

Rejected by her family, wandering the globe, experiencing numerous relationships and exploring experimental lifestyles. Rusty suffers heartache, pain and betrayal. Coerced into compliance. Surviving by her wits. A woman seeking an elusive destiny. A miraculous meeting with Jesus propels her towards wholeness and service for the kingdom of God.

Good Things Take Time: Metamorphosis of a Damaged Soul

by Rusty A. Lang

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GOOD THINGS



TAKE

TIME

Rusty A. Lang

Metamorphosis of a Damaged Soul

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This work is based on true events. They have been recreated by the author from her memory of them. The names of some characters have been altered to protect their identity.

Many books, both secular and Christian, fiction and non-fiction; essays; articles; DVD teachings; websites; devotionals; conversations; sermons; and especially the Word of God have all inspired and helped shape the author's thinking and development. Credit has been given where possible. If the author has omitted to do so, it was not intentional.

To order additional copies of this book, contact the author direct in Australia:
www.rustyalang.com
rustyalang@westnet.com.au

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Chapter 6 - First Call

Leaving the hospital in a weakened state, taxiing to Honolulu Airport, and checking in for my flight to return to Los Angeles extracted all my residual physical energy. As I made my way to the foyer coffee bar for a soft drink, I had a strange encounter.

Someone behind the check-in counter recognised my depleted state. This man in airline uniform helped me to a bar stool and bought me an orange juice. I was naturally sceptical of his motive, but all he said was, 'You need Jesus.'

Then he promptly left.

I must have told him where I lived or he got it from the airline booking because he did contact me in San Diego a couple years later, though I have never seen him again. I had been miraculously converted by that time and was able to share what impact his boldness might have had on the life-changing decision and thank him. He was ecstatic with my news and wanted me to meet him in San Francisco. He was a widower with two small children. I did not sense it was the right thing to do. The thought of building a relationship with someone who already had children was beyond my still much damaged soul.

Back in San Diego once again from Honolulu. Jobless, weak, and alone.

My little white cottage was on a lot of three similar structures a block from the beach. I loved having the sand and ocean nearby.

It was the 1970s. The flower power era had arrived in California (26).

Flared jeans, long-haired hippies, love-ins, and Jesus pretenders (27). Many of these pretenders were very vocal against the Vietnam War. The activists spoke in sharp contrast to my first-hand knowledge concerning the war from acquaintances on R and R in Sydney, but no one was interested. Genuine conscientious objectors sought non-military posts. It was rumoured many young people travelled north to Canada to escape the draft, the US conscription.

The relative tameness of the Beatles' 1960s rise to fame was taken over by rock music: hard rock and heavy metal. This played the most important part of the western cultural scene, along with funk, smooth jazz, and soul sounds. Groups such as the Bee Gees were supremo in the United States as well as many single artists.

Not only music but books, magazines, underground comix, films, and poetry all contributed to the counterculture influence, especially affecting the young people of California. Fiction and non-fiction works were prolific. The emergence of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien were more acceptable than books like *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Robert Heinlein. Cult fantasy novels came from within the culture but were not considered mainstream

as *Steppenwolf* and *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse, the latter advocating finding meaning in the Buddha.

Tom Wolfe produced the non-fiction *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. One quote says, 'Everybody, everybody everywhere, has his own movie going, his own scenario, and everybody is acting his movie out like mad, only most people don't know that is what they're trapped by, their little script.' A profound rendition of the sign of that time.

The sad autobiography *Go Ask Alice* was an account of a teenage girl's descent into drug use, a popular read. It almost elevated Alice to idol-worship status. *The Medium Is the Massage* was by Marshall McLuhan, a very popular author. Vegetarian cookbooks and self-help manuals appeared.

A comical treatise, *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive* by John Muir, was passed from hand to hand. Books on yoga were in. Abbie Hoffman wrote *Steal This Book*, guide to living with little or no money and living outside the rules of establishment culture. A controversial commentary on mainstream authority.

