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**LETTERS TO MY: FATHER-IN-LAW
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 TO MY HUSBAND
 TO MY FAMILY**

FINAL THOUGHTS

**HOW DOES GOD FEEL ABOUT MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, ADULTERY AND
THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FAMILY?**

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

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DEDICATIONS



My dear hearts, I dedicate this book to you with all my Love.

R'Que and Terrence Singleton words could never, ever express how much you boys mean to me now and forever. I hope that this book will help you to know me (the child, the young adult, and then the woman-your mother) and some of the circumstances surrounding this tragedy--- the break-up of our family. There are two sides to every story and this is my story as seen from my perspective.

Everyone throughout their lives make choices and decisions based on their morals, values, understandings, and convictions. So here we are a family in turmoil, a horrifying example of God's purpose for family. Did we have to be here waddling and remaining in this state of dysfunction---- of course not. But we are. You boys will one day look at the facts and realize for yourselves the answers to the many question I'm sure you have in your hearts (either asked or unasked).

For my little men I wish you much success in all that you do. I wanted only the best of everything for you two. I wish you to grow up to be strong, confident, secure, well rounded, God fearing young men. Please be committed to your families, DO NOT and I emphasize DO NOT take lightly the humongous responsibilities and sacrifices required of you when you choose a partner and plan a family. If your family is not functioning do not look at the other person to "fix" what's wrong, look at yourself first. What are you doing , what values or issues that you are holding on to that continues to cause conflict and unrest in your family.

Boys I also say to you, know whom you're marrying---- what you see is what you get. Don't go into marriage intent on changing a person or even expecting that you will change. The characteristics that you see in the person whom you choose to be your mate is imbedded, they're not going anywhere; you must ask yourselves if you can live with that type of person... if the answer is no, then don't marry, move on. Once married when there are areas of continuous conflict trust God, lift the situation up to him and put yourself in a place to allow God to utilize your strength, courage, and faith to bring peace to your home. If you put God first and allow Him to work through you, everything else will fall into place. I share this with you now because I will not be around when you grow up and these are lessons I've learned in life----- the hard way, and that's what parents do, they share their pitfalls with their children in hopes that you will avoid making the same mistakes.

Elizabeth Stone stated, "making the decision to have children is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart walking around outside of your body." I agree whole heartedly with those sentiments. You boys are my heart, you are my life, and you are the reason for my very existence (aside from my purpose to worship our Lord and Savior).

Love, Hugs, and many, many, kisses to you both forever, and ever, and ever. We will be together again in Heaven my little Angels. For all eternity

I Dedicate This Song To The Boys I Love!

Greatest Love Of All

**I believe the children are our future
Teach them well and let them lead the way
Show them all the beauty they possess inside
Give them a sense of pride to make it easier
Let the children's laughter remind us how we used to be
Everybody searching for a hero
People need someone to look up to
I never found anyone to fulfill my needs
A lonely place to be
So I learned to depend on me**

Chorus:

**I decided long ago, never to walk in anyone's shadows
If I fail, if I succeed
At least I live as I believe
No matter what they take from me
They can't take away my dignity
Because the greatest love of all
Is happening to me
I found the greatest love of all
Inside of me
The greatest love of all
Is easy to achieve
Learning to love yourself
It is the greatest love of all**

**I believe the children are our future
Teach them well and let them lead the way
Show them all the beauty they possess inside
Give them a sense of pride to make it easier
Let the children's laughter remind us how we used to be**

Chorus:

And if by chance, that special place
That you've been dreaming of
Leads you to a lonely place
Find your strength in love

Words and Music by Michael Masser and Linda Creed

I dedicate the following 2 songs to the man I love

You'll Always Be My Baby
(Pantomimed to Reg Nov 2002)

We were as one baby
For a moment in time
And it seemed everlasting
That you would always be mine
Now you want to be free
So I'll let you fly
'Cause I know in my heart
Our love will never die

You'll always be a part of me
I'm part of you indefinitely
Boy don't you know you can't escape me
Ooh darling 'cause you'll always be my baby
And we'll linger on
Time can't erase a feeling this strong
No way you're ever gonna shake me
Oh darling, 'cause you'll always be my baby

I ain't gonna cry
And I won't beg you to stay
If you're determined to leave boy
I will not stand in your way
But inevitably, you'll be back again
'Cause you know in your heart babe
Our love will never end

You'll always be a part of me
I'm part of you indefinitely
Boy don't you know you can't escape me
Ooh darling 'cause you'll always be my baby
And we'll linger on
Time can't erase a feeling this strong
No way you're ever gonna shake me

Oh darling, 'cause you'll always be my baby

**I know that you'll be back boy
When your days and your nights get a little bit colder
I know that you'll be right back boy
Oh baby believe me it's only a matter of time**

**You'll always be a part of me
I'm part of you indefinitely
Boy don't you know you can't escape me
Ooh darling 'cause you'll always be my baby
And we'll linger on
Time can't erase a feeling this strong
No way you're ever gonna shake me
Oh darling, 'cause you'll always be my baby**

Lyrics: Mariah Carey

Music: Jermaine Dupri, Mariah Carey, Manuel Seal

Background Vocals: Mariah Carey, Malanie Daniels, Kelly Price, Shanrae P

One Sweet Day

(Performed Choreographed Dance for Reg Nov 2002)

Boyz II Men

**Sorry I never told you
All I wanted to say
Now it's too late to hold you
'Cause you've flown away
So far away**

Mariah

**Never had I imagined
Living without your smile
Feeling and knowing you hear me
It keeps me alive
Alive**

Together

**And I know you're shining down on me from heaven
Like many friends we've lost along the way
And I know eventually we'll be together
One sweet day**

Boyz II Men

Darling I never showed you

Assumed you'd always be there
Took your presence for granted
But I always cared
And I miss the love we shared

Together

And I know you're shining down on me from heaven
Like so many friends we've lost along the way
And I know eventually we'll be together
One sweet day

Boyz II Men

Although the sun will shine the same
I'll always look to a brighter day

Mariah

Lord I know when I lay me down to sleep
You will always listen as I pray

Together

And I know you're shining on me from heaven
Like so many friends we've lost along the way
And I know eventually we'd be together
One sweet day

And I know you're shining on me from heaven
Like so many friends we've lost along the way
And I know eventually we'd be together
One sweet day

Mariah

Sorry I never told you

Together

All I wanted to say

Lyrics: Mariah Carey, Michael McCary, Nathan Morris, Wanya Morris, Shawn
Stockman,

Music: Mariah Carey, Walter Afanasieff

Reg, I dedicate this song to us
(Our Wedding Song)

I Lean on You/You Lean on Me By the Bar-Kays Lyrics were
unavailable(Al/Alexander/Beard/Dodson/Henderson/Jones/Smith/Stewart/Thompson)

September 8, 2001

The following letter explains things as I remember them between me and Dee. Dee asked me to write this letter in case she ever needs it to pass on some of her history to her children. She want me to tell the facts of why we got divorced.

- Me and Dee loved each other very much. She was my hunny-bunny. We spent all of our free time together massaging, caressing, and pampering each other. We could not think of ever not being together. Our love was innocent and pure it was a true love. I haven't seen Dee in years (until now) she's still as beautiful and sexy as I remembered!
- We had differences but nothing earth shattering. the main thing we fought about was my chewing tobacco and drinking alcohol. Dee thought I drank too much and she was worried that I was going to be an alcoholic (my father was for years and still is) if I didn't stop drinking so much. I was young and had these vices for a very long time. My dad owned a bar when I was growing up and I had been drinking since I was 12 years old. Drinking and chewing was a part of me and I had a hard time quitting. I tried

time and time again to quit. Dee didn't drink or smoke so I don't think she know how hard I tried to quit but couldn't. We went round and round about this from time to time. Other than the chewing and drinking we didn't have much else to fight about. Turns out Dee was right about the drinking I spent several weeks in detox about a year after we got divorced the drinking had got real bad.

- Me and Dee didn't have children. Deidre insisted on waiting to have children until we both received our college degrees so that we could make a nice home for the children. She said she wanted us to make enough money to be able to save for the kids college education. I wanted children right away at first but later I agreed with Dee.
- The army paid for my LVN school in San Antonio. After I finished with school I had to decide where I wanted to go next. Dee asked me to stay in San Antonio so she could finish her classes. I did not want to work at the old BAMC, I wanted to go somewhere else, so I asked to go to places I knew had nicer hospitals than old BAMC. Dee told me she would not come with me if I asked to go some place else, she said if I asked for San Antonio and didn't get it she

would come with me if I wanted her to. I still didn't want to work at Brooke so I didn't ask to stay. I wanted Dee to come with me where I went and apply to school when we got there. When I received my assignment to go to Hawaii and realized Dee was not coming with me I tried to change my assignment or trade with someone else but it was too late. I could not get reassigned and no one would trade. We were both very sad we cried together. I wanted to stay with my hunny-bunny!

- I went to Hawaii alone. Dee would be coming in about nine months. I put us on the housing list. The waiting list for housing was 2-3 months you'd stay in a hotel until you can move into housing. Dee told me she got accepted to the nursing school at the University of Hawaii and would be coming when she finished up her classes.
- Several months after being in Hawaii I made a life changing mistake. I had an extramarital affair. I also made a baby during this time. I did not know how to tell Dee. I was very confused and angry. I was overwhelmed by everything going on around me. I didn't want to hurt or lose Dee so I didn't call or write. My life was spinning out of control and I

didn't know what to do so I did nothing. I just lived in the moment. I withdrew and began to drink more. When Dee got a long break from school she came to Hawaii. I could not tell her everything that had gone on over the past year so I showed her a picture of my daughter. She didn't seem surprised.

- As though that was not enough when Dee came to Hawaii I was not living in the barracks she found me living with my mistress. A eerie thing I think of about this time when Dee came to visit is when me and Dee was standing beside my car my neighbor's son was outside on his bike he came by and said Hi Mr Walker, where's your wife? Dee who was my real wife was standing beside me when I said, she's at work. Only family is allowed to stay in the government houses we was in so we had to tell everyone we was married.
- This situation me and Brenda was in had several things that was punishable by the Uniformed Code of Military Justice both of us was enlisted active duty soldiers at the time and Dee could have gone to our commanders and gotten us in lots of trouble.
- Deidre was a class act. She was very hurt and heartbroken and I was so mad at myself to have made

her so sad. She was always so energetic and full of life. When it was time for Dee to leave to go back to the Mainland she gave us all hugs (including Brenda and the kids) and bowed out of our lives gracefully. Dee didn't do anything vindictive or selfish. I wish she had put up more of a fight. I asked her several years later (we ran into each other by chance after many many years) why she didn't fight for her man and she told me that I didn't give her much of a choice. She said I had already started a new family if it were just another woman she would have created more of a fuss, but when there was a child involved she didn't want to force anything that could lead to resentment years later. She said she did not want to be the reason for the child growing up without her real parents no matter how wrong the conception was. I wanted Dee to still be my wife I came up with ideas for us to still be together and make this work but Dee didn't want to. The only way she said she would stay in the marriage is if she could adopt Brittany (my daughter) and Brenda would agree to stay out of our lives. I couldn't agree to that Brenda wouldn't either I'm sure (Brenda had 2 other kids besides Brittany from 2 other relationships). Me and Dee had an uncontested amicable divorce.

- If I had made different choices me and Dee would have had beautiful children together. There are no bad feelings that we have for each other. I wish her well and hope for her to have a good life. Since our divorce Dee has never asked me for anything. I know that if she ever needed me I would be there for her. I told her years ago that I was sorry and made a bunch of foolish mistakes I wish I could undo I still feel the same and I wish I would have made smarter choices.

Love,

Sean

CHAPTER ONE

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."

Mark 10:14

I was born Deidre Gail Mott on March 14, 1964 in Columbia South Carolina to Grace and Lee Mott. I am the second oldest of seven children (5 girls and 2 boys). My childhood memories recall the years I spent between Philadelphia and Detroit, but I affectionately call Philadelphia my home because it's where most of my family lives today. My early years in elementary school were spent in Detroit. I attended middle school in Philadelphia and returned to Detroit at the beginning of my freshman year of High School. I graduated from Osborn High School in Detroit Michigan in June of 1982. With the exception of the three years I spent in Germany, most of my adult life has been spent here in Texas where in May of 1992, I graduated from the University of Texas Health Science Center with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing.

My childhood was a happy one filled with memories of family and school. As I recall, the four years I spent in high school were the best years of my life. It was only the four months I resided in Hawaii while attending a specialty course in pediatrics, that I even came close to matching those memorable high school years.

My life as a child was very structured and organized. My parents had distinct and separate roles in our home. My mother was the nurturer, care taker and organizer of our home life and daily activities. While my father on the other hand was the provider, protector and the family historian.

My life growing up with my five sisters and two brothers was quite ordinary. Dad was a great provider, and because of his commitment and dedication to his family, we never wanted for anything. We always lived in big homes and had fantastic holidays feasts filled with love, laughter, and a strong sense of family.

Christmas time in our household was always exceptional and a very special time of year, there always seemed to be a hint of "magic" in the air. This time of year seemed to always distinguish itself from the rest of the year with an overwhelming sense of joy, peace, love, and excitement. I remember that we would wear out the Christmas catalog looking through the pages over and over and over again. We would select the items we wanted by putting our initials next to whatever it was we wanted for Christmas. When we were younger the choice items were always toys, as we got older we would select clothing or some more practical item like a stereo or camera or something. If any of the items selected were not under the Christmas tree on Christmas morning, there would always be a note from Santa explaining why, and which un-requested item (amongst several other un-requested and useful items) was given in it's place. The night before Christmas mama would have us all up half the night cleaning the house, chopping seasoning, wrapping and assembling gifts for the younger kids, making desserts and kool-aid, and of course, doing dishes... all of this was in preparation the next day's feast. I don't know how mama did it, but every year Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, and Easter were all filled with the same hustle and bustle the night before to prepare for a grand feast on the following day. Our home was filled with family, food, joy, and plenty of love every holiday. The absolute worst thing about these big holiday feasts was having

to do the dishes. Even with a dishwasher, it took hours to clean the kitchen. No one wanted their turn to do dishes to fall on a holiday.

I loved being part of a large family, however, I never really wanted a large family of my own. I never wanted more than two children. I thought one child would be great, but it would be pretty lonely being an only child so I thought having two would be perfect. The siblings would have someone to share life's experiences with. Cousins and close friends are great, but they could never take the place of a brother or sister having shared the same heredity and environment during the most formative years of your life. When I was a girl I thought that I would only want to have daughters, or one boy and one girl.... but when I became older (probably during my college years) I decided that having two boys would be the best thing in the world and God blessed me reeeaaal good, that's exactly what I got, two handsome baby boys who I love more than life itself. Every parent wants a better life for their children than the life they were afforded. Because of the many blessing I shared with my family growing up I knew that nothing less than a college degree would suffice for me to be able to supplement my husband's income and provide for my children everything (and more) that was provided for me growing up. I pray that my boys will have memories of their childhood that are filled with love, laughter, joy, peace, fun, and family. I pray their holiday seasons will take on a special "air" of it's own and the holidays will come alive for them year after year after year until they are grown and can share the memories of those holidays with their families.

Although we were a large family, my parents managed to have us involved in extracurricular activities (aside from those offered through the public schools we attended) on the weekend at various times throughout our childhood; for instance, my oldest sister and I went to etiquette school, one of my sisters took organ lessons, the other studied piano, we all did gymnastics, and at one time or another we were all in some sort of dance classes either ballet, jazz, tap, or modern dance. The boys were another story, the only extracurricular activity I remember them doing were to go to the neighborhood recreation center and play sports. Throughout the year our parents would take us to community events such as the ice capades, the circus, dance or music recitals and plays. We especially enjoyed these events when one of our siblings were performing.

I don't have a childhood memory of any time growing up when we didn't have a pet, either dogs, fish, or birds. The first dog I ever remember having is a dog named Lassie, she was a dog like the one in the TV series "Lassie", the others I remember is two twin dogs name Chipper and Chena, they were gray and white pure bred(I don't remember what kind) they died of distemper. We had a dog named Sin, he was a big German Shepherd. Sin was like a Houdini, he could get out of any kind of fence we put up for him. We wondered how he kept getting out, then we discovered he wasn't jumping the fences, he was climbing them. So no matter how high the fence was Sin could always get out. We used to laugh at other people's dogs that would bark ferociously behind a fence, we'd say, "if that was Sin he could get out". We had a dog named Trouble, King, Harry-hippi, Queeny, Ebony, Candy, Wendy, Rocky, Roach, and Tiffany. I'm sure there were a few more not mentioned, and of course when our dogs had puppies we named the puppies too. Harry-Hippi died one year when we were visiting my dad's family in Louisiana, a car hit him while we were in church. We buried him in the back yard at grandma's house. We had a funeral for him with a eulogy and everything. When Wendy died, I was so moved by her sensitivity to her pups. I guess it was my first look at how

mothers will instinctively know what to do to protect their young. Several days after giving birth to her puppies, Wendy became ill, no one knew she was sick. We came home early from school one day and Wendy had placed herself in a remote area of the basement where her puppies could not get to her. Apparently she knew she was going to die and she did not want her puppies to nurse because it would probably make them sick too. My dad told us that maybe she had not delivered all of the puppies and the death was somehow related to that possibility. We took care of Wendy's pups by making them a special formula based on the guidance given to us by the veterinarian. We had to feed them through baby bottles until they were old enough to eat on their own. My dad always took advantage of any opportunity to "teach" his children. Any time any event would occur dad would give a half-hour (at least) lecture on the incident. Explaining the physical, social, psycho, instinctive dynamics of the situation. He would give in-depth instructions on the proper way to do a thing if he noticed something not being done properly. For instance, if one of us were not carrying one of the puppies correctly, he would instruct us on the proper way to handle a puppy and why; then, he would explain how the adult dog would handle and protect her puppies and then explain the importance of our responsibility as pet owners to respect and appreciate the trust the adult dog has placed in us by allowing us to handle her puppies. Tiffany was my favorite... of course I loved all of our dogs, but Tiffany was the one I remember being my favorite, it may only be because she was one of the dogs we had when I was in high school. Tiffany was so smart and she loved to play (just like all of the others). It was so much fun when she chased my feet. She always tried to attack my fluffy slippers. I could tell great stories about all of our dogs. They chased us around the house or yard, tackled us, played ball and Frisbee with us, they snuggled with us, they were all great and loyal friends, and they were part of the family. I remember one year when it was time for our yearly photos we included the dogs in the family portrait (the photographers came to your house back in those days, unlike today where you have to go to the studio). One of the stories I want to tell about Tiffany is how cute it was to watch her learn that grapes were edible. Grapes were one of my favorite fruits. One day I was eating my grapes, Tiffany was watching me so I offered her one, she sniffed it, took it into her mouth, put it down on the floor, sniffed it again, rolled it around, then looked up at me as to say, "what did you give me this thing for". I guess she thought it didn't smell or feel like food. So I picked up the grape, mashed it between my fingers until the juice and fruit came out, offered it to Tiffany again and she ate it and every grape that was offered to her after that. It was so cute watching her discover and appreciate the grape as something edible. I was in middle school when I started training our dogs. I taught several of our dogs to sit, stand, beg, lay, heel, and paw (similar to a handshake). I was always very proud of this, it was lots of fun training the dogs and they seemed to love the attention. I was never was able to figure out how to teach them to roll over or bark on command. This is something I would have liked to have discovered with my own children. We would have learned how to teach a dog to roll over and bark on command. I would have purchased my sons a book from the pet store on training dogs like my mom had purchased for me decades ago. It was a book with large print that explained everything in simple terms that a child could understand and it had lots of pictures. I know my babies would have loved doing this with me.

One of the birds I remember having is a bird named Pistachio. He was a cockatiel. He was very smart and playful. Pistachio could imitate sounds and he learned to talk. He

would say "give me a kiss, pretty bird, come here, come here bird", and he learned to whistle, that's how we often called our dog, and he imitated the sounds of one of the my brothers' toys. It was a tractor or truck type toy that made several different sounds. One of the funny stories I remember about Pistachio.... Tiffany (like any other dog) would run to the door whenever the doorbell rang. Pistachio would at random, throughout the day go through his repertoire of imitations. One day the door bell rang, Tiffany was running to the door, Pistachio (at random) whistled and said come here and he repeated that over and over, Tiffany stopped running to the door and turned around, I guess she thought one of us had called her, then once she realized it was the bird she continued going for the door. It was totally coincidental, but I thought that it was so comical. We often allowed Pistachio out of her cage. She would perch on our shoulders, heads, or some of her favorite places in the house. When Pistachio would walk around on my head, it was very soothing, it felt like a scalp massage. Pistachio was a victim of the freedom we allowed her. One of her favorite places to perch was above the door frame of the front door leading outside, one day the front door was left opened and Pistachio accidentally flew out of the front door. We never saw her again, but her place in our hearts is forever etched, she was part of the family too.

We also had fish, Gold fish and sometimes those small Tropical fish. The fish were fun to watch and we had the shared responsibility of feeding them, cleaning their tank, and changing out the water. One of my favorite fish tanks of all the tanks we had was a tank that had two separate sides, one side boasted a house, while on the other, a school. What made this fish tank so unique was the ark that connected the two structures. I loved to watch the fish as they traveled from the house to the school, and then back to the house. We had one tropical fish (his name was blacky) he used to love the skyway (that's what that arc was called) he would go up in the skyway and zoom from one end of it to the other and he would just zoom back and forth-back and forth for several minutes then he'd either go home or to school. It was always interesting to watch new fish discover the skyway. They always explored it cautiously. They'd first have to discover that one end of the tank was not the water's surface, they usually found that out rather quickly with just trial and error and coming to the surface for food. They'd travel a few inches into the skyway then scurry back home. The next time they would go several more inches in and then go home. Once completely in the skyway they'd hang out there for a while inching on to the other end of the sky way, then swim back home, finally they would feel comfortable enough with venturing to the end of the skyway, then they would explore the descent into the school. Then they'd hang out and explore the school for a while then eventually make their way back home. It was real cool to watch that. I would like to have had a tank like that for my baby boys. The first and only tank I purchased for them was pretty cool too. It had a periscope and a food basket to place the fish food in. When the fish came to the basket to eat, you could look at them through the periscope and see them magnified. The boys used to take turns feeding the fish each morning before going to school. They would help Oma clean the tank and change out the water when needed. My baby boys also had an ant habitat. It was made like a sports park. It had three sections, one portion was the bungee jumping, skateboard, and rock climbing area, the other was a raceway for go carts, and the third section was a BMX bike arena. The boys had to feed and water the ants once a week. They learned to be real careful not to bump the table to disturb the sand and bring harm and discouragement to the ants by causing an

avalanche. We could see all the intricate below the surface tunneling that the ants did when they were not at the sports park. We could see the ants tunneling in the sand, they were always busy moving sand grain by grain, handing it off to another ant or patting it into it's new location. The two large portions of the Sports Park had magnifying glasses at the top so that we could look down and see the ants when they were on the surface. The magnifying glasses were removable so that the food and water could be placed in the habitat. Now both the fish tank and ant habitat sit empty and without life at Oma's house unable to be the catalyst that it was intended to be--- a means of opening a child's mind and introducing them to new creatures and the environments in which they live. Children and their potential are only limited by their horizons. To limit a child's imagination and their life experiences is to limit their potential.

Although we were a large family, five girls and two boys, we were taught to be respectful of each other's property and privacy. We were taught that the younger siblings should always respect the authority of the older sibling when they were in charge. The older siblings were placed in charge when our parents weren't home or we were in charge of certain activities such as making the chore lists and ensuring all chores were carried out properly. Because of the trust and authority given to the older children by our parents we were very good at self-governing. We even had our own imaginative set of punishments that we would use on each other whenever necessary. For instance, one of our rules were you could never walk into another persons room without knocking and awaiting a response that would allow you to come in, this rule applied even if the door was open. If you were in another person's room and asked to leave, you had until the count of ten to be out of the room. If you breeched any of these rules (or any of the many others) for a first offense you would be subject to the victims "command" and this meant that you had to do whatever they asked you to do for a day, second offense on the same person by the same assailant you would be "slave" to the victim and that meant that they could have you do things for others as well as things for themselves for a day.... these punishments went on and on and they each had their degree of severity and duration. They each had their own limitations also, for instance if under a persons command, you can only ask them to do duties (one of your chores), if under a person's bewitch they can have you do kooky things like stand on your head or walk backwards down the stairs.

