

“OFFICER INVOLVED SPOUSE”

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Foundational Truths, Chapter 7

(You will find throughout the entire book that there is no mention of faith or scripture. The purpose behind this is to gain a trust in the common knowledge of the law enforcement career's impact on the officer, the marriage and the family.

There are reasons, however, that I needed to sift through and explain each chapter through the lens of Christianity. Welcome to chapter seven...)

Perspective

You will find throughout these chapters that I've stated certain ways to look at things, perspective shifts to consider and instructions to follow in order to heal your marriage and family relationships. I believe that in every "common sense" method attributed to the growth of people and anything that creates a change of heart, you will find has its foundation in the bible.

I am not a theologian, nor am I anything close to a seminary student, so I give you the following information because it comes from my heart.

God came mightily into our lives early in our marriage and during the first stages of police work. Brian and I both had radical changes because of the Lord, mine was a light switch moment and his was a dimmer switch journey, but definitely life altering for both of us. We did, however, live for about seven years in a very hostile environment because I had come to know Christ and Brian was not interested initially. I went to church, joined bible studies, volunteered for everything under the sun and left my husband at home. This was not a positive experience for either one of us and it wasn't until I realized that I wasn't making church or God look very good in Brian's eyes that things began to change. I began to make more of an effort to invite him, and at times would not attend weekend church or fellowship events so

that he would see me placing my marriage as a priority in my life. Yes, church can become a warped idol if you let it. God first, but He also requires you to put your covenantal marriage in an honored place in your life. You get to decide how you proceed, but visibly and tangibly respecting the spouse in your life can help heal your marriage.

God helped us see our lives in light of eternity and we are ever so grateful for that transition. Fully surrendered and fully known by the God of the universe, we were invited into a beautiful and free life because of His gift of grace. We admitted our sins and repented. We surrendered our lives and our marriage to Him fully for our good and for His glory on this earth. We accepted the freedom that comes when the shackles of this life drop from our weary souls and allow for a clearer vision of His path for our lives.

In the Beginning

God created and rested, the fall came and sin entered the world. For years the people lived sinfully, leading to lives overwhelmed with fear, isolation, bitterness, anger, desperation, and loss of hope. God sent His one and only prophesied son to this earth humbly and created a beautiful picture of hope restored. His son, Jesus carried our sins to the cross, was crucified, died and was buried. This act was God's proclamation that there could be access to him through belief in His son, Jesus- who is the avenue of your forgiven sin. In the temple that day, the curtain was torn from top to bottom, signifying a new access for us to connect with the Creator of the universe through His son, Jesus. Jesus rose and ascended into heaven and left the Holy Spirit to live inside of each and every one of us who declares that Jesus is indeed the son of God.

Pretty simple, we just say "yes" to God and he comes to live inside. Your normal, everyday life now takes on new meaning. Accepting His authority over your life -

really, handing yourself over to Him is the safest thing to do. We think we have it all worked out, but He has a better plan for you. (Hint: He does it better anyway.)

Some may view this as a weakness. The thought that you would "bow down" to another's authority. As an officer, it is difficult to give up your authority. It really doesn't make sense that you would willingly do something that looks like a "weak" act. Amazingly enough, this actually allows you to become stronger than you've ever been.

Do you notice that you feel empty? Restless? Ready to jump out of your skin? Consider this...

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." Colossians 2:13-15

When sins are forgiven and hope is restored you are a new creation, able to walk forward on a purposeful path that God has already created for you. He makes all things new and looks at you through Jesus to see how beautifully and uniquely He created you - talents, interests, hobbies and choices.

He LOVES that you chose to be in law enforcement. He has boundaries and limits to be respected, and you also have boundaries and limits that you expect to be followed. Maybe you can see some similarities in that? The streets are a mess and you're exposed to it daily. The world is a mess, and God sees every moment of it.

You say, "If only people would just respect us and follow our orders, we are really here for their safety and most of the time we know what's best." In a similar sense,

God says, "If only people would just be obedient, I can save them because I know what's best."

"...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

Ultimately, He leaves you to choose. We are not puppets with a master who guides our strings, we have choices. Choices that draw you to Him. Choices that are tempting and can promote a sinful lifestyle. Choices that can ultimately breakdown trust, hurt a marriage and destroy a family.

