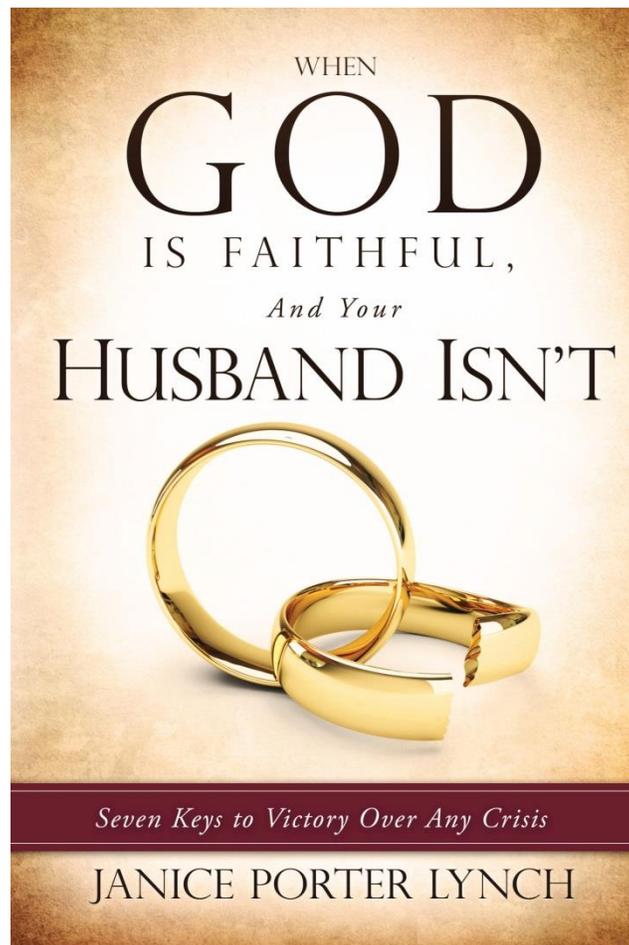


When God is Faithful, And Your Husband Isn't

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Chapter 3

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The Fingerprints of God

Saturday, March 13, 1999

If you'd been the oft-referred to fly-on-the-wall at our Women's Aglow spring retreat, you'd have seen over one hundred women from local chapters in the area joining together for a special time in the Lord.

Kirk had agreed to watch Nicole and Meaghan so that I could attend. In fact, he'd seemed eager to do so.

This year the speaker was named Ms. Irma, a former politician for nearly twenty years, but now, later in life, a prophetic minister.

I sat next to Ginny in a folding chair along the aisle on the right side of the room about halfway from the front. I was in my 26th week of pregnancy. My protruding tummy caused some discomfort, but I ignored that right now.

It was late in the afternoon on Saturday, and we attended the optional afternoon ministry meeting with many others.

The assembly of women gave themselves to prayer and enjoyed the presence of the Lord following the intense worship period. Ladies lined up in the front to be prayed for by the prayer teams, and others sat in their seats or kneeled on the floor, individually seeking the Lord. The five musicians played in harmony, setting the tone for the continued worship.

Ginny and I sat on our chairs quietly enjoying the faith-filled environment. Ms. Irma, the speaker, began to walk up and down the center of the aisle passing us and, at times, pointing for different ladies in the room to stand up for prayer and prophecy as she felt the Holy Spirit lead her.

Then, to my surprise, instead of passing by us again, she stopped by my folding chair and motioned for me to stand up so that she could pray for me. My heart began to pound at being in the spotlight like this, though it seemed others were mostly distracted by their own prayers.

More surprising yet were the tears that this tall woman minister began to cry over me, "He just loves you so much," she insisted. She pulled me to herself and continued to speak as she literally wept. "You are His precious, precious, precious, treasured possession. He just loves you so much," she repeated over again and again. Standing higher than I, her tears mingled in my hair. I noticed that she didn't cry like that over anybody else.

Out of the speaker's embrace and her tears, I sat back down beside my friend. Ginny nudged me and I turned my head to look at her, shrugging my shoulders while I did.

"Janice!" Ginny exclaimed, wide-eyed, "What was that about?!"

"I don't know," I answered her, wondering about it just as much myself. I mean, I knew that God loved me.