All of us had our daily and weekly chores to complete. My older sister and I were in charge of making the chore list and inspecting the work of my younger siblings to ensure it was done properly. My older sister was usually in charge of cooking when my mom didn't cook. The older children washed and ironed the clothing of the younger children until they were old enough to do it themselves. Mom always oversaw everything, if it wasn't done right she'd have us redo it until it's right. If we bathed one of the younger ones she would inspect the ankles and between the toes and behind the ears to make sure the child was cleaned properly. Same with the clothing, if there was a wrinkle in it, then back to the ironing board you would go. So you couldn't get away with trying to do your things right, but half-doing the things for your younger sibling. Mom made sure of that! Mom paid meticulous attention to the grooming of all of her children when we were young. She would clean noses, and ears, apply lotion, oil, and powder all over, mom always sent us out into the world looking well cared for. Our hair was always done real nice, clothing was always well coordinated and neat. We always got new clothing to start school with in the fall, at Christmas, and in the summer to go on our yearly vacation to

Louisiana.....oh, yeah, we also would get a new outfit to go to church in on Easter Sunday. I can remember mama spending all summer in the sewing room sewing, ironing, and preparing our wardrobe for the fall. From time to time she would call us in from play to try something on that she may have needed to alter. Mom isn't a seamstress, she didn't make any of our clothing, but she mended and altered things as needed. I think my mom thought of the idea of walk in closets long before architects were designing them in homes. The sewing room was set up like a very large walk in closet. There were clothes hanging all along all four walls. We each had our own section where our clothing would be found neatly hanging, starched and ready to wear to school. We had school clothes and play clothes. When we'd come home from school we had to immediately take off our school clothes and put on our play clothes. We also called this room our dressing room. After getting cleaned up in the bathroom (some of us in the upstairs bathroom some of us in the downstairs bathroom, this house had four bathrooms) we'd all meet in the dressing room and get lotioned, powdered, and oiled before putting on the clothing that mom had laid out the night before for us to wear. Mom would take the head scarves off of our heads and put on our pigtails matching ribbons or barrettes. Mama had combed our hair the night before to save time in the mornings. Then we'd go downstairs for breakfast and then off to school. In the winter mom would make us a nice hot breakfast of oatmeal and we'd have a cup of hot chocolate every morning before going out into the cold. We'd go outside all bundled up feeling so warm and toasty on the inside from the hot chocolate. On the way home from school we'd have snow ball fights, make snow angels, tumble or roll down the snow covered hills that we'd pass on our journey home, climb snow mounds, or make snowmen. We'd often come home from school cold and wet after playing in the snow, ma would give us a cup of hot chocolate and get us warmed up from the inside out.

One of the greatest advantages to growing up in a large family with great pets is that you are never bored or lonely. There's always something to do and someone to do it with. We all had wonderfully creative imaginations and when we weren't playing with our toys we would improvise and come up with games that we would make up. We had great toys. The toys we had made play so realistic and fun, for school we had a real chalk board with chalk, a magnet board with magnetic letters and numbers, for house we had lots of pretend food and drinks that looked real. We had child size furniture and appliances. Even when we couldn't go outside because of inclement weather, we'd have an awful lot of fun playing games indoors. Sometimes we played old classics like hide-n-seek, lots of fun in a big house because there were so many great places to hide. The younger ones if too young to hide alone would hide with an older sibling. Another old classic we'd play is school. Someone would be the teacher and there were enough players to have a classroom full of kids or we'd have two teachers and 2 classes (small families can't do this). Whenever we played school someone always misbehaved and had to get put in time out, hit with the ruler, made to write an "I will behave" sentence, or sent to the Principle's office. We never designated a person to act out or be the teacher's pet, it just always turned out like that... and funny as it seems, the same person wasn't always the one to act out, we all seemed to change up and take on different roles at different times. I guess that kept it interesting, but like I said, these roles were never pre-determined, it just happened that way. There was also a game we played called "bus", we would sit in the stairwell, someone would be the driver and we'd drive through the city.

Passengers would swerve to the left with left turns, swerve to the right with right turns, jerk forward as we'd come to a sudden stop for a jaywalking pedestrian. The bus would come to different stops, beep in traffic, and of course there had to be the uncontrollable passenger angry with the driver or another passenger about some issue that they would create. Then of course the driver or another passenger would have to problem solve. Either the driver would call security or a passenger would be a plain-clothed security officer and handle the situation. Any of these games just took on a life of it's own depending on the input, one person would do something then everything else would build on that, and the game would evolve. There was a game we played called "tuk-shuk house", the "tuk-shuk" was to represent the sound of a door locking. We would come out of our pretend house and the object was to get back into your house and lock the door before getting tagged. "Alligator water" was a game where you had to cross the river and get to the other side without getting eaten by alligators. Some of the games we played we divided ourselves up into teams and played.

Unlike today's kids we did not spend much time in front of the TV. We played outside a lot with the neighborhood kids. We played jump rope, jacks, tag, mother-may-I, red light-green light, truth or consequences, we rode our bikes, bounced on our pogos, skated, hoola-hooped, ran races, played hop-scotch, we made mud pies, mud soup, mud loaf, we even made mud sauce for our grass spaghetti. On some of the hot summer days a sprinkler would be placed over the fire hydrant by the fire department and we'd play in the water, or mom would hook up the water hose from our yard to our alligator sprinkler and we'd play in the sprinkler in our yard. Also, there was the swim mobile that came around in our neighborhood and we would go swim in the swim mobile. In the evening after it cooled down, there was also a book mobile that came around and we would go down to the book mobile to read.

In the evening or on rainy days we spent countless hours in the basement playing every game imaginable. In the basement we rode bikes, skated, bounced on or hoppity-hops (sometimes we did this upstairs, I don't see how it didn't drive our folks crazy), put on shows and skits, did magic acts (we had those TV magic cards), we created music with our musical instruments my brothers had guitars and/ or drums we girls had flutes, xylophones, and any other item we could use as an instrument, but we all had something....I have to laugh as I reminisce and write this because my parents must have been insane- drums, yes, I remember, the boys had drums, a complete set with the foot pedal, cymbals and everything. We also had the two guitars. I know all the girl had flutes, but we all didn't use the flutes for our composition only one or two of us used the flutes. We all had flutes because our music class had us do flutes for a season (Angie did the violin, I don't remember if she did flute too.) My childhood memories of holidays, playtime with my brothers and sisters, and even chores, are some of the best memories of my life.

Every summer we would all head down South to visit our Grandparents. In Crowley where dad grew up we would visit our cousins and other relatives in nearby Cities and we played with the kids up the street. We only stayed in Crowley for a couple of weeks then we'd go to Berwick where mama grew up. My parents only stayed in Berwick with us for about a week, then they would head back home with my two brothers. We would remain in Berwick to spend the rest of the summer. Both my Granddad and Uncle worked at Casso's Fisheries, Grandpa was retired, but my Uncle Albert still worked there. He

would bring home crab and crawfish from the dock before my parent would leave to go back home and we would have our version of a seafood fest in the back yard. I didn't care much for crab or crawfish during those years, but it was always fun just having everyone together and enjoying the festivity. Before the summer's end we'd have our fill of crab, crawfish, catfish, and perch fish.

One of mama's High School friends still lived in Berwick, we would play with their kids whenever we visited. We became so close we considered them cousins. They'd come visit us over at Gram's house then we'd walk them part of the way home, or we'd go visit them at their house and they'd walk us part of the way home. We did lots of fun things together either around town or their mom would bring us to a movie theatre in Morgan City, which was just across the bridge from Berwick. We'd play jacks, jump rope, walk over to get snow cones, or we'd play board games. I enjoyed so very much spending our entire summer down South. I think the coolest thing about going down South for the summer was experiencing the culture. The world seemed to move so much slower down there, people were friendlier more relaxed. My grandparents lived in a small town, it felt very safe and people were trust worthy. Unlike the big city where we lived, you never knew whom to trust so people mostly kept to themselves. Parents warned children not to speak to strangers and to be aware of their surroundings. It would not be uncommon up North to live in a place for years and never get to know your neighbors, of course that mostly applied in the adult arena---the children in the neighborhoods would play together and get to know one another. I love big cities and the fast paced life style that comes with it. I never imagined that I would live anywhere but in one of our Nations larger cities. The neighborhood children thought that many of the games we played were so cool. They gathered around to watch us when we played jumped rope, we played double-dutch which is a style of jump rope not common in the South, they were intrigued and tried to learn. The way we played jacks and the rules that were applied were different and more complex than the way they played. We spoke with an accent unlike theirs and many of our expressions and colloquialisms were different. I always felt very special to be known around the neighborhood as the "city girls" or the "kids from up North", that's how the neighborhood kids referenced us collectively. Not many of them (if any) knew all of us by name. My grandmother didn't allow "those kids" over at her house, whenever they'd come around she'd shew them away. So I guess with them not being allowed to come over, only being able to watch us from across, up or down the street also added an air of mystery to our presence in the neighborhood. The only kids Gram allowed us to play with were Carmen and Celeste which were the children of my mom's best high school friend and the children of my mother's oldest brother their names were Earl, Lionel and Reshawn they were 3 or 4 years younger than me, they were the ages of my younger sisters. We didn't play very often with them, they came around infrequently and for very short periods of time when their mother came over to visit with Gram or if Gram was asked to watch them while their mother went on an errand.

Along with the memories of the special "like family" relationship we developed with Carmen and Celeste, and the feelings of being very special and respected in a "goddess like way" because we came from a far and different place. I remember the kids (and sometimes the adults we knew) asked us lots of questions about school and life up North, they asked us about snow and subways and sky scrapers, and anything else they were inquisitive about in regards to customs and things they may have heard about and

wanted to clarify or validate about the people, places, and things up North. I remember Gram used to have us capture rainwater in a big foot tub so that she could wash our hair. There was something very special about getting your hair washed in rain water... it felt so very soft almost like silk after being washed in the rain water. When we washed our hair at home in tap water we always had to use conditioner to soften it and make it more manageable. Gram would heat the rainwater up in a huge pot on the stove, the warmed water was used for washing only, and oooooohhhh my goodness!!! that very cold rainwater was poured directly over our heads 2 or 3 times for rinsing... did we wiggle, scream, and giggle! that was the best and most memorable part of that whole hair washing experience. We even delighted in watching each other get their turn beneath the cold water rinse. The summers were very hot down South and getting that cold water rinse was probably just what we needed. God is so good, thank God for those memories of fun times and experiences down South with my grandparents (maternal and paternal).

Although we had oodles of fun and wonderful memories of all the time we spent down South year after year, I cannot fail to mention the great joy and excitement and all the fun we had getting there. When we were younger we all traveled there together (when we were old enough to travel alone the girls would fly or take the bus and the boys and my parents would drive down later), my dad drove and before he purchased the trailer he would rent a u-haul and set it up in the back with a mattress, pillows, coolers and anything else we'd need. We had lots of space to play as we traveled down the highway. I remember times in the back of the u-haul we'd sit in a circle and play circle games like little sally walker, all around my Sheila, doggie-doggie your bone is gone, hot potato, cat's cradle, pitty-pat games, and many, many others. We'd also sing songs and make up stories to tell. When we were tired of playing we'd all lie on the mattress and we could look out from beneath the opening my dad left in the door and see the other cars go by and we'd of course make up games to play or do things to keep us occupied. One thing I remember we used to do is as we looked out from beneath the door and saw a car approaching we'd all start to chant "gooooo daddy go! go!" urging him to speed up and not let that car pass, then if it passed we'd let out a collective "aaawww!" then we'd do it again with another car approaching and so on until we'd tire out and go to sleep. I remember when dad got the trailer. It was so cool traveling in that thing. It had a stove, sink, refrigerator, cabinets, closets, bathroom, a king size bed in the back, a pull out sofa bed, two bunk beds, and a pull out kitchen table. I remember one year we had pulled over at a rest stop, we'd taken a watermelon out of the refrigerator and went to walk the dog, and of course run, play and move about, when we'd gotten back to the trailer the whooole inside of the water melon had been eaten. When we complained to ma, she said "you'll know better next time." We learned early that if we left our food hanging around it was fair game for dad. At Easter time dad would grab an Easter egg out of his basket (or someone else's), salt it all around and put the whole egg in his mouth. If left unattended dad would go from basket to basket helping himself to whatever seemed appealing. Mom would give us a gentle warning before going off to church on Easter Sunday, "y'all know what to do with those Easter baskets", and if we listened we'd take them and hide them in our rooms. My childhood memories are filled with these kinds of stories about family, and how family is one of the strongest bonds God ever created.

I have recently returned from a family reunion in Detroit. We had a wonderful time, it was a great experience for us all. We drove around to our old neighborhoods

communicating between the cars on walkie-talkies. Lots of things were excitedly shared over the walkie-talkies as we reminisced our childhood experiences. One of the things that I had forgotten was the many times we had other children over our house to eat, bathe, or sleep. Periodically when our across the street neighbors were over our house playing in the evenings, when we took our baths we would give them baths too. There was this little girl up the street named Mimi, when she came over, she was always eating bread and mayonnaise for a sandwich, we would make her a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, give her another sandwich with meat on it, or she would have dinner with us. We'd bathe Mimi too sometimes. I remember one time when we were getting ready to go to Louisiana our next door neighbor Angelique (she was between 3 and 4 yrs of age) was crying because she wanted to come with us, we were already loaded up in the trailer, mama told her to go ask her mom if she could come, her mom said yes and off we were on our yearly trip to Louisiana. Having these other children around was just fun, they were usually younger than our youngest brother was so they were someone else for us to "baby" and care for.

We also remembered how on Halloween along with the candy we would get from trick or treating my uncle would bring these big Halloween bags (these bags were the size of those brown paper grocery bags) filled to the brim with candy each of us had our own bags with our name on it. He'd also include homemade popcorn balls in our bags. We would have candy and popcorn balls for weeks. Of course we had to hide our bags from daddy when we went to school. Every Easter we would have these big giant size chocolate bunnies and of course we all had our own with our names on them. We had to hide them in the refrigerator or dad would eat em up. Hiding our treats from dad was a "fact of life" for us, if you didn't do it, the obvious consequence is that some of your goodies would be gone. But dad was real cool about it (in retrospect) because he never went snooping around looking for your candy. He knew we had it but he didn't go snooping, not even in the refrigerator, but if it was out in the open ---fair game.

Choice and variety were not strangers in our home. When my mom went shopping she allowed us to choose any of the items on her shopping list that was specifically for us. For instance, she allowed us to choose what kind of cereal, kool-aid, pop tarts, cookies, snacks, chips, ice cream etc that we wanted. With such a large family of course we all did not go with mom to the supermarket, we had our own method of choosing who would go with mom (depending on how many kids mom was going to take with her) and who would choose the items. We had our own method for deciding amongst ourselves who would get which toys from the cereal box, who (and in which order) would get the left over items; for instance, if we had a dozen donuts and all 7 kids and the parents had one, there's 3 left over, if the parents didn't want them then we had our own method of deciding who got the extra, and no, it wasn't necessarily the oldest... we were democratic about these things. Our parents rarely had to get in the middle of these issues, as long as things were equitable and without conflict there was not any need for parental intervention. If the parents did have to get involved because a conflict ensued, you can bet neither of the bickering parties would prevail, so it was always in our best interest to work these things out amongst ourselves. Many times throughout the few years I shared with Reggie he made me keenly aware of the fact that he loathed the idea of children being allowed to have choices, variety, and freedom. I can't imagine having it any other way. He often told me how appalling it was for my parents to have allowed us

the many freedoms and choices that they allowed us, but for me, it was these very freedoms that allowed me to make decent and moral choices throughout the many trials in my life growing up in my parents' home. My parents placed a lot of trust in me with every freedom that they allowed and I did not want to betray their trust by going out and doing something stupid that would cause them to question their decision about allowing me these freedoms and the natural consequence would have been to have these freedoms revoked and the siblings under me would have lost privileges based on my errs. These are the thoughts that kept me on the straight and narrow growing up.

Throughout my childhood as far back as I can remember, I recall dad periodically holding family meetings, generally held after dinner. In these meetings he'd talk to us about any issues affecting our family that he wanted us to be aware of. He'd share with us excerpts from his and mama's lives as children and how they grew up. He'd share with us moments from their early years of dating or when they first met, their first encounter with the in-laws and so on. Of course these antidotes were always appropriately placed, fitting in with whatever topic he would be discussing. This peek into the lives of our parents was not presented at one sitting, over the years throughout the many family meetings and casual conversations with our parents we learned about their lives. Mom and dad always spoke highly of one another. All of my siblings would agree that while growing up we never saw our parents disagree, have any sort of confrontation with one another, raise their voices to one another, or display any form of disrespect for the other. We never heard either parent speak any words against the other. We as children would not dare to try to play one parent against the other, these two people were always in sync and fully supporting the others judgment (at least in our presence, we later learned that sometimes one parent would have to intercede on our behalf from time to time in regards to certain freedoms.) they always showed a "unified front". These family meeting were also a time for dad to discuss with us facts about drugs, sex, dating, foul language, and anything else that seemed appropriate at the time. Dad talked to us about life, choices, and consequences, he talked to us about peer pressure and distinguishing between your true friends and those that could potentially be "the wrong crowd", he talked to us about self-respect and about not allowing yourself to be used. He told us about boys and what is their primary interest in a young lady and how to not fall victim to the predators. Dad gave us enough information that we knew that if we got out there and screwed up it wasn't because we were uninformed, it was most likely due to poor judgment or a bad decision by the individual. Mom didn't say much at these meeting but she was there nodding and providing occasional input when appropriate. Our parents would let us know at these meeting how proud they were of us for any of our most recent accomplishments, they would let us know about their expectations for any upcoming event. Knowing what our parents expected from us or how they would respond if we deviated too far off course was never a guessing game for us. I think these family meetings gave us every tool we would ever need to succeed in life and to survive any of life's challenges. Jesus has given us everything we would ever need to live a Godly life, yet based on the choices we make we all have different experiences in our Christian walk; based on our choices relative to the tools my dad had given us my siblings and I all have different experiences and outcomes in life based on the choices we have made. Reg, has told me on more than one occasion that I am my dad's greatest scholar.... he meant it as an insult, but I take it as a compliment.

Another thing that dad did that I thought was pretty exceptional was he taught us how to file our own income taxes. Dad was a notary public and did other people income taxes, I can remember several occasions around tax season dad would give us tax forms, W-2s and any other info that was necessary to fill out the forms. He would show us how to complete the forms and calculate the taxes using the information he gave us. After he showed us how, then he would give us forms to complete on our own and he would check them to see if they were done correctly. We first started out using the short form (1040A), then when we got older we had to use the long form (1040), he no longer allowed us to use the short forms. I had my first job when I was fourteen, I worked at a Laundromat 5 or 6 hours a day for \$7.00 per day. I would wash down the machines, sweep and mop the floors, Windex the windows, and make change for customers. It was a decent job, I liked it. Sometimes I earned extra money when people asked me to wash and fold their clothing and they would pick them up later. Then later this same company asked me to work in their dry cleaners for \$14.00 a day. It was further from my home, I had to take the bus to work, but I didn't mind because I was getting paid more. The dry cleaners were located inside of a Laundromat so I was still able to earn extra money by doing laundry for drop-offs. My first real job was at McDonald's, I loved working at McDonald's. I worked there the entire four years I was in High School. I filed my own income tax every year, the 1040EZ forms were non-existent during these times. The shortest forms available were the 1040A. My last semester of High School because of all the senior activities going on I worked very few hours.

During my senior year of high I was very much involved in all of the senior activities. I went to all of the football and basket ball games, I attended all of the organized senior activities including our senior class trip to Orlando Florida. During my high school years I had a letter-sweater, letter-jacket, purchased a class ring, and lots of other school paraphanelia. I had a lot of school spirit and was very much involved in all of the fun stuff. When I was in my senior year in high school I put my bed in the closet. I was in the Dance Club (Modern Dance) at school and putting my bed in the closet gave me more floor space to choreograph dances. My girlfriend would come by an we'd work on our dance routines in my room. I Choreographed at least 5 dances during my senior year. Reg told me he never would have let his child put their bed in the closet. He said it was this lack of parental supervision and my parents' failure to provide restrictions in our household that has lead to my eccentric and hard-headed tendencies. He said my hard-headedness is the main problem in our marriage and my parents should have not allowed such liberties. Reg is a tripp, having my bed in the closet was very positive and it fostered my creativity. For the sake of our sons I hope Reg get over some of those hang-ups or he will seriously hinder their potential by limiting their horizons.

When it was time to paint the house, our parents let us choose the color we wanted for our rooms. Pink is my favorite color so I choose pink, with a royal blue trim. Tami's favorite color is black, she wanted to paint her room black and put glass or mirror chips on the ceiling---- moma 'nem wouldn't have it, that was too "far out", so she had to choose another color. She like dark colors so she chose royal blue with dark red trim. We had our little jobs where we were making \$7.00 a day at the Laundromat so we had to pay half of the cost of the paints and curtains for our rooms.

When I was about to enter my final year of High School my parents told me we were moving back to Philadelphia and they asked me what I thought about that. I told

them, "I would rather get my GED than graduate with a group of people I don't know. I'm not about to enter my senior year in Philadelphia and all of my friends are here". I told them I did not want to go to Philly. My parents told me I could stay in Detroit. So the family moved and me and my oldest sister (she was beginning her freshman year in college) stayed in the house. This was an 8-bedroom home (7 really but the pantry, which was being used as a pallor where we entertained our dates was turned into a bedroom for one of my brothers). Reflecting back on that, my parents had placed a lot of trust in us to be able to stay in a home hundreds of miles from them and continue to be responsible and do what we need to do outside of their direct supervision. Making decisions for myself about church, school, family etc allowed me at an early age to know what is really important to me. Sure, getting my GED instead of graduating High School would have been foolish and I probably would not have carried out that idea, but just having the freedom to be able to express how I would feel about not being able to graduate with my classmates and knowing that my parents had enough respect for me to even consider getting my opinion and adjusting their plans to accommodate me and what was important in my life is something that I will never forget.

CHAPTER TWO

1993-1996

"Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate."
Mark 10:9

When I met Reggie, I had just completed the Pediatric Specialty Course in Hawaii. While in Hawaii my girlfriends and I did a lot of island hopping on the weekends. We'd visit malls, market places, beaches and any other tourist spots that seemed interesting and fun. I remember one weekend me and the girls (5 of us) toured a nearby island, during our drive to our hotel we planned our itinerary, deciding what we would do and see while on this particular island. We all provided input, each of us selecting one activity that we "must do" before leaving. We intended to do everything scheduled, but the priority things would be the "must-do" activities. We agreed to make sure that we did everyone's "must-do" activity before leaving. However, the time sort of got away from us and we were going into our final day on the island and we had not done the one thing I really wanted to do and that was to drive to the top of this mountain and watch the sunrise. I had been urging the girls to spend less time primping and to eat on the go and many other time saving ideas, but they wasted so much time doing these activities that we were coming to the end of our day and it was obvious that some of the remaining activities would have to be eliminated. We had not driven up the mountain and a couple of other things we had scheduled. I realized that if I were going to do my "must do" activity I would have to go off on my own. The girls tried to talk me out of staying on the island alone. They argued that we came as a group and we should leave as a group. They insisted that I did not know my way around on the island and it's not a good idea for me to stay. Once I convinced them that I will be okay they came around to realizing that I was not taking no for an answer.... all except Esterlitta, Esterlitta was holding all of our plane tickets and she refused to give me my ticket because she was concerned about my safety and the prudence of them allowing me to stay on the island alone. It took the entire group to convince her to give me my ticket so that I can make the arrangements necessary to stay. I rented a red convertible, changed the departure date on my ticket, went to a movie, had dinner and then began my drive up the mountainside. The scenery along the way was beautiful. I drove further and further up the mountain; higher and higher into the clouds with the top of my convertible open enjoying the night air until I finally reached the top. The view was spectacular and the sunrise was breathtaking. I was so glad I came. There are some things in life that are just so spectacular and awesome you just say to yourself, "I know there is a God". This was one of those moments for me. As far as I was concerned, it was just me, the mountain, and God, everyone else that was around watching the sunrise just seemed to have disappeared for a period of time. I was always very independent and confident. I'm certain that it is my secure upbringing that has fostered my adventurous nature. Shortly after my sunrise adventure, I hopped on a plane back to Honolulu. Thank God for Freedom, Independence, and a Free Spirit.