God ultimately desires for you to choose to look His way, consider surrendering your life to Him and ask for your sins to be forgiven. When you are at the end of your rope, or find yourself deep in your own personal pit, we pray that you would look up and see that He loves you, He wants you and He has an amazing plan for you.

Solid Skepticism

First of all, can I come right out and apologize if you've been hurt by anyone who calls themselves a "Christian", "follower of Christ" or "faithful church attender"? May I also apologize for any church you've attended that has not been a place of refuge for you?

People make mistakes. Christians are people, which means they make mistakes all the time. Churches are filled with people who call themselves "Christians", so that means churches end up hurting people, too.

As an officer you may have a scepticism regarding church because you've most likely arrested a staff member or volunteer when they got caught molesting a child or a different crime that doesn't seem to suit someone in their capacity. You believe they

are held in high regard in the eyes of their community, and now you know something about them that just leaves a bad taste in your mouth. You wonder how many times that has happened before and it was just quietly swept under the rug? With your experience, you've no doubt formed a strong opinion regarding church and church staff that doesn't shed a good light on the people of God.

Another scenario may be that you've been to the home of a pastor because their child is a mess or addicted, on the streets and stealing from their parents. Oh, and *bonus*, they have a Mercedes sitting in their driveway, so you decide that they are skimming church tithes and completely dismiss the idea of ever attending a church. It seems reasonable at this point for you to make a judgement call regarding *all* pastors because you've seen these circumstances all too many times.

Hey, you're not wrong. We cannot ignore the fact that in today's culture, churches and members are just as tempted to break the law as typical citizens. Being a Christian doesn't make you perfect. In fact, we know that as Christians that we need the parenthood of God to be guided away from those temptations. Side note: not every person who tells you they are a Christian is really walking that better path. Only God can know the true heart of a believer.

*"I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve."
Jeremiah 17:10*

These foundational truths will help steer you toward the biblical basis of the concepts that we covered in chapters one through six and point you toward some scriptures that you can look up yourself as an active participant in learning about God's best for your life.

Also, for more information on biblical Christianity, seek out your local church pastor, or go to www.peacewithgod.net. This site is hosted by the Billy Graham Evangelistic

Association and has a short step-by-step process of surrendering your life to Christ and also offers immediate chatting capability online if you have questions.

What about the bible?

Are you afraid to read the bible? Have you heard information surrounding the bible that may confuse you? Please, please, pick up a bible today. I know there are many people that will disagree, but I am giving you permission to find *any* translation of the bible that suits you. Many will claim that only certain versions of the bible are worth studying. To that I say, "Pshhh, phooey"! (Could you hear my slight spitting sound with that remark?) Just begin somewhere and God will meet you there, I promise.

"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

ALL scripture. Remember, I said you were unique? Look at a few different bible versions at a local Christian bookstore so that you can browse the literary styles and touch the pages. Take it all in. I love having the NIV and The Message paraphrase in the same bible - literally those two bibles are side by side on each page of my bible. This is probably because I learn through stories which is what *The Message* offers. This may not work for you...that is OK! You know what strikes your fancy, so pick one up and get a move on to some really solid and intimate conversations with God.

"...the Bible, all of it, is livable; it is the text for living our lives. It reveals a God-created, God-ordered, God-blessed world in which we find ourselves at home and whole." -Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book

Biblical Concepts Within Chapter One - Self Care

If you are a Christian, God obviously comes first and is our first priority. Until God is first in our lives, everything else will seem off-balance.

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33*

The self care interests that you desire were specifically and intimately designed for you by God. Value and love yourself enough to remember who you are in the marriage, but also what inspires you as an individual. God sees you as His masterpiece, He wants you to display the beautiful person that He has made in YOU.

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10

Husbands and wives...we are friends, but we are different. We may have interests that require us to be alone, or we may need to adjust some of our "likes" so that we can be involved in fun things together. Appreciate one another's uniqueness and love them just the way they were made to be.

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8

If you have a difficult time thinking about what you could do as a self-nurture activity, or possibly believe that it's not necessary, remember that even the Creator of the Universe rested on the seventh day, and then blessed it and made it holy.

"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." Genesis 2:2-3

Biblical Concepts Within Chapter Two - Personality Plus

It is true that God made each person uniquely beautiful, there are no copies in this world. We praise God for this uniqueness!

