

The last thought I would have had would have been that someday this victim would be “Dr. Judith.” “A victim is a person who is deceived or cheated, as by his or her own emotions or ignorance, by the dishonesty of others, or by some impersonal agency.”<sup>1</sup>

Coming home that first time after three months in the hospital, I walked through the door of our house and the weight of depression, loneliness and hopelessness I had been released from during my stay in the mental health ward flooded back over me. Fear gripped my heart as the sudden reality of my situation overwhelmed me again, I started to sob.

“How am I going to do this alone?” I asked myself. The thought of coping with my own problems and raising four children, all under the age of eight, seemed to be more than I could bear.

I forced myself to survive just one more day—each day. Nothing had really changed after those three months in the hospital, except that now I realized that under the right circumstances, I did have the capacity to think straight. The problem was that it seemed that the right circumstances didn’t happen very often. The pressure inside me continued to build.

I felt alone but I coped the best that I could, with whatever help I could find. Before my stay in the hospital, I discovered that a little Kahlua and Brandy in my afternoon coffee would help me get through the day. After the hospital, the psychiatrist gave me Ritalin to pick my energy up. Then he gave me Valium to calm me down. That routine became my life.

In the following years, I fought anorexia and alcoholism. I checked myself into a treatment center twice for stints of twenty-eight days, once for alcohol addiction and once because of an attempt to end my life.

Somehow in those bitter times, I found the Lord—or did He find me? Whichever it was, I began to get better. As the Holy Spirit began to teach me, my mind recovered and I realized that I could not survive in the lifestyle my husband and I were living. I had to change some things.

I divorced after twenty-five years. My children were now grown. I left family and friends, and the home I had always known and moved to Phoenix.

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<sup>1</sup> Random House Dictionary

Alone for the first time in my life, I concentrated on myself. As I did, it was soon apparent that I had some serious hidden issues. I battled old habits and desires.

In the midst of that struggle, the Lord brought me to a Christian woman who understood spiritual ties. She began the process of leading me out.

I had no awareness that certain events from my past had traumatized my soul. Forgotten molestation and abuse had been accepted as “just life.” I began to realize that these events in my past had actually led me into and kept me bound to the life that I was now determined to leave behind.

But that is not the end of the story. I have found deliverance from the ties to my past life. God has brought me into freedom and life.

I speak to you now from experience. Regardless of your circumstance, you can be delivered from your past. God promises in His word that He will turn all things for our good.<sup>2</sup> I am living proof of that.

My years of pain and subsequent deliverance are the foundations God is using to help those who now come to me for counsel. It is those soul ties that I want to deal with in this book. It is as though there are invisible strings that attach us to our past, continually pulling us back to what we were, sometimes unknown strings that we cannot untie on our own.

- How can we cut ourselves loose from our own past?
- Why are we afraid to take the risk of change?
- Why are we not able to love as we see some other people love?
- How can we break this cycle?
- How can we become the kind of person that the man/woman of our dreams would want to marry?
- What keeps us in unhappy and unhealthy relationships?

Perhaps you have found yourself in my story or perhaps you will find yourself in one of the case studies below. These case studies are typical of the issues many Christians face. The names have been changed and some liberties have been taken with the stories to protect the confidentiality of our counselees. The scenarios are real.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 8.28

## **Susan and Eugene**

Susan sat across the table, her eyes red from tears that wouldn't stop flowing. In her late 50s, Susan appeared to have been struggling emotionally for some time. Her neck and chest were red blotched. Her hands and arms had scabs on them from excessive scratching. She tried to hide the signs of her nervousness with long sleeved blouses and by keeping her hands folded under.

She had been to her physician that afternoon and had her prescription for anti-depressants increased again for the third time. The medicine dulled the pain somewhat, but the cause of the pain remained. It was obvious that Susan's ability to deal with her situation had diminished even more.

Susan's husband, Eugene, sat next to her, though careful to stay just far enough away that he didn't touch her. His demeanor was resolute—neither smiling nor frowning, but determined. He had thought the whole thing over many times. There was no turning back, regardless of the consequences. He was here because she insisted, and he didn't know what else to do with her. He would give her this much.

Susan told their story.