Hawaii was paradise for me and there would have been something missing to not have memories of romantic and tender moments with the opposite sex. I dated a lot in Hawaii. I enjoyed spending time on the beaches, exploring caves, going to luaus with the

guys I met. There were fellows from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines on the island. I must have dated at least one from each category during the four months I was there. I received two legitimate marriage proposals and I told them exactly what I told Reggie when I met him, that I am not interested in marriage, I've already done it, I just want companionship. The most gorgeous guy I ever met in life was this Marine; he was light skinned, had green eyes, and a beautiful smile. I invited him into my room and then I went down the hall to my girl friend's room and said, "Hey Corina, come see what I brought home from the beach." She knew not to come right away and to pretend that she just happen to drop by. He was a hunk. My relationship with these guys was platonic. We enjoyed each other's company and shared tender moments in paradise. I will never forget these special times. Carefree and enjoying life to it's fullest. I didn't date while I was in Texas, I just enjoyed being by myself. On my off days I often did yard work or things around the house, went to the movies, ice skating, roller-skating, horse backing and Karate. I am a loner and introvert by nature and an extrovert by occupation.... I much prefer being alone. Extroversion does not come natural for me, I have to make a conscious effort at being an extrovert when the situation calls for that attribute. I am so relieved and recharged when I can leave a situation that calls for me to exhibit the characteristics of an extrovert and resign myself to my own space where I can just be me--- a loner and introvert.

When Reggie entered my life I was 29 years old, owned my own home, completely furnished and custom-built. I had just purchased a new car, and had already established secure investments with U.S. savings bonds, mutual funds, CD's and had over a year invested into an IRA. I was quite secure and content. I thoroughly enjoyed my free time and I loved my job. My roles as a professional nurse and soldier were not in conflict. This seemed to have been a time when my social, professional, spiritual, and family life were all in complete harmony. This was also a time that I was very much aware of the fact that my biological clock was ticking away; however, I was in no hurry to jump back into a relationship. I had long since resolved any issues stemming from my 1st marriage, and was very reluctant to consider marrying a second time for fear of choosing another incompatible and unfaithful mate. However, my childhood dream of someday having children was still nudging me from time to time...in fact, it was stronger than ever. I considered adoption, foster parenting, and even artificial insemination. At one point I even considered getting pregnant out of wedlock by a "friend," that way there would be no commitment and no desire for matrimony. My plan was to have my "friend" sign an agreement giving up all rights of contact with the child. Thankfully, my morale standards and Christian faith prevented me from seriously considering anything other than adoption or foster parenting. In fact when I met Reggie, I had already contacted a foster parenting association in San Antonio who was in the process of sending me information on how to become a foster parent and scheduling me for the classes I would have needed to attend. When I mentioned this to the new man in my life, he told me I should hold off for a little while...so I did.

This new man in my life was Reginald Terrence Singleton. He was tall, dark, handsome and stood 6ft tall and weighed 180lbs. Reggie had the body of an athlete. A whole lot of man to hold on to. His stature commanded respect whenever he entered a room. His legs were slightly bowed and he had a tight butt. Reggie had a great smile and a boyish laugh that showed off his baby teeth. He was always a great listener and ready

to give good solid advice on a variety of professional issues. One of the things I loved most about Reggie, was that he was a kind and gentle man who seemed to love the Lord with all his heart. When I met Reggie he was in his first year of residency for OB/GYN and we both worked in the maternal child section at Brooke Army Medical Center. We would see each other throughout the day and would go up on the rooftop at B.A.M.C. to have lunch together. Reg took me jet skiing and horse backing. I remember when we went camping with my sister and her family at Canyon Lake. We rented a cabin and we went boating and fishing and had a cook out...it was great fun. I was really impressed with the fact that Reggie liked to get out and do things. He was not like most men who liked to sit around and watch the ball games on the weekends. When we were dating and during our engagement he never put off an activity or chose not to do something because he wanted to watch the game (this changed after we were married). Our spiritual life together also seemed to flourish during this time. We read scripture together daily and attend church as a couple every Sunday. We were very discreet about our relationship when we were at work because we didn't want anyone at work to know we were seeing each other. We wanted our relationship to evolve on it's own if it were meant to be without inquiring minds adding additional pressure to our new relationship.

There was nothing special about our courtship. We didn't have a lot of conflicts while we were dating; however, because of our differing views on certain issues, we never thought a long-term relationship together was possible. Initially, we decided we'd give ourselves two weeks before deciding that we were not compatible; then after we made it through the two weeks, we gave ourselves a month, then three months...by this time we had already formed a great friendship and were quickly heading towards a serious relationship. It was around this time that Reg asked me to be his lady. Although we had been dating for months, it wasn't until now that we officially became partners.

After dating for about six months, we decided not to date beyond one year if the relationship was not moving forward. We liked each other a lot, but neither of us thought we were candidates for marriage and we did not want to spend more than a year in a steady relationship that was not going anywhere. We had some issues that we just couldn't seem to see eye to eye on. One of those issues was that I did not want to change my name. I was set on keeping my maiden name...I think this was one of the biggest issues. I was set on keeping my last name and Reg refused to marry somebody who would want to hyphenate his name...but time marched on and our relationship continued to evolve. I was against pre-marital sex and told Reggie that we should keep our relationship platonic until, and if, we were to get married. Reggie convinced me that two people needed to know whether or not they were sexually compatible before marriage, rather than afterwards when it was too late. This should have been a red flag for me, but it wasn't. It seemed like such a contradiction to me. Here we would be attending church on Sunday morning after having spent Saturday night together in the throws of passion. If either one of us were spiritually mature we would have realized that this is not proper behavior for children of God. Either one of us could have decided to not compromise our values. It was during this time that I got pregnant unexpectedly. Reggie had wanted me to take birth control pills, but I refused. On more than one occasion he tried to get me to take the pills. I should have. I didn't take birth control pills in the past because I was not sexually active. I never took medication for anything, I always allowed my body to heal itself. Even with colds the only thing I would take was cough drops---- when my sexual

activity changed I guess I never seriously considered the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy. After the pregnancy we both contemplated marriage but decided that was no way to start out a marriage. We were not certain at this point of our commitment to one another. We knew we liked each other a lot but we weren't sure about whether we were ready to commit. It was at this time that we both decided that perhaps I should have an abortion. Everything was moving right along, I would have the abortion and we could continue right where we left off. The problem was, I found out I was pregnant about 2 weeks after conception, the people at the clinic told me I had to wait until I was at least 7 weeks along before they could do the procedure. During this waiting period I was having second thoughts about the abortion. When I went to Reggie and told him that I wasn't sure about having the abortion, he came unglued. This event should have warned me of things to come, but hindsight is always 20/20. Reggie told me that if I didn't go through with the abortion as we had agreed, that he would leave me and I would be on my own to raise the child. Raising a child alone at this point in my life was not a scary thought for me. I was financially secure and I know I would have the support of my family, but for the child I knew he/she would want to know his/her father. Not wanting my child to be born wanting for anything, especially a father, I went ahead and had the abortion. In retrospect it was a very bad decision and I'm sorry I made it. I wish I had kept my baby and let Reggie go on his merry-way.

Reg proposed to me at a park in our neighborhood. It was in his car near a pond. There was a full moon and I remember that Reg made several comments about our relationship and the future that he wanted to have with me. One thing in particular I remember Reg saying was that he would never let me go; he asked me if I could spend the rest of my life with him...I said yes. To my surprise, he pulled out a beautiful ring that sparkled radiantly in the moonlight, he then proposed to me, he asked me if I would marry him, I said yes and he placed the ring on my finger. Afterward, he gave me a long hard kiss. Its memories like these that intensifies my desire to hold on to my marriage...how can something that started out so beautifully end so tragically? That's why the Scriptures tell us to think only on those things that are good.

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-meditate on these things." Philippians 4:8

We were engaged and planned for an April wedding. Some time after we were engaged, Reg suggested that we move in together. We contemplated one of two options, Reg wanted us to get a larger apartment and have me move into his apartment complex because it was closer to our jobs. He said we would put anything that didn't fit into the apartment into a rented locker space (to even consider this as an option seemed a bit odd to me when we could just move into the larger home. But now in retrospect, I'm certain his hesitation to move into my home was more related to his ego than anything else). The second option was for him to move into my home because it was larger, had more space, it was a new home (only 2 years old) and it would be a lot more comfortable than squeezing into an apartment. I didn't feel staying in the apartments should have even been a consideration when you could be buying a home---- paying mortgage instead of rent. The final outcome was that he moved into my place. He donated his furniture to the goodwill (it was very old furniture that he had since undergrad, though he was still

understandably not ready to part with it, so I don't dismiss the sacrifice he'd made to compromise on this issue). When Reg first asked me to move in with him I told him no, I did not want to be his concubine. I knew what a concubine was, I had learned that as a child. My dad gave us a list of words to look up in the dictionary when I was a freshman in high school. The words he had us look up were words that were foul and inappropriate for children to use or they were words that would describe a person based on their behavior. Dad had us look the words up so that we would know the meaning of these words and recognize how they are often used inappropriately by adults and children alike. He would say that people of little intelligence resorted to such language because they had a limited vocabulary. Any actions that were antisocial he wanted us to know the word that would describe that behavior, knowing that if you conducted yourself in a particular way you would be labeled by your peers and/ or society. One of the words on dad's list was the word concubine. Remembering this word from my childhood, I told Reg, when he suggested that we'd live together, that I did not want to be his concubine. Reg insisted that this was the best thing we could do to help save money to finance our wedding. We had a wedding date and he calculated what we'd save by moving in together. Of course, I agreed, again compromising my values to accommodate the situation. I should have known that God would have made a way for us to finance the wedding without doing what I knew was not consistent with Christian values. As a small child I knew I never wanted to be a man's concubine, but I rationalized that some of the rules that kept me out of trouble when I was younger and dating, didn't apply anymore because my partner and I were more mature and not prone to some of the callous behaviors or careless mistakes that teenagers and young adults sometimes make.

Reg and I were saved and had given our lives to the Lord. We attended church every Sunday, read our Bible and said our prayers every night before going to bed. We prayed every morning before going to work. We knew that pre-marital sex was not consistent with how God would have us grow in our relationship, but somehow we rationalized that it was okay. Heavy petting was okay with me, but intercourse in casual relationships was far too risky. I was easily convinced to leave my comfort zone and engage in casual intercourse with Reg. I believe that was my first and most regrettable mistake in our relationship. My dad had always told us that if a man respects you, he will meet you where you stand; he would never ask you to come out of your comfort zone. A woman has so much more to lose when she compromises her values than does a man. She bares a greater burden if a mistake occurs in the relationship such as an unplanned pregnancy or alienation of affections. My dad told us that a man whom truly loves you will respect your values, he will continue to love you and respect you for remaining true to your moral compass. If he does not honor your values his intentions aren't genuine. I learned this as a child. These words stayed with me and kept me focused throughout my high school days. I wish I had applied them to my relationship with Reggie. In retrospect, I realize that if Reg and I had been spiritually mature this arrangement would not have been okay with either one of us. If just one of us had been where God would have liked us to be in our relationship with Him, we would have been able to see the err of our ways.

In October 1995, we had a setback. I had to relocate from San Antonio to Killeen Texas. I was working in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and they were starting a NICU in Killeen and needed experienced NICU nurses, so I had less than thirty days to relocate. Because of this move, Reg insisted on moving the wedding back from April 96

to September 96. He said he wanted to ensure there would not be a problem with our commitment to each other across the miles. I thought that was absurd; I thought to postpone the wedding was a display of his lack of commitment. I told Reggie that commitment doesn't come with a wedding certificate, it comes from the heart. If we were not committed to each other from the heart, to overcome all adversities, the marriage certificate wouldn't mean squat...it's just a piece of paper (the present state of our union is a prime example of what I meant when I said this to Reggie years ago). We moved the wedding date back and began making the necessary changes to plan for a September wedding. I talked to Reg about everything I was doing and he was in agreement. The only thing he asked me not to do was plan the musical entertainment. I wanted to ask my brother and sister to sing, or even his mom, but he said he would take care of the entertainment. So I made all the other arrangements, everything from A-Z. Reg stayed out of the planning until about four months before the set date when he decided to change two major things; he wanted us to get married in the new Post Chapel and change the reception from the officers club to the golf club. This was very frustrating because months ago in the initial planning phase, he allowed me to make all the decisions about the location of the wedding and reception. I put in lots of time and effort into the arrangements. Then as we got closer to the date of the wedding and Reg finally decides to get involved, instead of accepting all the things I had already done, he wanted to make radical changes. We changed the location of the wedding from the old chapel to the new chapel. The new chapel was brighter and more modern, but the older chapel was closer to the reception site, which made a big difference in travel time. The plan was for us to depart from the chapel in a horse and carriage and travel to the reception site. From the old chapel this would have been a five-minute trot, allowing the horseman to travel on a scenic route allowing the guests to arrive. We would have trotted around for about fifteen minuets before making our appearance at the reception. However, coming from the new chapel the trot was at least thirty-minutes, I thought this was entirely too long for the guests to wait; they would have arrived in less than ten minutes by car. I urged Reg to keep the wedding at the old chapel, but he insisted on the new one because he said it was "classier". Although all went well, due to very patient guests, I would have preferred not to have had them wait so long. We did end up keeping the reception at the officer's club due to the cost of having it at the golf course. I thank God for that because the golf course had already been booked for the day of our wedding and Reg was going to change the date of the wedding to secure the golf course (because it was "classier", than the Officer's club). I was livid because it would have meant contacting everyone and rebooking everything. The invitations hadn't been mailed yet, so that wasn't a problem; but the photographer, the wedding coordinators, the harpist, the minister, it would have all needed to be rebooked.

Even as close as four months before the wedding, Reg still told me not to worry about the entertainment. He said he'd get Hooty and the Blowfish from his ole school to come down and sing at the wedding and provide entertainment at the reception. But I did start to worry so I put a DJ on stand-by just in case. I paid him a deposit and told him he may not be needed but I wanted him available if we couldn't get Hooty and the Blowfish...he agreed. Well time marched on and as we got closer and closer to the wedding day, Reg finally realized that he would not be able to get Hooty and the Blowfish to play. I told Reg that I had a DJ on stand by...he didn't like the idea of a DJ, even with all the

classical music I would provide. I had hand picked classical and instrumental selections for the DJ to play during the meal. Reg wanted a pianist, I didn't like the idea of a pianist...to go from classical music to a solo pianist; I couldn't imagine the idea so I suggested a harpist; Reg liked the idea. We were able to book a harpist, even on such short notice. The harpist was very nice, more expensive than the DJ, but more classy than either a DJ or pianist. The harpist was a real nice touch.

By now it's getting very close to our wedding day and we still didn't have anyone scheduled to sing at our wedding. Reg said not to worry he was going to ask someone from the choir at our church. I reminded him that it's still not too late to ask my siblings, he said no, he'll get someone from the choir. I said okay, but still put the accompanist that sang with the church organist on stand by just in case (I had to give him a deposit). I don't remember what happened, or why getting somebody from the church choir fell through, I just remember that we didn't have anyone to sing. I called up the singer I had on stand by and told him we needed him for our wedding. I didn't even have time to pick out a selection it was so rushed. The singer and organist had some selections they'd done together in the past so those are the ones they chose to sing at our wedding. I wish I would have taken the time to choose their music, but because I had taken so much time planning selections for the DJ and ended up not using him, I thought most likely I wouldn't need to use the stand by singer either. I was sure Reg would have been able to get someone from the choir. I wish Reg would have let me ask my brother and sister to sing--- then this would not have been a problem.

We had a military wedding, complete with swords and saber guards. We had 2 receptions. One was at a reception hall immediately following the wedding. The other was at a dance club managed by one of Reggie's fraternity brothers immediately following the 1st reception. We had hired 2 wedding coordinators, a harpist, a pianist, a vocalist, the saber guards, a horseman and chariot, 2 limos and had many other expenses. Family and friends came from seven different States to celebrate our union. Our wedding was fabulous, you might say it was straight out of a storybook. But like all storybook tales, mine would have its share of happiness, betrayal and of course, tragedy.

Our honeymoon was spent in the Bahamas. We had a very nice time. We really enjoyed the nightlife. Reg slept most of the day and avoided any time out in the sun. He didn't want me to go up on the deck without him, so during the day I watched TV and stared out the porthole at the big beautiful and powerful ocean. Next time we go on a cruise, I would like a room with a bigger window or patio, that way I can see more should I be confined to the room again.

We stopped at several ports, but we only got off the boat at one of them. While on the island, we stopped at one of the souvenir shops. I had \$30.00, which was all the cash I had to spend for the whole trip. I purchased a T-shirt for his sister and was confronted with a side of Reggie I had never seen before. He became very angry with me for not letting him know that I had money...this was very confusing to me. I told him all I had was \$30.00 to buy souvenirs with and that I didn't think it was such a big deal. He told me I didn't need any money and that if I wanted to buy something all I had to do was ask him. He accused me of "holding out on him", allowing him to spend his money on things for us, while I hoard mine and buy stuff only I want. He told me not to buy anything for his family because I had no idea what they would like. This whole incident was a real

shocker for me. We didn't go to any more islands; the next time we went into a gift shop, it was the one on the boat where he bought us matching jackets and souvenir shirts.

In retrospect, some of the subtle signs pointing to a lack of commitment, lack of respect for the toils of others, as well as a certain tendency towards a controlling behavior, were evident with Reggie. Moving in together once a wedding date was set for the purpose of saving money for the wedding, was not a commitment to be taken lightly. I can't imagine that Reggie did not know the magnitude of such a request. If he didn't know, then that is certainly a testament as to how two people can undervalue each other's willingness to compromise. This early display of the need to control the "purse strings" was just a preliminary for the struggles that were yet to come related to our budgeting and spending. This idea about not wanting me to buy anything for his family was carried out throughout our marriage. Reg's mom always sent me a beautiful sweater for Christmas every year (for the 1st 3 years of our marriage) every year I wanted to buy gifts for Reg's family. He told me not to and when I insisted he became angry and told me that I don't have the same "tastes" as his family and I wouldn't know what to get them. He told me he'll take care of his family. Every Christmas we had a replay of the same scenario. Year after year he bitterly protested any ideas I had of getting his family anything for Christmas.

Changing previously agreed to details with regards to the wedding, showed a total disregard for any effort I had put into the initial planning. Although Reggie's input was included and sought after in every detail, this behavior to change things in the last few months prior to the wedding date was a preview to things to come. Reggie consistently throughout the marriage showed a lack of respect for anything that I did from raising and caring for the children, to minimizing the sacrifice of having to spend long hours away from the family working outside the home. In all the years Reg and I were together, there isn't one thing I ever did that Reg actually approved of or appreciated---I pause to think--if I could just think of one thing...let God be my witness, I would mention it here. There's nothing.

Reggie was always very critical of me and everything I did or failed to do. I came from a home where we were always encouraged and praised no matter how trivial the accomplishment. Reggie's constant criticism did not break my spirit or diminish my esteem, I was aware and secure with my self-worth long before I met Reggie...thank God for that. Needless to say, constantly feeling unappreciated and undervalued was very disheartening.

I had been driving down to San Antonio on a weekly basis for nearly a year and half to visit Reg every chance I got. I was working twelve-hour shifts, so most of the time I had three and four days off in a row. I became pregnant on our honeymoon. When I was twenty-four weeks pregnant I began showing early signs of having a problem pregnancy. I was placed on bed rest until thirty-six weeks. Throughout the time I was on bed rest I stayed in San Antonio. I no longer had to drive back and forth to Killeen. This time was probably the best year of our marriage. This is a time in our life together when I can say my husband was truly committed to his family. No great stories of how he cared for me, because he didn't, although I was placed on bed rest I still cared for the home: cooking, cleaning, ironing, laundry, etc. But Reggie was always physically and emotionally there for me. We worked together in the family business we had started and didn't have any major conflicts...this was certainly a blessed time for us in our relationship.

S-Cube was the name of our family business. It stood for "Singleton, Singleton and Singleton." We didn't have any children at the time, Que was in the "oven", but we felt that was a good name for our company after considering other options such as "Singleton and Singleton".

Reggie was very ambitious and he was a risk taker if he believed he could profit from it. I admired his determination and fearless approach to investing. He had more guts than I ever did. S-Cube was a home automation business and Reg really did a great job of figuring out how to make all those gadgets work and how to set them up to automate a home. I was very impressed. We didn't always see eye to eye on how to manage the business, but I yielded to whatever Reg thought was best. We were in this together and whatever risk he was willing to take, I supported it. Naturally I assumed that we would both reap the consequences or benefits of his aggressive style of investing.

CHAPTER THREE

1997

"And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."
Deuteronomy 11:19

In June 1997 our first child was born. Having a child was like having a dream come true. I remember waking up in the hospital the day after Que was born and mentally performing a reality check. I remember realizing the amazing truth about my life, I have a baby.... a real live baby! A beautiful baby boy! I remember looking over at Reg who was asleep on the pull out chair that was in the room and thinking how big and strong and wonderful he was. I remember remembering (as I watched him sleep) how he woke up in the middle of the night to feed the baby and the tremendous amount of love I felt for my husband for being there with me and helping me to care for our first born son.

Both of us felt overjoyed and blessed by the presence of our newborn son, neither of us wanted to make an issue about the huge conflict that overshadowed this once in a life time experience. The conflict was the naming of our son. Reg wanted him to be named after him Reginald Terrence Singleton. I would agree to any name except Reginald for a first name. The middle name could have been Reginald, but I didn't want to have 2 people in the house with the same first name. That was such a big issue for me; even before Reg and I were engaged I asked him whether or not it was important to him to have his child named after him. He said it was not important to have his child named after him nor had he ever considered doing that. Nearly halfway through my pregnancy Reggie told me he wanted to name the child after him and he insisted on it. He would consider no other name for this baby except Reginald. It was terrible and I felt so betrayed. I thought it was awfully selfish to insist on only one name out of all the tens of thousands of possible names, heck, people can even make names up if you can't choose from an already existing name. Well at some point during the pregnancy we agreed on Reginald Quentojohn and agreed to call him R'Que for short. The other issue with the name is that I insisted on having every child that we have carry my last name as a third name. Reg did not agree and he wanted me to not give the children my family name. I told him that the given names for the children is negotiable because that's exactly what a first name is a "given" name. It does not necessarily speak to a person's history or heritage, but to take away a family name is a lot more significant. I explained that having my name is for historical purposes, they will be known by their first and last name only, the same as any other child in the U.S. He never agreed to having my family name on the birth certificate, I never agreed not to, when the time came around for me to fill out the birth certificate, I filled the name part out in pencil (in case we were going to discuss it more and change things) and I showed it to Reg, he didn't say anything about the last name and I didn't make an issue about the first name, both of us were trying not to ruin the moment. I thought that although his first name was Reginald, we would not have had a problem substituting his formal name for the name his dad and I had agreed to call him. R.Quentojohn (to be pronounced R.Que) is how I had hoped to have our son's name

reflected throughout his youth, he of course when older could have decided to go by his first name if he preferred. But for the time he was living at home, he and his dad would have had separate and distinct names all of their own. The children would have their dad's family name, I didn't think it was unreasonable for our baby to be known by a name that both Reg and me agreed to, which was R.Que (spelled R.Quentohn). To name or call Que Reginald Singleton hurts my heart so bad (I tear up thinking about it), it bears no reflection of my input into naming our baby boy. Our baby grew and survived and moved around in my womb long before Reg ever laid eyes on him, yet asking him to choose a name that we both could agree to was non-negotiable. In truth, Reggie didn't even have input into how the name "Reginald" became a part of the Singleton family history of names, the name Reginald, was given to him over a quarter of a century ago. Having a child named after his father is an honor only if both parents agree to the name.

In retrospect, our level of spiritual maturity was quite obvious. We were just babes in Christ. Neither one of us gave this situation over to God and asked God to lift this burden from our hearts. Yes, the naming of the child was very important to both of us for different reasons. Reg felt that having his son named after him would have been and outward display of a wife's honor for her husband. I felt like the child was a product of both Reg and my love so both of our desires should have been reflected in the name. The child would be given both family names in representation of their heritage but the first name reflecting my input into the name and Reggie's family's last name which would be given to each child that we had and carried on for generation to come (and in my opinion is a greater honor than a first name that's only reflected for a season and given only to one child) would have been the two names by which the child would have been known. If Reg or I had been a bit more mature in our spirituality, either one of us would have been able to look at this issue and test the spirit. We learned through our church Pastor some of the tricks Satan used since the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden to create discourse. These very things were at the root of this issue and what we were holding on to. Our Pastor told us in any situation you find yourself struggling with test the spirit, if you're standing on an issue that represents lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, or pride of life, you're not lined up with the right spirit. God's spirit is not in that battle, so let it go and ask God to take over so you don't have to worry about that thing anymore. Completely release it and God will take care of the rest.

