

REFLECTIONS
OF A
MARRIED MAN



THE STORY OF
IAN & BARBARA PIKE

IAN PIKE

Foreword

Contained within these pages is a glimpse into the lives of two people who have walked the marriage road well.

Not without problems or challenges, trials or disappointments but have risen from the events of life demonstrating a strong faith and desire to love the Lord and to live a life that is pleasing to Him in every aspect. Together they have done this remarkably well.

They have loved one another, brought honour and respect into their home and enjoyed the rich benefits of such choices.

Thank you, Barbara and Ian Pike, for giving us a Godly example to follow. We are truly grateful and inspired to do life God's way.

Pastor Anne Graham
Senior Pastor of Highway Church

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Introduction

If someone had told me after our first year together as man and wife that our 53 years together would have ended up to be so great then I would have literally laughed at them. Our marriage was indeed great and it was hard to imagine it ever getting better but how wrong I was.

Words are hard to convey the pleasure, the joy, the blessing, the satisfaction and the fulfilment of being in love with my 'honeybunch', the love of my life for over 53 years. God is so very good.

I have always believed in marriage and could never understand how men could joke and belittle something that is so important (I have always walked away from such conversations and jokes, everyone in the workplace knew never to joke around Ian about marriage). I was especially upset when people who claimed to love God would say things that belittled their wives and women in general and made fun of things that I value so highly.

Upon reflection on 53 years of marriage, the only times there was friction in our marriage was when I was being selfish, thoughtless or just wanting my own way without considering the effects of my selfish actions.

There is great reward and satisfaction when you are the Godly husband you are called to be.

Basis of Marriage

Marriage has nothing to do with man's ideas or ways. Marriage is God's plan.

Genesis 2:18 'And the Lord said It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'

Genesis 2:23b & 24. 'Because she was taken out of man, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'.

NOTE! Marriage is not two individuals living together it is the two becoming one and walking and working out God's plan over their lives together.

Proverbs 18:2 'He who finds a wife finds a good thing and finds favour from the Lord'.

Proverbs 5:19 'Always be enraptured with her love'

1 Peter 3:7 'You husbands dwell with your wives with understanding, giving honour to the wife, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered'.

Ephesians 5:25 & 28. 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their bodies; He who loves his wife loves himself'.

Observation

1. God never creates anything bad, so if bad things are happening, they are not from God. We need to deal with the true source and remove it from our relationship.
2. The world has no claim on any aspect of marriage, they may try to influence the way people think but we need to be very clear that the world's way is not God's and we must not be part of the world's standards by allowing it to be part of the way we live. God's ways are always the best and are meant to be lived and enjoyed.
3. Man becomes complete and fulfilled when the two become one. The relationship is not about two ships passing in the night, his and hers, it's always 'ours'. It is a wonderful experience living as one. Life becomes very precious, enjoyable and fulfilling. Life is great.
4. When God is the centre and you believe He has brought you together then the journey begins. Learning about merging two personalities together can bring complementation and provide great strength and versatility. Jeremiah 29:11 says; 'The plans God has for us is for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope'.

5. There is a great reward when you honour your wife. Some men never understand this. Some just learn to tolerate their wife, some will avoid conflict, and some will just give up and not try anymore. Sadly, when this takes place you miss out on the greatness of marriage. You miss out on two things. Firstly, the joy of being married to the one you love. Secondly, your prayers become ineffective and this leads to mistrust of God and you can become distant from not only your wife but also God.

6. God instructs men to love their wives. This is so often misunderstood because we equate the word love to what the world says it means not God's measure of love. The world will tell you that love is a feeling. The bible has a much deeper meaning than this. Love is not a feeling but rather an action. We demonstrate love by the things we do without any expectation of reward. In the bible passage about loving your wife, the word love is described in Vines Expository Dictionary as;

- a) To describe the attitude of God to His Son.
- b) To express the essential nature of God.
- c) Love can only be known as the actions it prompts.
- d) Love seeks the welfare of all. It is not an impulse from feelings. Love seeks opportunity to do good.

In the verse, it gives an example of Jesus loving the church and giving Himself for the church. This is a wonderful practical example of how we are to treat our wives. Saying "I love you" does not mean a thing if there is not a real action that is present to back up our words. This is a great challenge to men but when we do, then the rewards are outstanding. One of my regrets is that I did not see for a long time what Barbara (Honeybunch) did for me out of love. I took it for granted and did not appreciate it. What a wasted opportunity to enjoy the gift that God gave me with this beautiful woman.

Family Life

I grew up in a large family. I am the third eldest of eight children. I remember that dad loved God and he also loved my mum very much. When he came home from work the first thing he always did before he spent time with his children was to take mum in his arms, give her a big kiss and cuddle and asked how her day had gone. Afterwards, he would then spend time with his children.