She and Eugene had been married for 32 years. Their relationship had not been all that it could have been, but they had been relatively happy. They had received Christ as a couple soon after they were married, and had served in conservative full gospel denominations for many years. They had two children and four grandchildren. Their lives revolved around seeing the grandchildren every weekend.

About a month before our appointment, Eugene had taken Susan out for their customary weekly night out. But this time he was unusually quiet. He wasn't one to carry on much conversation anyway, but that night he obviously had something on his mind.

About midway through dinner, he blurted out, "I'm leaving. I want a divorce."

Susan knew things had not always been the greatest between them, but divorce? She blurted out, "Why? What did I do? What about our family? What about the grandchildren?"

"You didn't do anything. This is not about you. I feel like I am wasting my life."

Eugene, now approaching 60, had tried to be a good husband and provider. He

stayed on a job that he merely tolerated for the sake of the family. He began assessing his future and, although Susan had been a faithful wife, he felt that he had “sacrificed enough.” He had missed “the love of his life.” If he didn’t pursue his dream now...

The love of his life was Sharon, the girl next door. They dated during high school. Sharon and he went everywhere together. They attended weekly church youth meetings. Every school function, including the Junior and Senior Prom, found them on the dance floor. They made plans to get married.

It happened the night of Senior Prom. They had carefully kept themselves sexually for their wedding night, but with that now firmly in their future, they gave in to the passion they felt for one another.

The next couple of weeks were difficult for both of them. They felt guilty about what had happened. As the summer went on, their relationship became strained. They just couldn’t talk about things the way they once did.

Then in August, Eugene received his draft notice and had to leave for a two-year stint in the Army. One evening, while stationed at Fort Bragg, he went to a party to relax with some of his friends.

That was where he met Susan. He was lonely and she was available. They became sexually involved on their second date and the rest was history. They were married after a three-week romance.

As time went on, he thought about Sharon occasionally, especially in times when his marriage to Susan was under stress. He wondered how she was doing, if she was happy. He had the recurring thought, “What would life have been like if I had married Sharon?”

Eventually he got on the Internet and searched for the whereabouts of Sharon Miller. Through a classmate search, he found her in Florida. He wanted to see her. More than that, he wanted to spend the rest of his life with her.

We asked him if he had talked with her or met with her.

He hadn’t yet. It didn’t matter.

“Do you know anything about her and her life now?” we asked. “People change in 30 years. Is she a Christian?”

It didn’t matter. She was his soul mate and she would be glad to see him. They would be happy together.

What force was so strong that it kept dragging on Eugene for over 30 years? What could make him even consider leaving his wife and family, those he loved with all his heart, to chase a fantasy?

## **Charlie and Mimi**

Charlie was a product of the 70s. His college days at Arizona State were filled with free love and drugs. He caught an occasional class—just enough to graduate. But once out of the university, he settled into his job as an investment banker and soon was considered “quite the catch.” Life was good for Charlie. He dated when he wanted and played the field with gusto.

Charlie’s other passion was living a healthy lifestyle. He worked out at a local club to begin every morning. There he began to notice an attractive young woman who was always in the club during those early hours. One day, they found themselves on adjoining treadmills. Charlie and Mimi had a brief conversation.

In the following days, they found themselves together with increasing frequency. Soon they were dating casually, then steadily. They began talking about marriage and children. Both had felt the clock ticking. Each knew that if they were going to have a family, it should be soon, within the next few years.

Marriage was the natural next step. Charlie’s career was taking off and Mimi would be a great wife to have alongside as they climbed the success ladder together. According to all their friends, it was a marriage made in heaven. Once the decision was made, life settled down even more for Charlie.

Now, five years into the marriage and two children later, Charlie and Mimi found their way to our office. Charlie was preoccupied with making a living and came to the meeting with a cell phone glued to the side of his head. After being interrupted by calls several times, we suggested “if there was a better time to see them”...?

Charlie took the hint and turned off the cell phone. (Although, he did pull the phone out of his pocket once or twice to see if he had missed anything.)

Mimi had given up her career to be a full time stay at home mom. She didn’t need to work outside the home. Truthfully, she had everything she wanted, a beautiful home, a new Lexus, shopping at Nordstrom’s—everything except Charlie.

Charlie said he loved her, but according to Mimi, Charlie was distant. Even

during their most intimate times together, Charlie usually had something else on his mind. At first she thought it was pressure from his work, except that work was the only thing that seemed to motivate him.

