possible) simply is not an easy thing to do.

Yet it is **possible** if, and when, God's Spirit is alive and active in you. We have to see, recognize and acknowledge that apart from the active grace (defined as favor rendered by one who need not do so; the intentional exercise of love, kindness, mercy, favor) of God we are all guilty and without a shred of hope.

The fact that I don't snort coke, smoke crack, drink, gamble or ...whatever **"it"** could be, means zip, nada, nothing at the foot of the cross. No one was, is or ever will be good enough to stand worthy before the throne of God uncovered by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Some of us may think so but the Bible is clear on this.

"What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one..." – Romans 3:9-10

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. ~~ Romans 3:22-23

This is a fact you must purpose to ponder any and every time you are confronted with sin. It doesn't matter if it's in your life or the life of your spouse, the truth of the gospel applies to one and all, the same.

Now let's take a defining look at life-dominating sin.

Part One: What is life-dominating sin?

"When we willingly or unknowingly are under the control of any power other than God's Holy Spirit (ex., drugs, alcohol, sex, another person, your peer group, a false religion, a self-centered habit such as gossip or laziness, or a self-oriented desire for power, food or wealth) you are in bondage to sin. (This sin usually dominates your life).²

2 Ed Welch, Addiction – A Banquet in the Grave, 2001.

As you consider this definition, stretch your thinking beyond that of the traditional drugs and alcohol. Can you think of any area of your life that you have tried to change repeatedly but continue to practice? For example, overeating, overspending, anger/bitterness, verbal explosions, etc. _____

(As I write this question for you to answer, my own response leaps to the front of my mind. Overeating! I love to eat! I have “tried” but I continue to eat more than my body needs to live.)

Think about your answer for a moment. How does your response differ from what your husband would answer? How is it the same? How often have you tried to stop doing it? How are you doing in that area right now? _____

In our ministry, we counsel many women who can't go an hour without a cigarette, or they are so twisted up inside by anger, bitterness and resentment that their husbands haven't heard them speak a kind word in ages. And yet their ability to understand the compelling nature of their husband's addiction escapes them.

I am well acquainted with this because it was me. I was not kind or compassionate towards my husband. I was miserable. Every time he lied or did any number of things **I felt** all my hopes and dreams for a happy life being squashed. So, if I was mean, I deceived myself by blaming him and justifying it all the time by saying something like this, “I would never have done it or said it if he hadn't done _____.” Does that sound familiar?

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Vs.6-7 ...knowing this, that our old

man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin, might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For He who has died has been freed from sin...vs. 11-13 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it and its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. --Romans 6:1-2, 6-7, 11-13

Are you knowingly sinning (is there any behavior or attitude) in any area of your life and justifying it for any reason? Be specific. _____

And He (Jesus is talking here) said, "What comes out of a man; that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, and evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within and defile a man." --Mark 7:20-23 (parenthesis added)

This time, pause and ask God to show you any behaviors, attitudes, deeds, etc., that you believe are there, due to other people. _____

What does the Lord require of you to change this? Write out 1 John 1:8-10

More times than I can remember I have sat listening to hurting women as they pour their hearts out, sharing the sometimes cruel ways that their husband's addiction(s) have impacted their lives and the lives of their children, and my heart is moved with compassion. I want to gather each one in my arms and offer the blessing of hope found in Christ alone. Sometimes all I can do is pray and give a hug, hoping they will simply feel that someone is here for them, to listen and hear the cry of their heart.

Unfortunately, there are almost as many occasions where I must advise, or earnestly caution a wounded soul to cease from its own sinning. The way that addiction has so grossly impacted your life (our lives) can cripple our ability to view ourselves accurately and thus we're convinced that the "little things" we do are nothing compared to what our husbands have done.

Simply put, if we allow sin to dwell in our bodies, be it addiction or a harsh and hateful tongue, we deceive ourselves. It will never be okay to sin against other people just because they sin against us. But unless we wrestle with the huge emotions that stir us, unless we take our souls in hand and make them obedient to the Word of God we will not do better. Just as our husbands, will and must, deal with sin (lest they continue to be a slave to it) so must we!

Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin." ~ John 8:34

Dear sister, if you (we) love the Lord, we don't (nor will we ever) have the option to justify or qualify or own wrong-doing. Why?