When I was growing up one of the bad habits, I developed was giving mum a lot of cheek and intentionally didn't do what I was told. She never threatened me but I knew that when Dad got home, I would have to wait and see if there was going to be any consequence. When nothing happened, I was sure that I had gotten away with it and that perhaps they had forgotten about my bad behaviour.

The weekend came and Dad said that he wanted to have a talk with me. I was ushered into another room away from the rest of the family and he said that he had learned about my disrespectful behaviour toward my mother. He told me how great a mother I had and that any behaviour of disrespect would never be tolerated. In fact, in no uncertain terms, I was told that it was the worst thing I could do. I was duly punished and never treated my mother like that again. Growing up in the family I was taught that everyone was expected to play their part. I became very good at washing dishes which paid off because later on at church functions I found myself very comfortable washing dishes without asking. It had become second nature. Since retirement we obtained a dishwashing machine, I have to confess though it has never been used.

I am so grateful to have had Godly parents. Mum was a very good lay preacher and even though it was a little unusual to have a female preacher both Mum and Dad seemed to have a way of expounding the scriptures in a way that they could be applied to everyday living.

My father was not an educated man – he left school when he was 12 years old and went to work to help support the family which was quite common at the time. I sometimes wondered how he knew so much about many things so I asked him. His reply was very simple; “All I do is ask the Holy Spirit why certain parts of scripture were written and He tells me and then I pass it on when I preach”.

Observing my Dad created in me such a hunger for God. I am forever indebted to his influence on my life.

I was born again at the age of 15 at a church camp in country Victoria. It was a life-changing experience that I have never regretted. Later on, I was gloriously filled with the Holy Spirit at another church camp which was another life-altering moment.

Life is made up of choices. My older brother passionately followed the way of the world. I however followed hard and passionately after the Lord. He was only in his late 50s when the doctors told him that his lifestyle was going to kill him. His habits and lifestyle had such a stronghold on him and he wouldn't change despite the news he had been given. Tragically he did not reach his 60th birthday. How sad!

Two brothers were brought up the same way. One living fully for the Lord and the other turning his back on God and wanting nothing to do with him. We are all a product of our decisions.

The bible says 'Choose you this day who you will serve'. Our family life was one of respect for one another and being willing to help each other. We were never well off by the world's standards but despite that, I have very fond memories of my childhood.

I must have been around 18 or 19 when our Pastor Amery took the 4 of us and mentored us for about a year. He taught from 1 Peter 4:11. 'If anyone ministers let him do it with the ability that God supplies'. I have never forgotten that verse and have always tried to put it into practice irrespective of whatever I am doing.

Growing Up

Growing up in the 1950s was one of innocence compared with today. There was not the ungodly influence of movies and television, it quite simply was not part of our lives. The very first television we owned was after 2 years of marriage. Women's clothing was very modest and not revealing. Even swimwear had a modesty about it for both men and women.

As a rule, people were respectful of each other. At work, I never participated in any dirty jokes or talking about other people and what they did on weekends for entertainment. I was shielded from the ungodly influences and had no desire to be part of it at all.

After youth on a Saturday night, some of the youth group would go to a cafe, talk for a while then we would walk home. This was our weekly entertainment and we loved it and were very happy about it.

Living With Honeybunch

I had a good friend from church, his name was Barry. On Saturdays we would knock about together, sometimes we would go fishing or play cricket in the backyard. Whether we did something or nothing it was always fun.

What I didn't know at the time was that my friend was related to Barbara. His father and Barbara's mothers were brother and sister so Barbara was Barry's cousin. I was about 17 when one Saturday afternoon I was with Barry when I heard a car pull up at the back gate. The gate opened and people began to come in. One of those people was Barbara. She must have been around 15 or 16 at the time.

I took one look and I was smitten. I don't know how it happened but it did. All I could think about was how I could get to see her again. When I shut my eyes, I could see her beautiful face, I was well and truly hooked.

I started to invite myself to Barry's for every family get together. Going to the lakes near Ballarat was a favourite place for picnics so I found myself there often. Barbara loved the water, as for me I could hardly swim but that didn't stop me from going anyway.

I found out where Barbara worked and by some strange coincidence I just happened to be there when she knocked off. I saw the opportunity and decided to escort her home. Firstly, it was just a couple of times a week; she never complained so I continued, but it soon grew until it was every day. Barbara did not go to my church, she went with her mother to the local Methodist church. I decided to speak with Barry's sister about inviting her along to youth on Saturday night. At some point, that's what happened and she began to attend our youth group. I was about 18 and now I was seeing her about 6 times a week. This was heaven!