I wondered about it the rest of the day and later at home that night as I shared the experience with Kirk while we lay chatting in bed. Still resonating with the joy and the warmth I felt from the afternoon meeting, I wriggled Kirk's feet with my own and reminded him again of how much God loved me, laughing.

"That's great, Babe." His voice was sincere and even glad. He'd had an especially happy day, too, he'd said.

"And you know, Kirk," I remembered aloud, "Treasure has always been such a keyword for me. Remember me telling you about how I buried treasures every summer at our beach home and then tried to dig it up when we came back the next year?"

Not quite ready to find sleep, I basked in the quietness of the night as I felt again the words and the experience of God's special dose of love for me. Eventually, I did sleep, wrapped up in God's peace and embrace until morning.

But I had not been privy to exactly why Kirk had been so entertained during his day. He'd not shared with me all his details or the secret which kept him grinning in the dark.

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*"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.  
The LORD your God has chosen you  
out of all the peoples  
on the face of the earth  
to be his people,  
his treasured possession."  
Deuteronomy 7:6*

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The digital clock read 7:30 AM. That was when I heard three-year-old Meaghan call me from her bed.

"Honey, I'll be there in a minute," I answered her, lifting myself up on my arms to a sitting position, then opening my eyes.

That is when the room spun. It turned in circles. Like being on an upside-down rollercoaster. I shut my eyes tight and firm.

Were we having an earthquake? I considered, because after all, we did live in California. But, I reasoned, I did not hear any noises like that of picture frames falling off the walls, or things sliding off bookshelves. There were no crashes and no bangs.

I opened my eyes again. The room began to spin again. I quickly closed my eyes shut again.

My mind recalled the term, 'vertigo,' and I knew this must be it.

I found that I could get up and feel my way down the familiar hallway as long as I kept my eyes shut safely behind closed lids. I pictured the geography of our home and made it to the girl's room.

After a few minutes on the old, blue couch in the living room, while sitting straight up, the world righted itself and turned back to the way it should be.

That was disconcerting, I thought. Experiencing one's world turned upside-down sure was kind of jolting.

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*"God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,"  
Psalm 46:1-2*

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I should just sleep and forget about it, I thought, everything was surely alright. But, no, Kirk said he would always answer my page and he should have been home by now; he had said so.

The baby, who had been moving inside me earlier, now rested quietly within. Again, my daughters had been asleep for hours.

Why did he not answer my page?

Kirk had phoned and asked me if I wanted to meet him with the girls at the outlet mall for dinner; we had done that several times before.

But it had already been a long day for us, and my preschoolers were in more need of a regular bedtime than a late night out – especially with a homeschool field trip scheduled early the next morning. So this time I'd decided it was best that we stay home.

Kirk, however, decided he'd work late, and, "get caught up."

And now, at 11:00 PM, *where was he?* He knew how upset I'd been the last time when he didn't check in and when he didn't answer his pages.

The what-ifs began to play like a theatrical production on the stage of my mind. Before I could control it, I began to cry into my pillow to muffle the sound and to keep from waking the girls.

I know, I thought, sitting up all at once. I'd call the security at his work and ask them to check on him. My friend's husband did security work and I knew that it was generally boring work, sitting around just passing the time.

I looked at the digital clock: 12:30 AM.

"Hello," I phoned the 24-hour answering service at Kirk's work. This time instead of giving them a message to type into Kirk's pager, I had them transfer me to the security office on his complex.

"Hello, security?" I inquired. "Would you check on my husband, Kirk Lynch? He was supposed to be home hours ago and I am really worried about him. He was working late. Could you ask him to phone me?"

Waiting, waiting, waiting. Trying to rest. Tears.

1:30 AM. The phone rang. "Hello, ma'am. This is security. We located your husband. We told him to call you."

"Where was he?" I asked, relieved, embarrassed.

"He's going to phone you, ma'am," the voice on the other end evaded my question.

2:00 AM. The phone rang. Grabbing it as fast as possible, half asleep, but more awake, I leaned over to speak into the receiver, "Kirk! Where have you been? I've been paging you all night and it's so late! Why did you do this to me again?" I cried, frustrated, angry, and yet relieved.

"My pager must not have been getting reception," Kirk excused himself. "I got locked out of the building, and then locked out of my truck."

"What? How? What did you do? I'm so sorry, Babe!" I sat up in bed once more, leaning my back against the pillows, my fiery emotions melting into compassion. "I phoned security. I've been so worried! It's so late and way past when you said you'd be home," I explained.