Reading was safer than unreliable relationships. It was hard not to be swept up with it all. The two books on my own shelf leaned towards poetry: *Desiderata* by Max Ehrmann and *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. My favourite was *The Prophet*.

The latter discussed life and human conditions. Gibran advocated, 'When love beckons you follow, though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you. When love speaks to you, believe in him though his voice may shatter your dreams.' He claimed love has no

desire but to fulfil itself. Intoxicating stuff for a love-starved hippie wannabe.

This book was a hippie's bible. It was divided into chapters dealing with love, marriage, children, giving, eating and drinking, and work. There were sections on joy and sorrow mixed with comments on houses, clothes, buying and selling, crime and punishment, laws, freedom, reason, and passion and pain. It delved into self-knowledge, teaching, friendship, talking, time, good and evil, prayer, pleasure, beauty, religion, and death. All hedonistic and forerunner to new age philosophy.

Hippies promoted natural living and simple lifestyles and decorated Volkswagen vans for road trips to nowhere. The power behind it all came from the pit of hell. Easy to slide in, impossible to climb out without Jesus.

Cults emerged. Some distorted God's Word into a sexually repressive message. This perpetuated the concept 'Enjoy yourself and sex and what God has given you to enjoy without fear or condemnation.'

False teaching became embedded in my psyche and cast a shadow over my sexual sins, and the unclean spirit found a place to hide.

Without going overboard, my little home was decorated with hippie odds and ends to reflect the culture. It already had dark wood panelling interior walls. I added black hessian curtains, an orange-and-black sunflower bedspread, lots of plants hanging from the ceiling in macramé holders, a singing canary, and a salamander. I

sunbathed topless in the backyard and wore jeans with a flared floral edging and boots when out and about. Bras were out. Free love was in.

A new image as I was catapulted into the seventies. Drugs were moving from cannabis joints to psychedelics (28). Sex orgies and group sex resulted. Communes sprouted up (29). Finding these unappealing, I was able to avoid situations where they abounded. I enjoyed my independence too much and didn't like the idea of living with people I did not know or even like.

One night at a small group party, someone slipped acid into my drink. I was terrified and frantic as I hallucinated for over twenty four hours, going bananas, bonkers, mental, and barmy. Far-out sensation beyond description. Crazy flashes of demonic beings attacking and biting, devouring and debauching. Raucous satanic laughter. Burning sulphur rubbish-dump smells. Hell on earth. No balance. Abstract reality. Out of control. Body dysfunctional, soul floating in a dark, forbidden existence. Acute, razor-sharp senses, my spirit on a journey to nowhere.

It took over a week to level out.

Flashbacks occurred for months.

Once I realised what had happened, I never touched LSD again (30).

In 1964, Eric Berne, MD, had released *The Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships*. In brief he describes both functional and dysfunctional social interactions. Reading this, I identified many of my

own efforts to build relationships, those that succeeded and those that failed. From the example of a controlling parent who engendered self-abased obedience and tantrums to the mind games, which started with hidden motives. Gaining understanding of some of the events of the past led me to examine my own current behaviour, reactions, and responses.

The addictive nature I had developed during the prescription drug period of my life was volatile and easily enlivened. This awareness kept me from some possible disastrous experiences as the pressure to partake of the current trends in the California beach scene was powerful.

Spending nights at discos choosing whom I danced with and drinking steadily, moving from wine to spirits. I chose gin and tonic as this left no aftertaste or day-old hangover. One-night stands with faceless partners. I had a semblance of order in my life while avoiding unpredictable party scenes.

Overhearing someone call me a lush immediately caused paranoia (31). I didn't know it then, but it was God who allowed me to hear this. I began to curb my intake but never went back to that bar again.

One of the miracles of my new birth in Jesus Christ later was that desire for alcohol disappeared. When someone near me is drinking wine, I am still tempted to smell and taste. That is how strong the appeal is. The Bible tells us that we must not do anything that would cause someone else to stumble, but people don't know they are tempting me. Instead of putting rules upon them, I prefer to stand firm on

abstinence. I do not consider it wrong for Christians to drink some alcohol, it simply is not for me. For each time I resist temptation, I gain victory over my enemy, the devil.

