

Change Him, a Personal Story

Tara: “*Change him, God. Please, please change him!*” I cried in utter desperation.

This was the way I used to pray for my husband. For years I prayed this way. “Change him.” Two words - It’s all I knew to pray for my lifeless marriage. It was dead and cold.

Carol: Welcome to *Women of Hope*. I’m Carol. Have you ever prayed this way? Have you ever found yourself ***begging God*** to change your husband?

Tammy: Hello again, I’m Tammy. Tara it’s good to have you with us today, and thank you for sharing your story with us. I’m sure many of us have felt that way at times...but we would like to hear why *you* wanted God to change your husband. ...What was he doing that was so bad?

Tara: It wasn’t that my husband was a bad guy. In fact, he was a great guy. He worked hard, he loved his family and he was a great father.

I had just given birth to our second child and had just quit my job to be a ‘stay at home’ mother. It was my dream to be a stay at home mom – to just take care of my children and our home. But instead of feeling joy and excitement for this new phase of my life, I felt miserable.

Carol: Really?

Tara: Yes...I was lonely...and I felt insecure. I found myself sinking rapidly into the bottomless pit of depression. Never in my life had I felt more isolated and alone.

Carol: Ok Tara, if your husband was a great guy, and you had always wanted to stay at home and care for your children and your home why did you feel like that?

Tara: Because my husband was not giving me the love and the attention that I so desperately needed and wanted. Let me tell you about it...

He seemed to be always at work during the week and on the weekends he was usually out with his friends, playing golf. He spent more time with his friends than he did with me. He was a great father to the kids, *but I* was the one who did most of the work in the home... *I* was the one who bathed the children. *I* was the one who fed them, changed their diapers and got up in the middle of the night with them. I felt like I was on a deserted island...and had no one to help with these 2 tiny little children.

They depended on me for *everything*.

And then there were all the things that needed doing in the house - I cooked...and cleaned...and did laundry...and took the dog to the vet...and paid the bills. I carried the load with no time for myself. I would have loved him to help, but he seemed to be living an easy life! He did whatever he wanted, when he wanted.

Most days I would feel angry inside. Other days, I couldn't keep my anger in... I would nag at my husband – 'when are you going to help me?' or make unkind comments – 'you never do anything!' He would go silent...and we would live in silence. We rarely shouted at each other. We just didn't talk. We didn't like each other too much then.

Carol: That must have been hard. I wonder if *you* have felt the same? Maybe you and your husband *do* yell at each other, or have angry words. Maybe you can understand how Tara was feeling – with long silences and no talking! I wonder how it makes you feel?

How did you feel about it Tara?

Tara: I felt bitter, and resentful...almost all the time. I was not happy. As a result, my husband was distant and cold. He was not interested in me or in the things that I was interested in. I wanted him to go to church and to do Bible study with me; to talk to me; to share his dreams with me...but he was just not interested.

The only way I could really get his attention was when he wanted sex. This only made me feel even more angry because again - this was meeting *his* needs but not *mine*. My marriage was dying a painful death.

Tammy: So Tara what did you do?

Tara: Well...I thought about leaving him. But I had no money and nowhere to go. And I really didn't *want* to leave him, I just wanted to feel loved...for him to give me the attention I needed. I wanted him to treat me like some of my friends' husbands seemed to treat them. I wondered what I was doing wrong.

Tammy: We have Tara with us today on *Women of Hope*. She has been telling us about her home life. She felt angry and upset because her husband was not showing her any love or attention and he seemed to spend more time with his friends than at home with her.

Tara: I was not being abused by my husband...I just could not understand why he seemed to be neglecting me? What was I doing wrong?...

One cold winter day, after he had left, *yet again*, to play golf with his friends, I fell to my knees...and in tears I began praying, “*Change him, God. Please, please change him.*”

Was God even listening? Did God even exist? If he did, why wasn’t he answering my prayers? Didn’t he see my despair? Didn’t he care? Was he even real?

At that moment, I truly began to doubt that God was real. I had been praying this way for years – yet in all this time there was no answer.

By this time I was on the floor with my face flat in the carpet...tears streaming from my eyes...

Suddenly I heard something in the quiet of my heart...and I knew that this was not *my* voice. For what I was hearing – in that ever so quiet voice was NOT something *I* would ever say. In fact, it wasn’t even anything I wanted to *hear*.