Matthew 22:37-40 makes it plain;

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Write out the following Scripture verses:

John 14:15 _____

1 Thessalonians 4:7 _____

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ~2 Timothy 2:22

Stop and think for a moment. What exactly do *righteousness, faith, love and peace* look like? As the wife of a former addict I must say that I often thought, felt and believed that

I was a righteous woman. After all I didn't do any of the things my husband did. I was the one who was there for our children. I was the one who kept things going when he was messing up. Oh how I loved this man! I was faithful and true to him always, never once considering another man. **I was right** before God and **he was so very wrong**. This was the prevailing attitude of my heart and from this very same heart I spoke to the Lord God **about** my husband. Lots of time would pass before I would learn to go to God in prayer **for** my husband.

In fact, if I were to judge myself according to the words of 2 Timothy 2:22 I'm quite sure I would fall way short because I did not call on the Lord from a pure heart as Timothy exhorts us to.

More often than not my life looked "righteous" *to me* because — compared to my husband — I was living a good Christian life. I think it's safe to say that God did not make the same comparison.

I've taken the time to define the words of 2 Timothy 2:22 for further reflection and to assist you in looking at yourself through the eyes of Scripture, as opposed to the side-by-side comparison we may be prone to make **with** our husbands.

Righteous – morally upright; without guilt or sin

Faith – belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence

Love – read 1 Corinthians 13 (it's all in there)

Peace – freedom from quarrels and disagreements

Be honest with yourself. How do you compare to God's measuring stick? How do you compare in righteousness? _____

How do you compare in faith? _____

How do you compare in love? _____

How do you compare in peace? _____

Taking the time to consider Timothy's words will, at the very least, help us to put things into proper perspective; to see things from a clearly Biblical perspective. I hope that

your perspective is opening up to see a bigger picture, one that is not based on how we feel but rather on who God is and who we are because of Him.

We must never forget that we don't serve a God who is unacquainted with what we are going through. To respond Biblically is to **want to** be more and more like Christ and less and less like **I** want to be.

Read 1 Peter 4:1-11 and you will see that:

1. Christ suffered and died to destroy sin
2. You are not alone in your suffering
3. Christ never gave in to the least little sin
4. As tempted as you may be to strike back, you can resist the temptation to be ruled by your own passions

Only you and God know the ways that you have which are corrupt. As true Christians we can remember our conversion experience, repent of any and all wrong-doing and move toward a change of heart that alters the way we think, the way we judge and the way we feel and act.

As you grow it will become harder and harder for you to do the things you did in the past. You will be pleasantly surprised when you don't allow your buttons to be pushed and give in to your normal reactions. Instead you will allow Christ in you to govern your responses to your husband.

For example, at times, I would allow my anger to get so big that I'd withhold my affection and/or my acts of service to my husband. Perhaps I wouldn't greet him in love and/or I wouldn't prepare dinner for him with the same care and love. In my spirit there would be much grumbling and complaining. Nothing I'd do for him would be seasoned with grace...and it most definitely should have been.

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ~1 Peter 4:7-11

If you need to, take the time now to pause and pray this simple prayer as David did in Psalm 139:23-24:

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

On a regular basis I encourage you to hold the lens of Scripture up close to your own heart and see if there *is any wicked way in you*.

As you consider the following Scriptures please answer these questions. How does the Scripture speak to you as you relate it to your present life? How are you challenged or called to interact with your spouse?

Psalm 32:1-5

Proverbs 16:16-19

John 3:19-21

Romans 12:9

1 Corinthians 15:33

Ephesians 4:1-3

Ephesians 5:11

Hebrews 12:14

James 1:22-25

James 5:16

1 Peter 2:1-3

I know that you have just been on a journey through Scripture and you may be thinking and wondering how this all fits in with how you are responding Biblically. For us to understand the “how” of our own responses to a person with life-dominating sin, it is critical that we examine our own life before the Lord. In order to do that we must know and understand God’s Word as it pertains to our own hearts and minds.

I can talk to you all day and night and give you opinion after opinion based on my own personal experiences.

How do I begin to speak a truth that is peppered with grace and mercy, into someone else’s life that I, myself, do not live out? Oh, I can attempt it, but my actions will override my words.