She couldn't put her finger on it. He was faithful as far as she knew. He loved the children and was a good father to them. But it felt as though they were never alone. He seemed unable to give himself totally to her. Mimi wondered if it was her, or perhaps something out of his childhood that kept him distant.

Neither suspected that Charlie's past had caught up with him.

## **Lois and Tony**

Lois was ready to get on with the rest of her life. At 50, she found herself single, divorced after 26 years of marriage. Her children were grown. She was a new Christian, and determined to make a new life for herself. But, she had all this...baggage!

Lois had come from a military family. She could only imagine having roots like the other kids in school. About the time she would get a few friends and develop a feeling of belonging, orders would come down and the family would move to another city. To complicate things for Lois, she was the "middle child" among her siblings. All in all, she never received the attention she craved. She felt unimportant and longed for recognition.

In college, Lois discovered a new sense of belonging. She could be a part of the college crowd. She wanted to experience life.

She met Tony, an aspiring musician who was studying for a music ministry with the church. Lois had studied piano as a child, and truly came to admire Tony and his talent. They both had a desire to serve the Lord that was central in their time together. Lois had finally found someone to whom she was important and valuable. It wasn't long before Lois and Tony were talking about getting married.

Lois did not do very well in college. Two years into her experience there, she decided to take a job. As a representative for a cosmetic manufacturer, she would have the opportunity to travel, something that appealed to her. The problem was that she then had to keep her relationship with Tony at long distance.

They got together whenever they could, but that seemed more and more difficult as time went on.

As a young woman on the road, Lois was constantly approached by men looking for company. She managed to control all of that until she met Mike.

Mike was good looking, a man of the world. He knew how to show Lois the attention that she craved. One evening, in a moment of passion, she gave her virginity to him.

After that sexual encounter, she gradually lost contact with Tony. In spite of that, as far as Lois was concerned, Tony was the love of her life and always would be. Guilt, distance and life style now became their fatal enemy.

Eventually, Lois met Roger. She would admit later that she knew she didn't love Roger when she married him, but he could give her a good life. At the time, that seemed important enough to go ahead.

The marriage was rocky, with occasional adultery on both sides. Lois spent a lot of time alone, and in those hours of solitude, she thought about her lost love, Tony. She longed to be with him. Tony, in the meantime, had gotten married himself, and settled down with his new family. Still Lois held Tony in her heart.

Then one day, when things were particularly difficult for Lois, she made contact with Tony. They agreed to meet. Lois had fantasized about life with Tony, and even though she knew that she could never have him as a husband, she thought about being connected to him by conceiving his child. That had not worked out.

Maybe it is our culture or maybe there was something about Lois that attracted the wrong men to her. The men that came into her life always wanted something from her. They took what she could give them and then disappeared from her life. She felt dirty, used and discouraged.

But now, Lois was ready to be free. She had given her life to Christ and wanted to live for Him. The problem was that the past still clung to her. She sat in our office and told us of the thoughts and desires that still plagued her. In the nighttime hours, alone in her bed, she still thought about Tony and the life she missed.

Lois wanted to be loved as every woman wants to be loved. On the one hand, she desired "to live for Jesus," while on the other, she held the advances of men in her heart, imagining them to be the real thing. She was afraid that she would slip into that world again. As a new creation in Christ, was it possible to bring those thoughts captive as it teaches in scripture? Could she really be free?

## **Angie**

Angie was a young woman in her thirties. She is single, although actively looking for “Mr. Right.” Angie loved the Lord with all her heart, but it had not always been that way.

In high school and in college, she was free to give herself to whomever she wanted, whenever she wanted. Sex was a regular part of her life, though she did not enjoy sex so much as the feeling of having someone physically close to her. She longed for someone to love her. After finding Christ, she determined to change all this, but somehow she ended up doing what she determined not to do.

She went to Christian events, hoping to meet a Christian man she could build a future with. If she met someone, and that was seldom, he either turned out to “be a little too different,” or someone masquerading as a Christian in order to meet vulnerable women.

Frankly, she kind of liked the latter and usually decided to “go along” just to have some fun. She admitted that deep down, what she really wanted was a “bad boy” that she could have fun with. It seemed that Angie unconsciously sought them out.