That quiet voice I heard said, “*Honey, you need to change.*”

I sat up...trying to make sense of what I had just heard, I blurted aloud, “*I need to change? I need to change?*” Then I said again rather boldly, and with great sarcasm,

“*I’m* the one who reads her Bible every day. *I’m* the one who goes to church each week. *I’m* the one who goes to a Bible study every week. It’s not ME who needs to change – HE needs to change! God, You’ve got it wrong!”

Again, I heard that quiet voice in my heart... “*You need to change.*”

As I heard those words again, my sarcasm began to fade away... In its place I began to feel humble and somehow I began to feel *willing* to change. Indeed, this was NOT what I wanted to hear. But I felt so desperate; so hungry for meaningful change in my marriage – I was willing to do *anything*. And if this meant “me” changing, I was open to it.

But what did I need to change? I was tempted to ignore that still small voice. Yet, as I went through the rest of my day I kept wondering...‘what in the world do *I* need to change?’

Carol: So Tara tell us how you found out what you needed to change?

Tara: Well...that week I went to my usual Bible study group where I joined in with a few other ladies to study God’s word. We were studying John, chapter 12, where Jesus was talking with a group of his followers...and God spoke very clearly to me. It was as if some of the words leaped off the page of God’s word and into my heart. Was this the answer to the question in my heart of how I needed to

change? As Jesus spoke to his followers, he said, "very truly I tell you this, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (John 12 23-25 NIV)

I suddenly knew in my heart that God wanted *me* to be just like that kernel of wheat – promising that if *I* would "die," my marriage would come to life.

Now God didn't mean literally to die and be put in a casket. These words were teaching me a powerful lesson that I still practice to this day: it's the lesson of *dying to myself*...putting my own needs last. Let me give you a few examples of what this looks like in real life:

- I would have to *die* to always wanting to have the last word – I would have to give that up.
- I would have to die to having my own way all the time – I would have to give that up too.
- I would have to die to nagging every time my husband left the house to play golf! Now, instead of saying, 'When will you be home? I need to you help me...' I would say, "Have fun, dear." Let me tell you that the first time I said this, I truly thought I was going to be physically sick?!

Tammy: So what kept you going?

Tara: Making these changes was not easy, but because God seemed to promise, in his word, that dying to myself would bring my marriage back from the dead, I was willing to try.

The following week we were studying the next chapter...John 13. We read about how Jesus served his special friends, the disciples, by washing their feet - a very lowly task. It was as if God was whispering in my heart, yet again, that a practical way for me to *die to myself* would be to serve my husband by taking the lowliest task around our home... And I needed to do it without complaining or without him even saying thank you. Ugg... not fun!

At the time the lowliest task in our home was picking up raccoon trash. Raccoons are medium-sized furry animals found in America where I live. We lived near the woods...and at least 2-3 times a week, a raccoon would get into our trashcan and spread the trash everywhere.

Now by nature, I'm a girly, girl...I love to be clean and tidy...so to pick up smelly raccoon trash was horrifyingly disgusting!

To make it even worse, my husband hardly even seemed to notice. Soon I sensed God quietly encouraging me to serve my husband in *other* areas as well:

- by starting his car for him on cold mornings so that he had a warm car to get into...
- by making a fresh batch of coffee each morning and serving it to him before he got out of bed...
- by not nagging when I'd pick up his clothes that for some reason could never make it to the dirty clothes basket.

I stopped *one* thing I had been doing - refusing sex in order to get what I wanted. And I began walking with him to his car each morning and giving him a kiss. When he got home each day I would greet him with a warm hug and have a cool drink ready.

Was any of this easy? NO!!!

During the first few weeks, I thought I really would die! In my heart I wondered when it would be "my" turn to be served! Truly, when I look back, I was behaving just the same way as my two year old. And that's exactly what I must have looked like in God's eyes – a 2 year old wanting *her turn!*

Carol: So Tara, by now I imagine you really didn't feel like going to your Bible study group the following week.