Caffeine in coffee and tea had been eliminated at the same time when I discovered they had the same attraction and effect as any drug. Self-control is not just about anger but being strong enough to say no to any temptation. Temptation is not sin; it is when we give in to temptation that we sin.

Unfortunately it took much longer to learn this discipline with regard to my emotional soulish needs.

But God . . .

Yes, God had started to move towards me in earnest. His first call, 'You need me,' had somehow unconsciously penetrated and without knowing it, I was starting to respond to his leading.

Chapter 13 – Shock

Karen Moore, in her booklet *Prayers from the Heart*, January 3, states,

‘The One who designed the universe by speaking it into being has the power to design my life. He can remould and reshape me and any circumstance in which I find myself.’

During the couple of years of my involvement with China, people from the local church communicated. One of these was a man whose wife had left him. He was selling his farm, moving into town, and building a new life. He was estranged from his two sons and going through a difficult time. In his letters he outlined the activities of the local church and his own efforts to re-educate himself for employment – general news.

I did not see him in any other light than a Christian brother until the church hired a bus to attend an outreach to hear a visiting speaker in a nearby town. It was here I had a profound experience. Following prayer, I went down under the Spirit (60). On the floor, I began to sob. I was struggling with the Lord. I do not know how long.

The Spirit took me onto a highway, the highway of holiness (61). While on the floor, I saw this man on my right coming up out of the sidebar ditch. He was walking towards me. I was trying to stop him, cross him

out of view. The Lord said to me, 'Will you take his hand?'

I did not want to.

I wrestled and argued with the Lord, begging him not to ask me this. I pleaded with him. I did not want to go down this path again. By now I had decided I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Jesus and no man.

I came back from the vision into the hall environment, opening my eyes. Everyone had left except a few of the helpers cleaning up. Shaken and shaking, I told the Lord I would need some additional clear evidence of what he was indicating. As I turned around to get up off the floor, this gentleman was standing near me with his hand stretched towards me. I took his hand. He later told me he had left with all the others to go to the coffee shop but felt compelled to come back into the hall and wait for me. He did not understand this nor read anything into it. But I did. On the returning bus, everyone was chatting and laughing. I was numb.

Was this the everything I had sensed?

Was this what a Chinese couple had alluded to as they told me through a word of wisdom that my life was going to take a change and a man was coming into my life? (62).

I had recorded in my journal that I was praying for this person daily, for the Lord to bless him. That he would grow in grace and understanding, for his love for God to increase and his heart's knowledge of God's Word expand. That his listening ear would continue to develop

and he would truly become a man after God's own heart.

Having a spiritualist and Jehovah's Witness background, his mind had been sorely affected (63). As we sought to know one another, I began to witness remarkable changes as he desired to have his mind cleansed. Although we were both reticent about the future, our friendship continued as we often delved into scriptures together.

A heightened sense of visions, images, pictures, and words of knowledge (64) occurred for me throughout that year as I continued to pray for my friend, believing his mind would be renewed by the washing of the Word (65).

What I did not know was how long this would take and the course it would take us through.

Despite all the struggles he had with his previous marriage breaking up and his concerns about marrying a divorced woman, on 7 September 1996, we were married. My final walk down the aisle.

Within forty-eight hours, I was manhandled and mishandled, insulted and berated and generally abused. Tsunami shock waves almost drowned me. Six weeks later, I was sitting in our pastor's home bleeding from small cuts on my hands, with a bruised arm and hip bone.

I had wandered down the wrong side of the mountain too many times of my own doing; all I had to

stand on now was God asking me to take this man's hand. This was the beginning of one of the darkest chapters of my Christian life, a long season of great heaviness with ominous black clouds looming.

My husband was a professed born-again believer. I had known him for three years. It was difficult reconciling his behaviour. In public he was a model of sanitised Christianity. Behind closed doors, it was another story altogether.