After youth each Saturday night we would go to the cafe and hang out for some time and then head home. There must have been about 7 of us that lived near where Barbara lived so we all walked together. One night when we came to a street where we had to turn to head toward her house I took her by the hand and said that there was no need for the others to come and we walked on by ourselves.

I took her home about 6 times before I plucked up the courage to kiss her goodnight - I had never kissed a girl before, this was the very first time which is still very much alive in my memory. After almost 56 years I can still remember the sensation of that very first kiss. I will never forget that wonderful experience. I don't think my feet touched the ground the whole way home that night. The only cloud in my life was the one that I was on. Over the next few weeks, I kept seeing her more and more and becoming part of her family.

I wish I could say that I did something spectacular to propose but I cannot lie. We had now been seeing one another for a number of years and felt very mature at the grand age of 19. I had been in the workforce for 4 years. We both would have married earlier if we had been allowed to but we had to wait.

When I was 20 I felt it a good time to approach Barbara's parents to get permission to become engaged, I cannot remember the exact date but it was approximately another 12 months before we were married.

On the day of our engagement, I remember driving to Melbourne to buy the engagement ring from Dunklings The Jeweller in Collins Street, Melbourne. From memory, the ring cost about 6 weeks of salary. We then drove to the Botanical Gardens to a quiet place where I placed the ring on Barbara's finger. I was overwhelmed by such a feeling of euphoria which is hard to describe. It literally took all my concentration to drive back to Ballarat. To say that I was over the moon would be an understatement.

That night we had an engagement party with family and friends but I don't recall too much about it. All I remember is that every time I looked at Barbara, I thought I would explode - she was gorgeous and I was left with a feeling of wonder that has never left me. Now some 55 years later as I write this, tears come to my eyes, and that same sense of awe and wonder wells up within me all over again. I am truly a very blessed man.

On the 24th of September 1960, we were married at the Assembly Of God Church Ballarat. I was so nervous. My friends told me that I was so white they feared I would faint. However, that all changed when the music began to play and I saw Barbara walking down the aisle towards me. Words cannot describe what I felt at that moment. That picture remains with me to this very day.

I remember saying "I do" and meaning it with everything within me. The wedding song we chose was "Just a closer walk with thee". Looking back, it was quite a radical choice at the time but it truly reflected the desire of us both to have a closer walk with the Lord.

I remember waking up on that first morning and seeing Barbara next to me for the first time, it was so special and again I was flooded with that same sense of awe that has never left me even after 53 years of marriage.

For our honeymoon, we went to Sydney in a caravan for 2 weeks. We rented for about 6 months and then purchased our first home. In those days, you could readily buy a house with no deposit on a 30-year loan and we could manage the repayments quite easily. The overall cost of the house was 5 years of salary so when Barbara fell pregnant and gave up her work, we found things somewhat tight for a couple of years. In typical Barbara fashion, she never complained.

Our first son was born on the 28th of November 1961. This little boy who we called Craig, brought a new dimension to our lives. Barbara was a great mother and always kept the house spotless, she never found fault and tackled her new duties as a mother beautifully. Our 2nd child was a girl who we named Trudy. She was born on the 13th of March 1964. When Barbara found out that once more she was pregnant she decided that she had better learn to drive and obtain a driver's licence. As it turned out, she became a much better driver than me and in the 51 years of driving there was only ever one accident. I wish I could boast of the same driving record but unfortunately, I can't. In late 1966 we felt it was time to leave Ballarat and move to Melbourne to live. Both our families were not happy about our decision but that was the direction we pursued anyway. By mid-1967 I had landed a job in Melbourne, so we sold up and bought our next property in Mentone.

By this stage, Barbara was 6 months pregnant and much of the hard work of packing and finding a place to live fell on her shoulders while I found myself working in Melbourne and travelling back and forth by train each day. I still ask the question as to how she managed it all but she did, there was a job to be done and it was done without any complaints at all.

Our 3rd child Bradley was born on the 14th of September 1967. The first year seemed to be very difficult for us and many adjustments had to be made. The cost of living had risen and I had to travel an hour each way daily for work. Barbara dutifully dropped me off at the railway station and then would collect me at nightfall even though at times the train would be anywhere up to an hour late. This did seem to put quite a strain on her. We had grown accustomed to being paid weekly but with this new position, we were now seeing a pay packet monthly which took us about 6 months to adjust to this new way of coping. Barbara had a knack for finding bargains and praying her way through difficult seasons and seeing many answers to things that she had prayed for.

Over the years the perception of people about us was that we had more money than what we really had but it was really Barbara's good stewardship and a keen eye for fashion and bargains that made us all look good with great choices of clothing for us and the children.

