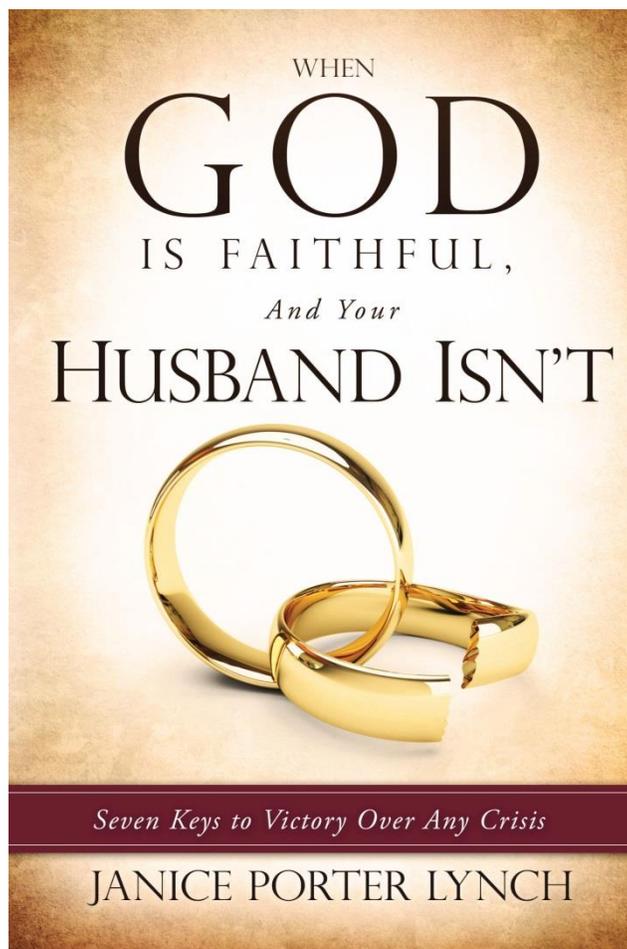


When God is Faithful, And Your Husband Isn't

By Janice Porter Lynch



Chapter 1

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“Janice Lynch maintained strong trust in God
in the face of loss and betrayal in her marriage.
I pray her story will encourage many others.”

Joshua Harris
Lead Pastor Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, MD

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"Janice's story  
is a testimony to the faithfulness of God  
in an otherwise impossibly painful situation.  
Page after page, the message is so clear and real:  
We can trust the Lord through everything  
and come out victorious.  
Even though it was so different  
from my own terribly difficult situation—  
the same principles apply  
and are a huge help to me.  
Thank you, Janice!"