What I was experiencing and what I now believed a godly marriage should be found me bereft. I began to feed the heaviness around us with fear and dread as the verbal abuse continued, escalating until I was hospitalised, traumatised after a direct attack.

We had been sitting quietly in the living room listening to a Christian radio program on the local station. My husband had fallen asleep. I was doing some hand sewing across the room. As the program ended, a rock music program took its place. I quietly got up and made to move around his chair to turn the radio off.

Without any warning, he flew out of his chair, grabbed me by the front of my blouse, threw me to the floor, knelt on my ribcage pushing my head to the floor, and held my face in a vice grip. He yelled, 'I don't care if I even kill you. I am going to get the devil out of you.'

Then I heard and felt the ribcage give way. I heard the rib crack. The chest pain was excruciating. It all stopped as quickly as it started. He simply stood up, went into the bedroom, and went to bed. I lay on the floor trembling, in shock, hurt and terrified. This was so

reminiscent of my first memory of my mother and father.

I managed to drag myself into the bathroom and run the shower over my body, but I knew I was in trouble physically. Every step I took, nausea welled up. Eventually I was able to go to my husband, and though I knew it was dangerous, I asked him to take me to the hospital.

When we arrived, the doctor took one look at us both, correctly surmised what had happened, and ushered me into protection. He asked me if I wanted to report to the police. I asked him to wait until I spoke with my pastor.

This was the first very serious mistake I made, and it led me down a path I never want to encounter again.

This was the worst of the attacks physically, but I did experience being thumped and shoved out of the car on a highway and pushed and shoved, threatened, and yelled at regularly.

One weekend we were trying to reconcile after a difficult period, and we went to the coast. The first day was tense but hopeful. Then without warning, the atmosphere changed, and my husband began to act unreasonable. The next morning, he packed his bags and left me there. I did not know where he had gone. Fortunately, I still had my car in the parking lot and the keys. When I arrived home a few days later, my husband acted as though nothing had happened and life continued on.

Trying to communicate about these episodes only produced more anger. I have never been an argumentative person, so I simply backed off and pretended everything was okay as well.

This was a pattern of behaviour that continued for many years until I moved into another area in the home by myself and gave my husband every space he needed. I saw my role as keeping the atmosphere as balanced as possible. Compliance was easier than confrontation on any level.

I realise now I tried to make it work because I felt guilt and shame for all the failed relationships previously. It was a small town, and most of my finances had been given to purchase and renovate our home. I felt I had no alternative but to stay. My damaged soul was too weak to contemplate any other permanent solution at the time.

This was the second big mistake.

In hospital following the direct attack, our pastor challenged me, 'What did you do to provoke him?'

There was no answer to this inappropriate question. Having read the powerful book *Battered into Submission*, I gave my pastor a copy, praying for his eyes to be opened, but he did not seem very interested.

Some people who have never experienced an abusive situation will proclaim there are two extreme reactions. Spouses with low self-respect and a martyr complex stay in an abusive situation long after any efforts towards resolution. On the other hand, spouses with a low commitment level who are looking for an

excuse to walk away will call any conflict abuse and use it as their ticket out of the relationship.

This issue is not as simple as these extremes and reveals little understanding of the complexities of domestic abuse. The erratic behaviour I was subjected to convinced me there was an underlying cause and effect occurring. We were two people with damaged souls fighting an uphill battle.

When my husband became emotionally attached to a young woman at church, I prayed for him. When he told me he saw no good in me; that he saw no fruit from my relationship with God, I stood firm. This does not make me a martyr, just someone doing their best in all circumstances.

The way God led me through this is not necessarily how every woman in a similar situation should follow. Each person must walk their own walk.

Where life is threatened, the action to leave the situation must take precedence, especially if children are involved.

The only way domestic abuse can be dismantled is through inviting the love of God into the relationship, then developing mutual trust, honour, and respect.

One of my first revelations was that though fear is a real feeling, it is not a tangible commodity. I learned that Satan feeds on fear, and as long as I feared, the devil would be able to perpetuate the abuse.