Tara: I was really not sure that I wanted to hear what God had to say to me next, but I went of course. We were studying John chapter 15 this time...and sure enough another verse seemed to jump off the page and into my heart. Jesus said, "I am the Vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I remain in you, you will bear much fruit; *without* me, you can do nothing. (John 15:5 NIV)

It seemed that God was speaking to me personally...again. He was using these words of Jesus to say, "Tara, I am the Vine – you are a branch. If you will make your relationship with me the most important thing in your life – you will produce a lot of fruit. But if you choose to do this in your own strength and power – without me – all this dying to yourself and serving your husband will be for nothing. So what did this mean? It meant staying close to God by reading my Bible every day and praying, asking him to guide me...and putting the things I learned from him into practice...doing what God was teaching me from his word...each day.

So...feeling humble before God and desperate for change I obeyed. I began to make reading my Bible every day the most important thing in my life. I would get up early in the morning to study my Bible...or I'd read it during the children's afternoon nap time. At these times, I would not only read my Bible but I'd pour out my heart in prayer to God, telling him all about the things that irritated and annoyed me. I would tell him, how frustrated I felt and about my dreams for my marriage and my

family life. This time I spent with God began to heal me. Each time I talked with God about these things – my bitter and resentful feelings would fade away. God would give me the strength to keep serving my husband and would bring back the kind feelings in my heart that had long ago been lost.

Some time later my husband told me that the kindness he saw come back was the kindness that originally made him love me when we were dating.

Tammy: So...things began to change?

Tara: Within weeks of this new lifestyle, miracles began to happen... Remember when I told you that I had wanted him to go to church and Bible study with me? One day he asked me to find out how he could get signed up for Bible study! (I nearly passed out!) Not long after that, he began attending a men's Bible study...and soon he too became a believer in Jesus Christ! What a happy and special day that was!

Carol: A very special day I'm sure!

You're with us on *Women of Hope* and we've been listening to Tara's story. A special story of how God changed *her* heart, when she thought she wanted God to change her *husband*!

Tammy: She had pleaded with God for many years to change her husband. He did not seem to love her; and he spent more time with his friends than he did at home with her.

What a surprise you must have had Tara when on that cold winter day as you pleaded with God, yet again, to change him, you heard God saying to you that it was *you* who needed to change!

Tara: Oh yes – what a surprise! I didn't know what those words meant. I didn't realize that my attitude to my husband had become so cold.

It's been 10 years now, and my life and marriage are completely different. I'm still serving my husband and putting his needs before mine. But now there's difference...the most important relationship in my life is not my relationship with my husband, my children, my mother or my friends – but it's with *God himself...and his son, Jesus*. And what God told me in his word, the Bible has proved to be true – fruit has come...the fruit of a happy home where God, and his word, are honored. And instead of our children growing up with parents who don't talk to each other and don't take care of each other, they're learning that when we love God and serve him, we also love and serve each other.

The Bible is not a good luck charm or just a religious book. As we read it, we get to meet the Living God of the Universe who loves us and is interested in the smallest details of our life. I used to think

that God was far away – only interested in the special people of the world...not ordinary people like me. But I was so wrong. God is a personal God who loves and adores both you and me. He longs to be invited into the personal areas of your life – so that you can know him and know how he wants you to live your life

He is real! He loves you, just as he loves me, and he wants the best for your life too.

Tammy: Thank you Tara for sharing your story with us today.

Yes, God is the one who created you. As Tara said, he is the living God of the universe and yet he loves you and me and he cares about what's happening in your life right now.

Carol: I can't help but think that maybe you would like to ask God to help *you too*. Would you like to pray with me? You can listen and say the words with me in your heart, or you can say them after me.

Dear God, creator of the universe...thank you for creating me...and for loving me...

Thank you for your son, Jesus who came to give his life for me...who came to show me that you love me...and that you know what is best for me and want my life to be the best it can be.

Today I invite you into my life...help me to see what you want me to change... Help me to show love to my family and those around me...

I pray this in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen

Tara: Keep listening to *Women of Hope*. If you can read the Bible, or get someone to read with you, you too will learn more about what God wants for your life.

God bless you as you let him work in your life too. Goodbye

Tammy: We have to go now, but we do look forward to next time. We would love to hear from you. You can write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope. The email address is:

TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. That's TWRWomenofHope@twr.org.

If you have missed a program or would like to hear one again you can do that on our website twwomenofhope.org. or visit our Facebook page.

We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.