In those days, men were not allowed in the delivery room when a child was born but by the time our next child Kim was born things were beginning to change. I knew that Kim would be our last child so I sought permission from the residing doctor to be present at the birth. He consented but unfortunately, when the time came, the Matron came out and said; "why are you still here Mr Pike?" I mentioned that I was waiting for the doctor so I could witness the birth. She was not backward in letting me know that she was the boss and I was not going to have anything to do with the birth of this child and then promptly escorted me to the exit and told me she would notify me when it was all over. Sadly, I never experienced the birth of any of my children. Kim was born on the 3rd March 1970.

We went to Dandenong Assembly Of God Church which was around a 20-minute drive from our home. We would always go as a family both morning and night. My involvement was first as a Sunday school teacher and then as the Superintendent of that children's department. I was also a lay preacher and worship leader and on the board of management. This is how I first met Stan Job; he became the Pastor of the church just after we arrived. In recent years, we have reconnected as today we find ourselves attending the same church, a truly wonderful experience to see him and his wife again.

We lived in Mentone for 10 years until we made the move to Frankston in 1977. We had confidence that this was our next step but probably didn't fully realise at the time that God's hand was on our move. In 1979, I was asked if I would consider Pastoring a small church of new Christians at Rosebud. After much prayer and seeking for the right direction, we accepted the call to the church which was about a 40-minute drive from our home.

I worked as a tool design engineer, Pastored the church, prepared 2 sermons a week plus looked after the bible study class and travelled at least 3 trips a week to Rosebud - how it all came together and worked I do not know but it did with God's help. During this time, I had invited Tim Hall who was a youth pastor at a large church in Adelaide to come for a 1 week crusade. He accepted and during that week we experienced the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit for the first time. This created such a hunger in me which has never left. After a year, the church had grown from 40 people to 100 in attendance and there was now a need for a full-time pastor. We discussed the possibility and were prepared to make the move to Rosebud but God seemed to intervene. He told us both separately to find a pastor and for us to return to Dandenong.

The week we arrived at the Dandenong church the pastor who had been there for over 10 years suddenly resigned so a replacement was now required. In time Tim Hall became that new pastor. Changes were made and the first thing that was introduced was Friday night prayer meetings - they would last anywhere from 2 to 5 hours. Sometimes the youth would even pray throughout the night.

Tim taught us aggressive prayer, how to lift our voices together and to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Nothing seemed to change; 3 months went by then revival came. The church grew from 60 to 300 people with about 80% new convert growth. It truly was an exciting time and we loved it. Multiple services were added and then we hired the Dandenong Town Hall for our Sunday services.

I had now gone full time as a Pastor in 1981. There was a big drop in my salary in comparison to my secular job which presented challenges for us. It was indeed a giant step of faith for us. Barbara never enjoyed any limelight - she never enjoyed the demands that were put on her now that she was a Pastor's wife. In spite of this, our two and a half years with Tim were the most fulfilling of our lives. Tim is a mighty man of God - fun to be with and always encouraging.

Two and a half years went by and Tim resigned to become a full-time evangelist, a replacement had to be arranged. The new leader was a man who was a great preacher and administrator. He successfully began a great Bible College and a new church building was built seating 1200 people. He was a leader with high expectations and requirements, a strong leader which brought demands that eventually affected my home. Barbara suffered as a result. At one stage I was out on church business for over 30 nights straight without a single night home with my family even missing out on our wedding anniversary. Something I deeply regret not making a stand in order to protect my wife and family. If I had my time over I would have handled that very differently.

By 1985 something had to change. Neither one of us was happy but wasn't sure what to do with our situation. We prayed and committed our lives and the direction of it to the Lord and waited until we knew what path to take.

Interestingly, I received a call to pastor a church in Redcliffe Queensland. We accepted. This move to Queensland was certainly a move of faith for us. It did affect our family though, the 3 eldest had work and couldn't leave so we could only take Kim with us - she was only 15 at the time. I had no idea initially how this would impact on her.

By April 1986 Barbara's mother and father came to live in Redcliffe. They were in their 70s at the time so it was quite a big step to take. In the same year, Barbara's father passed away, this affected Kim so much as she was always very close to her Poppy.

The church was growing but unfortunately, there was a situation present that I won't divulge - it brought us to a point where we felt resigning was the correct decision to make. I had confidence that another church would become available or a job. Neither happened, so I found myself on unemployment benefits. We agreed that we would have to watch every cent and if we were careful, we would survive.

