

SECRET One

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POWER

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**A** A GIFTed woman has access to God's power to do the impossible.

*With God we can do all things; without God we can do nothing.*

*"Next red light ... I'm outta here. Not just out of this car, but out of everything."*

I wanted to taste freedom. Freedom from housecleaning, from laundry, from arguing, from the pain of relationships, and most of all, from the pain of feeling sad. I was starting to look and *feel* really bad. My face looked like a basset hound having a bad day! I was so sad it seemed I wore my "tired hurt" look all the time! I longed for life to be different, to laugh once in a while. My life was taking the breath right out of me. I felt as if I was smothered

underneath a pillow stuffed with a lifetime of weighty feathers.

And now, as I was seated in the passenger side of our little Dodge, my hand nervously groped for the door handle. I hung on with all my might, saying nothing to Rob, my husband of seven years, but sighing loud enough for him to know I was upset. Not in seven years had there been so much distance and silence. This two-day getaway was intended to bring us together; instead, hurtful words interfered with a promising romantic weekend.

*Where is a red light when you need one?* I truly was ready to bolt, even if it meant flinging myself on the pavement and risking my life. It wasn't much of a life like this anyway. What difference would it make? Staying put would mean nothing would change. My eyes blurred with tears, but my mind was clear—or so I thought.

*Why couldn't this trip have ended as it began?* Our little getaway had actually started out great—in fact we were actually chatting and “connecting.” And then, like so many times before, we managed to erupt into a heated quarrel. *Where does that always come from?*

That day in 1979 seems a lifetime ago. Segments of the recollection as I write actually cause me to chuckle instead of cry. A home video of that day would be quite amusing, yet I was hurting. I must confess that I didn't plummet onto the hard concrete that day. I didn't even open the door at the next light and calmly walk into the night. In fact, this became one of those “life moments” when God began to change me.

Looking back, it seemed at the time like my entire life resembled these recurrences. Life would flow smoothly and easily along for a short time, even enjoyable—then, *boom!* I'd become entangled in the dark, difficult threads of hurtful relationships, painful circumstances, or stressful disappointments. And now! Not even my marriage seemed to be turning out like I'd expected. There were days when I thought my heart would break. This particular trip was one of them, and I didn't know what to do. I just wanted out. I wanted to run! Even Rob's attempts at lighthearted conversation seemed to wound and offend me.

### **God Wasn't Ready to Give Up!**

I can't remember everything that happened; I just remember calmness and clarity of thought coming over me. And I remember Rob's voice repeating softly, "Hon, we *are* going to make it. Things *are* going to get better. Things *aren't* as bad as they seem right now. I promise, they will get better."

*What did he know that I didn't know? How? And when? And where?*

"I don't know all those answers," Rob pleaded, "but I do know that God will help us! He has carried us over rocky patches in the past and he will continue to do so. He didn't bring us this far just to drop us like a box of rocks!" One phrase Rob kept repeating over and over — "With God nothing is impossible"—really seemed to calm me down. Now I'm not one for cheesy little clichés, but at the time, this one really worked! With God nothing is impossible. A little daylight began to break through the clouds of my depressed mind.

At first I didn't want to hear anything that might detour me from my mission of abandonment. I was so determined that my way was the right way. I was hanging on to unbelievably poor advice I had received from well meaning people over the years. A few others had encouraged us to give up, and at times I am astonished that Rob didn't agree.

Give up on our marriage.

Give up on our ministry.

Give up on God.

Give up on me!

But Rob wasn't ready to give up and neither was God! Rob's continual reassurance turned what I saw as a sure defeat into something of a triumph. Graciously being used of God, he offered again and again, "*We can make it. We are going to make it. Honey, we will make it.*"

Rob's "no quit" reassurance slowly began to strengthen my weak faith. I know that God was working in my life because of Rob's reassurance alone. He had every reason to be the one to jump out instead of me. Beyond being irrational and spiritually drained, I was not the wife Rob had bargained for, yet he never gave up on me. His determination for a better marriage began to change my perspective and God's Word began to filter into my worn-out brain.

There was hope for our marriage.

Our ministry could and would survive.

God is almighty and in control.

And yes, even I could be a better person!

## **Nothing Is Too Difficult for God**

I don't know your background or the situation you find yourself in as you read these lines. I do know this: God is in control. And aren't you glad? On that beautiful autumn day so long ago I was having trouble coming to terms with who was really in charge. As you may have realized, I am not that good at calling the shots. What I realized is that God does a much better job of controlling my life and circumstances than I do. As a young wife I didn't yet understand all that I needed to know about God. But as I grew in my knowledge of Him and trust in Him, I have realized again and again His refuge and strength.

I am grateful that the Lord opened my heart enough to listen to Rob's reassuring words. That night began a path of recovery for me that included restoration and reconciliation. We actually drove straight to our Christian physician's office where I learned to ask for help. His wise counsel gave direction and showed me where to start in reclaiming my sense of wholeness and peace. When I cried out to God, "I can't do this anymore!" He said, "Good, now I can!" The sheer realization of my heavenly Father's love and care for me made me feel special to Him—something I had not felt for a long, long time. Discovering and admitting my weakness was the beginning of finding His abiding strength and healing grace.

That, in essence, is the beauty of the Christian faith. The very thing about to destroy us loses its power over us when we accept the truth that God promises to step in and keep us from jumping! Jude 24 tells us, "Now to Him who is able

to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (nkjv). That could have read, “Now to Him who is able to keep Sharon from jumping ...” You see, God is the source of our power, and we must plug in to Him!

### **An Ancient Story of the Impossible**

The setting is the scrawny Old Testament town of Zarephath. Most of the people have moved on to other places, trying to feed their families. Years without rain had made the ground dry and the air dusty, a truly miserable place to live. The only thing harder to find than food was hope—hope for any future whatsoever.

