

## **Turning the Heart of Your “King”** *when a husband is unrepentant over moral failure*

Through our counseling ministry, I have spoken with countless women about their family’s journey to moral freedom. They are all at different points in the process, and some of them are frustrated because there is a problem in their marriage and **their husband is failing morally, but he is not moved to brokenness and repentance** over his sin. He is not willing to change, and his wife wonders what she can do.

I often direct these women to read the Book of Esther and to see her life as an example to follow in this situation. Queen Esther was married to a very ungodly man. He was willing to allow her whole family to be destroyed. This situation is really what most of the women who ask this question are facing. They’re married to men who are living ungodly lives and who are willing to allow their family to be destroyed while they sit back and do nothing.

What could Esther do in this situation? Was she hopeless? Did she just sit back and hope that somehow God would change her husband’s heart? No, she devised a Godly plan of action. **This solution didn’t come from worry and fret**; it came from days of fasting and seeking God’s help. Esther sought God with all her heart and with an attitude of total surrender to God’s will, whatever the outcome.

Now, do I think that Esther didn’t worry at all? I’m sure that as a human being and as a woman who cared for her family, she did struggle with these feelings and concerns—but they didn’t prevail in her heart. **Faith prevailed—a faith strong enough to carry out the plan that God gave her.**

There are a number of things that Esther and her cousin Mordecai did in response to the situation that God used to bring freedom to their people. These are concepts that a wife should consider when responding to a husband who does ungodly things and when facing the needs of a family about to be destroyed.

### **Fast and Seek the Lord**

When faced with the plans for the destruction of her people, Esther began a fast herself and called for a fast among her people. This was no wimpy fast—it was a fast of three days. *“Fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king”* (Esther 4:16).

**Esther did not ask the people to fast for her ungodly husband**, and she did not fast for him. She called for a fast for herself. She needed a plan! She needed to hear God’s voice about what she needed to do.

Many times I meet women who say they are fasting for God to change their husbands, and I tell them that this focus is wrong. They need to be fasting for God to change them. We need to give up on trying to change anyone except ourselves. A key to your husband finding

brokenness is you finding it in your own life. Taking your eyes off how you have been wronged and realizing your own sin will cast you on Jesus, your only hope.

The story of my husband **Paul coming clean really starts with me fasting**. I had fasted for Paul in the past, but now the focus was on my own life. After 13 years of frustration in my marriage, I began to become desperate. Paul and I had just gone through the John Regier counseling material, and Paul once again seemed to not have any problems, so I assumed I was the whole problem. All the marriage counselors and pastors had been telling me that for years anyway, so I began to fast and asked God to free me from whatever had me bound.

I realized that I could not change Paul, but I could ask God to change me. **Bitterness was the first issue that really came to the surface**. As I fasted, I realized the stronghold was much stronger than I had ever imagined. I was completely unable to help Paul remove sin from his life, because I had so much in my own.

God spoke to me through Matthew 7:3–5: *“Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”* As I began to pray about the bitterness in my own life, my focus came off of Paul and onto myself and my sin. Fasting was the first step towards freedom for Paul and me. As I became free from bitterness, God was free to use me as a light in Paul’s life to draw him to the truth. I had to get about of the way!

A lot of women tell me they’ve tried to fast but can’t do it. When you get desperate, **you can do a lot of things you think you can’t do, and fasting is one of them**. Fasting is never easy because it’s brings death to the flesh, and the flesh never wants to die. *“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”* (Galatians 5:17).

**Fasting puts down the flesh and strengthens the spirit** so that you can hear what God wants to speak to you. It is saying to your body and your mind, “I don’t want you to be in control, I want my spirit to be in control.” God instructs us to *“walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”* (Galatians 5:16). According to Isaiah 58, **fasting also frees us from bondage**. *“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”* (Isaiah 58:6).

A friend once told me, “There’s no way I can fast! I get so sick, I feel like I’m going to die. I can’t even go without one meal, so there’s no way I can fast three days.” We talked about the purposes for fasting, and I encouraged her to try just one meal a day for a few days. After skipping a few meals and surviving, my friend has now been fasting two days a week for over six months. She has seen God move in incredible ways in her life and in her husband and her children!

Your fast may be different from my friend’s or from mine. If you’re willing to follow God’s instruction, He will show you what type of fast you are to take and how long to keep it.