*Sheila Brown*  
*President, Maryland Chapter Women's Aglow*

~~~

"We need to have more books on the shelf
that tell the intimate story of how God works
through hardship in real people's lives –
this is one such book!"

Sandy Dufryn
Author, He Gives and He Takes Away

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*Disclaimer:
Most names and some
irrelevant details
have been changed.*

Table of Contents

Prologue: The Day the World Became a Different Place

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

1. My Prince Charming
2. First Glimpses of California
3. The Fingerprints of God
4. The List
5. New Arrival, New Hope
6. Tremors of an Earthquake
7. But God Sees
8. Stranger in my Bed
9. What Happened Next
10. Hard Steps
11. Kirk's Decision
12. As a Shepherd, He Leads
13. Preparation for the Worst, Hoping for the Best
14. The Escape
15. In My Parent's Home
16. Divine Direction
17. The Retreat
18. Road Trip
19. The Return
20. Adjustment
21. How Odd it Feels
22. Walking it Out
23. Fear in the Night
24. Another Attack
25. Prejudice
26. God Leads Again
27. Kirk's Agitation
28. God Convicts Me
29. More Steps in the Journey
30. A Sacrifice of Praise
31. A Plan and A Future
32. The Court Trial
33. The Choice to Praise
34. The Next Step Begins
35. Still Praying for Kirk
36. A Question That Would Pop Up
37. The Agreement
38. More Angels Sent By Him
39. A Chapter Closing

Seven Keys to Victory Over Any Crisis

Dedication:

To God Who Is My Help

*And to all those whom God used
as His personal hands to serve me,
His arms to hold me,
His feet to go for me,
and His mouth to encourage and to pray.*

I am so grateful.

Thank you.

My Prayer for You... Love, Janice

Dear God,

*Bless each person who reads this story.
And please bring the ones who need
to hear it's message.*

*I ask that You would open up
each one's understanding
and draw their heart to You.*

Build their faith.

*Let this book
make a significant difference
in their life,*

*and let each person discover
a depth in their relationship with You
that they never knew was possible.*

Bless them in every way, Lord.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

The Day the World Became a Different Place

I froze. My newborn baby son, who had filled his tummy with breast milk, also lay halted, unmoving. Fast asleep once more, with breath as soft and quiet as warm mist, he lay face turned towards mine on my chest.

His little arms covered in blue terrycloth rested like cooked spaghetti on his petite belly. The slight smell of dried, soured milk on his sleeper wafted upwards, but no one noticed.

Darkness still held the approaching day captive and barred the windows to the small office. I sat cross-legged at my husband's desk in a rolling swivel chair, the cluttered room illuminated only in part by the short desk lamp. Shadows stalked the corners and drew on the walls in the predawn hour.

Holding the baby in the crutch of my left arm, and my husband's pager which I'd been tinkering with in my right hand, I stared at it, unblinking, not daring to move, hardly daring to breathe.

But somehow I did take another breath. Slowly, I allowed the air to enter and to exit through my opened mouth as the words on the pager's screen scrolled over and over again, and marched defiantly before my bright hazel eyes in their single-lined demonstration.

Did I dare to comprehend the meaning of the words jeering and mocking me from the device no bigger than the palm of my hand?

I drank in this one last moment as my two small daughters and my husband slept in bedrooms across the hall. I drank in the last inch of a journey where nothing significantly bad or tragic had ever happened to me before. I drank it in because I knew that when I took my next step, it meant crossing over a bridge and into a world that I would never, ever have expected to enter.

So I continued to sit, still, stunned, and stationary.

It was then that the ticking clock on the wall beckoned to me, demanding my attention: 5:30 AM. It was time; it was time for me to move. I stood up.

Now, I knew. Now I knew for certain.

It was predawn, early Saturday morning, in Hillside, California, July 10, 1999.

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*Be joyful always;  
pray continually;  
give thanks in all circumstances,  
for this is God's will for you  
in Christ Jesus.*

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

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My Prince Charming

My earliest teenage recollection is dreaming of myself growing up and married to my wonderful Prince Charming – dreaming that I lived happily ever after, in fact, with three small children and a brick house in the suburbs with large climbing trees in the front and back yards.

It was during my preteen growth spurt at my home on the East Coast with my mother, father, and my little brother, Michael, two years younger.

My girlfriends recall this vividly as we had many conversations locked behind closed doors inside my enormous, pink bedroom on the upper floor of our home in the late afternoons following long, tiring days at school.

Giggly young girls, our ideas of true love splashed over, spilling into piles of laughter, and sometimes even turning into more contemplative discussion and sharing in those early formative years.

At one time I'd come upon a book in the local library, quite by accident, on one of those weekly excursions carried out to expand my brother's and my own horizons of the world.

I read the words of romantic love with great interest and intrigue, except in my imagination it was my own destiny that I observed – almost certainly with no thought of practical constraints.

I experienced the future with my husband inside my head long before its arrival:

My family, friends, and relatives stood on the sidelines in awe and respect – the next generation had succeeded.

A magnificent union between my husband and myself with our children, well-behaved, obedient, and adorable - bore witness to the badge of success we would wear.

The expressions the onlookers wore on their faces said it all: never had any family been more blessed on the crust of this planet.

"Such wisdom and success at their youthful ages!" one in the group spoke loud enough for all to hear, marvel, and admire.

Little did I know that when I did at last meet my Prince Charming, a hidden time bomb in his soul, not yet detected nor diffused, ticked away, moment-by-moment, unchecked, toward the destruction that would one day unleash itself within the sacred womb of our marriage.

When that time came, perhaps because my confidence in the solemn vows of marriage had been so deep, perhaps because of my innocence or naiveté, perhaps because I'd lived the good life up until then and thought the best of those I knew, the force of the nauseating reality bewildered and surprised me like none other. It was an unforeseen possibility for my life, nor could it have been in the thoughts of any of those who knew us.

The sting was astonishing, like surgery without the help of anesthesia, like bleeding with no end. It was the most terrible pain I had ever known in my entire cheerful life. But it was only my own pain for a short time.

When the news of what had taken place spread to others, my heart was not the only one to be broken. Even worse, the multiple ramifications for my beloved children became increasingly apparent in my mind.

I cannot remember exactly what the weather was like outside that day, or what events topped the local news, but I do remember being astounded that I could still live and breathe and move when my beloved husband had simply, suddenly, and stoically walked out that door and closed it, leaving me all at once by myself in the home that we had made together; alone with the responsibility of caring for two preschoolers and our infant son, and wondering *what in the world happened?*

~~~

We'd been married nine years and Kirk had moved us from one city to the next whenever a better job opportunity came along. 707 Strawberry Lane, three thousand miles across the country in Northern California, was address number seven in less than a decade, and the furthest we'd been from family and friends.