Over the next few years, we separated twice for a year each time. I had nowhere to turn except to the Lord.

When there is only the Lord, he is enough. I knew God had not forsaken me. Jesus was very near. The Holy Spirit upheld me with his strength.

It was during the two separation periods that my dream life increased exponentially. In one vivid dream, the Lord said, 'You will defeat the influence of the devil with the sword of my Spirit.'

We attended several marriage seminars and counselling sessions to no avail. We were each giving a different picture of our lives. The false accusations and lies were hard to refute, and being the most emotional, my perspective was often dismissed. Our pastors at the time did everything they could to assist us in our struggles but they were ill suited and not equipped for the task.

These things did not affect me as much as they might have in the past because I knew what God had done, and it was through his righteousness and him alone that I was washed clean, and I knew the devil was not in me as my husband claimed. I knew I was a daughter of the King, a golden daughter of the King, and he loved me.

However, whatever was happening, it was up to me to sort out my life. I wanted God to change my circumstances, but he was about to change me.

Then without any explanation, I was labelled a Jezebel. This conveniently allowed the verbal abuse to continue unabated in private.

I could not change anyone's perception of me. Only a clear revelation from God directly would do this.

But I was able to choose whether I would believe what others said or believe what God said about me.

God is the only one who is able to tell me who I am, what my purpose is, and where I am going. He made me. He saved me from the very pits of hell and was establishing me upon the Rock, his Son, Jesus.

We were separated. I was staying in the basement of a friend's house, angry and miserable. It was New Year's Eve. I woke about midnight, sensing a presence in the room. As the cloud of glory enveloped me, God's light shone right through me. I fled from the house. Staying in a park until daylight, the presence came with me. Persistent, pervasive, and exposing. Not knowing what else to do, I went to see my husband. He called his pastors.

Next I became aware they were praying for my deliverance. That day, Jesus delivered me from the evil spirits that had started to take control and oppress my soul from conception. This stripped away all the images and pretences and left me feeling empty, naked, and exposed.

I expected after giving an account of my supposed evil deeds in front of two congregations, this would bring relief on the home front. My ignorance and desire to comply with other people's opinions made no difference to my being accepted or rejected. Erroneously I became a victim (66).

Taking the blame for everything that had happened to me was a false confession. A blatant lie.

This was my third big mistake.

It is only the love of Jesus Christ that has forgiven me for this untruth and set me free from any condemnation.

In *The Long Road to Freedom* by Stephen Wang is the story of Wang Mingdao, who, along with his wife, was imprisoned in China for his faith. Mingdao says in one instance, all he wanted to do was find a place to hide. I can relate to this. His false confession of being a counter-revolutionary did not win him his freedom as he thought it would but left him utterly miserable. Only in my situation, my imprisonment was once again within my own soul.

Mingdao taught me any confession should only be as broad as the scope of the offence if any, no more, no less.

In Neil T. Anderson's book *Victory over the Darkness*, he states that sanctification (67) is becoming in behaviour what we already are in identity since God has changed our nature when we believe (68).

It is then our responsibility to change our behaviour by fashioning ourselves after Jesus, recognising and changing old patterns of thinking. Once born again, our identity is found in Christ Jesus, but our ongoing spiritual growth takes a lifetime.

This dramatic event was followed by a time of complete soul searching and brought a decisive shift in the way I saw myself and, eventually, our relationship.

Challenged to become a storm-proof believer, I continued to submit myself to the hand of Almighty God and his Word. I discovered most of the excesses, distortions, and abuses of the passages about family authority in the scriptures come from sin, hurt, and insecurity. No one can change anyone else, but we can take responsibility for our own reactions to situations.

The next eighteen months resembled a nervous breakdown. Broken on all fronts, with stress-induced dissociation, to the extent that I struggled through every day-to-day function, I was on the potter's wheel.

'Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel which he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.' (Jeremiah 18:3-4)

Nelle's demise added to my distress. This precious animal ran out on the road and was smashed by a passing vehicle. A hit-and-run. She was never right in the head or body again. After she suffered several severe fits, I had her put down.

The more I surrendered to the Lord on a daily basis, the more freedom I began to have as he revived, remoulded, and reshaped me to become who he intended me to be all along. Only Jesus could unravel my life and bring my outer and inner lives together.

He began to show me the worth of my unique personality traits that I had believed were of no value. Stubbornness he was building into endurance. My deep emotional capabilities he was shaping into passion for him and his Kingdom. He showed me my position in Christ was secure and that I was redeemed from the hand of the enemy and the power of darkness. I am not only filled with his Spirit but led by the Holy Spirit and have divine favour in him whatever I do and wherever I go. I was bringing every thought into captivity in Christ Jesus. I was free from all bondages because of the bondage destroying anointing of the Holy Spirit.

There are many excellent teachings and books available on the subject of the spirit of Jezebel. Three with specific sections are listed in the bibliography: *The Surpassing Greatness of His Power*, *The 21st Century Prophet*, and *Breaking the Threefold Demonic Cord*. These are by no means conclusive. Another book, *Evicting Demonic Squatters and Breaking Bondages*, is a brilliant detailed book on the title subject.

Some men and women can exhibit specific traits of the Jezebel spirit. In the extreme, Jezebel has a source of obsessive sensuality, unbridled witchcraft, and a hatred of male authority. No born-again Christian can be possessed (69) by any evil spirit for light and darkness cannot coexist. Christians, though, can become oppressed and in need of ministry by knowledgeable and reliably equipped persons.

Only God knows the truth of my experience. It has been confirmed since, by unbiased wise counsellors,

that my battle was with unclean soul-destroying and perverse spirits.

Psalm chapter 17, verse 2, reads,

'Let my judgement (vindication) come forth from Your presence; let Your eyes look with equity.'

Freedom for my soul came at a price of brokenness, but full healing from years of damage was still a long way off.

Kris Vallotton, in *Fashioned to Reign*, says, 'Women with strong personalities are sometimes tagged with names like Jezebel. That is ridiculous, hurtful, unfounded and untrue. I have often observed men who are intimidated by strong women. They try to hide their fear by demoralizing the women. This is just another way of forcing women into a mould that does not fit.'

Kris also says that in his experience, when a woman with a strong personality is mislabelled a Jezebel in the Church, it is common for 'these women to feel as if they are in a constant state of battle ready and on high alert. Interacting with anyone who is dressed for battle creates a defensive posture for those who are in relationship with that person, which ultimately leads the female soldier into feeling justified in her attitude.'

While I understand and respect his experience, to claim a blanket statement of one reaction fits all is, in my opinion, compartmentalising. I never want to be seen as a porcupine with her quills up all the time.

In 2001, I produced a testimonial booklet with forty-four local testimonies. Here is my husband's contribution:

'Sometimes I would walk about daily carrying anger and not even know it. My reaction to problems was to get angry. This led to the breakup of my first family life. After my second marriage deteriorated and I was living alone, my youngest son began to visit me. One day as we talked he became emotional and expressed that he would like to go back to the way things were when we were family. I knew this was not possible. I tried to comfort him. I began to cry myself. As I held him I saw for the first time the extent of what my anger had done. I was devastated. I had never understood this before. When confronted at work about my anger, I finally relinquished it to Jesus, the only One who is able to take it. Then began a time of renewing my mind to line up with what Jesus says he wants for me, in His scriptures. It became clear I was not able to do it but Jesus can, through the power of His Holy Spirit. Faced with what to do about my present marriage, God put a lot of information about relationships in my path. Some of what was explained said that I could be at fault for my situation and might need to change my ways. I am now back with my new wife and have a better relationship with my two sons. I thank Jesus that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life and for giving me a new way to live.'

This was the start of my husband's walk towards wholeness.