We were in a habit of opening our home to hospitality on Friday nights for dinner with friends. This was something that we found the need to cut out. The day after that decision was made a friend spoke to me with a strange look on his face and said; 'as I was praying for you this morning God said to go and tell Ian and Barbara to be generous'. I thought it was a joke as we had always considered them generous people and so had the friend who delivered the message feeling a little foolish at speaking to me the way he did. We smiled and told him of our decision the day before. God was setting us up for a miracle even though we didn't know it at the time.

Friday night dinners continued. Barbara would cook up a chicken or lamb taken from the freezer each time. It was only months later when we surveyed the state of the freezer expecting it to be running out but it turned out to be quite the opposite.

In fact, it never did run dry. With the number of meals that were provided, we should never have had the meat to cover all those dinners but it never got emptied. It was a miracle.

We had wanted to go to Melbourne to see our family but on the calculation of petrol and accommodation costs, we knew that we could never embark on such a journey. There was nothing spare at all.

A week later we received a letter from some people we had spent time with when they were first saved. They said that they were talking about us and had never really thanked us for our generosity toward them. They enclosed a cheque for the exact amount that we needed. God has been so good to us on so many occasions; this was another example of His grace and provision.

I began work on the Hinze Dam extension. I would leave home in Redcliffe after lunch on Monday and return after midnight on Friday. During the week I would stay at Barbara's brother's home on the Gold Coast. One day as we were coming out of church Barbara said; "Did you hear what God said today? It is time to sell and move to the Gold Coast".

I replied; "I didn't hear a thing". She said that she would pray that I would hear God's voice. Sure enough, just a couple of weeks later during worship, I heard this voice behind me saying; "now is the time to sell and move". I turned around to see who was speaking to me but there was no one behind me. The next day I went to the real estate office to list our house for sale. Later that day the agent came with a listed price which we were happy about and said they had someone already that might be interested in the property. I left for work as usual and on arising the following morning news came that the house was sold for more than what had been first agreed. Another miracle over our lives.

We purchased a house at Ashmore and in 1989 I became the Associate Pastor at Surfers Paradise Assembly Of God. The church grew from 40 to 400, always wonderful to see a growing church.

The church had bought the squash courts on the Gold Coast Highway and converted them to a church building. The sign outside was a clear message to all passing by or entering, which was OUR MESSAGE JESUS.

In 1992 Barbara was not happy. She felt she was being mistreated. I told the Senior Pastor at the time about the person responsible and that this treatment of my wife had to stop. This time I was not going to neglect standing up for my wife. We went away for 3 weeks' holiday but on my return, I discovered that I was no longer a pastor, I had been replaced by the office secretaries' husband. As difficult as this outcome was, I decided to walk away and move on.

God was so good to us, within a week I was chosen for a position as a Sales Representative for a local Fastener Company. From 1994 to 2004 I worked at the Gold Coast Council.

Hard times hit in 1995, and our daughter Kim suffered a major nervous breakdown from severe depression which was so difficult for all of us. We had never had any experience in the past with dealing with mental illness and found very little help or support. God's hand in the situation gave us the strength to deal with this one day at a time.

The retirement age was upon me so I felt it would now be a good time to go back to Melbourne to live and reconnect with our two sons and daughter. Barbara was not overjoyed about the idea but saw how enthusiastic I was so she went along with it.

By November 2004 we had arrived in Melbourne buying a nice house in Narre Warren South. It had a very nice garden which we both enjoyed and on top of that after the purchase even with expenses we had some money in the bank and superannuation.

February 2005 turned out to be the coldest February on record. Things were not turning out as I expected. The kids were very busy and had now developed a life of their own and we never seemed to be able to spend any time with them. In addition to that, we just didn't feel like we were embraced and welcomed at the Dandenong Church. We moved on to other churches but didn't feel at home in any of them either.

The costs of living where we resided was now costing us an extra \$70 a week more than when we were living on the Gold Coast and our only income was our age pension. The shopping was always great but we had to travel quite a distance to get there. Barbara was missing her friends from the Gold Coast and was very unhappy. Instead of comforting her I became distant and began blaming her for our situation. I would not admit that I had made a mistake and tell her that I was sorry for the position that we found ourselves in. I wanted to prove that I was right and backing down was not an option for me and as a result, over the next couple of months, things declined even further and got worse. Was I going to admit that I had made a mistake? No way! I would not back down.

Most mornings I would go for a 45-minute walk, during one of those mornings I sensed God speak to me and prompt me to read Ephesians 5:28. "Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for the church". That was it! I was so convicted. I hadn't shown love, I had shown hate. I got before God and asked for his forgiveness and that Barbara would not hold this against me for being so wrong. Here I was, claiming to love God but hadn't loved the wife He had given me.