As usual, a stream of overtime at Kirk's work descended on our lives. I don't know when it was that I had grown used to Kirk's sporadic hours that had begun early on in his career of servicing hospital equipment.

The only thought I remember with precision was the one that I repeated aloud to myself on trying occasions: "Kirk provides well for our family; he works very hard. I will support him by having fresh meals ready for him, cleaned and ironed clothes, listening to him, conversing with him, and, most of all, *by not complaining.*"

Kirk himself was always ready to fix what was broken, find what was lost, or listen to the antics of his children. Kirk had an engaging way with people, and this quality had attracted me from the beginning.

But the most important characteristic of Kirk was this: Kirk was a Christian. We'd met in the summer after our college graduations while being trained in a school to serve as youth ministers in the church.

Whenever a twinge of longing or doubt struggled to arise about his long hours away, I comforted myself with this: Kirk worshipped the Lord with his guitar when he put the kids to bed, Kirk had a Bible, Kirk tithed, and Kirk brought us to church on Sundays.

Sometimes, when Kirk was alone at the computer monitor, his eyes glazed and his lips curled upward slightly with an unusual kind of grin. He answered interruptions with an abrupt curtness and lacked the patience he normally demonstrated.

*Flash!* It was like being in a dark room when the bright light of a camera goes off and your eyes just barely adjust to make out a few images that disappear just as suddenly. Like this, Kirk appeared to return quickly to normal. It was easy to explain away any inconsistencies; it was easy to believe his excuses when I did question him.

I remember the brief prickles of foreboding that something was not altogether quite right, the split-second of uncertainty, and, mostly, I remember the happy life that I led.

While there was sometimes, briefly, a hint of something that did not make sense, more often than not I remained occupied in the delightful tasks of living that took up my time: serving my husband, exploring the wonders of the California coast as a family, weekly ballroom dancing classes and date nights with Kirk, putting my children to bed, changing diapers, decorating my home, hosting our women's church Bible Study, playgroups, and beginning the homeschool education that we'd prayed about and that I'd especially felt convicted in my heart to pursue.

In many ways, God protected me until exactly the right moment for me to know about the double-life that my husband was leading behind my unsuspecting, unsuspecting eyes.

How can someone who has made such a godly commitment leave his wife and children?