## Spend Time in Prayer

We can picture the earnest prayers of Esther, her servants, Mordecai, and all the Jewish people who took part in the fast. So much depended on the outcome of Esther's presentation to the king, and **she needed divine strength** to act against the laws of the land and go to the king without a formal summons to his presence.

Praying seems simple enough. We all know we need to pray, but I want to remind you that prayer is not just talking to God—**prayer is also letting God talk to you**. Supplication to the Lord is a part of prayer, but you also need to allow God to speak to you and reveal His requests *for you*. We are to pray without ceasing as we go throughout the day attending to children and caring for everyday needs, but you still need a time to pray when you **set aside all your duties and just seek the heart of God**.

Have your Bible with you during these times of prayer so that if a verse comes to your mind, you can look it up and allow God to speak to you through it. Often I have found that as I sit quietly before the Lord in the spirit of prayer, thoughts come to me that I have never thought before. Many times these thoughts provide the answer to a question I have been asking.

In my life, these prayer times usually occur between 2:00 and 4:00 in the morning. For many years, I woke up in the middle of the night and became frustrated because I could not go back to sleep. Finally I made a commitment that when this happened, I would get up and go to my closet (literally my closet) and spend time in prayer seeking God's heart. Over the years **these times have become very precious**. God has given me insight and wisdom that I would not have had if I had not chosen to get up when He called me to spend time seeking Him.

Let me assure you, this is not my natural bent! I love to sleep, and I usually go back to bed after I have had this time with the Lord. I am no saint who prays for hours every night! I might need to, but the truth is that I struggle like most of you with living in my flesh instead of my spirit. However, I have sought to surrender this area of my life to the Lord. As a matter of fact, I am writing this at 4:00 a.m. because I awoke and could not sleep! My first response was to head for the bottle of Tylenol® PM, but I knew God was telling me to come seek Him on how to answer this question which I hear almost every day from women who are in despair.

## Cry Out to the Lord for Help

When Mordecai heard of the decree against the Jewish people, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and cried out with a loud voice. *“When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry”* (Esther 4:1).

When your heart is desperate, it's hard to simply pray a quick, soft prayer—you are more likely to cry out with emotion and passion! God promises to hear these cries for help, to work, and to receive glory for rescuing us in the midst of despair. *“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”* (Psalm 50:15).

*The Power of Crying Out* by Bill Gothard has been a powerful influence in my life as I have learned the difference between prayer (requests and supplication) and a cry to the Lord. It's not the tone of the voice that makes the difference, it is the desperation of the heart. The example of a man who has fallen into a deep pit helped me understand this concept. This man doesn't speak in a low voice and calmly ask for help. He desperately screams for help. **There are times of desperate need in our lives when we call out to God** in the same way.

The first time I remember crying out was two months before Paul came clean. I was so desperate for God to move! I did not know what was wrong in my marriage. I did not know why Paul responded to me the way that he did, why he would not listen to my cautions, and why there was so much stress between us. All I knew there was that **I was desperate for something to change.**

While Paul was at work one night, I went outside into the darkness and walked to the edge of the woods behind our house. I began to call out at the top of my voice, "Abba Father, deliver Paul from his enemies! Set him free from what ever binds him!" Then I began to worship God by shouting to the heavens that He was my hope, my only hope in my day of trouble. It turned into a wonderful worship service between me and my God in my backyard and in the darkness of the night.

It was just a few weeks after this that Paul took that brave step of coming to the light. Once Paul did come clean, crying out became a daily activity in my life. When Paul and I were going through our darkest days, I would get in my car to run an errand, and I would cry out, "O God, please set us free!" We also cried out on many occasions with all of our children. Crying out to the Lord has become something that we do as a family whenever we are desperate for the Him to work.

## **Surrender to the Lord**

Esther was surrendered to God's will and purposes, and she knew that she might have to give up her life to see them fulfilled. She was willing to give her all to obey the Lord and to walk in His ways. I believe this was the most important step Esther took. She said and meant, "*If I perish, I perish*" (Esther 4:16).

We as women have to come to this point of surrender. **We have to be willing to "die" and give up our lives to the Lord**, as Esther was willing to die for her family. Every woman's point of "death" will be different.