I went to Barbara and asked for her to forgive me and that I was so sorry for the way that I had treated her and for being pigheaded. It took some time for the hurt to heal but during the rest of the time, we had together these issues were never raised again. I am a blessed man for having a wife like this.

We put our house on the market and it sold quickly. House sales generally went to contract over a 90 day period not 30 like the Gold Coast. This worked in our favour. After 30 days when the contract became unconditional, we came to Coombabah and miraculously bought a house on the Gold Coast. We moved back in November 2005. Legal expenses and costs were all paid leaving us with the same amount in the bank as it had been a year ago. It seemed like blessing flowed our way once I had repented and put right what I had to.

In 2008 I came across my old boss from the Council and he offered me some work working 2 days a week on some special projects for a 12 week period. This work provided well for us, our needs were met and we even discussed and planned to go on a cruise. I worked until December 2011. Barbara has always had an unshakeable faith and belief that God would give her the desires of her heart.

About 7 years ago my "Honeybunch" said she would like an apartment overlooking the water so I ventured looking for the next 6 months but came to the conclusion that this could never be a reality for us as it would cost us an extra \$100,000. The money we just didn't have so it was best to give up on the idea to avoid disappointment. The water-facing apartments we could enjoy would be the ones that we rented for the holidays. One day about a year later "Honeybunch" came out of church one Sunday all excited and said, "Did you hear what God said this morning?" I had to admit that again I did not hear God's voice. She said, "God gives you the desires of your heart and I know that we are going to get our apartment overlooking the water". Three weeks later we were having a picnic at Paradise Point at the park facing the river and we looked over the road and saw an apartment for sale. Barb said, "This is where I want to live so God will give it to us". After inspection, we couldn't believe our eyes. It was perfect for us! After some negotiation, we agreed on a sale price of \$435,000 and 30 days to sell our house. After 10 days the agent contacted us and said I was speaking with the owner of the apartment and said if the price was reduced by \$10,000 would that help the Pikes to sell their house? The very next day we received a cash unconditional contract which we could accept because of the reduced purchase price. Even after 5 years, we are grateful for His goodness and provision once again. The last 9 years have been

wonderful, we have enjoyed 10 cruises and many other holidays – we have been richly blessed.

Barbara once joked that she would never be as old as me and said she would never want to suffer and that she would be happy to go to be with the Lord first – this is exactly what happened.

I was recently looking at my finances after the funeral with all the expenses and added up the money that had accumulated in the bank along with superannuation and discovered that I had the same as what we had 10 years ago. I know that God's sustaining provision has always been there. We have indeed experienced His goodness.

Barbara (Honeybunch)

Barbara was born on the 10th of November 1940. The only daughter in the family, she had a brother who was 14 years older named Ron and she had a younger brother called Graham who was 8 years her junior. When she was 10 years old, she was struck down with polio and spent 12 months in hospital with callipers on her legs which were showing no signs of improvement at all.

Her parents had heard of a special cream that a man had discovered and claimed he was getting results. The doctors warned that it was a fraud and that no cream would ever cure polio, however, her parents persevered and after treatment, she showed no signs whatsoever of polio ever again. She went back to school and successfully made up for the missing year of schooling.

Her favourite sport was hockey and from what I have learned she was very good at it. When I began dating her there were two things that stood out, first how pleasant it was to be with her and secondly how very trustworthy she was. She never betrayed confidence and had an uncomplicated attitude to life. Be nice to people, don't talk behind their backs and if there was work to be done then just get it done without any expectation of reward or attention.

She never complained about her life but always looked forward with enthusiasm to the next thing she would do. She was an excellent mother and always made time for our children and I never saw her moody.

The children learned that when mum said no she meant no. Procrastination was never allowed, if something needed doing then now was the time not later. It was an adjustment for me as I was happy to get things done in an hour or so but that wasn't good enough for Barb so if I didn't do it she would get the job done with or without my help.

Our homes were always clean and tidy and in order, not to mention what an excellent cook she was even though she never considered herself anything special in that department. She carried no high opinion of herself in any area. It was simple; she loved God intensely both privately and publicly. Everybody loved Barbara; she had a special quality of helping people relax around her. Nobody ever felt inferior. She possessed a gentle nature making it easy to enjoy her company and many did.

Barbara never saw the influence that she had on people. At our daughter's funeral 4 years ago in Melbourne, I saw a lady who I had not seen in 25 years. She came up to Barbara giving her a big hug and said; "thank you so much for what you said to me before you left to go to Queensland. Over the years it has been a great source of strength to me". A startled look came on Barbara's face, almost disbelief - how could I have ever helped someone? She never felt comfortable being a pastor's wife - happy and content to be in the background somewhere even though she did lead worship while we were in Redcliffe. The presence of God was much greater when she led but she would never accept such attention. She thought I was just being nice by saying such things about her being a great woman of God but I meant every word.