I don't know. Until that time, it was a scenario that I had never considered possible.

~~~

From the beginning, excitement filled my heart every time I viewed or even thought about Kirk Tufton Lynch.

Built slightly taller than myself, the same fair skin of the Irish with a top of dark brown hair like my own, *I saw my own self in his reflection.* Not only in physique, but he matched my 'jar is half full' perspective, enjoyment of others, and enthusiasm. Again, he was *like me.*

Meeting in the same summer camp, or, in actuality, it was a ten-week, all-day, intensive business training school for those applying for the position of youth director in one of many small, local churches, Kirk and I shared the same goals: to make a huge difference in the lives of teenagers with the gospel.

Spiritually speaking, I met Kirk at a time when he was full of passion for the Lord. His conversion had been not that long before, while in his later years of college. There, because of his involvement in campus ministry, he had been recruited by an organization looking for youth director potential.

Taken with this new direction for ministry after college graduation, he'd put aside engineering plans for the short term in order to focus on the difference he could make in a youth's life.

I, sensing the same direction, and carrying many wonderful memories of my growing up experience under my own church's youth ministry program, wholeheartedly committed to the like-task presented us.

We were both 22 years old, he just a few weeks older than myself.

Even though the days of that summer were long, and homework was required of each of us in the evening, Kirk and I both made our early morning individual time with the Lord a priority. Kirk rose early to sing and to worship the Lord for up to an hour on his guitar – by the time he arrived for our classes, the sweet aroma of God’s presence accompanied him. I was smitten.

It happened at the zoo. Our group of forty had opted to take a Saturday tour on one of our first and only days off, but the rest had left Kirk and I in the distance because we’d both had so much to say about the bat exhibit.

And then there was the elephant ride; that is what we wandered up to next. Sitting side-by-side atop that huge animal as it lumbered us around the yard, my heart fluttered; Kirk’s jokes were so funny, his words so interesting, his manners so thoughtful and caring.

And so the summer went on growing warmer and hotter with each progressing day. By the end I had been certain: I wanted to marry Kirk Tufton Lynch; I’d met no other like him in all my short life.

That was when we’d received the bad news. It was after our summer graduations from the business school and it was time to receive our assignments and invitations to interview with a local church.

I struggled to hold back tears that morning in August as I walked down the street from my host family’s home to meet up with my ride to the school. At 10:00 AM, I had an appointment with the couple who had originally interviewed me and would place me with a church.

I had reason to believe that we would be offered assignments very far away from one another due to the territories of our different recruiters. I just knew it.

I felt ripped apart inside as I contemplated two years of separation across many, many miles. We were not ready to get married yet – it was still too soon, and we both desired to fulfill our calls to youth ministry.

That is when the jogger intersected my path and paused, moving his feet in place. The middle-aged man with gray hair, shorts, and a sweat towel asked me, “How are you today?”

“Terrible,” I replied, eyes tearing. “You see,” I told this unlikely stranger while standing at the corner and gesturing with my hands, “Today I will find out that I have been offered an assignment far away from the man I love.”

The jogger looked into my face. “God is in charge,” he said, “and God knows what He is doing.” With those simple words, he’d jogged away. Stunned, I took hope in the reminder that God did know what He was doing.

What followed were two years of great happiness even with the long distance. Kirk was the one with whom I talked on the phone every day. He was the one who wrote me letters and expressed his thoughts; I’d never forget his list of *100 Reasons Why I Love You*.

We completed Christian couple’s workbooks over the phone and discussed the aspects of our relationship as guided in our studies.

And then, one day when I’d least expected it, because, after all, Kirk lived over 500 miles away, there’d been a knock at my apartment door.

I didn’t even look through the peephole to see who it was because I’d been expecting some other friends to pick me up for a Valentine’s Day dessert outing.

And there he was. Kirk, clothed in a smashing black tuxedo with a red cummerbund. Kirk, with shiny black shoes and kneeling in front of me, taking my hand, and saying those words I’d so longed to hear: “Janice, I love you. Will you marry me?” He had driven ten straight hours to the tuxedo rental store in town without stopping one time.

“Oh, yes! Yes, Kirk. Yes.” I breathed and danced and spun in his arms as he held me tight, lifted me off my feet, and turned me in the air. Dinner with wine. And then the many happy phone calls.

The marriage had taken place after the completion of our two-year contracts at our churches. The reception happened at a mansion back home, adorned with bouquets and arches of balloons, fancy hors d’oeuvres, piano accompaniment, and a walking barbershop quartet wading through the patios and flower gardens.

Family and friends traveled for miles to take part in the important ceremony. It was a most treasured day.

We married, then honeymooned, then settled down in a city in Florida. God provided.

Kirk landed an exciting medical engineering job even though the odds had been stacked against him; I began a career in social work. We traded in our first 325-square-foot rental apartment for our first single family home on Sunnyside Court.

We attended church; we had godly friends; we had no television for a year while instead we spent part of each day singing and worshipping the Lord together.

Memories. Yes, special memories. Friday nights at Ryan's Steakhouse. The day I found out my grandfather had died and Kirk held me and he cried also, even though it was *my* grandfather. Team teaching Sunday School. Our first married Christmas eating pizza for dinner in the surprising warmth at the beach. The cockroaches, and then the fleas we'd tackled and conquered in our first home, and the long, black snake in the garage.

We laughed and we played and it was fun.

It turned out that Kirk was a whole lot brighter and more talented than I could ever have imagined. Kirk fixed anything broken in our house or in our car. Eager companies offered him employment to come and work for them.

Kirk, I thought, was pretty amazing.

After only two years, we moved from Florida to North Carolina.

But here Kirk's hours were crazy. His meager pay had doubled, but his new female boss remained unsympathetic and unrelenting. It was not uncommon for Kirk to work thirty-six hours straight because of the high demands of keeping hospital equipment up and running.

It was also here that he had just one co-worker; the co-worker whom, it turned out, was attracted to the strip clubs located outside the town. I never considered that Kirk would stop there, and I felt sorry for his co-worker's wife because I knew that her husband did.

After two more years, one more apartment, one beautifully custom-built house, and our first precious baby girl, Kirk accepted a job offer in another city in North Carolina. Here, it was promised, the hours would be better. And they were, in a way.

In the newest city in North Carolina, Kirk worked daytime hours one week and then nights the next. His hours were consistent but still difficult due to the constant shift.

Still, we made time for family fun. On the weekends, Kirk drove us to Bluegrass festivals big and small.

We lived in a town of missionaries and our friends were good ones; we had another beautiful daughter; and then came the fantastic job offer from California only six years after we'd first been married.

Kirk interviewed; and, Kirk took it.

Little did I know what the next chapter in our lives would hold.