Let me ask you a question. Are you blameless? Are there any areas of your life that your husband or children could point to; areas that you know are not quite up to snuff? What would they say of you? _____

In my counseling ministry here at America’s Keswick it becomes necessary, on occasion, to strongly encourage a wife not to drink. You see, **for her** drinking is not a sin. It simply doesn’t grip her by the throat as it does her loved one, and so she has the freedom, the liberty to drink without sinning. What she is challenged to consider is the fact that for him it is sin, and that by drinking herself she is setting a stumbling block before him, who in actuality can be considered “the weaker brother.” In essence she is sinning against her brother.

We must **never forget** that sin is sin is sin. And no matter who is doing the sinning it is not okay with God. **Erase** any dividing lines you have drawn to separate your actions or sin from that of your husband’s. And **choose** today to be on God’s side, to see things as He sees them, **seeking** to do all that is up to you to do to live at peace with your husband, etc.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. ~Matthew 5:1

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being. ~ 1 Corinthians 10:23-24

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way. ~Romans 14:1

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ~1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.
~~2 Corinthians 5:9

In what ways do you intentionally or unintentionally place a stumbling block before your husband? _____

...casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. ~~2 Corinthians 10:5

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ~~Galatians 2:20

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ~~Galatians 5:22-24

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the speck from your eye; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. ~~Matthew 7:1-5

Assimilation and Application

By now you may be wondering how to assimilate this information or absorb it and put it to proactive use in your life. Before you give in to the temptation to be overwhelmed, let me encourage you by saying that, the sole purpose for the above section is to give you a solid, foundational understanding of facts and Scripture. As you interact with yourself or your husband over a particular area of sin, you will see how some of the above plays itself out in your life and you will be less ignorant of truth to apply to the situation. Hosea 4:6a says, *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* Grab hold to the truth of God's Word and hold fast to it. Your very life depends on it!

Part Two: So what can we do?

What does a Biblical response really look like? Am I going to be a wife or fiancée who will grab hold of this truth and do the hard work of applying it to my life? How? _____

*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition (**loss of the soul; eternal damnation**), but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me. ~~Philippians 1:27-30 (parenthesis added)*

Now that we have a much clearer understanding of what life-dominating sin is, let's move on to our response and the reality of what it looks like when, and if, we respond Biblically. Most of us could sit for hours and give good advice to our closest friends on the "right way" to be a good wife. The truth is it isn't that hard, as long as **everything is going our way**, according to the plan that we have consciously or unconsciously written on our hearts since we were little girls. But here we are, having made choices, some good, some bad and we've discovered that life won't be tied up in a neat little package with a pretty little bow, to be wrapped and unwrapped at our command. Life happens, and, it does so **without** our permission or control.

Thus it is the safest and truest thing to keep the main thing – the main thing.

1. Focus on God First

Is it possible that as wives, as women, we can get to the place of living as if we truly believe God is watching? We are great at looking for a change of heart – and hopefully mind – **in our husbands**. We look for all those subtle little changes that are going to make our lives, our world function better. We know exactly how we want **them** to be. (**If we could just get them to see it**).

God has often said to me, "You know, Stephanie, I really don't want him to do it your way or see it your way. As good as it is, **My** ways are higher and precious one, **My** ways are best." God is looking for **our** hearts. He is wooing and pursuing us for the purpose of drawing us closely to Himself. His desire is that we be willing to lay aside our wants, lay them at His feet and say, with a surrendered heart, "Not my will LORD, but **Thine** be done." More often than not, these words are prayed through travailing tears. I don't know anyone who has ever said these words with a smile on her face. Travailing tears are usually born out of painful effort in agony and anguish. Jesus, Himself, shed tears from the agony and anguish He bore in His soul in the Garden of Gethsemane as He bowed before His Father, knowing what lay ahead for Him at Golgotha.

I can do more than imagine how your heart has been bruised by the bitter fruit of addiction, I can relate. As the wife of a former addict, now set free from the bondage of

addiction, my heart and eyes have wept many tears. I wish I could say that I cried as many tears for my husband as I did for myself, but I can't. I spent more time crying because I was hurt and wounded than I did out of concern for him. I share this to encourage you not to do the same. Sure, cry for yourself. Tell God all about your anger, bitterness and resentment. Allow Him to hear your heart in all its misery. Only don't get stuck there! Stay on your knees before Him in confession and repentance. Receive cleansing and healing from Him; new strength to start fresh believing He is able to do in you and through you a new and better thing.