Just prior to leaving for Germany, we went to South Carolina to have Que Christened in the church where Reggie grew up. Reggie's mom hosted a huge Christening reception, she hired a caterer and invited lots of friends and family to the event. It was very nice and it was obvious that she put a lot of time and effort into this event, after all, this was the Christening of her first Grandbaby. I'm glad we decided to have it in South Carolina, though it would have also been nice to have it in Philly because my family would have been able to come. But we agreed on South Carolina because it was nice having the Christening done in a church where Reg grew up and by a Pastor that knew him as a young man.

Going home (South Carolina) for my son's Christening was beautiful. I was with my husband, my beautiful baby boy, and surrounded by "family". In retrospect I say, what a facade. Only God knew how shallow and insignificant the time spent attempting to bond and get to know these people would have turned out to be. Gathering, festivity,

exchanging hugs and smiles was only for the "good times". What an idiot I was for thinking otherwise.

Prior to the birth of our first son, I spoke with Reggie about resigning my commission. The army had converted all their Pediatric Nurses to Medical -Surgical Nurses, so the pediatric identifier was no longer recognized. I considered resigning my commission because I did not want to end up doing Medical-Surgical nursing or caring for adult patients. Reggie suggested that I wait and see what type of nursing I'd be doing in Germany before hastily resigning my commission. He pointed out that the rules may be different in Germany. He told me that if we get to Germany and I don't like the job they give me then I could get out. I agreed. Little did I know at the time, that this would be the beginning of a four-year battle to resign my commission.

So we were off to Germany. Of course the assignment they wanted to give me was to work on a Medical Surgical floor. They told me they do not assign husbands and wives to work in the same area, and since my spouse was OB, they were going to put me in another section (Med-Surg). I told them that Reg and I had worked in the same area before and we were very good at maintaining our professionalism in the work place. I told them about how we worked in the same area at BAMC and at DACH and very few people knew we were a couple. We kept our private lives private. I told them I chose Pediatric Nursing long before I chose Reggie and to take me out of my area of expertise and interest would be a loss for the unit. They assigned me to the Maternal Child Health Section where I was able to work with the neonates. But because of the type of unit we were on we also had to care for the mother. I liked working with the babies and the postpartum couplet, but I did not like labor and delivery and on this unit we did it all. It was nice working with Reg though. I liked it when he was assigned to the deck on the days I worked because I got to see a lot of him on those days. But unfortunately, the way things were, even though we worked in the same section, I worked 12 hour nights so there were very few times we spent a lot of time together at work. Even when he was on call at the hospital and I was working the night shift, I would see very little of him. Sometimes if things were slow I'd go to the call room and lie down in the bed with him. But mostly we only saw each other in passing.

The first thirty to forty-five days in Germany was spent just getting settled. We went to classes on how to recycle, German laws, housing, driver's ed, and the week I liked most was the last week of in-processing, we all went to head start. Me and Reg were in the same class. This whole week we learned basic German. We learned how to order food at a restaurant, how to travel on the train and lots more. Both Reg and I were very interested in learning German. Reg worked through many of the exercises in his book (I hadn't done any in mine... I was impressed with him) we quizzed each other and used our new words and phrases in the middle of our English sentences as we communicated daily. He'd even bought a language CD. Reg insisted that I learn by using interactive participation on the computer, but I told him I learn best by emersion, song tapes, and repetition. I told him I couldn't gain anything if I just sat down and tried to remember vocabulary words and phrases. I did use the CDs as an adjunct, but my primary method was tapes and emersion. Reg's interest probably peaked by the sixty day mark and by ninety days he was not as excited anymore. In fact Reggie went to the opposite extreme, he began to vehemently object to anything having to do with assimilation into the German culture. I don't (to this day) know what changed his heart so

drastically. I think it was because he was having difficulty learning it and so he just rebelled. A wiser and more confident approach would have been to capitalize on his wife's strengths and assist and encourage me in doing what seemed natural--- I was picking up the language rather easily and he saw this, even at work I spoke with the German nationals in German although they were bilingual. When we went out to restaurants I ordered my food and made requests in German although the waitresses were bilingual. I continued to grow in my German experience but it was not as much fun as it was when we were learning it together. In fact it became an area of contention in our marriage. He often criticized me for speaking the language around the house as my skills improved. He didn't like it when I watched German programming on TV and he never came out with us when we did events sponsored by our Host Nation. He turned into an "ugly American", that was the coined term used to describe Americans who arrogantly chose to not assimilate. The expectations of the ugly American was that they would manage to get through their experience in this foreign Country because the natives will have to meet them in their comfort zone.

Child care was a real challenge for us. When we exited the plane in Germany, we did not know anyone in the country and we had to report to work in one week. Reg reported to work on the first business day, but I was still on maternity leave so I had one more week before I was to begin in-processing. Meanwhile we had to find child care, someone in this foreign Country to watch our 5 week old child. We couldn't get Que into the childcare center on post right away because the waiting list was too long. We were dual military so we had priority and were moved to the top of the list, but we only had a week (now down to a few days) before I needed to report to duty. We saw a bulletin board at the PX where people posted items they were selling things such as cars, furniture, clothing, and services. We saw a person who said they do child care in their home, and they had a phone number to pull off, we pulled off the number and called it that night. A German lady, Andrea came to meet us and Que the next day. Reg and I were concerned about the fact that we did not know anything about this lady we were entrusting our child with and we considered the possibility of this person taking off with our child and having him in another Country before we had gotten off from work. It was a scary thought, but there was nothing else for us to do. I had to go to work, no option here. If I were a civilian I could wait until we screened people and found someone we knew we could trust or until a place became available at the Child Development Center. When Andrea came by to pick Que up for the first time we asked her to see her drivers license (we wrote down all of the information from the license) we took her picture and we even considered using shoe polish to obtain her finger prints. Andrea worked out well, she came to pick up Que every morning from the guest house and dropped him off every evening. Once we got our driver's licenses we brought Que over to her house and picked him up. This worked out nicely for a while, then Andrea decided to get married and would no longer live in the area. Our names hadn't come up on the list yet for the daycare, plus Reg and I had agreed that we wanted to have in-home care for our son. Thankfully my mom volunteered to take vacation from work and come down to watch him until we got something more permanent. My sister Angie knew a friend from school whom she thought she might be able to convince to come down to help. Mom was with us from the guesthouse until we moved into a rental home on the economy. She stayed until Isha (Angie's friend) came. There was an overwhelming peace of mind that came

with leaving our child with family versus leaving him for such a long period of time with strangers and non family members. Ma had to eventually go back to work, Isha came down, Ma showed her around the house and introduced her to the baby's routine. Isha stayed nearly a year, then she became homesick and wanted to go back to the U.S. We thank God for the time Isha did stay with us. Although we would have liked her to have stayed the whole time we were in Germany, having her for the length of time we did have her, gave us stability in our home. Que had a permanent and dependable person caring for him and Isha became very aware of the family's routine so when I was home I never worried about caring for the home, I spent most of my time interacting and caring for our baby boy. Isha didn't drive so I still did the grocery shopping and ran errands on my days off from work. Isha had her days off whenever I was off. She often would come around town with me when I ran errands.

There was a great deal of consistency to our daily routine, even though Reg and I worked long hours, I wanted our lives at home to be as organized as possible. An audio cassette with lullabies (both German and English) played softly throughout the night in Que's bedroom, he had a small night light which softly illuminated his room, the theme in his room was Pooh's blustery day. Everything in his room was coordinated. His bath accessories were Pooh. I was very big on purchasing kids products for kids. Most everything that Que used, if there were a kid's product on the market for it he would have the kid's version. He was read a bedtime story every night before going to bed and every noon time before nap. He had regular bedtimes, meal times, and bath times. All his toys and things he used such as the diapers and baby wipes were kept in a place that was accessible to him and the location of these items never changed. This was done to foster independence and confidence in our little man. Que from the time he began to crawl was encouraged to do things for himself. Although it took longer for him to do a thing or get a thing and bring it to me, I always was very patient and gave him the guidance and assistance he needed to accomplish a task. Then once he completed the task he was given high praise, and oh, how he loved to be praised. I was involved in caring for Que whenever I was at home. Although I worked long hours and often the hours I worked were the 12 hour night shift, I spent as much time caring for and interacting with my baby as possible. When I would get home from work at 8am, I would take a short nap and get up at 10 or 11am so that I could be with my son. Then I would lay down with him during his naptime so that I would be somewhat rested for work that night. When I worked days and would get home by 8 pm I would be able to read him his bedtime story and lay with him until he went to sleep. When I worked the day shifts, if Que woke up in the night, I would go to his bedside to comfort him back to sleep. Of course we always had help in the house that could do these things as Reggie often pointed out, but I was his mother and I chose to do this. Reg of course had a different approach to parenting, as he should, our roles and responsibilities are different. He worked very long hours and when he came home he would take Que for a walk or play with him for a little while, then off he would go to spend hours on the computer or watch TV until bedtime. That's not unusual at all for dad's to do that, though I could certainly use that kind of recovery time knowing that when I get off work and get home, I have less than 10 hours prior to my next shift, but as a mother, my internal circuitry or something just wouldn't let me function like that. I had to be involved with my child, even if it were just watching him play. I wanted to be in his presence, if I were laying down resting, I had him with me.

Reg felt that having someone in the house to help us was a luxury and he'd tell me that I should realize how fortunate I am to have such a supportive husband that would honor me with such a luxury. I told Reg that having people in the house to help us is not a luxury it is sheer necessity. It doesn't have to be a necessity though, if we pitched in and worked together we wouldn't need help in the house or help would then be a luxury... allowing us to spend more time together. But if one of us decide not to participate in the household tasks or childcare activities then there is absolutely no way one person can do it all, therefore the help we have in the house is not a luxury, not in the least. He made it perfectly clear that his role did not include child care activities, in fact, he even made the comment to me (on more than one occasion) that he work too hard to be coming home to more work, when he come home he want to relax because his job requires a high level of mental functioning and he need to be at his functional best when he go to work (this is not fiction, Reggie said this, not verbatim---- but he said it). One time when I asked him to change a diaper (I was curling my hair), he said, " I didn't go to school for ten years so that I would be doing those things, that's what we pay people for". I was very disappointed to hear him say that, it was always a blessing to have someone around to help us, but the purpose for having them around was not for them to parent our children. They were there to care for the children when we weren't there and to do household things so that we didn't have to do them and when we were home we were freed up to care for and interact with our children and each other.

Caring for my children is far more important and rewarding to me than caring for patients in the hospital . I am the only biological mom these children will ever have, but at my job I am as expendable as any piece of equipment. My children will only be babies once and to spend as much time with them before they grow older and prefer spending their time with their peers was so very important to me. I wish my husband would have understood how important it was for me to raise our children. I must admit Reg had a better lease on recovery and relaxation for surviving our hectic work hours, but working all day then spending hours away from the family at night to recover just to get up and do it all over again was not my idea of family. I had to be with my family when I was home and not closed off into a room by myself. Even when I was taking Grad courses and doing my homework, I did it not away from my family, but with them. There were many times I took Que upstairs with me on the 4th floor to do my homework. Recovery for me was spending time with my family.

Reg worked more hours than I did considering his on-call hours and backup call hours. But he had a better schedule than I did. He worked days. He could count on being home most weekends (even if on back up call), he was able to take advantage of the 4 day weekends when he wasn't on-call, and he enjoyed the holiday work schedule at the end of the year (half day work schedule). He could plan vacations in advance and count on being able to get off during the time he requested.

Because I worked "only" 12 hours per day and no matter how hectic my time at work was on any particular day, someone would be coming to take over at the end of my 12 hour shift, (so, as Reg so very often pointed out , on my absolute worst day, I would only have to work 13 or 14 hours), unlike Reggie's job, if he's having a hectic call-day, no one's coming to relieve him for a whole 24 hours. I was enlightened to these facts by my husband very early in our German tour and reminded of this fact on several occasions. Reg compared my work hours to his and because he put in so many more

hours than I did he had very little empathy for me when I complained about the long hours and not being able to spend enough time with the family. I told Reggie how I felt about not being able to put my baby to bed at night, not being able to count on being home with my family on the weekends. I may have had one weekend a month off, sometimes (rarely) 2 weekends. I told him about how often I would not be able to get the 4 day weekends when he did(if we would have our weekends off together, especially the four day weekends we could plan trips and go to some of the many places around Europe that were organized by the military recreation association). When we planned trips back to the States I wouldn't be assured that I would be able to go on these trips until maybe 2 weeks out from our departure date. It was always so nerve wrecking not knowing if I would be able to get the time off or not. Reg would have gotten his leave approved and even if it weren't formally approved he would know with complete assurance barring any unexpected events, he would be able to purchase tickets and go on this planned trip. Purchasing my tickets was always risky because I may not get my leave approved. In nursing there were so many more of us to have to schedule leaves around, assuring that not more than a certain amount of personnel are on vacation at any one time and it was a lot more uncertain than with Reggie's group. There were only 3 or 4 of them and they mostly coordinated amongst themselves when they were going to take their vacation times.

Not being able to be home at night was another major dilemma for me. Most of the time I worked night shift. Reg would be coming home and I would be leaving out the door to go to work, or if he were still at work I would be coming on for shift report and he would be getting ready to go home. If it were the weekend and he was on-call, he didn't have to be to work until 9 am, well on these days I would be getting home to go to bed and he would be getting up to come to work. It was terrible, I saw this as so very unhealthy for our family. Our lives went on like this for quite some time. An occasional change up occurred when I went to 12 hour day shift for a little while. I saw more of Reg at work during this time and we slept together at night, but we still didn't get our weekends together very often. So the quality of time spent together was still lacking. I'd get home at 8 or 8:30 pm (Reg would have been home by 4:30 or 5:00--- no later than 6 pm) and I'd read Que a bedtime story and put him to bed, then by the time Reg and I hook-up we may only have 30 minutes to an hour of time to interact with one another. The little time we spent together before we went off to sleep was very positive. At the beginning of our marriage we promised to never go to bed angry with one another, and we seemed to have managed to do this for the most part quite well during the first year of our marriage.

The most devastating occurrence during our first 6 months in Germany was when Reggie was accused of marital infidelity. One night we were lying in bed and Reg told me how there was this nurse who had accused him of inappropriate behavior, I listened very attentively. He explained how these accusations were not true and he felt he was being victimized but he didn't want to make waves so he resigned to "leave things alone". Naturally I jumped to his defense and told him how horrific this was and that he should not just "lie down", he should go to her supervisor, if she's doing this to you, she may have done it to someone else(have an established pattern) or she may do it to someone else later. I assured him that there would be no merit to this because he's well known around the hospital and his character would speak for itself. I told him he does not

want to have anything like this circulating around (even if untrue), because lies evolve into bigger lies, plus he would get an untrustworthy reputation...etc, etc, etc. Reg assured me that to do nothing was the best course. So, I accepted that as the best thing to do, prayed about it and went off to slumber-land. At some point (possibly days later) my Chief Nurse (my boss's-boss) came up to my work area to see me. She spoke to me in private and told me that Reggie is involved in a situation involving another woman and the military police are involved.... she said she wanted to give me as much support as I will need and if I would need some time off to let her know. Of course my husband had spoken with me about this situation and there isn't an ounce of truth to it and I told her so. I told her we really should inform this lady's supervisor and do what we need to clear my husband's name. I told her the decision that Reggie had come to about not making waves and that he decided the best course of action is to let this all pass. She looked at me a bit puzzled and very sincere, she said, remember that we are here for you... let me know if you'll need some time off. Not long after this (that same day, possibly), Reggie came to me and told me he had lied to me the other night. He told me that he did have involvement with this woman but the extent of it was a few comments about her butt and legs and they fondled each other in the exam room in his office. He said he was sorry, he don't know why he did it, he know it was inappropriate and he promised to never do anything like that again. He said he messed up really bad and that he (on this day) give me a "get out of jail free" card (like in monopoly) he explained that I could mess up really bad and he would remember this moment and forgive me as I have forgiven him. I expressed my concerns to him and told him how it concerned me that he could screw-up one day and impregnate a woman and that would screw our family up really bad. I told him it would be awful to bring a child into the world under those circumstances and to bring in the turmoils associated with that circumstance into our family. We're too mature for this non-sense I told him. I told him how I did not expect to have this kind of non-sense in our household because we were a Christian household. Reggie was very humble, he had lots of legal stuff regarding this situation that he was dealing with. Reggie promised me that after we had our 2nd child he would get a vasectomy. We prayed about this situation and the outcome and went on with our lives. It looked really bleak for a while because there was talk of putting him out of the Army or relocating him. But things came to pass. The hospital we worked in was a very small community hospital and rumors circulated pretty quickly... it was really embarrassing for a while, knowing that everybody knew my husband was "easy"....a whore-monger. Maybe in today's world it wasn't such a big deal, but at the time it was very difficult for me going in to work knowing everybody knew. I didn't take any time off, I felt you just gotta get thru it, time will pass and this all will be a distant memory. I asked Reg how he felt about all of this. Did he feel like a "stud" or did he feel embarrassed by all this too? He said he was embarrassed and I felt that at least we shared that emotion and knew that this was not something either of us wanted to re-live.

Dealing with this infidelity issue was a real dilemma for me. One always thinks that infidelity in a marriage is the one thing you would never tolerate. You feel that the person is dirty and how dare he touch you with the same hands, kiss you with the same lips, expose you to the same organ that he used with "her". The wreckless, selfish consideration for the possibility of being exposed to disease with this irresponsible behavior was very concerning. I remember thinking when I was dating Reggie that

because of the nature of his profession, being an obstetrician/gynecologist and seeing all the venereal diseases and their frequency I would never have to worry about him stepping out on me. I gave Reggie too much credit, my dad always said education doesn't equate to intelligence.... how true that is! Intelligence is reacting intelligently to everyday problems, stimulations, and circumstances in ones environment. Reggie was a Christian, he attended church regularly, prayed and read the bible daily, this also gave me a false sense of security related to knowing that my husband would be faithful to me.

During our first year in Germany we went to several churches in our community trying to find a church home. We were looking for a church that would be good for our work schedules as well as one that had services similar to the services Reg was used to in his hometown of South Carolina. So we hopped around a lot during the first year. We only attended church, we were never involved in any church activities or attended mid-week services. We often stated that we wish that our schedules would allow us to go to bible study. We really wanted to be involved more but our work schedules made it real easy to not go. In retrospect, if we really had committed ourselves to going like we know we should have, we may have been able to go once a month and maybe sometimes twice.

I spoke with Reg about resigning my commission over and over again. He would always listen and then give me his rationale for why now was not a good time to resign. Each time I asked, Reggie would say no. Each time there would be another good reason for his decision (in his mind's eye).

CHAPTER FOUR

1998

"In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you"
Mathew 7:12

We brought this New Year in together. Both of us were off from work and we went to a function in Heidelberg (which is about 3 hours from where we lived), Reggie's fraternity sponsored this function. It was very nice. We had a grand time. Que was there and he was the best-dressed little man of the evening. He was very well behaved, everyone adored him and he of course loved all the attention.

1998 was one of our better years, at least at the beginning. We survived the issues with the infidelity, which carried over into the first quarter of this New Year. We took our very first tour, which was a bus tour to Paris for a four-day weekend. We had a very nice time. We had a hand sketched family portrait made in Paris, we went to the Eiffel Tower, toured the city and several other tourist activities.

In 1998, (I believe this was the first quarter of that year because snow was still on the ground.) I came up on the deployment list to go to Turkey, the deployment was going to be for 4-6 months with the possibility of the tour extending up to one year. I immediately was placed on the training schedule to go to different sites to train for this upcoming deployment. Two of the training weeks were near where we lived and I came home every night after training, but the other 2 weeks were in Hohenfels Germany which was several hours from where we lived and I stayed there for 2 weeks. I may have been pregnant at this time but didn't know it. I told Reg when I called him on the phone that I had some "spotting". I don't remember thinking too much of it because it could have been just an irregular period from the stress of all the pre-deployment training I had been doing. When we first married we said we wanted our children 2-3 years apart. One year was too soon and greater than 4 years was too big of a gap, so we decided that 2-3 years was perfect. Que was not quite a year when we got news of this deployment, we decided then to start working on having our second child earlier than we had originally planned. Reg and I agreed that I should stop taking my birth control pills and we started working on the second child. By the time I went to Hohenfels I had been off the pill less than a month so I did not think much of the "spotting". When I came back from Hohenfels I had a pregnancy test done and indeed I was pregnant. I was immediately taken off of the deployment list. The news of this pregnancy was pleasing to both Reg and me (this pregnancy was lost to a miscarriage).

Things were going well for me on the job but the hours were very long and I hated the labor and delivery aspect of my job. I spoke with Reg about getting out of the Army, resigning my commission. I wanted to spend more time with Que, take care of our home and Reg and I was only seeing each other in passing. I wanted us to have more family time together. We hardly ever had a regular weekend together, and even more rarely a Holiday (4 day) weekend together. I reminded him that he had told me that if I didn't like my job when I came to Germany that I would be able to get out. He told me that we still had lots of bills to pay from S-Cube and he needed my income to help pay

off these bills. I was very disappointed because I thought I was very supportive with him in this family business venture and I did not nag or criticize him in any way when I thought some of the business decisions he was making was less than wise. I gave him my suggestions, opinions, and recommendations but if he did the opposite (and he often did) I took no offense, I just prayed that it would work out and the decision he made would have proved successful. I did not imagine that he would hold me captive in the military until these bills were paid off... I'm sure that wasn't his plan, it just turned out like that.... nonetheless, hindsight is always 20/20. If I had known my freedom would have been tied to the amount of income we pumped into S-Cube, I may not have been so passive about the decisions he was making. I know I would have insisted on having him close the store before we left for Germany. We left for Germany in August and the store remained opened through the Holidays, the monthly rental for the store space doubles throughout the Holiday Season. We were paying in rent alone through the Holiday Season nearly \$3000.00 per month. The managers we had hired were unreliable, so Reg decided to bring his sister's close friend down (all expenses paid and a guarantee of at least one year's salary regardless of the success or failure of the business) to manage our store when we left for Germany. I opposed this, I wanted to close the store, but I supported Reg's decision to keep it open.

I can agree that the early part of 1998 would not have been the best time for me to get out, but considering once I would have put in my resignation paperwork it's probably between 4 and 6 months before I would be relieved from active duty, so putting in my paperwork during the first quarter of 1998 would not have been detrimental to our survival. Around the 2nd quarter of 1998 I was really blessed (so it seemed), I had gone down to the Officer's record's section to take care of something and overheard the secretary telling another officer about this offer being made to decrease the amount of CPT's on active duty she said that the Army was offering 7 CPTs with at least 5 years of service between 15 and \$ 20,000 to resign, (the military often does this when they are over strengthened). I said, praise God! I want to get out anyway so I might as well get paid to get out. Of course I wanted to tell Reg this exciting news but he was 3 hours away in Heidelberg for a conference, me and Que was going to catch the train up there and join him later. I certainly did not want to miss out on this opportunity and because the offer was for so few officers and the deadline was that day, I asked the secretary to sign me up, put my name on the list... and she did. I thought my chances for getting selected were pretty good. I came into the Army with a course guarantee to work in Pediatrics, the Army made a change and the identifier is no longer available, I tried staying in and being content doing something other than Peds, but it's just not fulfilling for me professionally... I think that would have been a pretty strong argument supporting my request for early release from active duty. And of course I had prayer on my side, if God was willing (and I had very little doubt that he would not have wanted me out of the Army and caring for my family) this was a sure thing for me. When we got to Heidelberg, I told Reg the news... he was furious. He told me to call back and cancel, have them take my name off the list. I tried to convince him this was a good thing and how the scales were tilted in my favor for being one of the 7 to get selected. I couldn't get him to agree that receiving the \$20,000 for getting out was a good idea. I tried another approach. I told him to let me keep my name on the list and maybe I won't get selected and if I am selected and if he still doesn't agree with my getting out then I could turn it

down. He said No! No! No! he told me if I don't call them back then he would file for a divorce when we got back to Wurzburg. I didn't call back, I told him I wanted to get out and this is the perfect thing, he went on about the divorce. This was a Thursday and I went to bed with this on my mind. I considered the divorce and going back to the States (San Antonio of course) and this was do-able, the only problem was I was pregnant (I forget how far along, but it was very early). I wondered how I would support me and the baby (Que) no one would hire me pregnant and I didn't know what kind of complications I would have with the pregnancy. I was put on bed rest at 24 weeks with Que, and if I were laid up with this 2nd pregnancy I would not be able to support me and Que. Financially supporting the children after the new baby was born would not have been a problem because I have a very stable profession. Reg and I talked about how sad for R'Que to not be able to play with his dad and how terrible for the new baby that would have never known his dad... we both talked about this with great sadness. Reg told me before he left for the conference that morning that I better call and tell the secretary to withdraw my paperwork. He called me midway through the morning and again at lunch, I still hadn't called, each time he reminded me about what he said about divorcing me when we got back to Wurzburg and he assured me that he meant it. I still couldn't change his heart... so I called and told the secretary to remove my name from the list. It was an awful sinking feeling I had in my heart... I had already claimed the victory and received this release from active duty as a done-deal, I believed in the power of prayer and did not doubt that God would have given our family this victory. I was also wondering about this man I married, how strange I thought, I didn't doubt his sincerity about divorcing me if I didn't withdraw the paperwork, if I had thought he would have reconsidered I would not have withdrawn my paperwork. This was awful, but I did not dwell on it. By the time Reg came back to the Hotel that evening, things went on as usual. I don't hold grudges or dwell on things that would make me angry towards someone, I let things go really easily.