"Babe," Kirk said, sounding almost mad and even like he clenched his jaw, "Listen to me: Do not ever call security on me again."

Puzzled, I wondered why I was the one that felt chagrined when Kirk had not called or come home on time?

As I rested on my bed, I thought, what would I do way out here in California if something happened to Kirk?

Thirty minutes later Kirk stepped softly into the room after using the kid's bathroom down the hall. He crept into bed.

But instead of holding me all night long while we slept like I was accustomed to, he kept to his side of the bed.

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*Saturday, April 17, 1999*

It was an enormous feeling of possibility when Kirk offered to take the little ones with him to the mall the next day for an outing.

So many tasks begged my attention before the new baby arrived only two months away. So I fed my family, bid them each a grand time, and turned my attention to attack the first of many projects without interruption.

How kind, I thought, of Kirk to provide this respite for me when so often I had no breaks from the care of the children. Especially with all the overtime recently.

When everyone arrived home several hours later, the girls bounded into the back bedroom and found me sorting the laundry. "Mommy! Mommy! Guess what?" The girls began.

"We met Daddy's friend, Leanne, at the mall today," said Nicole.

"While we were at the Froggie Park," added Meaghan.

"Kirk?" I asked him later while he worked at his computer, "Who is this person that the girls said they met at the mall today? Someone named Leanne?"

"Oh, just a co-worker. We ran into her while we were at the playland in the mall," he said, not even looking away from his monitor.

"Really? You mean she was all the way out here in Hillside from over the mountain?" I said. "That's strange."

Kirk did not answer.

But, I reasoned, I often ran into people that I knew whenever I went out. Kirk didn't seem to portray anything out of the ordinary and so I soon forgot about it, too.

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Giving a skip, even with my enlarging belly, I went to check on Kirk.

He was always working on some project or another. If it wasn't one of the cars, it was breaking up the concrete in the driveway with a jack hammer. And if it wasn't the driveway, it was installing decorative columns on our porch. And if it wasn't that, it was digging up all the nasty old carpet, and so on.

Just as I'd thought, I found him in the garage. He was painting the door of a cabinet for our bathroom.

My ears met with loud, unrecognizable raucous music blaring from the CD player. "Hey, what happened to the bluegrass?" I asked. "And some of those words! What are you listening to?" I demanded.

"Babe," he called, sidestepping my questions and glancing at me in the doorway, "The shelves and closet in our bathroom need painted."

"They do?" I asked carelessly, distracted by feeling my round, hard belly, and the baby who had just kicked me on the left side. Tired, we'd all awoken early for the family tour at the hospital aimed at older siblings expecting the arrival of a new baby.

"I'll give you a brush and open the can," he said, unusually insistent that I join his world of handyman work.

"Okay, but do you think it will be alright for the baby? I mean, the paint fumes?" I questioned. It was my third pregnancy and so it was my third set of nine months of abstaining from raw cookie dough, cake mix, and brownie batter in order to be healthy for the baby.

"It'll be fine," he answered quickly, leading the way back into the house and down the hallway to the bathroom where he set down the full can of paint, handed me a brush, and retreated.

"Well Lord," I prayed at the same time as I picked up a wet brush, "Here I am. Help me to do a good job. Help the baby to be protected." I added a fan for ventilation.

As I worked, I began to sing a new song to God about how good He had been to me. I was so grateful for a husband who could be so gifted at fixing things around the house.

"Sometimes though," I said as I talked to the Lord, "I just wish we could spend more time just enjoying being together." But there were always so many projects that needed to be done in the fixer-upper house we had bought because it had been in our price range.

Then, looking down at the clock, I quickened my pace, noticing that the girls would be up again soon from their naps.

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I didn't notice it at first. I never drove Kirk's truck which was a stickshift with only a front seat, and which he parked on the far right side of our mostly cemented front yard.

But one day I drew closer for some reason, and I noticed that the front fender was missing. Then, I saw that there were also marks, scratches, and small dents around the front.

"Kirk?!" I ran inside, alarmed, finding him at work on the computer in the home office, "What happened to the truck?!"

"Oh," he seemed unconcerned, "It was nothing. It happened awhile ago."

"Nothing?!" My voice rose, "There's damage! What about our car insurance? What will they say?" I asked, unsatisfied with his response.