For me death came in the area of sexual intimacy. Pornography affected my husband in a different way than it may have affected yours. Paul's sin made him apathetic and unresponsive. He was constantly dealing with the guilt from his secret sin, and masturbation had made it hard for him to be able to please me in intimacy. For him it was easier to just not go there.

I became very bitter over the years, because I was the one who had to initiate any time we were together physically. Many occasions I experienced the stinging pain of rejection when Paul avoided my advances. This was the most painful part of our marriage. I talk to women every day

who are experiencing the same thing. Because of pornography and lust, their husbands have shut down and are no longer sexually active within their marriage. I understand this pain of rejection and how deeply it can hurt.

This was my place of death. I had to come to the place where I said to the Lord and to Paul that if we were never intimate again, I would still continue to love and serve him. **My choice to die in that area has brought about the greatest blessings in my life.** God called me to die so that in His time He could bring resurrection power to that which was dead. God has restored that part of our marriage, and now we act like honeymooners all the time! It is wonderful!

Ask God, and He will show you where you need to die. **Your area of surrender may be different from mine.** One woman felt that she was to keep her mouth shut—that was her death. Another was to be sexually intimate with her husband when she hated it, another felt she was to stop interfering with her husband’s discipline of their children, and some women have to die by learning how to confront their husbands about their sin.

I spoke with a woman today who for 23 years has sat back and been quiet and never spoken up to her husband. This woman doesn’t like confrontation and will run from it and avoided it at all costs. As I talked to her, I explained that death for her is probably going to be facing her husband and confronting him over his sin.

As brothers and sisters in Christ we are called to reprove, rebuke, and expose sin in each other’s lives. (See II Timothy 4:2 and Hebrews 3:13.) Holding each other accountable is to be done without hypocrisy and in a spirit of genuine love, and this must come after prayer, fasting, and crying out to the Lord. It must come out of a spirit of love and concern for your family and not out of bitterness for how you have been mistreated.

Don’t say, “Well I can’t do it until I get my attitude right, so I guess I may never do it.” My dear friend, this doesn’t need to take days! Repent of your bitterness, ask God for grace to carry out the plan He is giving you, and move on. **Don’t let the enemy of procrastination keep you from doing what you need to do.** This really isn’t about you; it’s about your children. Keep reminding yourself of that.

### **Serve and Appeal to Your Husband**

Esther diligently sought the Lord, and **He enabled her to effectively present her appeal.** You must ask God for a plan on how you can serve your “king” in order to gain his heart and present your appeal.

*“If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him”* (Esther 5:4). It was from the place of service that Esther was able to make her appeal. **As she served the king, she gained his attention.** He was now ready to listen to her heart.

This area is a challenge for me. I tend to serve my children before my husband. To be honest, most of the time I am so busy that my home becomes like a self-service gas station for everyone, which isn't good. Once again, ask the Lord what you can do to serve your husband as Esther did.

### ***Appeal to Your Husband***

Ladies: fast, pray, cry out to the Lord, surrender to Him, and serve your husband. Once you have done these things, **God will give you a plan of appeal just like He gave to Esther.** He granted her wisdom to know how to serve the king in order to capture his attention. She needed him to be willing to hear her appeal, to listen to her heart, and to respond in order to save her family from destruction.

What is your appeal? "Honey, we need help. Can we please seek help? I see these problems, and they are destroying our children and our marriage."

Ask questions of your husband and his struggles, and make sure you are not hiding anything yourself. You need to tell your husband if you are seeking counsel and help, because it is wrong for you to hide anything. He needs to know that you are seeking help for your problems.

### ***Do Not Grow Weary***

The other day I spoke with a woman and told her these things, and she responded by saying, "I've tried all this and nothing works." I know this woman well, and I am assured that she has tried it all, but never for more than a few days. After giving it a small chance, she's back to her old ways of speaking to her husband with bitterness and dishonor in her voice.

Sometimes it takes time. **Be willing to go through day after day and to trust God with the outcome.** Ladies, *God* has to change us, just as *He* must change our husbands. We have to cry out for that change, we have to beg God to help us become women of God like Esther. He is willing to change us and to equip us in the path that we are traveling. Will we accept His truth and His grace at work in us to transform our hearts?

*"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"*  
(Philippians 1:6).