Together we faced some significant trials but her faith never seemed to waver. She would pray and we would see her prayers answered. Sometimes she would say something was going to happen because God had told her and guess what it did. What she really desired seemed to come to pass, our trip to America, 10 cruises, returning to Honolulu, many holidays, the apartment overlooking the water and so many more testimonies of answered prayer.

All this came about because she had a belief that God gives you the desires of your heart. One of the reasons why I love God so much is that He brought such a lady into my life and the joy that 53 years of living with my Honeybunch brought to my life. I give Him all the praise for the privilege of having this woman as my wife and best friend.

Lessons From Life

1. Make God First

a. Love Him with your whole heart

There is a chorus that we sang many years ago to the Lord.

The greatest thing in all my life is loving you,
The greatest thing in all my life is loving you,
I want to love you more; I want to love you more
The greatest thing in all my life is loving you.

You cannot love Him too much. There is a joy in spending time in His presence. For the believer, this should be so natural and automatic to give Him thought and praise. Don't be discouraged if those around you do not love Him like you do, just keep on track and keep loving and praising Him anyway. There is an anointing that builds upon your life, you may not be aware of it but it will impact the lives of those around you.

b. Think Right

Proverbs 23:7 “For as a man thinks in his heart so is he”.

Early in our marriage when we had a disagreement about something I would go to work and think about negative things all day about Barbara but when I walked in the door at night I would smile and give her a hug and tell her how great she was and at that moment I could never understand how there could ever be a barrier between us. Somehow I must have grown past all that because when we did have another situation arise instead of going to work negative and upset I could only think of good things about her. Coming home was heaven as I would once again give her a big kiss and cuddle and all was well with the world.

This applies to all aspects of our lives. The bible instructs us to bring all thoughts into the captivity of the obedience of Christ. We can choose our thoughts, it's a decision and the rewards of right thinking are great.

c. Forgiveness

In all of our lives, there are times of hurt. Sometimes deliberate other times unintentional. God's word tells us to forgive those who have hurt us.

Forgiveness is a choice on our part, an act of our will not what our feelings tell us. Sometimes we can say we have forgiven but our actions tell another story.

One way that you can be released from the pain and hurt is to pray God's blessing upon the one that caused you trouble.

It's a great lesson in life to be able to speak God's favour upon someone each time their name comes to your remembrance. It may not change things immediately but if you persist you will start to experience a new level of release and freedom that wasn't there before. Memories of what happened may remain but the sting of hurt will be gone. What a joy!

d. Holy Spirit

These days we need to be full of the Holy Spirit. He is essential to our everyday living. Jesus said; 'When the Holy Spirit is come He will lead and guide us into all truth". In a world of so much make-believe and untruthfulness, we need the Holy Spirit so we can be different from the world. God wants us to speak the language of the Holy Spirit for when we speak His language we become strong.

1 Corinthians 14:4 says; "He who speaks in tongues edifies and improves himself".

If you want to build yourself up in God speak in tongues, something you can never do too much of. You can do this privately between you and God.

Paul says; "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all". You strengthen the anointing upon your life that will in turn impact the lives of others and be a great benefit.

I had been working for the company for 10 years but on my last day, I felt such a failure. I hadn't led anyone to the Lord even though I had spoken to a few over the years. The phone rang at my desk and the Managing Director's secretary said he wanted to speak with me. I found my way to his office; this was odd as I had never once had a conversation with him in the whole time I was employed there. I was ushered into his magnificent office and was introduced to him. He came around and shook my hand and said; "thank you for your Godly influence on the company while you have been here. You will be missed but you have made the right choice in choosing to go into the ministry". I was blown away and left greatly encouraged.

Being a person filled with the Holy Spirit influences situations even when we may not fully realise it at the moment. Speaking in tongues is a wonderful gift from our God but He leaves the choice with us whether we want to exercise this or not.

When I have had times of growing cold I can always trace it back to my lack of speaking in tongues. It is important to understand that we are speaking what is required in that given situation even though we may not know the words or have an understanding. It is supernatural, not natural but it can bring some great results.

2. About Marriage

a. Being One

We live in a world where morals have broken down. If it feels alright then let's do it regardless of the consequence. This type of thinking does not belong in a Godly marriage. It's not two individuals' agreeing to live under one roof. Genesis 2:23 states; "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh". Genesis 2:18 says that a wife is comparable to her husband. One of the major areas that can create conflict and tension is in the area of finance - it should never be his or hers. It's always 'ours'. Together decisions are made in regards to where the money is spent, agree on a workable budget and then stick to it the best you can.