Refuse to be a casualty of war! Refuse to give up and *in* to the lie that you are without hope or help. **God sees you! God hears you! God knows you!** Wow! The Sovereign God is aware of you! Don't hide any part of yourself from Him for fear of how you will sound or look to Him. If there is anyone you can be real with it is **Him**.

*O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it. **Where can I go from Your Spirit or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You. For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. **I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You. **Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.** ~~Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24*****

2. Focus on Yourself Second (You are not all that!)

By focusing on God first and yourself second it should be virtually impossible to stand in the place of self-righteous condemnation *if* your husband relapses into his former sin pattern. Without excusing him, you will be better equipped to intercede on his behalf in prayer and initiate the necessary choices to make it difficult for this sin to continue and abound.

Remember you are a strong woman in the Lord and God has equipped you with everything you need to stay in the present and handle your situation. The specific

actions will vary from person to person because we are not all the same. What God led me to do may not be what He leads you to do. Praise God for the versatility of His Holy Spirit. Understand that when I say “you are a strong woman” one thing I am attempting to communicate is that it is okay that you are strong. *“God has no problem with you being a strong woman. He loves strong women.”*³

I have been strong and outspoken most of my life. More often than not, in times of conflict, I have exercised this strength in a rebellious way. I justified this expression of my strength because I was in pain and I wanted out of the pain or the conflict, and because it was what came naturally to me.

What might be an example from your own life of how you have used your strong temperament sinfully in relationship to your husband? _____

God is not caught by surprise when we don't respond Biblically and we shouldn't be either. The Lord wants us to see ourselves as we are and submit to Him with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength. He wants us to bring our strength to the table and lay it there for Him to mold and shape according to the wisdom principles of His Word, not our own wisdom.

He wants us to surrender our strength, our ways for His glory and not our own. Choose today, dear sister, to take back any ground which the enemy has stolen from you and say no to what you perceive to be your right to explode, scream, yell, shut down, withhold love, give dirty looks, talk down to, nag, whine, complain, use bad language, gossip, slander, etc., etc., just because you're angry. You know I could go on and on with that list. Most of us have been there and done that, and we know the real truth (not the truth we convince ourselves to believe). It's all a waste of time. ~~ Philippians 2:14-16

I remember well the day God began to show me myself. What a blow to my ego and pride, to be stunned to tears by the impact of God's Word on my heart and mind. For years I had justified my rebellious attitude toward my husband. In my heart I believed that I would be less contentious and rebellious *if* he would do and be the man he was called to be. As long as he was messing up it wasn't possible (or necessary) for me to surrender control of anything. I murmured, complained, argued, etc. I did it all sincerely hoping it would make a difference. It sounds crazy when I think about it. And yet, as long as our ways and our thoughts are not God's ways and thoughts, we don't do any better and we won't do or be any different.

3 P.B. Wilson, *Liberated Through Submission*, 1997

Can you see yourself here? Can you look back in your past, (or maybe it's your present) and see yourself willing to sin to get your way and being okay with it? After all if he wasn't doing a, you wouldn't have to do b. _____

As I said, I remember the day it hit me. I was in my car listening to the radio and Bunny Wilson was speaking about the "S" word. You know the one I mean...submission. She quoted 2 Samuel 15:23 which says, *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness as the sin of idolatry.* Like Bunny, I asked myself, how is rebellion like witchcraft? Bunny went on to explain:

"Well, witchcraft is designed to make a person do what you want them to do. The Lord says when you murmur and complain, when you pout, and you nag, and you give the silent treatment, He said it's just like practicing witchcraft, because what you're saying to your husband is, I will go back to being the wonderful person you always knew if you do things the way I want them done."⁴

When I heard this I was devastated. It didn't matter that my husband was in the middle of his addiction or not, I was to submit to God and deny myself the right to do a whole slew of things I had thus far allowed myself. The very thought that anything I could do would be equated by God to witchcraft and idolatry was offensive to my spirit.

