

# Life After Divorce

by Sheila Fields



The scent of vanilla swirled in the steam as I watched the candlelight dance against the wall. Jets of water massaged the muscles along my spine. I savored every second of this “take-me-away” time.

My usual routine includes working as a nursery school teacher and parenting three boys. On this day it also included an unexpectedly large doctor’s bill, a \$600 estimate from the plumber, and a near-miss fender bender. But now, the house was quiet. My children were asleep. I’d balanced the checkbook, thrown the last load of laundry into the dryer, and prayed. As the water coaxed away the tensions of the day, I began to relax.

Each evening in the shower I reflect—not only on the challenges but also, and more important, on the many blessings in my life. The goodness of God, a strong faith, great kids, good health, work I’m passionate about, and the love of special friends.

I started taking solitude showers to relax when my husband of 12 years left. I remained holding a baby and two boys who were 3 1/2 and 7. I was devastated.

In the beginning, when I was still reeling in a downward spiral, it was easy to forget that every dark cloud has a silver lining. In Isaiah, God promises to turn our ashes into beauty. And He does. I know because I’ve seen it happen in my life. “To comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the

oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor” (Isaiah 61:2-3).

The early days of my singleness were a jumble of emotions. I’d be delighting in my children’s antics and then distressed that their dad wasn’t there to share the milestones. I was happy and relieved that I could keep my house, but a strange noise or bro-

ken appliance unnerved me. I was glad my settlement allowed for me to stay home while my children were young, but I missed adult companionship.

Even in the midst of confusion, I felt that somehow, someday, I would make it. I would make it because I knew who my Father was, and that He had promised to never leave or forsake me.

“So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper: I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:6).

Those times were tough. Tougher than anything I’d imagined or experienced. Before my spouse left, some nights I complained to him about feeling like a single parent because of his long hours away from home. I lived to eat those words several times.

I recall the night my youngest son, who was prone to croup, experienced difficulty breathing. Thankfully my mother was visiting and watched the other boys while I raced to the doctor. Driving with the windows wide open for the cool, night air, I sang praise songs and prayed that my son would be okay. I felt my Lord’s presence in such a powerful way, and even though the situation was stressful, I had peace.

While I didn’t hide my feelings about the divorce from my boys, I never wanted them to see me completely losing it. In the long, lonely hours of night, when sleep evaded me, the candlelit shower was a place of solace. There I cried because I was hurt and scared. I cried because I didn’t know

what to do. I cried because I was tired of being brave and strong all day. I cried knowing the sound was muffled, and my boys' sleep would be undisturbed.

I did this for a long time. Then, after shedding gallons of tears, I heard a still, small voice say, "Let him go. Don't fear. You'll be okay."

That was when I surrendered. I knew my life was in God's hands. I sensed my Daddy-God reaching down to pick me up and wipe away the tears. I was reluctant at first to believe that life existed after divorce, but slowly I became more confident and grateful for all I had.

One night, I realized I wasn't crying anymore. I wasn't hiding in the shower; I was being healed!

While life still holds problems and obstacles, I face them now with an assurance that I am not alone because I have the Lord in my life. I can meet the ups and downs, knowing I'll have renewed strength for each tomorrow. The fears that stalked me and kept me frozen are gone. Those dark days of sobbing in the shower are behind me. I know the future holds promise of many kinds and the best is yet to be.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

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