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." Psalm 139:14 (ESV)

You and your spouse are most likely very different; you have different perspectives, different likes and dislikes, different ways of dealing with issues. You are so valuable and so needed by the body of Christ for your individual characteristics and gifts. When Christians speak of the "body of Christ", they are referring to the people on earth who believe in Jesus, the son of God and the Holy Spirit that resides in those who believe (The Trinity). Believers are confident of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection. We know that we need to be connected to each other in order for our own personal talents and giftings to be used to further Christ's message.

When your gift is used well in the church body, you contribute to growing God's kingdom here on earth and serve others the way the Lord intended.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

I'll take this opportunity to point out that because we are all so different and so unique, we have different ways of learning about God. Some of us are intellectual learners (books, bible commentaries, note-taking), auditory learners (podcasts, audio bible), kinesthetic learners (worship conferences, prayer ministry) and some of us are visual learners (worship bands, bible charts or graphs). The way you learn may not be completely fulfilled if you are going to a church where some styles

aren't incorporated. You may need to branch out and do some seeking of your own to find a good fit for your learning style.

Because of the differences in learning style and personality type, it may be difficult to release yourself to God, as mentioned before with the warped belief of authority figure, you may just end up adopting for yourself a spiritual guide in whatever is comfortable for the moment. If you're reading this right now and feel quite confused, rest assured that however you come, the Lord is very personal and knows you very well. When you are tired of pushing the car uphill, say in very simple terms,

"Lord, I don't want to figure out this life by myself anymore, I welcome you in my life as my Lord and Savior, please take this life and make it your own." Yes, there are many ways to say it, but if the sentiment is true and from your heart, He will hear and answer you.

*"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."
Revelation 3:30*

There is an enemy that enjoys seeing marriages and families fail. That same enemy opposes the act of giving your life to Christ. It is up to you to make the choice to surrender to Christ as your Lord and Savior. Satan will give you all kinds of reasons not to become a Christian - he will relate to your weaknesses and fears. Everything he whispers is a lie, do not agree with those lies.

Do a personal, internal survey. What, if anything, is blocking you from wholeheartedly laying yourself in the Father's hand and surrendering to His will for your life?

"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

Salvation is the saving grace of God, a promise that He has prepared a place in heaven for you. A place where we can safely live in Eternity with Him forever. He comes to heal us and He can come into your marriage to heal that as well. We would be wise to surrender our marriage to the Lord as well.

"Being in war together may be what keeps us from being at war with each other. Rather than neglecting the battle to work on your marriage, maybe the best thing for your marriage is to enter the battlefield together."

– Francis Chan

Try and take off the boxing gloves and come together for your marriage and family. Fight, yes. But fight shoulder to shoulder, not face to face.

Biblical Concepts Within Chapter Three - Integrity is Everything

Prioritizing and planning are helpful ways to keep your relationship and your home running well. Even more so, when you invite God into the mix, the plans that you place before Him become more organized and have more meaning.

"To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue. All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do and he will establish your plans." Proverbs 16:1-3

Honoring each other by sharing well and being a good listener builds trust in a relationship. Lead with a kind heart into all conversations and give your spouse hope that good changes are on the horizon.

"The most effective way to open the door to needed changes in a relationship is to honor a loved one. And once we've made that decision to honor, love is the action we take no matter how we feel. Genuine love is honor put into

action, regardless of the cost."

-Gary Smalley with John Trent, Love is a Decision

As proclaiming Christians, we also need to be honest in our relationships. Lying is something that should have been shed with our old selves, but in all honesty, we will always be a work in progress.

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." Colossians 3:9-10

Respectfully listening is also a God-honoring skill to pick up along the way. Be a patient listener without interrupting. Be an attentive listener without only thinking of what your rebuttal will be. Be a servant-hearted listener as an act of humility. Be an active listener, always aware that your body language and facial expressions should convey an interest in what your partner is saying. Confirm what you've heard in a conversation, allowing your spouse to be certain you have a clear understanding of what is being communicated. All of these acts of service in listening will take you miles in the rebuilding of your relationship.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others." Philippians 2:3-4

Living out a Jesus-centered life doesn't mean that relationships are going to be easy. You may think you're a good person, so things should go smoothly for you but, we live in a messed-up and fallen world that doesn't follow our whims. Suffering is likely in our relationships here on earth, but true joy comes when we are able to trust in God's plan, look in the rear view mirror for the past victories and claim His truth over our life - the good, the bad and the ugly. Begin to trust that He will sustain you through your journey, regardless of what that journey looks like.

