

PLAIN AND SIMPLE SERIES®

*Why Should I  
be the  
First to Change?*

THE KEY TO A LOVING MARRIAGE

CHUCK & NANCY MISSLER



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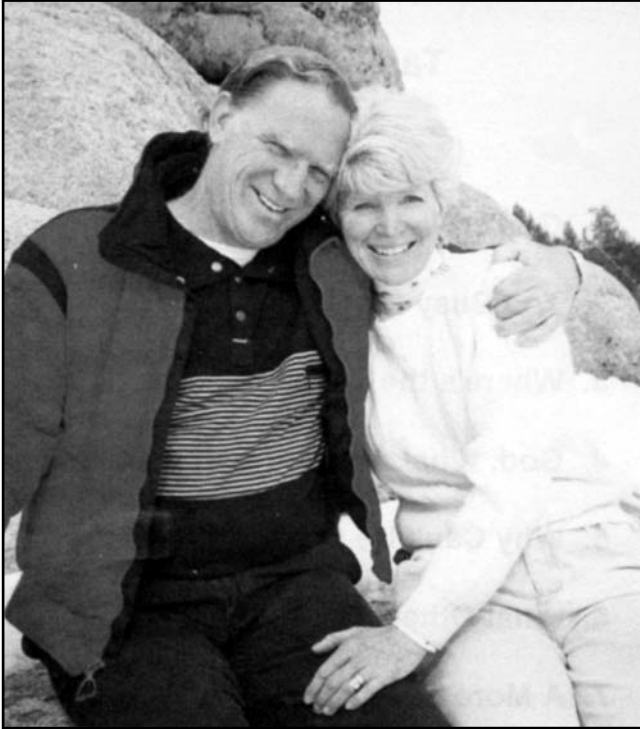
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## **Dedication**

To my beloved husband, Chuck, for whom I would be willing to change a hundred times over in order to experience the depth of love, friendship and intimacy that we have now.

## CHAPTER ONE

### God's Ways Are Not Our Ways

#### Terror in the Mountains

We were at 13,000 feet somewhere over the Colorado Rocky Mountains. The turbulence from the violent electrical storm tossed our small blue and white airplane—that my husband was piloting—frantically back and forth across the sky. It seemed like hours that we had circled, trying to find a way out of the raging downpour.

Suddenly, we lurched to the right and headed straight downward! I tried to hide the panic and the overwhelming terror that consumed me. Our little plane spiraled downward, twisting and turning in the sky like a toy, corkscrewing to the ground.

My precious family—my husband, Chuck, my two sons, Chip and Mark—and I were flying from Los Angeles to Denver to meet some friends. When we encountered the storm, I begged Chuck to turn around. But Chuck had insisted that the thunderstorm was “no problem” and had stubbornly overridden my objections and headed into the clouds toward Denver.

Chuck and Chip sat in the front seat of the plane, while Mark and I were huddled together in



the back. When Chuck realized that without oxygen we couldn't safely get above the storm, there was no other choice but to attempt to dive through it.

The storm was not our only problem. Chuck knew we had to land within the next five to ten minutes or we would be out of gas.

I have never in all my life been so petrified. I couldn't tell which way was up or which way was down; it seemed like we were spinning completely out of control!

The sky all around us was dark gray, except for an occasional lightning bolt that would brilliantly light up the interior of our little plane. Precious Mark, who was only ten at the time, was clinging to my lap and each time the lightning struck, it exposed his tear-streaked face. Finally he just buried his head in my lap and began to sob. That was all I needed. My own floodgates exploded within me and all the fear and terror cried out!

In my mind, I could see the newspaper headlines the next day: "Michigan family of four perishes in violent storm over the Rocky Mountains."

I never really enjoyed flying that much; I just wanted to be a "good sport" for Chuck. There had always been a trickle of fear within me, even when the weather was perfect. This time, however, there was no mistaking it—we were in deep trouble.

Sobbing, I cried out to God, "If You are really Lord and if You really do care and love me, then please, please, save us from crashing as I know in my heart that's what's going to happen. Lord, if You do save us, *I promise to give You the rest of my life to do with whatever You will.* Please, God, please...."

It seemed like only a matter of seconds, certainly not more than a minute or two, and we pulled out from under that horrible and frightening storm.

I could just barely begin to see. I could see mountain tops and trees only a few hundred feet below us, but thank God, they were *below* us! It was still raining, but I could now see the roads, the fields, and the buildings.

We crept along as close to the ground as we could, flying towards Colorado Springs where the control tower had said it was clear enough to land. Denver, it seemed, was still "locked in tight" with rain and fog.

A few minutes later, we landed in Colorado Springs!

I will never forget this experience as long as I live. God had truly heard my prayer. *He had saved us.* He had completed His part of the bargain. He was now going to hold me to "my part" of the bargain.