Trying to gain some understanding of our relationship, I studied the abusive cycle, from a variety of sources (70). I learnt there were basically four distinct phases: tension mounting, an incident, and then reconciliation, followed by calm until the cycle repeated itself. Considerable time was spent examining and praying, looking for the best ways to respond to each stage, and learning to live with someone recovering from abusive habits.

To speak of love is one thing, but to learn practical ways to demonstrate love in a situation like this has to be radical as forgiveness does not condone a cover-up.

Two of the most helpful resources were *Boundaries* and *Bold Love* (see Bibliography).

I started to identify godly boundaries, to control the gate to the fence about my life paddock. I learnt it was okay to say no as I could choose to keep good in and evil out.

There were some angry reactions and resistance to the subtle proactive steps I was taking. Giving in or being compliant would only reinforce the problem. Re-establishing godly boundaries brought me to the stage where I was strong enough emotionally to be able to say that if anger rose against me physically again, the marriage was over. I needed to be sure I was willing to carry this out; otherwise it would have been an idle threat.

This is radical, bold love. Giving the other person a responsible choice.

I have never seen my husband as my enemy (71) though I did struggle with the venom of the harsh words wielded against me from the emotional, verbal, and mental abuse. When tension erupted, I tried to remember that it is Satan who steals, kills, and destroys, but Jesus came that I may have abundant life (72).

Joyce Meyer (73) once said, 'Go to the throne instead of the phone.' This was a hard lesson for me to learn for there are some points in our spiritual journey that should never be shared with anyone but the Lord.

Out of respect for my husband and our personal privacy, there are also many aspects I have chosen to exclude as unnecessary detail to the purposes of my story.

When the situation at home became volatile, a loving couple made their home available to me for a few days. Living on a farm out of town, with a gentle creek running through and a hill beyond, this provided a quiet place to recoup and go again. This couple never asked questions, just let me be to enjoy the peace and quiet. I was free to talk if I needed to. The gentleman has gone to be with the Lord now, and Bel has moved into an aged care facility in town. But her home continued to be offered as a sanctuary when needed for many years.

This is true Christian love and acceptance at work.

It became clear that my husband had some painful experiences earlier in life that affected his ability to relate and communicate his feelings without anger. We were not experiencing a marriage most people would call a marriage, and in the effort to keep the home life as stable and balanced as possible, I had become very compliant.

A wise lady once said, 'Having a husband like that makes you vulnerable to control from others.'

This statement has been borne out in the following chapters.

I would like to make some general comments on submission and bullying. Submission by force is not submission. Submission by choice is God honouring. In a way, I have felt battered into compliance throughout some phases of my life, but then the Pharisees tried the same with Jesus. He was not bitter but went to the cross battered and bruised. His damaged body lay in a tomb three days. But the Holy Spirit is stronger and more powerful than death. Jesus is alive. He is the only living God. He is the only God worthy of all honour and glory and praise.

Bullying comes in the same basket. This can cover a range of behaviours, from teasing, which has got a bit out of control as in my childhood, to serious criminal activity. However, in a church or home context, it tends to be a psychological assault. A bully simply tries to dominate others either to boost their own self-image or hide insecurities. If someone is perceived as a possible threat to their dominance, the bully will systematically

undermine that person's confidence and sometimes their reputation until they are coerced into compliance.

Bullying is usually a very covert and subtle form of abuse that can be difficult to identify. Constant criticism, verbal abuse, unrealistic expectations, and manipulation are all examples of bullying behaviours. But it is the sustained nature of the abuse and the context in which it happens, such as a home environment, that turn seemingly minor incidents into seriously damaging abuse, leading to a damaged soul in childhood and loss of personal identity in adults.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we need to be so close to our Saviour that any bullying, ridicule, or mocking from any source runs off our backs and onto his.

Some people reading this may be wondering, why do I stay? Do I have a victim mentality? Am I a martyr? Is my self-esteem so low I bow to such treatment?

This is my own conclusion and where we are now. We are more like housemates than husband and wife, but I no longer see it as my full responsibility to change that. I prefer to see the good in people and believe God is working in both our lives. I have made the decision to continue to be pro-active and let my husband know what I am comfortable with and what I don't think is appropriate.