"God is more interested in your character than your comfort. God is more interested in making your life holy than He is in making your life happy."

Pastor Rick Warren

Anger is like an iceberg, you see a large amount of it on the surface of conversations and arguments, but it's important to realize what is underneath all of that anger. What are the other emotions that got you to the boiling point? Are you grieving something or someone, or scared, disappointed, embarrassed? Drilling down with a Christian counselor can help unearth some emotions that you may have been suppressing and it comes out as anger.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:30-32

When you come to Christ, you become a new person, the bible refers to you as a "new creation", as stated, "...the old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17) Make certain you are not just blaming your spouse for the anger outburst within your marital conversations, sometimes we have to take a look at our upbringing and truly ask ourselves if this isn't a response to a former way of looking at life.

"We are responsible for our own attitudes, for they exist inside our "property line." they are within our hearts, not someone else's. God repeatedly tells us to examine and take responsibility for the attitudes and beliefs that govern our lives."

-Dr. Henry Cloud, Changes That Heal

Accepting your spouse the way they are and remembering why you married them is important. Go and watch your wedding video or look at some pictures from when

you were dating. Refrain from setting unrealistic marital goals or comparing your spouse to someone else, as this can cause deep emotional pain. Those movies, tv shows or social media posts are fake! Trust me, there is baggage in every relationship, even the marriages you see that seem "perfect".

Set goals for a great marriage, but let God design yours uniquely and in His way. No two marriages are the same, but they all can equally glorify God because He designed marriage as an example of Christ and the Church.

Remember, God did not make just one person for you, (there is no such thing as a "soulmate"), He made a woman for a man and in every relationship there is much work to do, no matter who you are married to.

It takes work to keep a marriage going. You may be confused if you feel as though you are still learning how to be married or think that you're not good at it. Rest assured, any "title" or "role" you receive in this life takes some learning. When you walked into the wedding, you were single - then, as soon as the pastor pronounced you "man and wife", you became a spouse, regardless of whether or not you knew how to be one. Give yourself some grace.

Biblical Concepts Within Chapter Four - The Painful Reality

Every marriage has trouble and conflicts. Sometimes those differences can escalate into an angry encounter. It is important to remember that your anger is not always the problem, it is how you react when you're angry that can really create the wedge in your relationship.

Jesus expressed the natural emotion of anger many times in scripture. He was angry with the money changers at the temple because of the inappropriate use of the House of God (Matthew 21, Mark 11, John 2). He was also angry with the

Pharisees in their judgement of him regarding his healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3), identifying that they were more interested in the letter of the law instead of the spirit of the law.

God does have anger as well, however, His anger has redemption attached to it.

"How does God respond when something important in His world is wrong? He responds redemptively... by sending His very own Son to this broken world to be broken on the cross. He sacrificed Christ so that His people can be forgiven, transformed, and restored to a right relationship with Him and with others. Your anger can also result in redemption. When you come to God and find forgiveness for Jesus' sake, you will be filled with God's Spirit....you can learn to say, "That's wrong," without ranting, exaggerating what happened or calling someone names, cursing or hating the person." -David Powlison (Dealing With Your Anger, FamilyLife.com)

Our prayer for you is that as you explore the world of Christianity, become more familiar with the bible and invite others into your journey, you would begin to recognize your relationship with anger. It is meant to be a temporary emotion that should never take up residence within your life or become the way you are defined as a person.

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing." 2 Corinthians 2:14-15

The aroma of Christ...very simply, if we want to live our God's best in our conversations, conflict and even arguments, we should always ask Him to give us the ability to leave a sweet aroma behind.

How does your spouse remember your last conversation...or rather, how did the room "smell" when you left?

It is our desire through these seven weeks that you would pick up on the idea of being kind in a consistent manner. Develop a pattern of having a softer way of expressing yourself. Develop good patterns so that your spouse and family can trust that you are desiring to be good at listening and good at responding.

Do you feel like you just can't help it? The discussions that you have with your spouse just elevate to a yelling level and there's nothing you can do about it?

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

Scripture seems to indicate that everyone will be tempted. Being faithful to God means to believe that what He says is true. Don't miss the fact that God will provide a way out of the temptations in your life, but it's best to realize you cannot do this alone. When tempted to respond in an angry tone, wait a moment and lift a quiet and quick prayer to God asking for his help in responding in a better way. If you allow Him into your life in times like these, you will reap a great reward and create better patterns of communication.