"It was just a small fender-bender," Kirk answered, "We decided not to file claims and take care of it ourselves."

Though I pressed Kirk for more details, he gave none. Because Kirk could fix almost everything and planned to take care of it himself, I dropped the matter.

But, I wondered, especially much later on, *what was the real story behind Kirk's fender-bender?*

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April 1999

“But why are you accepting this job change?” I wanted to know. “What are the advantages?”

“It’s just a good career step.” Kirk said, offering no other explanation, and not sitting down to discuss it.

“How?” I asked. “You said there is no pay raise, no move up, no more cell phone so that we can keep talking on your long ride home, and not near as much flexibility in being able to work from home. In fact, you say they won’t even give you a guarantee of working at home at all. How can you give all that up? I don’t understand.”

“I’m not leaving the company. And I probably won’t have to go on as many overnight last-minute business trips. I’m going to take it.” Kirk said, avoiding every one of my questions and walking down the hallway to his office, leaving me standing in the living room by myself.

I was puzzled. Before this, Kirk had always discussed decisions with me and wanted my input. I wasn’t accustomed to him just making an announcement of a major change.

But I believed the best about Kirk. He was providing for us and working hard. If he really wanted to change positions, who was I to stand in his way?

I buckled myself in to support Kirk. I knew that a new job meant another learning curve and a period of time for him to readjust to the different requirements.

As the future unfolded I was to wonder, *had he really wanted this job change? Or was there really a whole lot more to this tale as well?*

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“You’re home early!” I exclaimed as Kirk walked through the door of our bedroom at 4:00 in the afternoon. “What a treat to have you home early for a change,” I said, all smiles, and greeting him with a kiss.

“I had the best time this afternoon, Babe!” Kirk gushed as he hung up his work clothes in the closet. “I took off work early. And there was this air show nearby. And a friend and I sat on the hood of the truck and just watched it! It was INCREDIBLE!” Kirk exclaimed, strangely excited. “I just had such a good time,” Kirk still grinned, looking at me.

“Well that’s good, Babe, I’m glad you had so much fun.” I replied, somewhat perplexed at his exceeding excitement.

“I did, Babe, it was great!” He repeated, still standing there in front of his closet, a wide smile stretched all the way across his face.

“Well, who did you go with?” I asked from where I now sat down on the edge of the bed.

“Oh, just someone from work,” he shrugged and began to turn away toward the direction of the long bedroom hallway. “Hey,” he paused, “when do you think you’ll book some plane tickets to go out and see your parents this summer?”

“Well, what is your schedule like?” I asked, standing up now. “Because you know that we’d all like you to join us for part of the time. Do you think you can make it during the family beach week again at the end of August?”

“You know,” Kirk said walking away now, “I just don’t see how I’ll be able to get the time off work this summer with starting up in a new department and all,” he looked at me for a moment from the hallway before disappearing into his office.

“Oh,” I was disappointed. “Well, honey,” I called out to him, “I just haven’t had peace about purchasing those tickets yet. I’m just not sure exactly when to go. I’ll keep praying about it,” I promised from our bedroom where I put away his clean socks.

“Well,” Kirk concluded our conversation with an odd firmness, “I think you should figure it out soon.” His voice trailed off as he turned his attention to that which was in his office.

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May 1999

It was a night when Kirk had worked at home during the day and we all sat around the kitchen table for dinner.

Three-year-old Meaghan rearranged her fork and her plate. Nicole, five, sat quietly across from her, patient. Kirk resided at the far end, and I, across from him, nearest to the stove.

The smell of homemade baked chicken wafted up from the platter in the center. A bowl of green beans and a plate of sliced tomatoes stood by its side. We all said our family grace and began to pass the dishes to fill our plates.

Realizing that the baked potatoes were still in the oven, I rose from my chair and pulled another bowl from the cabinet to hold them. "You know, Babe," I began, first noting the empty walls in our eat-in kitchen just begging to be decorated with the new blue-and-white-checked wallpaper I'd purchased, "I just love living in California."

My thoughts flew to the fun that Mom and I had had going to the Ladies Tea at our church earlier in the month while my parents had been visiting. And Nicole's swimming lessons, right around the corner, which could be walked to. And our preschool playgroup where recently we'd had so much fun decorating our friend's front door with flowers, ribbons, bows, and candy for her birthday.