The next ten years of my life would prove to be the most difficult and painful ever, as God would lovingly “corner” me and make me faithful to do what I had promised Him that day in the plane.

### Only Part of My Life

Up until the airplane incident in 1969, God had been only *a part* of my life. I was definitely born again and God lived in my heart, but He wasn’t satisfied with that—He wanted more from me. He wanted the complete surrender of *my* life, so He could give me *His* own. As Paul says in Philippians 1:21, God doesn’t just want to be “a part” of our lives, He wants to *be our very life itself*.

God wants us to know and to experience His own unconditional *Love*, not only for ourselves, but to pass on to others. He wants us to have His own supernatural *Wisdom* and discernment, so we can know when and how to love wisely. And He also wants us to have His supernatural *Power* and ability so we can live the Christian life as we are supposed to. In other words, God wants us to know and to intimately experience *His own abundant Life*.

However, it has to be our *own choice* to seek and to have this kind of life. Until that time, God will continue to be just “a part” of our lives.

Quite often, because He loves us so much, God will help us along with our decision by allowing

situations into our lives that we, in our own strength, can’t handle or control. He cares for us too much to allow us to remain stagnant. He, therefore, “corners” us, hoping that we will finally quit going our own way and choose to go His way.

### God’s Cornering Process

In Hosea 6:1 it says that God wounds us in order to heal us. For many of us this is a difficult truth to comprehend. It simply means that God loves us so much, He often allows painful circumstances into our lives. He knows that in the end, these circumstances will lead us to Him in a deeper way which, of course, is His desire.

A wonderful story by Dr. Haddon Klingberg exemplifies this principle beautifully.

A father and son were preparing to go on a camping trip. Their gear was lying out all over the living room floor, as the father was trying to organize it for packing. The little boy was looking over the equipment when his eyes stopped on the snakebite kit. He picked it up and said, “Hey, Dad, what is this for?”

The father put down what he was doing and gently explained: “Well, Son, if you were bitten by a snake, I would have to cut four small slits around the bite with this razor. Then I would have to suck out the poison.”

The little boy had been listening intently, but when the father talked about the razor, his eyes got as big as saucers and he said, “Dad! Why would you do that to me? That would hurt so much!” The father lovingly responded, “*Son, if I didn’t hurt you like that, you would die!*”

I think God, as our Father, deals with us in very much the same way. Listen to John 12:24-25:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth [hangs on to] his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life [is willing to lay down his life] in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

Jesus is saying here that only as we surrender and willingly lay our lives down to Him, will we ever be able to pick them back up and live them to the fullest. In other words, only as we become empty and cleansed vessels, will we ever be filled with God and His abundant Life the way He desires.

So, just because there is pain in our lives, it does not mean that God has forsaken us or that He no longer cares. It’s usually quite the opposite. He loves us so much that He is trying to get our attention by “cornering” us. He wants us to stop going our own self-centered way and begin to live His Way of Love. By doing so, we will then, as John says, find our lives to the fullest.

God knows there are only two ways out of a corner. One way is to continue on in the way we have been going, following and *depending upon our own selves* (our own self-centered thoughts, emotions and desires) to meet our needs. This is probably one of the reasons we’ve found ourselves in the corner to begin with.

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death [separation from God]” (Proverbs 14:12).

The other way is for us to yield ourselves, to set our own self-centered thoughts, emotions and desires aside, and *depend totally upon God* to meet our needs. Choosing to do the latter is the only way we will ever find the Love, the joy, and the peace we all so desperately need.

These two ways are totally opposite, and we can’t follow both of them at the same time. We must choose.

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you *life* [which is His Way] and *death* [which is our own way], blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live . . . *for he is thy life*” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20 emphasis added).

Most of us want desperately to have God’s abundant Life, but many of us are just not willing

to go *His* Way in order to have it. “Any other way,” okay, but not God’s Way—not the cross, not total surrender, not death to self—that’s too painful. We all want the easy way, the overnight solutions, and magic formulas.

## God’s Ways

I, personally, would never have chosen the ways God did over the next few years to bring me to that point of full surrender. But, again, God’s ways are not our ways.

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways...” (Isaiah 55:9).

In retrospect, however, after having passed through much of the fire and the refining process, I can honestly and truthfully say God’s Ways have been and are perfect for me. As David said, in Psalms 119: 71, “It was good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.”

And I *have* learned God’s statutes. I *have* learned to yield and to surrender to Him, moment by moment. I *have* learned how to be emptied of self and filled with Him. He is *not* just a part of my life anymore, He has literally become my Life itself.

Looking back, the only thing I would change about God’s cornering process in my life, is for me to have said “yes” to Him a little bit sooner.

Now, my story...