In August 1998 I decided to start Grad school. Because of the inflexibility in my work schedule the only type of schooling I could consider was some type of Outreach Program, with this type of program I did not have to attend campus for classes except once a year. And considering the fact that I was overseas, this made my chances for going to school even more remote, unless I considered something other than the traditional way of completing my degree. I applied to Graceland University and was accepted. When it was time for me to pay for my schooling Reg asked me if I had checked into the 75% tuition assistance program offered by the military. I told him I was very familiar with that program and how it works. I told him I used that tuition assistance program when I took graduate courses in Killeen in 1995. I told him I know the program tells you that you can pay the money back if you decide to get out of the Army in less than 2 years after you've taken the assistance, but it is at the Army's discretion to let you out or not. I told him my ROTC commitment will be up in Sept 2000 and I did not want any other commitment that could keep me on active duty. Reg continued to insist that I look into taking the tuition assistance. He told me to call and verify the fact that I could pay the money back if I decided to resign before 2 years. I called and spoke with every reliable source I could think of to verify what I already knew and that was that if I didn't remain on active duty for 2 years after I took tuition assistance, I would not be forced to remain on active duty (the potential for being forced to remain was a reality, but not likely), I would be able to pay back the money based on how much time I had remaining

of the original 2 years. The sources I used to verify what would happen if I decided to resign my commission prior to the 2 year period was my Head Nurse, my Chief Nurse, 3 education centers in our area, the Dantes personnel (the source of the tuition assistance), and the Nurse Corp Branch. These are all reliable sources, none of them would give me inaccurate information in hopes of getting me to sign a contract to force me to remain on active duty longer than I wanted to. All of these sources confirmed that I would not be at risk for being forced to remain on active duty if I decided to resign my commission less than 2 years after signing up for a course paid for by Dantes. I still told Reg that I didn't want to use tuition assistance because I did not want the remote possibility of being forced to remain on active duty beyond the year 2000. I told him I only called to verify the facts of the tuition assistance because he asked me to, but I have no intention to use it. Reg was not demanding nor did he give me any ultimatums, he did not tell me if I don't use tuition assistance that I can't go to school, he did not threaten divorce or act disrespectful in anyway regarding this issue. He just explained that he wish I would use tuition assistance because there is absolutely very minimal risk involved, it would be the responsible thing to do. I knew he was right about the minimal risk and it would be the responsible thing to do, but I wanted to not take that chance, however after a couple of days of thinking it over I agreed to use tuition assistance. My classes were going to cost me about \$5,000.00, Dantes would pay 75% of that amount, the other \$3,000.00 was room, board, and airfare to my resident courses, Dantes didn't reimburse for that. I realize this is rather expensive, but considering the fact that I was active duty and had no other options, the cost was worth it to me. Reggie already had his highest attainable degree, so he can easily minimize the value I placed on earning mine. If I were not on active duty other less expensive options would have been available. To wait for 3 years until I returned to the States to pursue this degree(which is what Reggie wanted me to do) was also something I was not willing to do... I wanted my MSN so that I could then move on to pursuing my PHD, to wait was not an option for me. I paid for the courses upfront, then once I'd completed the courses I would inform Dantes, send in the paperwork, then they would reimburse me. Very nice, it seemed like a good idea... this was August 1998, my commission was up in September 2000... not a problem. Both contracts (my ROTC and Dantes) would have been filled at the same time and of course if I wanted to resign sooner than the year 2000, it had already been clearly established that the contract with Dantes would not have been a problem.

Our spiritual lives had not been unlike it has been in the past. By the 3rd quarter of the year we had been in regular attendance at a church on Harvey Barracks which was about 3 or 4 miles from where we lived. The services were very long. When I worked nights I would come home and take a nap, then we would go to church. We would get there approximately 15 minutes before the worship service began and we'd leave just before the benediction so that I could get back home and nap again before it was time for me to go back to work. I worked the 12 hour nights so if we left church as early as 2 or 2:30 pm, I would still have only 3 or 4 hours of sleep prior to going to work. We always went to church together except on the weekends when Reg was on call, he wasn't able to go. The both of us would have liked to have gotten involved in the church but we concluded that our work schedules wouldn't allow enough flexibility for us to do that. Reg was still not quite satisfied with the Harvey church, he was still looking for something more like the church he grew up in down South. So we didn't become

members. We also wanted a church that had hours that worked better with our work schedules. We didn't like always leaving early and coming in late. But for the time being we decided to stay with Harvey. I really liked the church at Harvey, I just wish the hours would have worked better with our schedules so we could be there from start to finish. We both agreed that the messages we received while attending Harvey were always very uplifting and inspiring. Though with the escalating problems we were having at home, we needed something more we just didn't know what.

Around the 3rd quarter of this year we were planning a trip back to the States. Isha was still with us, but it is around this time that she decided that instead of a round trip ticket, she wanted a one-way. She said she was getting homesick. She liked Germany but she was bored. We were disappointed and offered her a pay increase and other perks to get her to stay but she had her mind made up. We were grateful that she stayed as long as she did because throughout the time she was with us we had very reliable childcare and we knew Que was in good hands. To find a replacement for Isha we ran ads in the paper and did several telephone interviews. Once we sorted through the eligible applicants and eliminated people by telephone interview, then the two of us coordinated our schedules to ensure we were both home for the personal interviews. We had narrowed the personal interviews down to three people, one was a 17 year old (Chris), she came on the interview with her mom, but we agreed we did not want to use her because she was too young. The other was a 21 year old (Jessica), Reg didn't want to hire her because she had a child (10 months old). He was worried about the liability we would have if the child fell down the stairs or something. I wanted to hire her because she had a child and he was Que's age, I thought it would be cute for him to grow up with a playmate. I felt she was trustworthy and would be reliable. Then there was this other lady, I forgot her name, she was older than Jessica, I think she was about 25 years old. Reg wanted to hire her because she was mature the more mature of the other two and she had no kids. I told him after the interview that her responses to our questions were too perfect. She told us exactly what she thought we wanted to hear. I told him I get bad vibes about her, I don't feel she's being honest with us. He still wanted to hire her, so we called her back. She declined. She told us why and later we found out that the reason she gave us for declining wasn't true. It turned out that Jessica knew her and her mother and many of the things she told us on the interview was not true. So I thank God she didn't come to work for us. I had visions of her mistreating Que... which may not have ever come true, she may have been just great with him, but I would not want to dismiss something like that and "take my chances". It was a bit disturbing to me that Reg did not think much of my maternal instinct enough to not take a chance with a stranger who I warned may not be the best care provider for our child. We called Chris, she had about one more month before she would have been finished with the kinderschwester shule.... or something of that nature. She was in school sort of like our vocational schools. She was studying childcare because she wanted to work in a kinderkrippe (nursery school). Because she was still in school she wasn't able to come work for us right away. She came by on the weekends or once or twice during the week so that Isha could show her around and introduce her to the routines of our household. We went on vacation, when we came back it was about a month or so before Chris was able to come live in. When Chris couldn't come work for us right away we called Jessica and asked her if she could fill in for a four week period, this was from the time we came off of our vacation until the time when Chris would be

available to work full time. Jessica lived in with us for about 4 weeks. Once Chris came to work full time we asked Jess to come by three times a week to work with Que on his academics. The additional advantage to having Jessica come by is that Que would have a playmate. This would give him the social activities with one of his peers that is so important at this age. Jess would take them to the park and for walks downtown. She gave Chris a break from the childcare, so that Chris could concentrate on getting the house in order. The organizational skills to get things done were a real challenge for her. We had to keep reminding ourselves that she was still just a teenager and we cannot expect her to do as well as a more mature person would.

Chris was a lot of fun, I liked her, but she was a child and needed lots of guidance. We had to be more specific with the rules around the home and put many things in writing to ensure Chris was clear about everything. Reggie didn't mind all the extra details that had to go into ensuring Chris knew what to do around the house... I liked Chris a lot but I did not like having to be so meticulous about the details of every thing concerning the household. I felt like I worked all day, I supervise people at work and when I come home I just want to come home. I don't want to come home still supervising and overseeing things. On my days off Chris had her days off and she usually went back to her hometown. I vented to Reg about wanting to get someone more mature. He said that there is no big deal about me having to closely look after Chris, it's a personality quirk on my part that makes this such a burden, I need to just handle it. He said I should be overseeing things anyway, to have people come in the house and not be constantly supervised should not be the way these things are handled anyway he said. Chris like most teenagers had a rebellious side and after a while she started to get under Reggie's skin. He hated the fact that she was independent minded and spoke up for herself. If she didn't agree with him she wasn't afraid to say so. The first big head to head they had was when we were having a 4th of July party at our home, Reg went out and bought this white cook's coat for Chris to wear. She told him what she thought about wearing it and he wasn't very pleased. I don't know their exact exchanges of words so I won't try to paraphrase the exchange. I do know that Chris told me she wasn't going to wear that thing like some sort of house slave. She said she talked to her dad about it and he told her she was not out of line for not wanting to subject herself to that humiliation if she felt that wearing the jacket was demeaning. Reg told me what he thought and why he thinks she should wear the jacket and he was adamant. He could not believe she was refusing to wear it. He was her employer, this should be a non-issue according to him.

Reg got his fill of Chris when I went away to Missouri for 2 weeks for the resident phase of my first year for my Masters Degree. He told me every night how much of stressor having Chris around was for him and what she was doing and not doing. I tried to encourage him, calm him down and ask him to hang in there. He did. I spoke to Chris nightly too and gave her instruction and guidance on how to do things so that things could run a bit smoother. She continued to challenge Reg and their heads butted. I prayed every night about their situation because I was in school in Missouri and I couldn't do anything except come back home if they couldn't work it out and I didn't want to do that. I was counting down the days and if they could just hang in there, Lord I prayed things wouldn't escalate between them and I would have had to leave early because Chris would quit and Reg had to be at work. But God worked it out and they both managed to survive. The first thing Reg had me do when I got home was to get Chris out of there. I tried to

convince him that she would be okay we just had to be more patient. But he was through, he had enough! he said Dei, you don't know what that girl put me through, I want her out of here. I said okay and drove her home the next day. Reg was so cute, I don't know what Chris put him through, but he was through with dealing with her, I never saw him so drained about a situation.

We let Chris go without a notice and called Jessica to work full time for us. Jess was there and available but we still wanted to get something even more permanent. My mom was retired (she had retired a year ago) and I asked her if she would come down, after talking to my dad, she said yes. Once my mom came we still kept Jess around because she had been so loyal and we didn't know if we'd need her again, plus Don-Don was a good playmate for the Que-man so we kept her coming 3 times a week. Mom was with us for over a month and I over heard her talking to one of my sisters about filling out the paper work to start dipping into her retirement account. I told her she need to leave that money untouched for a time when she will be unable to work. I asked her what her expenses were and she added everything up and told me they were about \$1200.00 per month. This included rent for the home they were in, a car note on her van, insurance for the van, life and medical insurance for her and dad, credit card bills and a few other things... I told Reg she was about to dip into her retirement to pay these things and we can't let her do that, we were paying these other girls to stay here, the least we can do is give mom enough to meet her monthly expenses. He agreed and that's what we did. Having mom around was a real blessing, I did not have to micro manage things. She knew what to do. All my off time was spent with my Que-man. I was able to do cut and paste with him and keep his picture album updated. We did finger songs, I was able to read to him. He was with me when I did my homework. I enjoyed the time I spent with my only son.

Having mom down resolved the child care issue, but Reg and me were still having difficulties, "A good wife should obey her husband and not be so rebellious." Reggie would often say. He had his own idea of what I should do or not do as it related to our son. For instance, he did not want me to cut Que's hair, he said that was a man's thing to do. I disagreed. I believed that there were no gender specific things (especially cutting a child's hair) that a parent should be restricted from doing if she or he chose to. Both of us were active duty and either of us could be called to deploy and I did not feel we should handicap each other by limiting what one parent can do or not do based on gender (if either of us were deployed the other parent should be able to carry out the tasks of the other). I suggested we alternate with cutting his hair weekly, monthly, quarterly or with whatever frequency he would like. He said I can't cut Que's hair period. He said just leave it alone and he'll do it. I did a great job with the man's head, Que would sit still and I was always very pleased with the outcomes of the haircuts I gave him. I don't know why Reg wouldn't agree to let me cut the little man's hair.

Reggie continued to accuse me of being financially irresponsible. He allowed me to spend \$300.00 per month without consulting him or getting his approval. Any amount I spent beyond that would require his approval. Time after time I would overspend, and time after time Reggie he would badger me over it. I tried to stay within the \$300.00 dollar limit he had set, but it was very difficult. I only purchased things for the home or for Que. During this first year we never had to buy any clothes for RQue, every item of clothing he had was sent for him from the States by Reggie's mom or my mom. The

biggest expense was buying things to organize the home, not decorate (I was not allowed to decorate), but to organize, containers and such. I never bought myself any jewelry or fancy clothes. I would spend a few dollars from time to time to update my seasonal wardrobe or buy a new dress for church, but never ever did I spend over \$30.00 for an outfit on myself. It just seems that \$300.00 didn't go very far. I tried... I knew how important it was to manage our income; I managed my income long before Reggie came along. I made several suggestion about how Reg could help me stay within the budget or how he could come to realize that \$300.00 is unreasonable but Reg declined to participate in any of the suggestions I had about how he could help me if he thought I was over spending. I suggested that he would come with me to the store if I had things to purchase. When he complained about how much was being spent on groceries I suggested that he'd come shopping with me. He declined. I think his mistake in this area was not allowing me to manage my own income and pay my own credit cards. I would have been able to keep track of things a lot better. I had no clue from month to month how much I was spending or how much was owed on any of our credit cards or what our overall living expenses was. I asked Reg to allow me to manage my own income and I may be able to do better with the budgeting. Having the responsibility of paying my credit card bill would have helped me to keep track of what I was spending, plus the satisfaction you feel with keeping the balances low or paying the card off would have been an incentive in helping me to keep better track of my spending. I asked him to come shopping with me and he could help me choose food items and things that were less costly. I am a brand name person and many things I purchased were not generic or store brand, so once I worked on that, I was able to cut down a tiny bit. But that wasn't enough. Growing up we always had a deep freezer and pantry, so I was in the habit of "stock piling" groceries, buying in abundance and that certainly didn't help with reducing the grocery bill. When we were growing up Ma had this intricate system of organizing the freezer and pantry to keep track of everything stored and scratching off items as they were removed. I was never this organized with my storage of groceries, but I certainly did purchase more (much more) than we needed. I made efforts to cut back, once I realized I was over-buying and it helped. I never was a coupon clipper and I'm certain that would have helped. In Germany you could get double the amount on coupons, plus the expiration dates didn't apply, but I never used the coupons. Reg could have helped me with that, he wanted me to use the coupons, I just didn't have time for all that, I'm sure if we would have clipped coupons together or shopped together it would have made it more fun and not such a chore. But he refused any of these suggestions, he just wanted to complain! complain! complain!

We were struggling with many issues that if either of us were where God would like for us to have been in our relationship with Him we would not have dwelled on these things or loss a moments sleep battling over them. In the big scheme of things and for the greater glory of God, none of these fights were worth the time, effort, or love loss dealing with them. These are the things that people who stay married for decades learn as the raise their kids and share their lives together. What a misfortune for our children that Reg and I didn't learn this sooner. What a pity to have unforgivable sins between Beings made in God's image and filled with His Holy Spirit. Irreconcilable differences amongst children of God is an oxymoron. It shouldn't exist.

CHAPTER FIVE

1999

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."

1st Peter 3:7

The biggest event of 1999 was the birth of our 2nd son, Terrence. Terrence came about 3 months premature. He spent nearly 3 months in the German Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Terrence was conceived on Valentines Day of this year. Needless to say I was a bit skeptical about having another pregnancy because of the overwhelming sense of helplessness I felt just one year prior when Reggie promised to divorce me if I did not remain on active duty; but then I thought about Que and how terrible it would be for him to go through life as an only child, especially if his home life was a wreck... I wanted him to have a sibling to share and experience the ups and downs of life. I wanted my children to be able to rely on each other and support one another through the turmoil's of life if their parents fail them (which we did. Praise God the boys have each other in their motherless-home) Terrence was wonderful. He was early but his progress was remarkable. I was able to give him a bath-- a full tub bath during his first week of life. I believe he was not more than a couple of days old when I bathed him for the first time. He got a bath every other day so I made sure that I was able to get there to bathe him. When I went back to work the people at the hospital were really good at changing his bath times to accommodate my work schedule. There were times when I'd bathe him late at night or the wee hours of the morning. Even though I visited Terrence as often as I could, it still wasn't enough time with him. The hours away from the hospital seemed like an eternity. The krankenschwestern (nurses) were really good at allowing me to parent my son. Anything that I could do, they allowed me to do, closely supervised at first, then once they realized or felt I was comfortable with doing these routine activities they allowed me to do them. Reg and I visited him together when we could (not very often because of our work schedules). But we both visited him daily. I Initially visited 2 and 3 times a day when I was in the Peds Clinic, but when I went back to work on the ward I usually visited in the morning when I got off of work and Reg visited in the evening when he got off of work. When we visited we'd tuck Terrence inside of our shirts (kangaroo care) and talk to him and sing to him and sometimes-just nap with him there. Whenever we visited Terrence we always waited until he went to sleep to leave. I will never forget this one particular time Reg and I were visiting him together, we had placed him back inside his little incubator and were waiting for him to doze off to sleep so that we could slip away. Terrence's little eyes would blink and blink and close for a few seconds, then open and blink and blink, and close for a few seconds longer only to open again and blink and blink... my eyes swell with tears as I reminisce this painful yet precious moment, it seemed as if our baby boy was fighting sleep. I remember thinking he did not want to go to sleep because he knew that when he awake that his parents will not be there. I hated leaving him, we wanted to take him home with us so badly. Terrence was just a baby, but he knew his parents loved him very, very much. He was doing so

well with meeting his Milestones. Sure he had his up days and setbacks. He was on antibiotics and needed new IV's practically everyday. There was a time when he had been taken off of the antibiotics, but then had an aspiration with one of his feedings and had to get put back on antibiotics. He's a little fighter and he overcame that as well. Terrence was beautiful. He was a magnificent little Angel. He made me so proud of him the way he pulled through all of his set backs and met all of his milestones ahead of time. He was a little American in this German hospital and he was in essence showing the medical providers in our Host Nation the true spirit of what Americans are all about. We are fighters, we are resilient, we WILL overcome!

Having Terrence born in Germany was not what Reg and I had planned, we wanted to come to the States when it was closer to my due date so that Terrence could be born on American soil. I had been having some discomforts around 16 or 18 weeks, Reg assured me each time I complained about the contractions that there was nothing to worry about. We both were hoping that there was nothing to worry about. I did not want to have complications early in this pregnancy because if I did I would not be able to fly to the States in October when I would have been closer to my due date which was some time in November. I was Head Nurse of the Pediatric Clinic so I had a decent work schedule. I worked days, had every weekend and Holiday off and I didn't have to spend much time on my feet. It seemed like maintaining this pregnancy at least until I could fly to the States in October would have been a "walk in the park" so I took it easy. Unfortunately not long after our Multi-Country tour I began realizing that this pregnancy was threatened (I was about 21 or 22 weeks along). I was fine when I was lying down, but when I stood up and was moving around I had lots of pressure and strong contractions. I asked Reg about putting me on bed rest at this time (I was put on bed rest with Que at 24 weeks---I was followed by another obstetrician, Reg was following me during this pregnancy) but he said research hasn't shown that bed rest helps to stop premature labor. I told him that it hurts to be up moving around, he said "you'll be okay, just make sure when you are home you rest and not run around doing all those unnecessary errands that you feel you must do. I took Reg's advice and when I was home I rested. I thought about going to one of his colleagues and asking them to put me on bed rest, but I knew Reg would get mad because then I wouldn't be able to go to the States in October as we had planned and he would have forever accused me of going behind his back, getting placed on bed rest "unnecessarily", and having his son born in a foreign Country. He would have told his family, "we had the perfect plan for Terrence to be born in the States, but because Dei was so rebellious, defiant, and focused on herself and her agenda, she could not fly to the States to have our son born on U.S. soil in San Antonio like we had planned because she went behind my back and got put on bed rest". Reggie has for years been telling his family that I went behind his back and put "Mott" in our children's names on their birth certificate, and that is a lie... it's not true. I did not go behind his back to put their names on their birth certificates. If I had gone behind his back, Quentojohn would have been Que's first name and not Reginald... I wish I had gone behind his back, but my sense of decency did not allow me to do that. So with this situation with Terrence, I did not want to give him reason to create another lie.... in retrospect, if I had known how serious this was I would have gone to another obstetrician to be seen. Reg was checking me and he assured me that I was not having any cervical change, even with all the contractions. I couldn't believe there was no changes with the amount and intensity of the

contractions I was having.... but I took his word and trusted his judgment. By the time I was seen by another obstetrician (the one who I was assigned to, one of Reg's friends and colleagues) it was too late. I was already dilated to about 6cm, Greg put me on bed rest but it was too late for anything to be done. Terrence was born about a week later by c-section in the German hospital.