"The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty. Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life." Proverbs 22:3-4

It may be time to set your mind on things above and get rid of a prideful mindset. This may be a new concept for you, to set your mind on Godly things and Godly ways, rest assured you can start small and actively add it to your life on a daily basis. Proactively see when you are headed for danger and make a choice to go to God.

Biblical Concepts Within Chapter Five - Home Sweet Home

Teachers, Preachers and Cops. These are sometimes the careers that are servant-hearted and give much of their time to people outside of their own family group. They are careers taken on by individuals that desire to help others and it can sometimes come at the detriment of their own family. They're tugged, pulled at and needed by people all day, every day and it can get exhausting. They need to see their home as a sanctuary.

As wives of a law enforcement officer, we adapt our home to their schedules, we create a rhythm of care for a consistent family life and we become really intentional about what we realistically can accomplish within a day. We try very hard to focus on things that will relieve their stress, improve their tolerance and create boundaries so that our family feels safe. We are tugged, pulled at and needed, too. All day, every day and that can be exhausting for us. We need to see our home as a sanctuary.

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." Psalm 32:7

I want to take this opportunity to give you some tips and tools for looking at your home and your marriage as a place of respite and growth. God is our ultimate shelter, safe hiding place and refuge in times of trouble, but your home and marriage can begin to reflect the heart of God as you lean into Him and His holy ways.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

One way you can grow yourself and strengthen your marriage is to consider committing some time every day to sit quietly before the Lord. When you enter into building your marriage on more of a Godly platform by beginning some type of daily devotion (A bible reading plan, Christian websites that send daily emails,

podcasts, devotional books) you may find that God becomes bigger in your life and eventually the daily tasks take on more meaning because you're not doing them for the enjoyment of a reward from a spouse, you're actually completing tasks to fulfill your God-given roles in this life. You're a wife, a mom, a daughter, a sister and a friend to someone. Those roles may come with separate job duties, but they can all produce much fruit in your life even if they seem monotonous.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." Colossians 3:23-24

Hooray for the mundane! Celebrate the normal and get used to the everyday monotony. It's not bad unless you have a poor perspective. The ordinary can be so beautiful when you learn to rest in it. It is so tempting to compare your life to another's, not realizing what they may have going on behind their four walls could be defined as disastrous to you.

Another way to help your marriage is by staying right where you are. In the book of Jeremiah, it says, *"...Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce."* (29:5) This is exactly what God wants us to do as we accept the season that we find ourselves in, no matter what feelings, behaviors, beliefs and emotions come with that season. The Lord wants to see us settle into the thankfulness of having a place to rest and a companion to work alongside. He wants to see that we have the ability to learn "how" to wait (gardens take a loooong time to grow) even when things look mighty dim.

"When I am in a season I don't want to be in, my bags are packed. I have my eye on the door, looking for any escape routes. I am not a buyer or a builder during these seasons; I am a renter - and I am barely willing to sign a month-to-month lease. To engage and "settle down" into a life I am not happy with seems incongruous with the future I want to pursue.

-Laurie Short, Finding Faith in the Dark

And yet, even though we want to follow our feelings that may lead us into bitterness, resentment and even isolation, God is there for us, waiting to grow our faith in this season and cheering us on to maturity. When we agree with the lies of the enemy, we begin to believe that our life does suck, we deserve more, we want things to go our way and we will do anything to make that happen. Even if that means we choose to leave our spouse because we want the pain to cease quickly. This just isn't God's best for you.

"Therefore, let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you." Psalm 31:6-8

Lastly, pray. Prayer is often such a baffling mystery at times, but the act of releasing yourself and your troubles into a conversation with the Creator of the universe can provide an immense amount of peace in your situation. Not that your situation will immediately change, but prayer can allow God to work in us to change perspectives, convict us of sin and prompt us into repentance - replacing our heart of stone with a heart of flesh that can be molded and made to look more like His.

Biblical Concepts Within Chapter Six - The Police Culture

This chapter was written from an interview I had with my husband, Brian. I recorded him one day shortly before he retired. He was a bit uncomfortable, but I couldn't believe what came out during our 20 minutes together. He spoke at length about the academy, how hard our young married life had been and about how strong the brotherhood of cops becomes for a young officer.

One of the topics he brought up during that interview was the need for an officer to choose a mentor for themselves. He said to watch and listen to that mentor and learn from him regarding your own personal growth. I loved that he shared how important mentors are in one's life, regardless of your career. Along those same lines, I want to mention one of the best investments you can make in your marriage is to seek out a "Marriage Mentor" for you as a couple.