Even though I could **self**-righteously justify everything I did, I knew and God knew that I had sinned against my husband. Bunny continued with this:

"He said that my rebellion (rebellion against Him and His way) is like practicing witchcraft, and stubbornness is like idolatry because idolatry is when we worship something above God. It could be your ministry, it could be your children, your money, your profession – it could be a lot of things that you worship above God that's idolatry; but He says when you are stubborn against My established order in your home, in your job, in your church, He said you are worshipping your thoughts, your feelings, and your opinions above what My Word teaches and as far as I'm concerned that is like practicing idolatry."⁵

Now, I don't know about you, but when God calls an angel over and says, "That's *Stephanie*, she's my _____ child." Rebellious, stubborn, contentious, argumentative, deceitful, manipulative, full of guile – I don't want those adjectives in front of my name. I want to be God's yielded, submitted servant. I want to be kind, compassionate, empathetic and sympathetic, and willing and obedient. I want those kinds of adjectives to be used by my name, and I said, "God, today I decide."⁶ (*italics mine*)

4 P.B. Wilson, *Liberated Through Submission*, 1997.

5 *ibid*

Like Bunny, I decided and it has been good, good, **good!** I did not say easy. Far from it! But God is faithful to do that which He has promised when we submit our will to His. You too must decide. Meditate on the following Scripture and then pause to seek God as to what He would have you repent of. Then repent meaning "... feel such regret for past conduct as to change one's mind regarding it) and then renounce it (...refuse to follow, obey, or recognize any further).

...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ~2 Chronicles 7:1

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **casting down arguments** and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ... ~2 Corinthians 10:4-5*

Write out your thoughts and your prayer here. _____

I'm hoping that since you have made it this far, you are beginning to get a hint of what is possible in your relationship with your husband, if God has first place in all that you think, say and do. Please don't confuse anything that I'm saying with hyper-spiritualism. You know the way some may have of walking around in abject denial while professing to "*just give it all to the Lord.*"

What I encourage you not to do is walk around **pretending** to believe any truth that is expressed here. Sisters, friends — believe God! Believe God is all that He says **He** is whether or not you can imagine, think or see it. For example, if God says He is your Deliverer, then you can trust Him to deliver you from whatever has you bound. Is it defeat, anger, frustration, unbelief? Or is it that you're afraid to trust God with all your hopes and dreams? What if He doesn't deliver? Will you be the conqueror in Christ Jesus that God says you are and overcome by force the group that unbelief has on your heart and mind? Will you praise God anyway? Will you look the enemy in the face and with all your armor on say to him that he cannot have any of the territory that is yours? Stand your ground and say to this lying, deceiving bully, "As long as I am on watch here **you shall not pass!**"

6 ibid

Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and list the armor. Leave nothing out! We need to know how to get dressed properly if we are to stand firm. We need to remember this armor which is the Gospel that saved us.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Why should you bother putting on the armor of God?

1. _____

2. _____

What is it that we battle against? _____

When and how are we to pray? _____

I have included for you The Message paraphrase for your personal edification. Read it again and allow the Holy Spirit to speak boldness into your heart and a fire in your bones for equipping you to stay the course and finish well.

A Fight to the Finish

And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels. Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own.

Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

Conclusion

It would be wonderful to not bear the burden of being on watch. I know I would gladly give over the weight of that particular duty. But...if it is to be, then so be it. I will stand watch over my family, my husband in prayer *and* fasting if necessary until I draw my last breath.

Ah, but there is victory to be had here on earth. Through many trials my husband has come to a place of believing that he is who God says he is. He believes that one day at a time he can and will walk in the victory that is his in Christ Jesus. Not just victory over the drinking or the drugs but victory over the lies and the father of all lies.

Dear sisters, as I must bring this chapter to a close I leave you with the following list of thoughts for you to pause, ponder and consider:

- **Resist the temptation to go it alone and thus forsake the ministry of the body of Christ**
 - Be sure to stay in fellowship with your church and allow someone to get close enough to you to speak the truth to you and hold you accountable
- **Your life must not revolve around the addiction**
 - Maintain as much order in your life and the life of your kids as possible.
- **Remember that you, too, are a person in need of change**
 - Refuse to allow self-righteous pride to get the best of you. It's so easy for us to do, especially when we are comparing our life and our deeds against those of the life-dominated sinner with whom we live.
- **Keep growing**
 - During difficult times it is too easy to get so caught up in the trial and stress of the situation that we begin to allow our time alone with God, our attendance at Sunday worship, our participation in Bible study, etc., to slowly diminish to nothing and, voila, we cease to grow and may even find ourselves slipping into our old sinful habits.
- **Stay in the present**
 - Purpose to keep your thoughts from running ahead of you. Much of our reaction and stress is related to the fear of "what will tomorrow bring?" Live each moment in the present and receive God's grace for the moment.