I wanted to get the house ready for Terrence's arrival, Reg didn't allow me to decorate our home or move things around without his permission. He told me that I did not have a good sense for coordinating and making the home look "classy". He said he had a better feel for these things because of his upbringing. I chose my battles with Reg and this was not one worth fighting. If he did not want me to decorate, then so be it. He did all the decorating. We went out together to select items he decided we needed. For instance, if he decided we needed a mirror in the hallway, we went out together to select that mirror that he decided we needed. But I couldn't decide we need a mirror in the hallway. I could suggest a mirror and he would either agree or disagree with the idea. If he agreed, then we'd go out together to get one. If he disagreed then we would not put a mirror in the hallway. One time I purchased a new frame for this old picture Reggie had. It was a nice picture, I liked it, but the frame was old and raggedy. I went out and purchased this very nice glass matted frame for it (the previous frame did not have glass, it was just open) and Reggie had a fit. He told me that I shouldn't have done that without his permission. He told me the picture was a family heirloom that had been handed down for generations in his family and I had no right to remove it from the original frame without asking him first. In my opinion, if it were a family heirloom it certainly would have been better preserved in the new-glassed frame than that open old frame. I put the thing back into the old raggedy frame and never touched another thing in the sense of trying to fix up our home until it was closer for Terrence to come home. The house had been so neglected in the way of decorating it that there were quite a few things I needed to do to prepare the home for our new arrival. The people that we had in the home kept the house clean, but the decorating was never complete (as far as I was concerned). When it was closer for Terrence to come home the main thing I wanted to do was clean out the office. It was a hog's pen. Books on the bookcase were just there totally disorganized. Big books and little books were all mixed in together. Rows were in front of rows, so you couldn't see the books in the back row. There were no family pictures on the wall. Boxes and containers were in every corner, you had to walk around or over stuff to get to the computer desk. The office was a total mess! Reggie went down there daily for hours, that's where the computer was. I couldn't stand being down there, it was just too cluttered. I knew Reggie would probably get upset if I went and organized it but I took my chances anyway because I wanted the home to be complete when Terrence came home. I didn't want him to come home to a home that appeared every bit as neglected as it was and foolishly I thought that once Reggie saw how tidy things were after I had organized everything, he would be pleased. . I don't remember where Reggie had gone, but he must have gone somewhere for training because it took me several days to get the office organized and put all the pictures up (Oh yeah, I remember now, he'd gone to the States for an Armed Forces Conference). If he had been home he would have put a halt to all that before I got started too good. I had shelves made for the shrunks that were in the office and turned them into enclosed bookcases. Between Reg and I we have several hundred pounds of professional books and magazines. Using those shrunks allowed me to

get the office completely organized. I hung up all the pictures. Pictures of my family and his. Then pictures of Que from birth through 2 years old were placed on the wall. I put pictures on the wall throughout the house and any other tidying up I felt needed to happen to have the house complete for Terrence's arrival. When Reg came home he was perturbed (I foolishly thought that he would have been pleased when he saw how nice things looked and realized how much time an effort was put into fixing up the house). He didn't speak to me for days. He had told me nearly a year ago that I could not use the shrunks as a book case, in fact, he made me have Isha take the books out of the shrunk a year ago when I had her put them in there initially. Then Isha put the books in rows on the 2 bookcases we had in the office. All the books couldn't fit neatly, there were just too many. But this is how they stayed for over a year, until now (1999). So he was mad because I had defied him by making the shrunks into bookcases again after he told me not to. I told him I had not messed with this for over a year being obedient to him. But now we have a baby coming and I want the house to be complete. The office was a mess. Of course he didn't agree so he kept the chip on his shoulder and didn't speak for several days. This was not uncommon, Reg would stop speaking to me for days, then one day out of the "blue" he'll strike up a conversation as if he had been speaking to me all along. I thought this was so crazy. I felt Reggie needed help. He needed to be in someone's office on a little black couch exploring some of the things swimming around in his head. But of course I couldn't convince him that his behavior was a bit "off". I wanted Reg's family to come down and see some of this "lunacy", I thought maybe they could help him to realize "everything is not as it seems". Having things organized in the home is not such a terrible thing... and maybe they could have convinced him to clean up the patio (which was embarrassingly disarrayed). He'd get mad every time I asked him to clean it up or comment on how the neighbors must feel when they have company over or whenever they look out of their back windows and see the hideous state of our patio. When I took Que's crib down without his permission, he didn't speak to me for at least a week (it may have been 2 weeks). I think the longest he had gone without speaking was 2 1/2 weeks. One would think that this is not a big deal. If you haven't ever been in a situation where someone you love just walk around you as if you're invisible; you'd speak to them and they don't speak back. If you've never been in a situation such as this you might think, "so what if he don't want to speak, I won't speak to him either." ---- but having been in that situation I can tell you, it's much more involved than that, it's emotionally draining and hurtful. It's not normal. I grew up in home where people got along; folks didn't walk around with chips on their shoulders; conflicts were resolved; you didn't carry grudges for days.... then to marry a man who on a regular basis held on to issues and refused to let go, it was psychologically abusive. I wondered what trigger in his head incites him to start speaking again. Surely it is not anything I say or do that makes him decide when to start speaking again. He makes this determination based on his own internal reasoning.

While Terrence was in the hospital my job changed, I was working in the Pediatric Clinic, Reg was Chief of the OB/GYN clinic and Assistant Chief of his department. He sent out a letter to the major decision-makers in the hospital complaining that he and his co-workers felt that the care on the ward was unsafe for whatever reason and he described the issues. I don't remember the details so I won't get into them. He had all his co-workers sign this letter. I do know the major complaint was directed at nursing, as a result of this letter the Department of Nursing had all the nurses throughout the

hospital that were experienced in OB/GYN come to work on the ward to improve the level of care. I think Reggie's complaint was there were not enough experienced nurses on the floor. I (and other nurses throughout the hospital) was taken from my Head Nurse position in the Pediatric Clinic and returned to the floor to work on the ward. This was terrible and I know Reggie did not intend for this to happen, but it did and to this day he never apologized for the collateral effect of his actions. Professionally he done what was necessary and I told him so. He did a good thing. My grief is that he has always refused to recognize how our union affects my professional career. Since we married my career has been on a course it never would have been on if Reg and I had not married. He always trivialized things regarding my profession or career path. He felt that anything regarding my career if in conflict with issues regarding his should always, without exception be the one sacrificed because he is the major breadwinner. I could not convince him that this was not the way to look at these things. Job satisfaction, doing what I love is far more important to me than how much I will bring home at the end of a 2-week period. Both the army and nursing was a career for me, not just a job and Reg never responded to my professional needs. It was very frustrating to me how he forced me to stay in the army but did not respect, appreciate, or even appear to understand the demands this career placed on me and how those demands affected us as a couple and our family unit. Reggie appeared oblivious to all of this. His sole focus was on the income. How much money would I bring home. I always told Reg he acted like a pimp. Sending me off to work like a prostitute. I do tricks (in this case being whatever the army would have me do whether it's 2 weeks in Hohenfels, 6 months in Turkey, or a year in Bosnia) then bring the money home to him and he give me my allowance. If I'm good and don't tick him off about anything then he'll be good to me and give me extra spending money or buy me something he know I'd like to have like a laptop computer. If I'm bad and tick him off then all I get is the \$300.00 he told me I could have and any previous promise about the laptop--- forget about it!(he did that one time, promised to buy me a new laptop, we went looking at them and pricing them, I was so excited---- and then I did or said something that ticked him off and he decided not to get me the laptop) Of course I always had full access to my bank accounts, and credit cards but when you're trying to cooperate with a person and trying to be honest about it, if \$300.00 is the limit that was set, you try to stay within that limit. Going over the budget and over spending was one thing, but going out and buying myself a computer would not have been a display of "trying to stay within the budget" so I didn't do that, I made-do with the laptop I had.

Being moved back up to the floor affected the amount of time I would be spending with Terrence in the hospital. We worked 12-hour shift (and I mostly worked nights) so I could only visit him once a day on the days I worked some times I was able to go before and after work and would visit him twice a day. It was getting real close to time for Terrence to come home and he had met all of his milestones. He was still occasionally having slight desaturation episodes and that concerned me a bit. Reg was pushing to have Terrence released from the hospital 2 weeks earlier than he normally would have been discharged because he was going to be leaving soon to go to the States to take his certification boards and he wanted Terrence home before he left. He pushed and pushed and pushed, then finally the Doctors agreed to release him because he was doing very well and had exceeded all his milestones. All along throughout the time Reggie was pushing for this early release I told him that I feel uncomfortable with this---

not because of my ability to manage and take care of Terrence (I have experience working with infants far more critical than Terrence.) but because if anything goes wrong while he is out of the Country he will blame me. He will fault me. He will accuse me. He will be completely irrational and "act a fool"---- I don't know what would go wrong, I don't know if anything would go wrong, but I do know if something does go wrong Reggie will "act a fool!" I asked Reggie time and time again--- I pleaded with him to leave Terrence in the hospital until he come back from the States. He asked me what's wrong with me and how come I don't want my baby at home. He told me I am being foolish, Terrence is coming home and that's that. I wanted Terrence home, I wanted him home more than anything, but because I know my husband and because the potential for something to deviate from normal this time of year (fall-winter months) with this premature infant was better than average, I thought it would be best to bring Terrence home when Reggie return and he would have been closer to his due date/date of discharge and the occasional desaturation episodes he was having may have been completely resolved. I thought it was pretty inconsiderate of Reggie to continue to insist on bringing the baby home if he know I was not comfortable with it and he knew he was going to be out of the Country. I could have told the Doctors my concerns and asked them to keep him until Reggie returned and they would not have had a problem with this because as I said earlier Terrence was being released earlier than his expected discharge date based on Reggie's request. But I didn't, I wanted to present a unified front. But I was a bit appalled that Reggie would be so inconsiderate and not consider my feelings and concerns about this. Well Terrence was released from the hospital, I was allowed to take one weeks leave so that I could be home with him (that's all they would let me have), and Reg was preparing to go to the States for his certification board. Terrence was home one week before Reggie had to leave. Reggie would be gone for a week. Terrence was home for less than two weeks before he had to get re-hospitalized. While Reggie was in the States, I brought Terrence in to the Doctor to be seen because he had nasal congestion. I was worried that if the congestion worsened it would interfere with his ability to eat and he would start losing weight and run into other problems. So I brought him in to be seen at the first sign of trouble. I expected to get medicine to clear up his congestion and go on home. I did not expect what I heard next. The Doctor said, "Terrence has pneumonia and will need to be admitted." I thought about calling Reg and discussing this with him because I know that's what he would have wanted me to do. He does not want me to make any decisions without first discussing things with him. I learned very early in our marriage that if something was important to me, it was best not to discuss it with Reggie because if he disapproves then I'm not supposed to do whatever it was I asked him about and if I do it anyway, his disgust is exponentiated because I defied him. The issue would then change to focus on not what I did, but that I knew he said no, and I did it anyway. For instance, if I wanted to take down the baby crib if I ask him and he says no, and I take it down anyway, then it's an exponentially worse offense than if I didn't ask him and just took it down. Reggie always said that I was very poor at communicating with him. He's right, I learned to not discuss many, many things with him for fear of disapproval and a fight if I defy him. If there was something that I would feel a loss for if I were denied having or doing it, I would not discuss it with Reggie, I would just do it. Or if I did discuss it with him, I would not disclose all of the details because if he disapproved part of a plan he would condemn the whole. This was a learned behavior, I did not leave

home with this habit. He always prided himself on communicating everything with me. He took great pride in the example he set of discussing everything with me. He boasted how he never make any decisions without talking to me first. I explain that he has that liberty because he can discuss these things with me and even if I disagree or would prefer a different course, he could do what he think is best, but I wouldn't go ballistic, hold grudges, or stop speaking to him. I explained to him that I don't have that same luxury. It was 2:00 in the afternoon German time, so it was 8:00 in the morning U.S. time. I had spoken to Reg the night before and he told me he had to be on location early the following morning, so I knew Reg would not be in his hotel room if I called him. And besides, it seemed foolish to have needed to call him anyway. He is about to take a very important oral certification exam, his mind should be clear. He collected cases and prepared for this exam for over a year. He should not be making decisions about what's going on with his family a half a world away. If he had trusted that he'd married a competent woman he should be able to relax and feel secure in knowing that no matter what goes on while he's away, his partner (me) will be able to manage it. There was a time when men sought competent, capable women. It seems that the man I married would have preferred that I were some lackey, insecure, dish-rag of a woman. Only a man insecure and uncertain of himself would seek those characteristics in a mate, someone that would be responsible for raising his children.

Once the Doctor told me he needed to put Terrence in the hospital and they would probably start him on antibiotics, I asked if he would be able to come home with us for this treatment. He said no, he would like to have him hospitalized for the time he would be treated because of his age and the fact that he was premature. I then asked if he could go to Landstuhl, a large Medical Center 3 hours from Wurzburg. Terrence was premature and the Community Hospital in Wurzburg was exactly that, a small Community Hospital. There was no Pediatric Ward, the most experienced nurse in the entire hospital trained and skilled in the management of the neonate was me, and my child was sick. The option was to put him in the intensive care unit, which is not specific for children and there were not any nurses on the unit that was skilled or trained in managing neonates. If Terrence would have needed an IV, it's quite likely he would have had to have several sticks by these inexperienced nurses before they would have successfully placed it (and I wasn't about to place an IV in my baby or watch multiple failed attempts). The Doctor would have ordered his care and that was okay, Reg and I both trusted our Pediatrician, we knew him from the States when we were stationed at Ft Hood. But the nursing care would have been less than optimal at this Community Hospital considering everything that was going on with Terrence. Because he was premature he needed to have his eyes tested for retinopathy of the neonate, that couldn't be done in Wurzburg I would have had to bring him 3 hours to Landstuhl or 3 hours to Heidelberg for that appointment. Also he had an issue that needed to be assessed by a Urologist, this had to be done as an outpatient at the Community Hospital, in Landstuhl it could be taken care of as an inpatient while he was in the hospital. He didn't have baby pictures taken at the German Hospital, and they didn't have anyone to take baby pictures at the Community Hospital, in Landstuhl we could have his baby pictures taken as an inpatient. In the Critical Care Unit at the Community Hospital, there were no accommodations for me to stay overnight except to sit up in a chair at his bedside. In Landstuhl Terrence and I had a room to ourselves and there was a bed for me to sleep in. Plus if I had stayed in Wurzburg I would

have had to go to work and visit Terrence before and after my 12-hour shift. My leave had ended the day before he was diagnosed with pneumonia and I was due back at work the following day. The advantages to bring Terrence to Landstuhl were obvious and everything he needed could have been taken care of during his hospitalization. It would have been difficult (though I would have done it) to keep all of those appointments once I had gone back to work. I was still working 12-hour nights.

When Reggie came back from the States, I met him at the airport. I told him Terrence was in the hospital with pneumonia, then I told him he was in the hospital in Landstuhl---- that's when he flipped. He asked me what is he doing in Landstuhl and I explained that he was there because I thought that was the best place for him considering all things. He went "off", he said, "that's the problem, you're always thinking. Now what was so hard about making a decision to put him in the hospital in Wurzburg." He went on and on there was no reasoning with him. I told him why I thought Landstuhl was better and he did not agree. He said "I leave you to take care things and you always do what you think, what about what your husband thinks. Did you consider what I would think about having my son all the way up here in Landstuhl. What about RQue, now you're all the way up here and you won't be with your other son". I told him, "Terrence is sick and I want him to have the best of care. I would do the same if RQue was sick. I told him sometimes the boys have to sacrifice for the well being of the other. If they were old enough they would understand and support this decision." He said some more ugly and ridiculous things. I then asked him if he wanted to come to the hospital with me to visit Terrence (the hospital was about 20-30 minutes from the airport). I told him he could take a nap then drive home or if he wanted me to, I could take his bags and he catch a train home. He said, "you're going to bring me home. Nobody asked you to put Terrence in the hospital all the way up here, that's a decision you made on your own, you're gonna bring me home. He said I just came off this long trip from the States and I'm tired and I come home to this nonsense." I suggested that he come to the hospital and visit Terrence before going home. He said no, he wanted me to bring him home now. I told him he could take the car and I could catch the train from the airport to the hospital, but I wanted to get back to the hospital to be with Terrence, I didn't want to drive all the way to Wurzburg and back again. He said, you created this mess so you just get me home. I drove him home 3 hours up the Autobahn to Wurzburg, dropped him off at the hospital to pick up his car, then back I went across the Autobahn to Landstuhl, by this time it had began to rain---- pouring, blinding rain. I couldn't see, I thought about pulling over until it slackened up but I knew my baby was all by himself and I wanted to get back as soon as possible so I kept on going. I was so very hurt by Reggie's insensitivity. This man, this provider and protector of his family. The man who is to love me as he loves himself--- as Christ loved the church. This was awful. I can't put into words all the emotions I felt as I lived this experience. It's still a very painful and insane memory. Reggie's irrational behavior through this experience is exactly what I feared when I was hesitant about bringing Terrence home early from the German Hospital during the time Reg was going to be out of town. Even if Reggie did not agree with my decision to have Terrence in the hospital in Landstuhl, the least he could have done was support the decision. I made the best possible decision (and I stand by it) that I could have in his absence. The mature thing to do would have been to support the decision that had been made and manage to get home by any of the many options available to him. To "punish" me by making me

make this 6-hour journey (3 hours of it in a rainstorm) was insane and down right dangerous. While Terrence was in the hospital in Landstuhl, all the issues that he had pending that needed to be followed up, were taken care of during his stay (plus he had his pictures taken). It was a real blessing. I praise God for being able to get all those things done without having to make four separate appointments. I would not want to be the child of God standing before our righteous, loving, merciful, just God trying to give an account for these actions. God sent His only son to die for our sins. He sent His only son to tell us about a place that is prepared for us according to our works. Thank God for the Love of Jesus.

I continued to talk to Reg about wanting to get out of the Army. He would always listen and then give me his rationale for why now was not a good time to resign. Each time I asked, Reggie would say no. And each time there would be another good reason for his decision. Sometimes Reggie would object because of our finances. Other times, he claimed I would not be fulfilling my role as a good mother and wife if I were to resign my commission. Reggie even dared to say that I would not be a good housewife, I don't have the characteristics of a woman wanting to care for her husband so he won't ever allow me to not work. He said he would be a fool if he allowed me to stay home and not work. He said he know I would take good care of the children, but he would not be taken care of so he resigned to never allow me to not be employed.

While we were in Germany, Reggie went through great expense and physical challenges to get programming in our house the was in English. With the Satellite that was in the home when we arrived we could only get German programming. We could not get the Armed Forces Network (AFN) or the programs broadcasted from England and Sweden that were in English. This was a major problem to Reggie, he took steps immediately to rectify the situation. The weirdest thing to me was after Reggie did all of these dramatic things with the Satellite (he bought a new one and did all kind of things to get it hooked up) we couldn't get any German programming in the house. We were in Germany and I could not watch a German TV show, news, cartoons, children's programming or anything. When I vented to Reg and asked him if he could fix the Satellite (at least one of them) so that I could watch some of the German stations he said it would be too much trouble. He said he could not turn the Satellite in a direction that would pick up both English and German stations. He said it had to be turned either to get German stations or English stations. I asked if we could turn one of them to be able to pick up the German stations, he said no. I asked him if we could get cable hooked up on the downstairs TV so that we could get German channels. He told me that that would involve an unreasonable amount of expense. He said that the cable people would have to come to dig a hole in the back yard to lay the wires for the cable set up. I told him we have cable jacks in the home so it may already be wired, I asked him if we could check it out to see if it was wired. He said no, we don't need to do that, the people that lived in the house before us did not have cable they had Satellite so there is no cable set up. I called the Cable Company the next day and asked if we were wired for cable, they said yes we were. I was elated, I could not wait to tell Reg the good news. He was not phased, he said we're not going to get cable and that's that. So I dropped the issue. We watched everything but German television for a year. Finally, when I was fed up with not being able to watch any German shows, I went behind Reggie's back and had the German cable hooked up. I lied to Reg and told him one of Jessica's relatives hooked the cable up for

us. I knew that if I had told him I had hired a cable guy he would flip and he would have made me turn it off. I don't watch much TV, hardly any at all except the news and foreign language channels. I would watch sitcoms and such with Reg when I was home with him in the evenings, but for the most part, I often find TV boring. I was so happy to have the German cable hooked up. It opened up a whole New World.... all kinds of American TV programs were broadcasted (but voiced over in German). You could watch Little House on the Prairie, Highway to Heaven, Bonanza, Urkel, Different World and all kinds of shows that were familiar to me, but they were voiced over in German. It was weird watching those TV Stars that we have known for years speak in another voice--- a German voice. We could watch German cartoons, Sesame Street, Teletubbies and lots of other kids shows. These were not voiced over, they were programs that were made in Germany. We were still able to get AFN, CNN, Headline News and lots of other English speaking channels through the cable. We just couldn't get the movies that were broadcast from England and Sweden, these were movies Reg liked to watch because they were in English. Reg never watched any foreign language TV, not even sports.

CHAPTER SIX

2000

“Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it”
Mathew 7:13

We brought in this New Year at the hospital. Reg was on call so I brought the boys up to the hospital, picked up some movies, and munchies and we stayed with Reg in the call room to bring in the New Year. Because he was on duty we tossed the New Year, the new Century in with sparkling grape juice. Not much of an evening but we were all together. We were blessed because we were together. There wasn't too much drama between Reg and me that I can recall during this 1st quarter. I was enrolled in school still taking Graduate Courses. I was also studying for my GREs (Graduate Record Exam) because we were going back to the States soon and I had applied to the Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Program at the University of Texas in Galveston and I needed to complete my GREs and take a statistics course. I was scheduled to take my GRE test in August and the statistics course needed to be completed before I left the country also. In the summer of this year I enrolled in an outreach statistics course.... it was a BEAR! statistics is tough enough but trying to do it by outreach was a whole 'nother animal. Lord, Lord, I don't know how I managed, but Jesus saw me through it and I passed the class with a B+. All I can say or even remember is that it wasn't easy and Reg was not supportive at all. He is such a pessimist when it comes to anything I try to do. He often tries to discourage me or tell me that I can't, shouldn't, or don't need to do a thing. He laughs at me and makes me feel "small" or the thing that I'm about to do is petty. Thank God I have a rock solid foundation from whence I came. Often times during my studies he would come up to the fourth floor and lay into me about the budget or something else he was displeased about. That's one thing that was a real "pain" about Reggie is that he nagged-nagged- nagged! I always heard people make reference to a "nagging woman" but you seldom hear them speak of a "nagging man". Well, they exist, I can testify to that. No matter how trivial an issue, if he was not satisfied or only partially satisfied he would address it, at nausea.

Reg and I had different ideas of where we wanted to go for our next duty assignment. I told him I wanted to go any place in Texas, any place would have been fine. In order for me to attend the Outreach Program at the University of Galveston, I needed to be in Texas. The Outreach Program did not take students outside the State of Texas. I told Reg this and asked him to make all his requests for duty stations places in Texas. He said the only place in Texas he would be willing to go would be San Antonio. He wanted to go to Georgia. When we put in a request for duty stations you get to put in 3 choices (in order of preference) for assignments in the U.S. and 3 choices for assignments overseas. The first 2 choices Reg listed were places in Georgia, I'm not sure what his 3rd choice was but it was either San Antonio or some other Southern State. I was really disappointed that he did not request places in Texas to assure we would get a Texas assignment so that I could go to school. If I remained on active duty (and Reg insisted that I did) I would need an Out reach program to finish school because with the

long hours and rotating shifts, I would not have been able to go to a classroom. When I put in my request for assignments, all of my choices were Texas assignments. My first choice was Ft Hood. I would have preferred San Antonio but it was not likely that I would have gotten San Antonio so I made my 1st choice some place I was likely to get. My 2nd choice was San Antonio and 3rd choice was El Paso, all places in Texas. Although Reg and I didn't request the same places, because we were joint domicile, where one goes, the other goes, so we were both able to put in our preferences. I was going to request the same places Reg requested but he told me it didn't matter if I listed the same places or not, the Army was going to send me to follow him. Where ever they need him that's where they would send me regardless of my choices. He implied that because he's a Physician they would not even consider my choices, they would just look at his and send me to follow him. So since he did not mind if I listed my preferences different from his, I did just that... we found out around the 2nd quarter of this year (2000) that we would be going to FT Hood (my first choice). Unfortunately, my Head Nurse would not give me the time I needed off (just one day a week) to attend the two courses I needed to take before I could begin taking the courses that were available through Outreach. I had passed my GREs and completed my Statistics course and had gotten accepted to the University of Galveston and to my disappointment because of the demands of my job, I could not go to school. I had to call the school and cancel my enrollment, it was very, very sad. I felt so disappointed in my husband for not letting me resign my commission. This would not have been a problem if I were not on active duty. Any job I would have taken in the civilian sector I would have requested this one-day off weekly to allow me to go to school. By the last part of this 2nd quarter we received our orders that told us where we were going and the unit we was assigned to. Initially we were not sure whether we would be going to Kentucky or to Texas. Reg was being assigned to the MEDDAC, which is a hospital. I was being assigned to a Forward Support Battalion (FSB).... I didn't know what that was. Reg wasn't sure what that was, I asked around at work, no one could tell me what that was, I was beginning to think it was a typo on my orders. I knew what a Medical Center was, I knew what a MEDDAC was, I knew what a Combat Support Hospital (CSH) was, but FSB, I had not a clue. I called the contact number on my orders and asked them what an FSB was and they explained to me it was part of an infantry unit. I was not pleased (for lack of a better word).... I could not believe this. This has got to be a clear message from God that it is time for me to get out! My follow-on assignment from Germany was with an Infantry unit here in Killeen. I remember telling Reggie, "No Way! I'm the mother of two small children and I do not want to be part of an Infantry unit!" I realized that to be part of the Infantry unit, I would be spending too much time out in the field. I did not care to spend that much time away from my family, nor did I care to live the life style of an infantry person. I wanted to be a civilian and have more flexibility with my work schedule. I wanted to spend more time with my children and focus on taking care of my family. I told Reg my ROTC commitment is up this year and I want to get out of the military. He told me that I can't get out because I have a commitment because of the Dantes tuition assistance I took last year. I said that's no big deal the Army will not hold me to that Dantes commitment and besides, if they want to hold me to it I'll just elect to pay it back. He said, "they're not going to let you out". I drew up my resignation paperwork and called branch to let them know I wanted to get out and find out if it would be a problem with having used tuition