Marriage mentors can help lead, guide and encourage you through tough times and offer suggestions that will pay dividends for years to come. They should be people you respect, admire and are at least 5 years ahead of you in life. This couple would be people that display a "fruitfulness" in their marriage by reflecting the love of Jesus in action and word.

Ask this couple if they would be willing to pray for your marriage and meet with you at least once per month to discuss questions or concerns you may have regarding marriage. They don't necessarily have to be in law enforcement, because the Lord will be instrumental in whomever you may choose if you are doing this for the benefit of your marriage.

Inviting a "Mentor Marriage" to be involved in your progress is a great way to be held accountable for how you're treating each other, what you're choosing to do with your spare time and how you're investing time into learning about a life lived out before God.

Brian also spoke of the difficulties brought into your life because of the temperament of the men on the force. After your swear-in, you take the oath and have a tendency to become "badge heavy", or idolize your "authoritative" self. You live life in a very demanding career and much of your time is spent at work. You see things you never imagined were possible and sometimes through the years you may try to numb the trauma and pain with different substances, adrenaline seeking activities, poor moral conduct and even isolation. We know so much more now

about trauma and how it can begin a vicious cycle of mental health issues if it is not "dumped" well. Between all of that and the overall mentality required of the police officer, your world can feel overwhelming.

"I thought my major defect of character was my sin addiction to alcohol. But I learned that it was only a symptom. God showed me that my biggest character defect was my nonexistent self-esteem....I attempted to cover up that poor self-image with the world's largest ego...I carried my character defects with me until I finally got into recovery." -John Baker, Life's Healing Choices

We know that God never lets go of us, even if we make poor choices. He loves us and desires for us to realize a better and more freedom-filled life in Him. Admitting what's wrong and asking for help is sometimes the hardest decision, but it is also the bravest decision.

"I made the decision to ask Christ into my heart when I was thirteen years old. When I went to college, I chose to follow my own way. In fact, for the next nineteen years I followed the world's way. But no matter how hard I tried to run, how many times I sinned, or how many poor choices I made, God never let go of my hand. My way left me empty and broken."

-John Baker, Life's Healing Choices

My desire in writing this seven week journey is to bring you hope, for both the officer and the wife. To open some doors, windows and even closets that have been shut for a while. To usher in a breath of fresh air and a sigh of relief. To come to terms with how your relationship has been hurting lately and how the communication needs some work. To invite you to participate in the life-giving way of Christianity as you pursue a personal relationship with God and His son, Jesus and by welcoming in the Spirit to do some work on your souls to beautify your marriage so that it can shine for all to see.

I pray that you are able to identify if the two of you are in need of marital counseling by a licensed therapist.

"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long." Psalm 32:3

These chapters should have shed some light on the dark spots of your relationship, those areas that can be brought to the attention of someone trained and can really help assist you in healing the hurts. My pastor for many years, Dr. Rick Warren, (Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, CA) often stated that "revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing." I took a cue from him and walked forward into sharing some of our raw stories. I hope you know that you're not alone in this blue line life. We are with you and for you.

"Lord, Thank you for calling me by name and making me your own. Even when others don't see my officer for who he is, you do. Being a police wife is just one of the many blessings I am created for. While others see me as just a police wife, I love how you created me with purpose that exceeds such a role. Remind me often how I am yours and you are mine. Help me to show patience with others who don't understand this life of law enforcement. Help me to be a blessing in and outside of our law enforcement family."

-Allison P. Uribe, Cuffs&Coffee, a devotional for wives

PDF SPECIFICE NOTE: Why would I create this for you to download? This chapter is near and dear to my heart. It is part of our story and I am hoping and praying that if it is also part of yours, that it somehow touches a painpoint and begins to heal and/or directs you toward individual or couples counseling. If you are interested in the entire book, it is on Amazon and also can be found for immediate download from our website, www.peaksandvalleys.life. I appreciate any and all shares on social media along with any reviews on Amazon. Our goal is

to help Christian and Law Enforcement marriages open lines of communication with each other that will eventually lead to a more connected and understanding relationship, ushering in the beauty of a peaceful home. You can help with that goal by telling other LEOWs and giving them the information they need to help a struggling marriage. May God be with you mightily!

Blessings, Linda