After constant criticism of my grocery shopping and cooking, which has greatly improved over the years, I gave him the kitchen. He likes this role, but it has shut me out of that area of the house to some extent. My

husband has a very large space bubble and seems uncomfortable when I appear to intrude in his territory.

Gradually I am claiming back lost territory, both inside and outside the house, and taking more freedom for myself. It is up to me to break out of the containment I have fostered to make things as smooth and comfortable for my partner. In the Bible we are told to respect our husbands. This to me means to honour my husband as my husband, but I don't believe this means to accept everything he does and says. I have not included certain details for any other reason than to express my story, my experience.

With regard to this manuscript, my husband read the first draft. He acknowledged he had known for some time I was called to write my story. When he read this chapter, his response was, 'I respect your point of view, but what you have written may be your story, but it is not mine.'

I have included this in fairness to him and you, the reader, for you are reading my perspective only. However, my husband did acknowledge my right to publish this book. For this I honour him.

My husband has always been a hard worker and skilled with his hands. This is admirable, and so are his acts of kindness and generosity extended to others. In small ways, he has started to soften towards me. I see a gentler person emerging.

My love will fail, but God's love never fails.

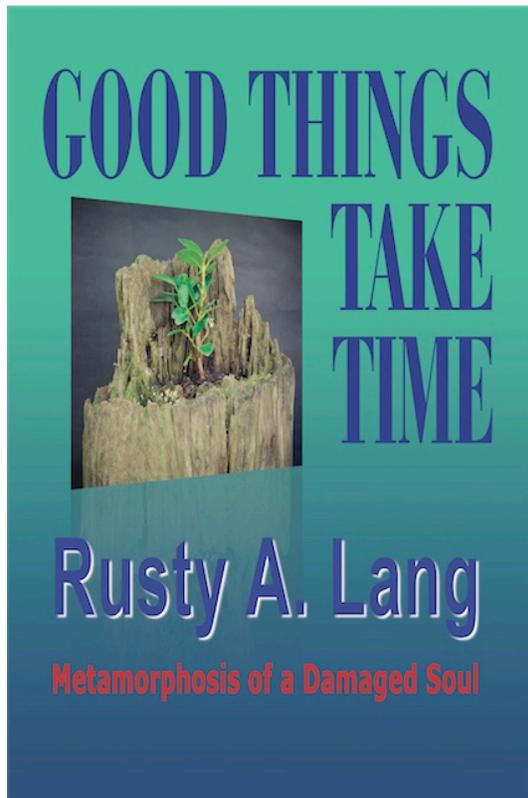
As Kris Vallotton says in his book *School of the Prophets*, 'Unearth hidden treasures in secret places of darkness.'

The biggest challenge for me, and this has much to do with my past, is protecting my life paddock. Only allowing good in and keeping evil out. Keeping the gate to my paddock in my control with the Lord's help.

The second challenge is living with a house husband with a tendency to micro manage. In my book *Warrior Bride: Building Women of Strength*, published in 2017, I state that my response is to show the same grace as God has shown me while not letting a door mat seed sprout. God has freed me from the spousal control which comes with the abusive behaviour and I need to stay free to be whom God wants me to be.

It has now been over twenty one years since I walked down the aisle for the last time. God is the master of turning disaster into victory. Tsunami shock waves do disappear eventually, even as they leave devastation behind. As someone once said, the scars from abuse can either adorn or disfigure our tomorrows.

People are able to rebuild lives, either together or apart.



Rejected by her family, wandering the globe, experiencing numerous relationships and exploring experimental lifestyles. Rusty suffers heartache, pain and betrayal. Coerced into compliance. Surviving by her wits. A woman seeking an elusive destiny. A miraculous meeting with Jesus propels her towards wholeness and service for the kingdom of God.

Good Things Take Time: Metamorphosis of a Damaged Soul

by Rusty A. Lang

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