assistance. Branch said no, that's not a problem, just fax us your paperwork and we'll start processing it. I told Reg what branch said and he got really ugly. He told me that I cannot get out without giving him a years notice. He said, we can't take a \$60,000.00 pay cut without planning at least one year out. I said Reg, you knew that I wanted to get out since last year. You knew my ROTC commitment would be up this year. He said yeah he knew but we didn't "plan" for me to get out. He said I'm not going to make him the sole support of this family. He said that I have to prove to him before I get out that I can stay within a budget. If he's going to be the one earning the majority of the income I need to prove that I can be fiscally responsible. He told me that he's the head of this family and it is his Christian responsibility to ensure our family do what is pleasing to the Lord and for me to have taken tuition assistance and not live out my commitment of my 2 year agreement then I am sinning against God. I tried to explain to Reg that Dantes do not commit you to 2 years of service, you have an option to do the 2 years OR to pay back the money. I told him they are not even holding people to that, no one cares whether or not you've used tuition assistance or not, they still release you from active duty. It's not a big deal I told him. I wrote letters to my Chief Nurse, to Branch, and I even pulled information up from the internet on the Dantes tuition assistance, but there was nothing I could do to get him to accept the fact that I am not under obligation to remain on active duty because of Dantes. Reggie is an educated man, I have got to believe he at some point realized the clarity of the fact that my commitment to the military was not based on the use of Dantes tuition assistance. He rationalized everything, he could tell you why all that information I pulled up was bogus and not convincing. He continued to rant and rave and insist that I not get out of the Army and that I pull back my paperwork. He said that what I was doing (getting out of the army) was destructive to our family unit and he would not support this decision. I told him my God given role is for me to care for our children and take care of our home. I told him for me to work outside of the home is a choice and as long as I agree to do this it is okay, but if my choice is to work only in the home then his position is to support that choice. His God given role is to provide for the family, and I am to be supportive of his role. Reg was a tripp, I could not believe my ears. This all seemed so insane. But it made perfect sense to Reg. I continued to make my plans to get out, Reg told me that if I continue on this path he was going to file for divorce. He told me that when we get back to the States we would get separate houses. He began looking on the Internet for places for me and the boys to stay. He looked into townhouses, apartments, and single homes. He'd always come up to the forth floor where I'm studying to share his findings with me and get my opinion. He started drawing up our separation agreement and on and on. I had ignored Reggie for the most part focusing on my studies and on my children. Finally (when I could ignore him no longer) I told Reg if he want to leave then please do, just leave us alone. I don't want any child support or anything from him if he would just stay out of our lives. I told him he can contact the boys when they get older. I told him to just give me \$30,000.00 (his October bonus) to get us started and carry us over until I get a job, and he don't have to pay any child support. Ever. I told him that we don't want or need anything from him. If the best offer he has for being a reliable father to these boys is to pay child support, I told him he could keep it. He agreed to that. So for months that was the plan. We were going our separate ways. Reg was going to pay the 30 grand and me and the boys were going to be a family without his interference. My mom was with us in Germany and she was going to continue

to stay with us with Reggie going on his merry way... so she made no plans to get a job or place to live or anything because she (and my dad) was going to be with me and the boys. I was making definite plans to get out. I'd gone to the 2 days of classes that the Army sends you to when you're departing. I hired someone to write a resume for me (I was still taking my Statistic course and studying for the GREs, plus with the hours at work, I didn't have time to do a resume myself). At some point Reg changed his mind about the agreement to pay the \$30,000.00 and leave us alone. He said that he wasn't going to let his boys be raised by a crazy woman (me), without his influence. He said that I would ruin them. So he drew up papers on how much child support he would give and continued to plan the divorce. He told me if I don't hire a lawyer and do this with only the papers he drew up then he would be fair and generous (generous meaning that he would give me a bit of change more than the 25% required by law). He said that if I get a lawyer, then he would not give me a dime more than what he's supposed to. By this time we were getting real close to the time we were supposed to leave. I would guess that he changed his mind around June. Once he changed his mind and decided that he was not going to leave us in Peace, I went to the church to seek help, prayer, support or whatever else our family needed at this time---- we certainly needed something. I'd gotten help and support from the mother of the church we had attended when we first arrived. We really liked the services, but they were too long and didn't work well with our schedules, but the people there knew us and our family. Everything that happened when I got the minister and his wife involved was very positive. Reg did not want to talk to them or meet with them initially. I continued to meet, fast, and pray and do what they asked me to do. Just like they said, if I keep lifting Reggie up and praying about this situation they Holy Spirit will touch and soften his heart. Reg decided to meet with the minister. Then we both met with him and he talked to us both about what we needed to do to have a peaceful home. We both listened and felt like we could do this, that our marriage wasn't over and it was worth giving it a go again. Still the only way Reg would feel I was faithful and willing to work things out is if I remain on active duty. He would not put his family together unless I called branch and cancelled my resignation. So I did. I had already practically gotten picked up for a Head Nurse position at a large Medical Center in Temple (about 20 miles or so from Killeen), so I had to call the recruiter back and tell her I can't get released from active duty and would not be able to take the job. Heartbreaking. Reg did not seem to feel any of my pain, he was just glad that I would still remain on active duty. In truth there was really no compromise on his part, he was still adamant about wanting me to remain on active duty and to demonstrate to him I was sincere about my intention to "work with him" on keeping our marriage together he insisted that I stay on active duty... which is what he had demanded all along.

Twice during this year Reggie had left us. The first time he went away he didn't tell us where he was going or when he would be coming back. The second time he left he went to Amsterdam. Didn't say how long he would be gone or who he would be with, when I asked who he was going with he said with friends, I asked what were their names and he refused to tell me. Naturally any woman would assume that if he refused to say who he was going with, that he could be going with another woman, especially after he has been unfaithful before, and even entertained the idea of us having an "open" marriage---- a couples thing, SICK, and this was even after he had already put his career in jeopardy over this kind of foolishness. You would think he would have learned a

lesson the first time. I guess I may have opened up the ground for him to express these ideas when I opened up a conversation one time and spoke to him about other people at the hospital I found attractive. He told me who he thought I might be attracted to and I told him who I thought he might be attracted to and so on. He told me maybe that's what our relationship needed was for us to get together with other couples and explore our fantasies----- a few days later my Christian, God loving, God fearing husband came to me and told me he had approached this woman (the female he was attracted to) about us getting together with her and her husband to get to know each other better, he told me he mentioned the idea about the couple swapping with her and she was all for it. I hit the ceiling, I told Reggie he must be crazy.... I told him we would look like idiots if word ever got out we were involved in anything like that. I asked him if he didn't learn anything from the first time when he was involved in disciplinary action for infidelity. I told him nothing would happen to the civilians, but for us, we'd be all over the news, "The Chief of the Obstetrics Clinic and Head Nurse of the Pediatric Clinic at the American hospital in Wurzburg etc, etc" ----- what a scandal it would be! He got mad and accused me of "setting him up", he said he feel like a fool having gone to that lady about this, now he have to go back and cancel. He said---I led him into this conversation and now I'm acting like it was all his idea. I didn't know what to say, all I knew was that Reggie needed help. He needed a shrink.

When we came back to the states our marriage was hanging by a thread. I still wanted to resign my commission in the Army, and Reggie still refused to let me do so. Terrence was having constant medical and developmental issues that needed to be monitored and followed -up. It was very hard to keep all his appointments while working the night shift, but somehow I did it. I wanted to tutor Terrence at home to ensure he received appropriate stimulation. I wanted to ensure maximal development and cognitive growth for my beautiful baby boy. I wasn't able to spend half the time I would have liked tutoring and filling his needs. There were times I would pick Terrence up early from school, (without Reg's knowledge) so that I could work with him, play with him, and spend more time with my second son. Since I would have to work later that evening, we would also nap together after we finished with our housekeeping duties. When I was in the kitchen preparing meals, doing laundry or just cleaning, I would have Terrence help me out...he loved it, and I just loved spending the extra time together. I'm sure the extra stimulation helped Terrence a lot. Que was an only child for the first two years of his life, so bonding and spending lots of quality time with him was never a challenge. Since Terrence was my second child, I had to make sure I spent alone time with him so he could develop into a confident and independent young man. "A can-do-it kind of guy" is what I always called them. I love my boys and miss them so very much.

When we came from Germany Reg was in the advance course in San Antonio (he would come home on the weekends), I had to in-process onto the post and into my new unit. We asked my nieces to come down and watch the boys until it was time for them to go back to school. It usually takes a couple of weeks for in-processing onto the post, then you go to your unit and in-process which is usually a week. I arrived in the States in late July, my unit, this infantry unit that I had been assigned to was scheduled to go on a 45-60 day field training exercise in California the 1st or 2nd week of September. I had a biiiig problem with this. Terrence had not yet had a passing hearing test in both of his ears. He needed to be enrolled in the Exceptional Family Members Program for his

developmental needs and he was having frequent ear infections.... I could not possibly leave my son for 45-60 days and "hope" that these things would work themselves out. I am his mother, his parent, the person responsible for ensuring he get the care he needs to ensure his best outcome. To ensure he does not have any lasting debilitating affects from his premature birth. I won't be able to prevent all collateral damage from his prematurity, but I am committed to not ignoring his needs in hopes that everything will turn out okay.... it might, but I wanted to ensure his potential was maximized at every developmental level. I went to my commander told him my dilemma but there was nothing he could do. They told me my position was slated and there is no one else that could do the job that they had been waiting on me to do. This is a new role and everyone is excited about me becoming a part of the unit and "leading the way". I told them I am honored, but the timing is really bad. I told them the needs of my baby boy is primary and I need to stay behind and ensure he get the care that he needs. I told them I am not the best choice for this infantry assignment, maybe a few years ago before I had family but I will not be able to make the Nurse Corp shine like I would have been able to a few years earlier. I told them I realize that this is a historical move (to have a Nurse assigned to an Infantry Unit) and I do realize my responsibility in doing my job and doing it well and setting the standard for those to follow and I also told them that I think it is fair to warn them that I will not be able to do what I know is expected of me because I have these additional issues regarding my family. I told them my husband is active duty and on assignment in San Antonio and when he does return from his temporary duty he will not be able to take my son to his appointments or follow up on his developmental issues because of the demands of his job. My commander was sympathetic but it was nothing he could do. I went to the Battalion Commander and told her my problem, she couldn't care less, she told me she expected me on the plane to NTC. I called Branch and I went to see the Corp Officer on post that was responsible to help people in my predicament. I had by this time completed my in-processing on post and into my unit and was expected to go to work in the Clinic. I did not go to work. Once I showed up at work I know it would have been impossible for me to get out of that unit so, at risk of receiving disciplinary action for being absent without leave (AWOL), I didn't go in to work. I spent the days working on getting someone to help me get out of this unit. In the middle of my crisis my career counselor at Branch went on leave and the Corp officer had a death in her family (her dad died) and she had to take emergency leave..... where do I turn now. Well I went to the Chief of Nursing in the hospital, I was in no shape, form, or fashion connected with the hospital at this time, but he listened, he was surprised that a nurse with my specialty (NICU) and credentials (Instructor in Neonatal Resuscitation, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Basic Cardiac Resuscitation and Provider for Trauma Nursing) was assigned any place other than the hospital as badly as they were looking for NICU nurses and credential instructors. He called Branch, then he called Washington DC on my behalf and Praise God! he told me to be at work, in the NICU, at the hospital on Monday morning. Those words were music to my ears. He brought me upstairs to meet my Head Nurse and I felt so blessed to have gotten out of that infantry unit. It was amazing! God is Good! My husband didn't see what the big deal was about me going to NTC for just a couple of months. I told him we'd be sleeping outside in tents, he said, "so, they're big tents". I told him I wouldn't be able to have time with my family, he said. "we'd have cell phones and you could call home every night". In fact, when he went buy our cell phones and we

were looking at which plan to sign up for he wanted to get the roaming plan so that when I'm in California at NTC I can call home without additional charges. I told him he can spend the extra money for that roaming plan if he want, but I'm not going to NTC. I told him God will work this situation out for me. And God did. Later during a disagreement with Reg, he told me he was disappointed when I didn't have to go to NTC, I thought that was one of the most insensitive things a human being could say to another after all that I had been through (all without his support). I fought against going to NTC for the children, for Terrence and his needs, to be able to not be an absent mother to my children and the only thing the father of these children ever said regarding this ordeal was that "I was disappointed when they didn't send your butt to NTC".

The girls had to go back to school at the beginning of September so they were sent home either the last week in August or the 1st day or so in September. The boys were already enrolled in daycare. Reg and I had to manage to take care of things until Jessica (our permanent care provider) came down from Germany. Before leaving Germany we had coordinated with Jessica to come to the States with us to help with the boys. She was delighted. She sold everything she owned and got out of her lease for her apartment to come join us. We left Germany at the end of July, the soonest Jessica could get out of her lease was some time in September. Once she got out of her lease she joined us and was our live-in family care provider. The house we were living in had 4 bedrooms, 3 upstairs and a large master bedroom downstairs. I suggested to Reggie that we allow Jessica and her 3-year-old son Donovan to have the downstairs bedroom. I explained that it is large and would be like a small efficiency apartment for them. There was a large bathroom in the master bedroom and it had 2 sinks on opposite sides of the room, one sink could have been used as a wash sink and the other could have been set up like a little kitchen sink. There were 2 large walk in closets one in the bedroom the other in the bathroom, we could have put a small refrigerator in the bathroom closet. The point is it would have been a small sacrifice for us to take one of the upstairs bedrooms and allow Jessica and Donovan to have a room that could have been set up like an apartment for them. Jessica left her family in Germany and sold everything she owned to come take care of our family---- why would it have been so ridiculous to give them the larger room. When Jessica was off (she had one day off per week) if she didn't want to come out of her room she wouldn't have to because she could have had everything in there that she would need if we had set that space up for her like a little apartment. Reggie wouldn't even consider it. He'd get irritated if I continued to press the idea. So I let it go. Jessica was our family care provider until it became obvious that things were not working out. I trusted Jessica when we were in Germany, she was a genuine blessing to our family. I had no reason to think things would change when she came to live with us. I did not trust my husband, he had on several occasions given me reason to doubt his commitment to fidelity in our relationship, but I did trust Jessica. I realize that this is not the way things should be in a relationship. I know that it is my husband that I should trust (the commitment to our marriage vows is between the two of us), but I could not trust him and because I was being forced to remain on active duty I had to trust someone. I had to allow some one in our home to care for our family. We both agreed to have Jessica come down because the boys knew her and leaving them in her care was not like leaving them with strangers. When Jessica came to the States she immediately began carrying out her duties of caring for the home and children. Her housekeeping and cooking efforts left little to be

admired but the fact that she was trustworthy, dependable, and someone the boys knew overrode all of her shortcomings related to housekeeping. I'd come home a couple of times and the music on the stereo was blaring, the house sounded like a discotheque. I told Jessica that when the boys are in school and she wish to play that hip-hop music and blast the stereo, I do not mind. But if my children are in the house I want them exposed to their music, songs that are appropriate for children to sing. I told her they have lots of great tapes and CDs and I showed her where they were (although I know she knew where they were). She seemed to have complied. Her son watched music videos from the TV and he sang songs that were not consistent with Christian values and he said words, filthy words that a three-year-old should never have heard often enough to repeat. Que had picked up some of these words and habits (vulgar jiration of their hips was one of the habits the boys displayed). I brought it to Jessica's attention and she denied knowing where Donovan came up with such things. Reg would spank RQue when he said these words and I told Reg Que didn't know what he was saying, he's just randomly uttering words from his limited vocabulary. I told him if we ignore these words and/or talk to him and let him know these are not words that make his parent proud.... the words will go away, in other words if we don't reinforce the negative behavior it will go away. And our responsibility is to ensure he doesn't continue to get exposure to this behavior, we knew where it was coming from and needed to hold Jessica accountable-----but to spank the baby boy was ludicrous (in my opinion). Reggie didn't hear me, he continued to spank the baby every time he said a bad word. Donovan didn't get spanked, why was my child being spanked.... I wanted to knock Reggie's head off! There were obvious problems that became evident with the two children being raised differently. In the same home but with different values. Que and Donovan fought a lot and their issues were not always resolved fairly or with a lesson to be gained for them both. I felt that Que was being slighted in some of these altercations because he would not start the fights or refuse to share, yet many times he was the only one cooperating with the disciplinary action that was intended to be applied to both of them, because Don didn't listen. When the boys were punished and had to stand in the corner, Que would be the only one in the corner, Donovan wouldn't listen and Jessica would sometimes forget the little man was in the corner as she chase Donovan down and try to get him to cooperate. Naturally a mom would notice these things and recognize behavior in her child that was consistent with these inconsistencies. I brought them to Reggie's attention but he thought nothing of them (later he began to notice what I was talking about and he told me so). Jessica did her best with the boys, she was a bit more than 10 years younger than me and Reg so her childrearing methods and decision making process would not likely pattern ours. But I felt like she should have had better control over her son so that he would respond to disciplinary actions. Terrence was less than a year old at the time so he really didn't get caught up in Que and Donovan's altercations. Que and Don would get into it sometimes when Que would try to come to Terrence's defense, sometimes warranted because Don was trying to take something from Terrence and sometimes unwarranted because Don may only be trying to play with Terrence.... but it put Que on the defense.

Jessica came over on a tourist passport, so she was only allowed to remain in the Country 90 days before returning to her country for at least 30 days before she could return again. We (Reg and me) realized that that would be a problem, we would have difficulty trying to find 30 days of childcare every 90 days while Jessica go back to

Germany. We thought that we'd give it a try for the boys' sake instead of coming here and putting them in the care of strangers. Some things that raised my antenna regarding Reggie's actions in the house with this 25 year old woman (not his wife) was his failure to be discreet on a couple of occasions that I am aware of. For instance one time I caught him using the common bathroom (located in the downstairs main hallway) with the door opened, just like I passed by the bathroom and saw him standing postured to empty his bladder, Jessica could have been the one to have passed by and saw that same scene. There was another incident where I had gone to work, (day shift) and had to return home for something in the early part of the morning (it was day light already, the Sun was up) I found my husband lying in the bed with his pants pulled down revealing approximately 50% of his gluteus maximus and the bedroom door was partially opened (not much only a 5 or 10 % gap in it) I know I didn't leave it that way when I went to work. Our bedroom was downstairs on the main floor and Jessica could have easily been passing by the bedroom to go to the laundry room and would have seen this man lying there like that or Donovan could have plowed into the room because the door was gapped and Jessica naturally would have had to chase after him. I brought both instances to Reggie's attention and he said on both counts he was unaware and had not paid attention to these things and that he would be more careful. He was and I never caught him in this manner again. However, I did find this behavior rather odd and not conduct becoming of a self-respecting young man. I couldn't help but think that if his mother or his sister were in the house would he have been so careless, the answer is no, I would not have found Reggie in these positions if it were his mother or sister in the house instead of Jessica. So I could not just excuse his behavior to innocence and naivety. But I let it go, no more was said about it.

Another story I'd like to share is, one Saturday I was working the 7am to 3pm shift, I had gotten off work around 1 or 2 pm, on my way home I called the house from my cell phone, no one answered. I called both Reggie's and Jessica's cell phones, no one answered... and of course I called the house again. I repeated this sequence once or twice again, each time with no answer. I concluded that they must have gone out, after all it was a sunny Saturday afternoon and the children may have gotten restless so they decided to do something with them or they had just gone to the store to pick up a few things. I couldn't imagine why I couldn't reach either of them on their cell. Neither of them was likely to not have their cell near by and turned on. Jessica's cell was her attachment to her family and friends, she was always connecting with someone. Reggie usually had his on and nearby out of habit, his profession calls for him to be accessible 90% of the time. So I thought this was rather strange, but I didn't make anything of it. I finally arrived at home and I saw Reggie's car in the driveway. This posed two oddities, we usually park our cars in the garage, I wondered why it was in the driveway. The 2nd oddity is that, if they are home, then why did no one answer the phones when I called. This all seems odd, but I still kind of shrugged things off not wanting to read too much into it. I went into the garage, parked my car, put my key in the lock and to my surprise I could not enter my own home. The door was double bolted. Reg and I had conversation about this double bolt lock before. When we first moved into the house both of us had accidentally placed the double bolt on and when the other came home was unable to get in without being let in. Reg was not staying with us consistently when I bolted him out, he was still doing his advance course in San Antonio, and one day on a weekend he was home he ran an errand

and I had come in the house from work or an errand (I forget which) and put the double bolt on. When he knocked, I ran, as fast as I could to open the door and let my husband into his home. It's an awful feeling being locked out of your own home. I apologized and all was okay. Reg had locked me out at least twice before Jessica came. He'd open the door apologize and that would be the end of it. Of course I told him that I didn't like the double bolt and we should remove it until it is time to leave. He said he feel safer with it on there. When Jessica came and Reg accidentally locked me out, the first time it happened created a strange sense of uneasiness for me, and to "accidentally" get locked out was not acceptable and excusable with an apology anymore. Something needed to be done. I told Reggie we need to remove the double bolt so that neither of us is locked out of our home. Our children are in here and we should be able to enter our home unannounced at any time. He did not agree, he still claimed that he wants the safety of the double bolt. I explained to Reg that we live in a glass house, this house has humongous windows, there are several picture windows in the front, back and side of this house not to mention the large window on the front door and the frame to floor vertical window at the side of the front door. Anyone wanting to break in would be foolish to find the best option is to break into the garage and then break through the garage door, there are multiple easier more potentially successful possibilities. This logic made no difference to him. He still insisted on keeping the double bolt. A few days later I was locked out again, Jessica ran quickly and let me in, she apologized and said she didn't know it was locked. Of course she didn't know, Reg did it when he came in from work. I'm sure it was accidental. Since Reggie insisted on keeping the double bolt, I devised a way to help him to remember to not lock the double bolt when I wasn't home. Whenever I left the house, I would place plastic Baggies or tissue paper inside the receiving end of the lock. If he attempted to lock it the bolt wouldn't go in the hole because the hole was stuffed, that was his reminder. When I came home I took the stuffing out. I went through this effort because I did not want it to become acceptable to accidentally lock me out of my home. My husband and children are in there. If I come home from work early at 2am, I don't want to have to wait until someone gets up to let me in. I don't want it to be an acceptable "oops" that I come home to find the door locked. Jessica was a 25-year-old young lady and for me to accept not being able to walk into my house unannounced with my husband and/or my children in there was not acceptable to me. Stuffing the lock didn't work, Reggie began taking the stuffing out. He didn't lock the door but he didn't want the stuffing in there. Well, I came home this one Saturday as I had explained earlier and could not get in, the double bolt was on. I knocked and knocked and knocked and knocked (just a normal loud knuckle knock), then with no answer I began to pound. I pounded and pounded and pounded and pounded (quite loudly with the pinky side of a fisted hand). No answer, so I kicked and kicked and kicked and kicked (louder than the pounding of course with the toe side of my combat boot). No answer. So I turned my back to the door and began to kick using the heel side of my combat boot. This was louder and stronger than the toe kick. I kicked and kicked and kicked and kicked. No answer. Well now after all this I started having fun.... I hadn't been to Karate class since I left Germany (I earned a Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do in 1993), so I started practicing my side kicks (they were the most powerful) and I worked on a few leap kicks and reverse kicks and running kicks and once I started repeating my sequences and had gotten back around to my front kicks all it took was one last jump side kick to bust the door in. When

I got into the house Jessica was in the kitchen and Reggie was upstairs in the game room, a wide-open area of the home. There is no way that those two adults did not hear my "knocking" (can I still call it "knocking"?). No-darn-way.... even if they had minor hearing loss they would have heard me. Both of them were in wide open areas of the house. But both of them claimed that they didn't hear me. The boys may have heard the noise, but they weren't old enough to associate its meaning. I told Reg I had kicked the door in. He went downstairs took a look and came back and told me how crazy I was. He told me I needed to get help. He told me he was afraid of me and that I am unstable. I told him I was not angry, I didn't kick the door down in anger. I wasn't in a blind uncontrolled rage when I kicked the door in. I told him I just couldn't get in. He said that I could have come around and rung the bell. I said that that was an option and it was an option that I considered, but I shouldn't have to ring the bell, I have a key. I live here and have a key to the door, the key should open the door. I've tried methods to ensure that I don't get locked out and those options didn't work.... I don't intend to resort to using the bell to get into my home. He still said I was crazy and insisted that I go to the outpatient clinic and get evaluated. So I did later that week. My psychiatric evaluation was unremarkable. Reg got the door fixed. I suggested that he buy one without the double bolt, but he didn't. He paid nearly \$400.00 to get the door replaced and I said to myself if he bolt it again, he'll be replacing it again. I did not want this drama to be repeated, so I thought and thought and thought about what can I do about this door, because getting locked out is not acceptable to me. I will not consider ringing the bell an acceptable alternative to using the key to get into my home when my husband and children in the care of an outsider occupy it. I want to be able to walk in unannounced. I took the entire bolt off the door and jammed it with crazy glue. The tumbler still moved but the bolt did not come out of its hole, so the problem of getting locked out was resolved.

