

CHAPTER 1

I was weeding my bed of twenty pink petunias. *What? One is white! How did that happen?* As I kept digging in the dirt, God seemed to say to me, “That is you.”

But, Lord, I don't want to be different. I want to be pink like the rest. Why do I have to be stark white?

Softly He whispered, “But I chose you to be different and beautiful for me.”

I wondered how different could be beautiful. I saw it as sticking out like a “sore thumb.” God had my attention. I pondered what He seemed to have said. Before the evening ended I said, “Okay, Lord, by Your grace I'll accept being different, but I need You to make me beautiful, for Your glory.”

Little did I know when I enrolled in God's beautifying school, how painful the next twenty-some years would be.

When I married Emanuel, on April 16, 1966, I was a jubilant bride. I made the solemn vow for richer or poorer, for better or worse, in sickness, in health,

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until death do us part. The possibility of divorce never entered my mind. Oh, I knew some marriages are not happy, but as for divorce, it was not a part of my immediate world, my culture, or my thinking.

Immediately after our honeymoon, we moved to the Washington, D.C. area where Emanuel served two years of civilian work as a conscientious objector. He worked as an orderly in Prince George's General Hospital in Cheverly, Maryland, and I worked as a nurse's aid in a nursing home. These were two happy years. The adjustment of a new home away from home, new jobs, new church, and new friends went smoothly, because Emanuel and I loved each other.

After moving back to Pennsylvania, Emanuel became a local truck driver, and I was a happy house wife. In the next five years the Lord blessed our home with two daughters. We enjoyed friends and family; we were active in our church, and life was good. Eventually, my husband bought his own truck, a big shiny Peterbilt. I knew the truck driver's world held its share of temptations, but I trusted my husband.

One day I was visiting my friend Joyce, whose husband worked for the same trucking company as Emanuel did. In the course of our conversation, she hesitantly asked me if I knew Emanuel was seeing another woman. I was shocked beyond measure; I was speechless; I couldn't believe my ears. After we talked some more, I went home in a daze.

I didn't know what to do or where to turn. I didn't want to believe what I had heard. I examined my life

as a wife and wondered where I had failed.

When my husband came home that afternoon, he whistled and greeted me as usual. There was no outward indication of anything out of the ordinary. *How could I confront him?* Being straightforward as I am, I bluntly said, “We need to talk. Joyce told me you are seeing another woman. Is it true?”

His face turned into a scowl and he said, “Why is she blabbing out what is my business? Yes, it’s true. I’m sorry; it will be over with soon. I didn’t find anything I can’t find in you.” He said it with such finality I felt I couldn’t say any more.

Several days later I revisited the subject. I said, “Honey, I have some questions.”

Emanuel said, “I’m not answering questions. I just want to be forgiven. Can’t you forgive? When the woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, He didn’t ask her questions. He said, ‘Go and sin no more,’ and that’s what I mean to do. I’m sorry it happened. It’s over.”

My trust was betrayed, my heart was wounded, but I hid my hurt. Emanuel was a man of few words. With loving actions, he tried to ease my pain, but I wanted to talk. I told my parents, my pastor, and two friends. Outside of that it remained a secret. My dad spoke to Emanuel once, urging him to be a man of purity and integrity. My pastor met with Emanuel to plead with him to get another job. In my innocence and ignorance, I blamed the woman, not Emanuel. Afterward I thanked God that Emanuel didn’t leave me. Time brought healing, and eventually my trust

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was restored.

Four years later when I was three months pregnant with our third child, I again made the heartbreaking discovery that I was not the only woman in my husband's life. We had come home from a vacation and I had days of mail to sort through. He was off on the truck again, and I had resorted to paying the bills. Upon opening the phone bill, I discovered it to be sky high. I noticed Emanuel had made phone calls almost daily to a number in Ohio. This seemed unusual because the calls were made late in the evening. I knew it could not be a dispatcher or anything truck-related. So with trembling hands I impulsively dialed the number. A woman answered, and I said, "Do you know Emanuel Lapp?"

She said, "Yes."

And I said, "Are you his girlfriend?"

And she said, "No, I'm not; my daughter is."

I told her, "He is my husband."

We talked a bit more and I hung up. I didn't know what to do or which way to turn. I tried praying. I called my sister who came over and sat on the back porch with me, as I sobbed out my story. She wept with me. Emanuel was away trucking and would not be home for a day or two, so I had time to decide how I would approach him.

When I confronted him, he said shamefacedly that he had wanted to tell me but couldn't. He was haughty and mean, not at all repentant or sorry. He told me a pack of lies. He was like an infatuated teenager. My pain meant nothing to him. By this time

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he was a long-distance trucker, and the other woman became his traveling companion. He drove truck from Pennsylvania to California, making the trip twice a month. During each trip east, he came home. I welcomed him home, washed his clothes, gave him meals, did his banking, and attempted communication. He was distant and cold. He became extremely unkempt. When he was home he was either working on his truck or sleeping. At night he spent hours on the phone with the other woman. He didn't bond with the children. He didn't talk much. I was crying a lot. My house was a motel and I was a maid. This went on for three years. I called myself a "me-too wife." He wanted her and me too.

He told me, "When I'm with her I want you; when I'm with you I want her."

I screamed through the house, "I cannot live this way any longer."

He would crush me to his heart and say, "I love you; we're gonna make it." I tried to believe that. I prayed hard and did everything I knew to put our marriage back together. I killed the fatted calf, I made soup, I acted happy, I cried convulsively, I talked, I was silent, I opened the cage and told him to fly away, I held on for dear life, but the power of what Proverbs calls the "strange woman" won out.

The day Jason was born, Emanuel had gone to Philadelphia to load his truck, with the promise to return home as soon as possible. We both thought this might be the day of our baby's arrival. Instead of returning home, however, Emanuel had made his