One thing that I think should be taken into consideration is that there is something accessible for the wife to be able to buy some clothes or personal items. She must be valued in this way. Always compliment her on her hair and how she looks, her perfume and other things, you cannot praise her too much. This level of relationship doesn't happen overnight but it is a wonderful journey to pursue.

In terms of finances, learn together that God is the source of your money and not your place of employment. That changes your perspective on giving and tithes. It brings generosity into your life as you realise that God has first been generous to you.

b. Intimacy

Over the years my attitude towards intimacy has changed. The thrill and enjoyment that I received from physical touch was fantastic but at times I noticed the look on Barbara's face - here we go again. She knew exactly where this was going to lead and as a dutiful wife she would go along with things.

I'm not really sure how I found out but somehow, I learned that the joy of being intimate was better when I was more focussed on her enjoyment instead of mine. This helped her understand that my love for her went way beyond any physical attraction or pleasure. Intimacy is about having moments together. Whatever that looks like let it be so that both parties can enjoy the experience.

c. Discipline

In spite of what the world may say parents must be the authority in the home. I have a few suggestions to consider.

Have some clear boundaries for your children, these are not for negotiation. These are the family values that we live by even if we differ from other families. Never threaten your children, don't make statements and then not carry it through. Children will soon learn that you say one thing but there's no consequence. Being consistent will create stability, an atmosphere that children feel more secure in.

Fathers must demonstrate how much their mother is loved and appreciated at home, always reminding the children what a wonderful mum they have. This is what honour is all about and I believe it is an important family value to build your home upon.

When children protest that their friends are allowed to do certain things you can reinforce that your home and standards are different and God's way of doing things always has the best outcome for their lives.

Bad behaviour needs to be corrected but the child should never be made to feel as though they are rejected just because the behaviour was unacceptable. One of the values that we adhered to was no bad-mouthing to one another and especially their mother. I also made a policy of never contradicting my wife in front of the family - mistakes will always be made but apologies to your spouse and children when required will go a long way to building trust.

d. Love and Honour

Why do I believe in marriage? Firstly, it is a command of the Lord, that's good enough for me. I am impressed with Pastor Byron who always honours his wife Anne at church. This is one of the first things that I noticed about the church that I now attend. My Pastors have modelled their respect and honour for one another and family. It provides a great pathway for other families to grow with the right perspective in regards to marriage and family. Loving your wife is such a great journey that keeps getting richer and richer with time. There is no formula but it takes a whatever it takes attitude to make it work with the differences that develop between two people. I would not trade the experience of marriage for anything.

3. Moving On

When my Honeybunch went to be with the Lord suddenly in January 2014 there were 2 questions that I was challenged with. Firstly, did I believe that God was in control and secondly did I believe that the plans He had for me were for my good and not for evil to give me a hope and a future? The answer on both fronts was a resounding YES. Therefore, it has not been hard to make steps in moving on and to love God more than ever before.

Shock hit me when Barbara went home to heaven but as I reflect, I see that God had prepared me at least four times when thoughts would come and I would say to myself; "what if my wife were to go home to be with the Lord?" It was a strange feeling at the time but I didn't see the significance of it when that thought and feeling would hit me. On the day of the funeral, I was able to speak with such clarity about the sweet things that were so evident about her. The passing of my greatest friend had such a positive influence on my 3 remaining children. Every day, as I look at Honeybunch's photo, I thank God for giving me 53 wonderful, glorious years with this precious person. She is today having a marvelous time in God's presence.

I personally want to thank my Pastors Anne and Byron Graham and the rest of the ministry team for their support and encouragement. The church family has been so outstanding. If I have needed anything there has always been someone there to help me. God is so good.

Barbara was such a great cook so I never had to cook a meal in 53 years, now to everyone's surprise including me I am able to cook my meals. Literally from day one I stepped up and have become quite the chef. Even as I write this there is a great smelling apricot chicken in the slow cooker. Being by myself has enabled me to spend more time with the Lord.

I am able to help and inspire others due to the gracious hand of my God upon my life. God is doing something in His church and I want to be a part of it. I take confidence that I have Pastor's who listen to the voice of God and are willing to obey. I dream of the church being filled and packed with at least 7 services a week. A passion I have never lost and never will.

Finally, a prophetic parody from 2 Samuel 5:25. "Highway Church with the instruction of the Lord to drive the enemy back from Rochedale to Robina. Together we will see the greatness of our God".

In closing, love the Lord with all your heart, and think about the right things. Enjoy every blessing and the joy of forgiveness along with being continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Love and honour your wife and you will get to enjoy the desires of your heart and the excitement that comes with that.

Ian Pike