You can't borrow grace for tomorrow when it isn't your reality yet. Think today thoughts and make decisions only as they arise for that day.

➤ **Do not keep score**

- In other words, keep no record of wrongs. The ground is level at the foot of the cross and we must resist the easy temptation to keep that record of wrongs.

➤ **Throw away your eraser**

- Let's say your husband has walked free from substance abuse for six months and for whatever reason (which you may never understand) he relapses for a day or two. You're crushed. How could he do it? How could he relapse when he was doing so well? So much pain rushes to the surface looking for escape. You lament, cry and moan over the injustice of it all. It feels like you're all the way back at square one and he needs to start all over again proving himself worthy of your trust and respect. In other words you erase the six good months and treat him as if they never happened. God's Word calls us to choose grace and mercy. Put the shoe on the other foot. Wear it for a while and see how it feels. Do you want to be a stumbling block or the voice of encouragement and hope?

➤ **You can always choose to change your mind and respond to what God is asking you to do (even when you don't feel like it)**

➤ **Avoid playing Sherlock Holmes**

- I don't know about you, but the more I did this the more I needed to do this. I had to know what was going on. Thinking about it all the time consumed more energy than I had to spare and it wreaked havoc on my body. You have as much choice as you give yourself. You don't have to be the one to regulate and control his coming and going and all he does in between. When you find yourself in the middle of some such activity, stop and listen to yourself. What is going on in your head? Where is God?

➤ **Don't expect perfection just because he has been through the Colony program. (Everyone makes mistakes, *even you*). There is no Keswick pixie dust.**

➤ **Remember that forgiveness is always a choice and never a feeling**

- *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you. ~Ephesians 4:32*

➤ **Develop patience**

- "To receive the harvest and the crown of life that you deserve, you must persevere. The testing of faith produces patience (the ability to endure). Only under trial can the believer test the true depth of his faith in God. The

established heart will not waiver, but will rejoice in the knowledge of the goodness of God.”⁷

➤ **Sing and give glory to God. Cry out to Him**

- *But I will sing of Your power; Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning. For You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises, for God is my defense, my God of mercy.”* ~~Psalm 59:16-17
- *Because Your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.* ~~ Psalm 63:3
- *Rejoice the soul of Your servant. For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all who call upon You. Give ear O LORD to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications.* ~~ Psalm 86:4-6

➤ **Be hungry for the God of the Bible**

- At one time you ate, drank, slept, lived and breathed the life of the sin-dominated addict in your life. Take a step back. Pick up the living Word that is inhabited by the breath of God and eat it, drink it, sleep it and breathe it as if your life depends on it. It does!!

➤ **Be who you are**

- Avoid the temptation to walk on egg shells, living in fear that anything and everything you do is going to *cause* your husband to stumble and fall back into his addiction. He will do what he will do.
- You simply do what is up to you to do and leave the rest to the Lord. It is not your responsibility to change him or keep him clean, drug or alcohol free.

I was asked to write this chapter because I have been where you are. By God’s grace, my life and marriage have been marvelously transformed in the crucible of addiction, pain, and suffering.

Sisters, choose to believe. Choose grace. Choose to hope. THERE IS HOPE.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ~~Romans 15:13

Remember in the midst of it all you are protected by the Father, through Jesus the Son, and empowered by the Holy Spirit!!

7 Truth-in-Action from James in the Spirit-filled Bible

Application Questions

1. What one or two statements impacted me from this chapter?

a. _____

b. _____

2. How can I apply it to my life today and begin to pursue positive growth?

3. What one step am I willing to take to move toward heart change, in my reactions, behavior or attitude?

4. What do I learn about God from this chapter?

5. How does His Word (the Bible) confirm this?