In Zarephath lived a good and generous mother and son. She found herself in this circumstance without hope. She was planning her last attempt to feed her beloved son with the handful of flour and few drops of oil that were left. Can you imagine such a pitiful sight? Frail and weak from days without food and little water, she would feed her hungry son, then lie down and die. Frightening? Pathetic? Painful? All of these. But remember, with God nothing is hopeless.

God had different plans. And no situation is hopeless when God is at work. The situation and the people involved are not important to this story—it could have been anyone in any town in desperate circumstances. What is important is a weary, faithful woman who dared to risk enough that she stepped out in faith and obeyed in spite what seemed obvious. God sent the prophet Elijah to Zarephath, and he asked this woman for food! Because she obeyed God’s instructions,

her obedience brought hope. God provided not only the meal for Elijah, but jars of oil and flour that did not run out but continued to feed the woman and her son. Obedience is a key; when you are at the edge of all reason to hope, obedience unlocks the door for blessing and hope to follow. Imagine the woman's sense of well-being and personal value when she realized that God saw and supplied her need. You can read more about this faithful woman in 1 Kings 17:8–16.

How are you responding to struggles, trials, and painful conflicts confronting you right now? Maybe the mortgage is past due, you've lost your job, your kids are sick, your mate has walked out, or the mammogram came back with conspicuous markings! Or maybe right now your biggest hurdle is getting past the piles of laundry, running eleven errands after work, or averting a wreck with a carload of screaming children. It can all be too much! Right now you may be thinking you've got to stop the train and get off quickly. Believe me—I know. Do you handle life's challenges with my old strategy? By jumping?

Jeremiah, a prophet with a bitter message of truth for hearers who did not want to listen, wrote: "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me? (Jer. 32:27).

God is asking you and me an important question. You may be sitting with me thinking, "Yeah, right! That may be true for some, but my situation is impossible." No! The truth is, God is God and nothing is impossible for Him. God asks, "Is anything too hard for Me?" Our answer should be "absolutely not," but I'm afraid it may be "Well, there's nothing you can't

do, God, but I'm really struggling with this, and I don't know how much you can handle!" Think back to our faithful woman in Zarephath. She faithfully obeyed in a hopeless situation, and God supplied. God has not changed in the hundreds of years since her need was met. This day He will do the same for you. The bottom line is, *nothing is too difficult for Him.*

Mentally, fill in the following blank with your own anything(s).

"IS \_\_\_\_\_ TOO DIFFICULT FOR GOD?"

Whatever you can think of to fill in the blank, no matter how hard it seems, the answer from God will always be "No! There is nothing too difficult for Me!"

### **Where Do You Begin?**

God offers all of us the same promises. He doesn't pick and choose recipients of His blessings. No, on the contrary, we pick and choose which blessings we want to receive. The Bible consistently establishes principles that have worked for generations, and they continue to work today. Yelling, "I want out" has never been one of those principles. Ruth, who lost her husband and worked hard in the hot fields, never called to be let out at the nearest corner. David, as he mustered the courage to face the giant, didn't beg for an open door to escape through. Time and time again God reveals through His Word that in our weakness, He is strong.

Are you tired of putting things off and hoping they will go away? Are you weary from worrying over bills and chil-

dren and jobs? Have you found, try as you might, that you can't handle everything alone? I never thought I would go through such anguish as to make me want to jump out of a moving car. Physically, I was sick. Emotionally, I was a wreck. The past seven years had been spent in five church positions, raising two young daughters, and moving our personal belongings to nine different homes. My wounds were beginning to get deep. I suspect for some of you the wounds are beginning to get very, very deep. As I speak, I meet women all over our country with the same hurts and pains.

Close your eyes for a moment. Think about what seems the most impossible to you right now. What giant is in your life threatening to slay you? Have you got your slingshot ready? Give it to God. Pour out your deepest disappointments, cares, and anguish. Trust that God will hear you; that He will understand; that He will help. You might be one that benefits from writing your thoughts down in a journal. Put your feelings in black and white. It doesn't have to be fancy or eloquent, only from your heart.

God can handle your thoughts no matter how painfully you express them. In fact, He already knows them and longs to hear you call on Him. This is not powerless psychology. This is merely taking God at His word, which says, "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy" (Ps. 126:5). You will sow many tears as you pour out your heart to God, but He promises the reward will be joy. We learn from Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 that God is a God of comfort. His strong arm is ready to wrap around your shoulders and His listening ear is reaching to hear your hurts.

## **Your Added Benefit ... a Godly Influence!**

A plus to letting God take control of your life will be the influence you will have on others. In 2 Corinthians 1:4 Paul says that the God of all comfort comforts us “so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” By taking the focus off of ourselves and putting it onto another person, we take on a quality that is Christlike. Jesus lived so that we may know how to live. He spent thirty-three years influencing the world by spreading the good news that He would bring eternal life. He had already experienced eternal life. But He wanted others to share in it. Jesus influenced others as He traveled, as He walked, even as He slept. We have His example to follow. You have an obligation to influence the world you live in and make a difference in the lives of those nearest to you. Being a wife, a mom, an employee—whatever role you fulfill in life, God has called you for His glory.

Being a **Godly Influencer For Today**—a **GIFTed** woman—is not about being perfect. It’s about life. It’s about living out the life that God has designed uniquely for you, with Him at the controls. Your life will never shine brighter than when you let others know that it’s not you, but God, handling your day-to-day problems. Great odds are against all of us. Tremendous forces of darkness and discouragement are trying hard to defeat us. But we will not be moved. God not only will help us to survive, but will help us to make a difference in the world in a great and mighty way.

Remember, jumping never works.

God always does.