"It's just amazing how God has knit us in so quickly to so many special people's lives in such a short time, don't you think?" I asked, smiling at the blessings as I thought of them.

Kirk chewed his chicken, but nodded up at me, then added, "Yes, I think I have decided to stay in California permanently."

"Really?" I asked, caught off-guard, remembering that we'd talked before about moving back East someday, to be nearer to my family.

Kirk nodded affirmatively and wiped his fingers on his napkin.

"You know," I said, considering, "I was thinking about all the moves we've made since we've been married. I think you actually enjoyed all those times when you got offered a new job and decided to move on," I said innocently, pausing, and wrinkling my brow as I thought about it even more. "You know," I continued, "I think you liked dropping the bombshell on your previous bosses when you told them that you were leaving and knew how much you'd be missed. Don't you think?" I asked Kirk, laughing at the idea as I pictured him meeting with one of his many previous bosses.

Kirk looked at me from behind his next chicken leg, kind of funny-like, with his eyes wider than usual, but shook his head, denying it.

"Now come on," I said feeling certain that I was on to something. "Once you made your decision, you never did look back," I finished, finally taking my seat and passing the bowl of baked potatoes in Nicole's direction. "I've never known you to change your mind," I repeated, proud of the man who had steered us to such a wonderful life in California.

Kirk dropped his fork.

"I'll get you another one," I jumped first to move towards the silverware drawer, pleased to find a way to serve him.

"No, I'll get it," Kirk took two long steps into the kitchen and retrieved his own fork out of the drawer.

"Well, okay," I said, "I just thought that since I was closer..."

Dinner continued as it routinely did with Kirk asking the girls about what they did during the day and with each one giving him a bubbly rundown.

Finishing first, I got up and began to work on the dishes. I looked over at Kirk, still seated across the table from where I'd been. He held his pager up in front of his face, strangely captivated by it. He had that unusual grin on his face. He looked at whatever was on the pager for a long minute.

"What's that?" I asked. "Something important?"

"Oh, it's nothing," Kirk said, depositing the pager back into his shirt pocket. "I have some work in the office I haven't finished up yet," he said, excusing himself.

"Okay," I called after him, "but can you help me by putting the girls to bed tonight?" I asked.

"Of course," he answered, already down the hall, "Just call me when they're ready."

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Actually, Kirk often put the girls to bed when he was home in time. He played his fiddle or his guitar or even his banjo for a long, long time. In fact, it seemed to be getting longer every night.

Tonight, as I heard him go into the girl's room, turn off their light, and begin the routine of playing his music and singing his familiar songs, often Christian lyrics, I decided to join them. Lately, he'd sing to the girls until they were both fast asleep.

I'd always wanted to marry someone who could play the guitar like Kirk had grown to do over the years since I'd met him. Again, I felt so blessed.

Donning my pajamas as quickly as I could with the almost full-term baby in my womb, I brushed and flossed my teeth. I was tired.

With my slippers on, I entered the girls' bedroom, coming in with a bright shaft of light. Kirk did not look up but kept playing on the strings.

I climbed awkwardly into Nicole's larger bed and lay down beside her, my belly resting sideways on the bed, giving some comfort to the weight of it, and placed my left arm around her. I was looking forward to lying there, in the midst of my family, with Kirk playing his bluegrass-style music.

Just as soon as I'd settled in, Kirk abruptly stopped his playing and his singing. Instead, he held the guitar straight up and down, supported on the floor.

"Daddy!" the girls cried together. "More! Daddy! More!"

"Yes! More, Babe!" I added with enthusiasm. "Encore!"

"Not tonight, girls," he said with decisiveness, standing up in the dark and then leaving the room.

Everyone lay there disappointed by his early and abrupt departure. I pulled myself up and spent a few moments praying with each of my daughters, and then kissed them both goodnight on their foreheads.

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"Babe," I said, entering Kirk's office where he'd gone after leaving the girls' bedroom. "What's the matter? Why did you leave so suddenly? All the other nights you've been in there singing and playing your guitar until even after the girls were long asleep."

I leaned my back against the doorframe for support. "Babe," I asked, trying to get him to open up with the peculiar way he'd been acting, "Don't you love me anymore?"

"Of course I love you," Kirk said, "Look at all the work I do for you around the house."

I couldn't argue. Kirk was always doing things that blessed us.