

ALWAYS SOMEONE



To lay blame on someone else is as old as Adam. From time to time we all indulge in laying the blame for what goes wrong in our lives. But until we assume responsibility for the choices we make, God will play a waiting game with us. We may then wonder why we are missing out on being where we believe God wants us to be.

Bravely, and openly sharing her heart on laying blame, Raylene Pearce as guest speaker, spoke at a Rural Women's Camp in Melrose in October 2009.

Raylene had been given a foundation for life by her Christian family and church, for which she praises the Lord. 'I've loved Jesus since I was two years old,' she enthuses. It was during those first twenty years where the desire to be a missionary was born.

God has a way of being patient, and seemingly to sit back and wait, until we come to a certain place of desperation. Raylene was no exception. She speaks of her anguish while living for two years in Papua New Guinea on an Army base with her husband.

She remembers a night in October 1982, because it was a turning point in her life. 'I spent most of the early part of the night composing a letter in my head to my father-in-law. Because of him, my marriage was in tatters. I had witnessed his behaviour toward his wife, whom I loved very much. He treated her appallingly and told her his future didn't include her. My husband, his son, was doing the same to me.'

Getting out of bed, Raylene sat in the lounge room, the louver windows open to the tropical air. A street light shone onto the coffee table. A small booklet caught her eye, and turning a page she read, 'The Lord will not lead you, where His Spirit cannot keep you.' She thought of where she was in a disintegrating marriage. How could the Lord lead her and keep her in such a place? It was at that moment that she began to feel ashamed that she should blame her father-in-law for the breakdown in her marriage. 'My husband hadn't learnt how to be a husband because of his father's bad example, and his father's father died when he was a baby. I felt I had no business to blame anyone.'

While pondering this, Raylene sank to her knees. 'I don't generally do this when I pray. Quite suddenly I found myself saying three words, I felt that my Heavenly Father had been waiting for years to hear me say, "I've botched it."' At the confession, the power of God was released and wave after wave of love flooded through her. She found herself speaking in a strange language. This prayer language flowed on and on engulfing Raylene, and she lost track of time. God had filled her with Himself. 'I got up from the coffee table and went to bed just as it was getting light. That was four hours later,' she says. 'All I know is that as confession poured out, God's Spirit flowed in.'

At the breakfast table next day, doubts began to arise. Did she imagine what happened? She must be going mad. Why should this happen to her now, when her marriage was failing? As soon as the family was off to school and work she went to her bedroom again and questioned the Lord about what had happened.

ELSE'S FAULT



Another language, this time in song, began to flow. Then Raylene asked the Lord what she was singing in English. The song started: 'Hallelujah, Hallelujah, my Lord I see, My King is in heaven, his Spirit in me.'

'This experience empowered me,' Raylene says, 'but I was puzzled as to the timing. My marriage had virtually ended. I asked my share group to ask God on my behalf as to why he was filling me with his Spirit now? My friend from New Zealand came back with the only answer, "It is for the future," Ngairie said.'

'And it was,' Raylene recalls. 'In December we returned to Australia and my husband went to his new posting, choosing to leave us in Adelaide. He divorced me two years later.' After eighteen years of marriage, Raylene found herself a single mum with two sons to bring up alone. But she wasn't alone. Her church at Coromandel Valley cared for them, and found a home for them nearby in Hawthorndene.

The future included ministering with other hurting women. At one camp she organised at Victor Harbor, Raylene began to cry. She says, 'I cried all night. I couldn't stop. It was most embarrassing.' Next morning, she asked one of the older women present, a widow, 'what am I going to do? I can't stop crying.'

Clarice thought, and said, 'God has a ministry for you among women and you will have to deal with a great amount of grief. You've been given the gift of tears now so that you will not be overwhelmed in the future.' This too proved true. God was indeed preparing her for the future in the *Overcomers*, a group she lead for many years at Coromandel Valley Uniting Church.

Raylene's future also included twelve years of being the South Australian Director of *Interserve*, an interdenominational mission working in South and Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. In 1994, Interserve sent her to the Middle East as Personnel Director for Middle East Media. She spent ten years working with the Egyptian Church, operating out of Cyprus and Cairo. She ministered to local women as well as to the expatriate missionaries.

This also included speaking and recruiting personnel at cross-cultural conferences, Bible colleges, and churches. This took her to Europe, the US and Great Britain. She also travelled alone in the Middle East visiting and encouraging families.

In 2005, Raylene returned to Australia and took up another call on her life as a student at Flinders University, and graduated with a BA in Creative Writing in 2008.

In April of 2009, after twenty-six years of single again-ness, Raylene became the wife of Greg Pearce, the minister of Whyalla Uniting Church. In February 2010, Greg took up the call as minister of Coromandel Valley Uniting Church. Raylene was coming home -- to the church that had nurtured her as a single mother, and supported her when she was a missionary in the Middle East. Now she was returning to them, rejoicing – as their new minister's wife!

The Lord brought Raylene through great adversity to fulfil her life-long dream to be a missionary. Even to do greater things than her girl-hood dreams. A scripture that Raylene found much healing and comfort from, and speaks to all people in similar circumstances, is Psalm 34:10 'The Lord is close to the broken hearted he saves those who are crushed by adversity.'

'Nothing in our lives is ever wasted', Raylene loves to say, 'that the Lord cannot redeem it, to make something beautiful for His Glory. All God requires of us is to be real, and to confess our sin and to stop blaming others. The key to my healing and releasing for ministry was when I said, "I've botched it."'

This may be a key for you too. If dreams and ministry fail to materialise, check out whether you are being a victim instead of an *overcomer*. Don't blame others.

Raylene has accepted the invitation, once again, to be the main speaker at the Melrose Rural Women's Camp from Oct 22nd to 25th, 2010. This time she will share the stories of the way Jesus was her protector and companion during her adventures in the Middle East.