Two other thing that disturbed me about Reggie's conduct with Jessica is one time when he needed to speak with her about her plane ticket back to Germany, or a car trip they were planning to South Carolina (I forget which), he went up to this young lady's bedroom and instead of speaking to her from the doorway, he actually went into her bedroom and closed the door (not completely, but nearly 90% closed). I was about 15 minutes away from leaving for work and I witness this behavior, I was appalled. I mentioned it to Reg and he said it was no big deal, he just needed to talk with her. I assumed since I couldn't see into the room that he was either standing at her bedside or sitting on the floor beside the bed, I later found out from Reggie that he sat on her bed beside her. To me this seemed like a man testing the water, initially his conversations with Jessica were at her doorway, then he enter the room, then he close the door, now he's on the bed..... what next. There was not anything Reggie had to say to Jessica that he could not or should not say from her doorway, he has no business in her room! I was infuriated with both of them because Jessica should have spoken up. She should have asked Reggie to get off of her bed and to open the door. But she didn't. I think it was at this time that I began to lose respect and trust for Jessica. If she cannot speak up to ask this man to get out of her personal space I could not trust her to remain in my home with my family. The other thing that I found bizarre and Reggie thought was quite ordinary and necessary was for him to plan a trip to South Carolina with Jessica, and without me. When we were in Germany Reg and I had planned to drop the boys off for a week or so in South Carolina while we go on a second honeymoon. I could not go because the

infantry unit I had been assigned to was planning a field training exercise during the time period we had planned the cruise. So Reg cancelled preparation for the cruise. He had planned only for us to go to South Carolina, at a time after the NTC dates....but unfortunately I had just started working in the NICU (which was a blessing) and was on orientation and could not get the time off. (I told you earlier in this book that leave was always a problem for me, I hope you see the pattern... it was very, very difficult to plan family vacations and be assured that things would work out and I would be able to go until the very last minute..... any man would see this as counter productive to family values and would support his wife in getting another job, even if it meant a pay cut---- but a pay cut would not have been necessary if I would have gotten that Head Nurse position that God was ready to Bless me with). I asked Reg to please wait to go to South Carolina when I can get the time off and we can all go together, he said no, his family was expecting to see the boys and he was not going to put the trip off. I explained that I have absolutely no control over the fact that I can't take leave, his family would understand. He said, your parents were in Germany and they just saw the boys, my family hasn't seen them since last year. I told him his family was invited to come to Germany just before we left (they were gonna come in May 2000) and you told them not to, please wait and we can all go together. He said no and proceeded to plan his trip. Later, by chance I found out he was planning on driving and taking Jessica with him to help with the boys. When I asked him about that plan he said it was no big deal they would drive straight through and not have to stop over at a hotel. Jessica had friends or family up that way and he was going to drop her off. I told him this was absurd, if he can't manage the boys by himself in the car, then they don't need to drive, they should fly. He didn't get it... or at least he pretended as if he didn't get it and continued to plan the trip. I told Jessica I was not aware of the fact that Reggie was planning to take this trip with her and that I did not approve. I told her that I considered the idea that they may not be able to drive straight through and would need to get a hotel and knowing my husband they would not get separate rooms. And even if the intent was to get separate rooms and the place they stopped at only had one room available, it is not likely Reggie would get back in the car and find a different hotel. I told her I did not want her to take this trip with him without me, I told her it is inappropriate. She said, she will sit in the back seat and take care of the children, she really wants to go on this trip and is very excited about it. Needless to say she did not speak up and tell Reggie she can't go on the trip if his wife disapproves. This further diminished my appreciation for Jessica being in our home.

Just before we left Germany I was talking to Reg's mom (as we occasionally did from time to time) and I invited her and Wonn down. I had invited Reg's mom and sister down to visit us several times while we were in Germany (at least yearly). Each time there was a "good" reason for them not to come. Time snuck up on us... it was April 2000 and we would be leaving reeeaaaaal soon... if they were ever going to come I told them the time is now. His mom said that she and Wonn may be able to come down after memorial day. Later Reg's mom told me that Reg had told them coming down was not a good idea because we were in the process of moving (PCSing) back to the States and we did not have the money to buy tickets for them. I told them the fact that we are PCSing is not a bad time to visit. I told them it could be a blessing. We would be busy running around doing PCS stuff and they could entertain the children. I told her Que would love to show them his room, the neighborhood park where he played and they could even take

him to the hallenbaden (swim hall). I told them not to let money be an object to keep them from coming. I said, this is priceless and I speak for my children, the boys would love y'all to come and see where they've lived for the past 3 years (for Que) several months (for Terrence). It would be priceless for them to look at pictures of Grammy and Aunie Wonn with them in Europe. Throughout this entire phone conversation Reggie was less than 15 feet away from me, he was lounging on the couch in the living room and I was on the phone in the dinning room. This was not a great distance, I was not whispering or trying to shield this phone conversation from my husband. I say this because Reggie accuses me of going behind his back and inviting his family down after he told them not to come. I did not know Reggie had told his family not to come until his mom told me in this phone conversation mentioned above. During this same conversation I told her that I disagree with Reggie's assessment of the fact that we're PCSing being a bad time to come and I mentioned the reasons stated earlier. Reggie's mom and sister had to decide whether to come on this once in a life time visit to see their grandchildren/nephews whom would certainly have been delighted with their visit or to abide by Reg's assertion that they should not come for the reasons he stated. I did not know which way they would choose, either for the grandchildren or for Reggie, I told Reg's mom that I was going to send her my credit card and if they choose to come they would have a means. Regardless of whatever dynamics was going on between the 3 of them (Reggie, his mom, and Wonn) I did not want money to be a hindrance. I told Reg's mom Reggie don't want them to come, I don't know why, but that's not important. I told her it is for her grand children that I implore them to come visit, I am their advocate and if they could speak for themselves they would plead with you to come. I told them that they had been listening to Reggie "bad-mouth" Germany for the past 3 years wouldn't it be nice to make an assessment of Germany for yourselves. I told them coming to Germany is not a big expense, we have purchased ticket between \$400.00 and \$600.00 round trip, so I invited her to please use my credit card if they chose to come. Reggie heard me invite his family down, he heard me insist that they come or should I say, he had the opportunity to hear, because he was in close proximity, now maybe he wasn't paying attention and did not hear this phone conversation.... but Reggie is nosey, he always listens-in, I have no reason to believe he did not hear me re-invite them explaining that I disagreed with his assessment of why they shouldn't come. The only thing Reggie didn't know about was that I was going to pay for their trip down... he didn't want me to do that. I felt like, if that's the only thing keeping them from coming is the measley cost of the plane tickets! Here- here's the card- buy your tickets- come! They of course chose not to come, so when Reggie mentioned that his family hadn't seen the kids in a year, I had to remind him that he discouraged their visit just a few months earlier, so please wait for us to go together on a family trip. He refused.

Jessica and Donovan left in November, they were originally due to leave around the December time frame because of the passport restrictions, but I helped her to change her ticket to depart earlier. I don't recall if their departure was before or after Thanksgiving, but it was mid to late November. Reggie was very angry, he accused me of running Jessica off and he called me an evil witch and again threaten divorce, promising to leave. He said he was going to look for him a place to stay. He told me I was repugnant and he could not stand to be in the same room with me anymore. He left the house for several days and when he was there he would sleep in one of the other rooms. Some how

I changed his mind and convinced him to stay. Christmas came, Reg was off for Christmas, I had to work. We got up early and opened the toys and spent time with the boys, but after about 2 hours I had to go in to work. I was not able to have breakfast with them, or help them assemble their toys. I watched them play with some of their battery operated things before I left, but then I had to go in to work. So here I am going to work on Christmas Day, unable to spend the day with my family. Once again I thought about my disappointment in this man who is supposed to be family oriented and committed to doing what is in the best interest of the family. How is not having the family together on a Religious Holiday like Christmas in the best interest of the family. I'm sure he could explain.

CHAPTER SEVEN

2001

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

Ephesians 5:25

We brought this New Year in, in Florida. We went to Disneyland and on New Years Day we went to watch Reggie's Alma Mater play football. The weather was really cold this time a year, but we had a great time. We were all together, we were blessed.

One of the things that I told Reg in order to convince him to stay when Jessica left in November 2000 is that I will do whatever I need to do to take care of the home even if I have to kill myself doing it, but I want things to work out. Since Jessica left we had been managing things on our own. I was working 8-hour night shifts in the NICU and when I'd get home I'd cook, clean, and do the laundry. By the time I'd pick the boys up (usually around 3PM, most times I'd get Terrence sooner, around noon, before he lay down for his nap) and have them bathed and fed, I might get to lay down a few hours before it was time to go to work. I had been running on maybe 3 hours of sleep a day trying to get everything done and keep the home organized and caring for the boys, and making Reg's lunches. I asked Reg if he would make his own lunch. I told him that would help me quite a bit. I told him even the boys put their own lunches in their lunch boxes. I don't have to do it I just let them get it and make sure they do it right. I asked him if I could get him those pre-prepared sandwiches at the store to save time so that I don't have to make the sandwiches. I even asked if he could pick up his lunch at work from time to time.... on all three counts he said, “NO! NO! NO! you are my wife and you will make my lunch“. So I did. I was so very tired all of the time. My body always felt so run down. Night shifts were really hard on a day shift body, by nature I am an early morning person, but having to work nights it put an extra strain on me. Reg didn't help with much of the housework. He took care of the bills, yard, and shampooing the carpet. He never washed a dish, prepared a meal, help by making his own lunch, he sometimes did laundry, helped fold and put away folded items, and bathe the boys on rare occasions. But it wasn't nearly enough. He didn't help clean the house or help with shopping. He didn't help with the things I needed him to help with to lighten my load for the day. He didn't want me to tell him what to do, he did what he wanted when he wanted, which was somewhat helpful in the big scheme of things but was useless for getting me to bed earlier on “that” particular day. Every time I wanted to go to bed at a decent time, it seemed like there was always just one more thing that I needed to do. Doing all these things and working the hours I had been working (to include the extra military or professional duties that were required of me during my off time) was beginning to take it's toll on me. I wasn't able to stay awake at work, I had began making multiple minor errors with my patient care, charting, or with my additional duties. I couldn't remember anything if it wasn't written down. When giving report to the oncoming shift, I had to write everything I wanted to tell them down and if they asked me a question, if it wasn't written down, I had to go look up the answer. I couldn't remember

anything. I didn't know what was wrong with me. My co-workers even realized I wasn't doing so well and they began to feel like I wasn't safe around the critically ill babies. But because they knew of my potential in the past they continued to assign me to the infants with high acuities (the most critical). I would start tasks and not complete them, draw labs on the wrong baby, one time I was giving an infant platelets and the entire unit had infused onto the bed and I didn't even realize it although I had been at the bedside the entire time recording vital signs every 5 minutes. It was terrible, my head nurse had been very patient with me but after this incident I (and everyone else) knew it was time for them to do something about me before I hurt or kill a patient. I was placed on 2 weeks administrative leave which gave me lots of time to rest and recover, then when I came back I was taken out of patient care and put on administrative duties. It was very hard to be there working at the desk and running errands but not able to do patient care. I did that for about a month. During the time I was on administrative duties I was going upstairs to psychiatric services weekly for evaluation. At the end of my evaluation process it was concluded that I was sleep deprived. I was so worried because mental illness runs in my family and they were evaluating me for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Schizophrenia they could treat with medication and I could remain on active duty, but with a bipolar disorder I would have to get put out because of the medication they would have me on I would not be deployable. But I was relieved and praised God when I found out it was just sleep deprivation. I had been going for so long on just a few hours of sleep I didn't realize the toll it was taking on me. I was sent to the mother baby unit, which was an area that dealt with well babies and postpartum moms, a much safer area to be in if I am not completely focused. This was supposed to be a temporary change (only for 2 months) but I decided when it was time for me to go back to the NICU that I would rather stay on the MBU, not that I liked it better, it's just that I had so much going on with my personal life I need to not be in an area where I had to be keenly aware of what is going on with my patients or I could miss something important and cause major difficulties for the infants I cared for. Reg for the most part worked hard at work and took it easy at home. He was very supportive when I was going through this ordeal, in fact he paid for my mom to come down to help us until we found someone to replace Jessica. Immediately we put out the word that we were looking for someone to care for our home and children. I decided that we wanted to find a mature person this time, we had used young people all along and each of them have had their share of problems. Reg did not agree, he still wanted to try the younger girls. We did get a College Freshman who was available to us temporarily while we conducted interviews and looked for a permanent hire. This young lady was very nice and seemed to be quite reliable and she was eager to take the job, but I had really had my fill of working with these young girls and having to micromanage their every move. I wanted help, real help in our home so that I could go to work and feel confident that things would be taken care of at the house and the boys would receive proper care. We didn't advertise in the paper we wanted to find help by "word of mouth", we thought that was the safest way of doing this instead of opening our doors to everyone in the city to happen to have run across our ad in the paper. We felt that by sticking to people that were referred by someone that we knew would be pretty safe. Thelma was in her 70's (or late 60's), someone Reg knew at work referred her. We called her, she came by for the interview and because she was older we hired her. She had been working at a barbeque restaurant owned by her brother so Reg had great

expectations in regards to her cooking. She advertised herself as having done several housekeeping jobs in the past where she had childcare duties as an aside. I expected her to do well with the housekeeping but I wondered about her patience and energy with the boys, but since they would be in school most of the day and Reg would be home in the evenings that wasn't going to be such a big deal. The only time she would have to spend a lot of time with them would be when I was working and Reg was on call and this was not going to be too often, maybe once or twice a month. So we hired her. It was a mistake, I admit it was a mistake (because she and Reg didn't get along), but it was the best decision at the time---- hindsight is always 20/20 (the younger girl may have worked out better). Thelma did a wonderful job with the housekeeping. The floors were clean enough to eat off of. She pushed furniture over on it's side and cleaned beneath it, she removed all the sofa cushions to vacuum beneath those, she climbed on top of things to clean light fixtures and high ceilings. She ironed all of our clothing and put them away. She bathed and put the boys in their pajamas before she left in the evening (except on the days that I did it, which was most of the time). Her biggest shortcoming was with cooking. Everything Thelma cooked was greasy. I told her we don't like greasy food it's unhealthy. I showed her how to read the directions on the Rice-A- Roni or Macaroni and cheese boxes and she just wasn't getting it. The easy to prepare foods was just not what she was used to. She liked making things from scratch and that's all she knew. I felt for Reg cause he suffered, his meals were very important to him and for them to consistently be a mystery or not what he was used to was very frustrating for him. The boys didn't care they ate anything and I just settled for soup, salad, or those pre-made sandwiches I would pick up at the store. But with my busy work schedule I had little time to coddle Reggie's needs about his discontentment with Thelma's cooking. I was just grateful to have help in the house, someone he wouldn't want to seduce or play stupid "I wasn't aware" games that he had played in the past. I continued to let Thelma know that Reg wasn't happy with her cooking and I encouraged her to work at learning to prepare one or two of his favorite meals well and if she did that, that 's all she would ever have to cook. He doesn't need variety just familiarity. I don't think Thelma's cooking ever satisfied Reg, she just never got it right. I wasn't going to go in there and cook to make up for her shortcomings. I already had just gotten over a major experience related to my health and I wasn't going to put myself at risk again that was too scary. If I were Reg, and just had to have a home cooked meal I would have gone in the kitchen once or twice a week, especially on the weekend and made my own dinner for the next couple of days. Meal preparations in my opinion was Thelma's biggest incompetence. Reggie sometimes gets so focused on a persons defects that he fail to see the positives. I just thought that although Thelma wasn't 100% of what we were looking for, being grateful for the fact that she was 75% of what we needed was something to be thankful for, Reg felt otherwise, he wanted me to let her go. She had worked for us for less than a month and he was also dissatisfied with her disposition. We had always had younger girls working for us and they were more flexible with what Reggie wanted to pay them and their payment schedules, Thelma wasn't as flexible and if Reg feels like he's not in control, he just becomes irrational. I could not agree with Reg in letting her go. I felt bad for her. It was unfair to let her go without just cause. Plus I know we needed help and I knew he wasn't going to be any help and we would be right back where we started with me doing 90% of the work and trying to work full time. I did not want to get into that position

again. My supervisors at work were constantly asking me if I had help around the house and was getting enough rest. They did not want me to become a liability to the unit again anymore than I wanted to repeat that ordeal. He told me to let her go without notice, so I did. She asked me for a reference letter and I gave her one. He was angry and disappointed with me for giving her a reference letter. I thought that was silly, this lady worked for us and we have a responsibility as employers to give her a reference letter if she ask for one. I focused only on her strengths in the letter and it was not a letter of recommendation. I would not have given her a letter of recommendation for anything more than housekeeping. But he was miffed, he thought that I betrayed him and did not support his actions by giving her this reference letter. The other thing he was ticked about is that on her last day he did not want her to see the boys....he didn't want a big good-bye scene. We didn't tell her until the day she showed up at work (I think it was her payday Friday), that that would be her last day. I worked the night before and was asleep when she came in to work that day. When I got up at 2pm, she was in the middle of ironing mounds of clothing. I told her we were letting her go and this was going to be her last day. She said she was going to complete the ironing and put the clothes away. I told her she didn't have to, she could just leave em, she said she wouldn't do that to me in a million years. This was an elderly woman (grandmotherly type) who took pride in her work, so I wasn't going to argue, I allowed her to complete her work. Near 3pm she was still well into her ironing, I had to decide whether to break Reggie's rule and not let her see the boys on her last day by leaving them in school or going to get my sons so that I could get them fed and changed into their pajamas and have time to spend with them before I leave for work at 6pm. I decided to go get them. I dressed them and fed them and when Thelma finished her ironing she told them good-bye on her way out the door like she had done on any other day. We made no mention of her not coming back. Needless to say when Reg found out I disobeyed him by bringing the boys home while Thelma was still there he was beside himself. He called me an evil, witch. He just couldn't get over the fact that I had betrayed his trust. All I say to that (and all of Reggie's irrational accusations against me) is that God examine our hearts, he examines our motives, I brought my sons home that evening so that I could spend time with them before I had to leave for work. Every second Thelma was there ironing, finishing up her job was one second less with my boys if I were to wait until she left to go get them from school. Once I would have gotten them home (at 5 pm or so) I would have still had to feed and bathe them, then out the door to work I would go. I was working 12-hour night shifts and to go to work tired was something I was trying desperately to avoid doing on a regular basis. Getting them at 3pm (as always) was the most logical thing to do. I respected Reggie's wishes by ensuring that Thelma said her good-byes in her usual way. The boys had no clue she would not be back tomorrow and besides neither of them had gotten attached to Thelma, they could not have cared less if they never saw her again. She was not with us for very long, I would guess less than 90 days. I never understood why he made this such an issue.

Once Thelma was relieved Reg and I were on our own again to take care of our home. I remember thinking that this is not an impossible thing to do. Hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of other families are doing it. I remember thinking that if we cooperate this would be simple. I flashed back to my days of growing up and the ole chore list. I thought that if I make up a chore list and we share

the jobs that need to be done we could do this. Then my bubble burst when I remembered the fiasco in Germany and how things turned out when I tried getting Reggie to commit to doing certain tasks to help out when we were without help. One time in Germany when we were between family care providers, I asked Reg if he could just be responsible for doing the laundry, reluctantly and after a lengthy explanation as to why I couldn't do it, he agreed. After he'd been doing laundry for less than a month I asked him to please be more careful about separating the clothing because the whites were very dingy and a pair of my good white stretch jeans are ruined because dark colors, especially red and black had ran into them. I showed him the jeans and a few other items that were literally ruined and could not be worn (except for loungewear). Reggie told me he agreed to wash the clothes, if I want the laundry sorted then I need to sort them myself. I told Reggie, this grown man that sorting the laundry is part of the task of doing the laundry, they are not intended to be separate tasks. I was so disgusted I told Reg not to worry about the laundry anymore, I'll take care of it. I couldn't even get Reggie to make the bed when he got out of the bed in the mornings. I know he didn't like being told or asked to do a task, so I never asked him to make the bed in the morning after he'd gotten up. I simply told him many times how I liked crawling into a cozy made up bed after a hard night's work. When he get out of the bed in the morning then I come home behind him to go to bed the bed is always completely ruffled up, covers every where. I told him when he come to bed at night the bed is always organized and made up, I would really appreciate coming home to an organized bed. He did make an effort and daily after getting out of bed he would grab the covers and throw them up over the pillows, a toddler's effort, but an effort nonetheless, I didn't complain. In Germany our bedroom was on the 3rd floor, the laundry room was on the 1st floor, when the hampers were full, the biggest, strongest, thing in the house had issue with me asking him to bring the full hampers from the bedroom to the laundry room. He told me if I brought the hampers downstairs before they became full, they wouldn't be too heavy for me to carry downstairs. He would bring them down if asked, but he rarely ever took initiative to bring the hampers downstairs without being asked. So needless to say, 90% of the time I carried the hampers down myself. After flashing back to these earlier efforts of trying to cooperate in caring for our home together, I thought that having a repeat of these earlier disappointments was something to be avoided. There was absolutely no hope for cooperation with taking care of the household duties. So I just did the best I could by myself until it was time for us to leave to go to San Antonio then Angie would be down to help.

By the time we'd let Thelma go we had gone into the 2nd quarter of the year. We managed to get along without her. I was working 12-hour night shifts on the Mother Baby Unit. Reg was not put on call very often and we did have a lady on stand by to watch the boys if we needed to drop them off overnight if Reg was on call. I had to consciously make an effort to ensure I didn't fall back into the old pattern of not getting adequate sleep and rest. That was a constant challenge. I had began falling to sleep at work, but it was the night shift, who don't fall asleep, I reasoned. When Reg told me I was doing too much and needed to slow down, I listened (I hadn't in the past), some of the errands or things I thought that I had to do, I decided could be put off until later. We were making it.

It was around this 2nd quarter (May or June) that I had to make a major career decision. It was nearly a year since we left Germany, the year notice that my husband

demanding that I give him to plan for my resignation would be up in August.... no plans were ever made, but if I wanted to resign he would have allowed me to do so. This was also the year I would need to prepare my packet for promotion because I would be in the zone for selection to Major this year and the board to select officers to be promoted was to convene in October of this year. What a dilemma, it seems like an easy decision to make, as badly as I wanted to get out of the Army in the past why would there be any hesitation on my part as to whether to stay in or get out. Well there was, Reggie didn't want me to get out, he didn't support my getting out, he only agreed to not force me to stay in (this time).... I didn't feel entirely comfortable with that lack of support because I know that he could be brutal with verbal insults and I reasoned that no matter what I earned on the outside he would have constantly compared it to what I could have been earning if I had stayed in. For instance, if I earned \$45,000.00 a year as a civilian staff nurse, then came home one evening elated because I was given a \$5,000.00 bonus (for anything) he would have said something like " Well now you earned \$50,000.00 for this year.... do you realize if you had stayed in you would have been up to 70 this year?) With this in mind and no way of convincing Reggie it was better to take a pay cut and assurance that one of us would be able to put the needs of the family first, I decided that I will do what I needed to do in order to ensure that my promotion packet remained competitive for when the board meets later in the year. The one thing I needed to do was to attend the Officers Advance Course. Because I was set on getting out, attending this course prior to now was very low priority for me. Now that I still plan on getting out, but am placing myself in position to keep my options open, I had a limited amount of time to get my paperwork in order. The last Advanced Course that would meet and be completed prior to my packet going before the board was a course that started in July. Having completed the advance course was a requirement to get picked up for Major. If I do not complete the advance course before the board meets it is absolutely assured that I would not get picked up for Major. With Reggie's help, I did everything that was necessary for me to do to ensure that I did what I needed to do to meet the requirements for getting into this last class that met before the board. This was the "eleventh hour" it was nearly June and the course started in mid July. I had (and needed) the support of my Head Nurse (I was working in the Mother Baby Unit, but was still assigned to the NICU), Section Chief, and Chief Nurse in order to make this happen so quickly. I also had to have the support of my Nurse Counselor up at Branch to ensure a slot was held open for me while I complete the requirements for attendance. It was amazing, everything came together. I completed all the things that needed to be completed in order to go to this course and around the beginning of July I received the official word that I was going to the advance course.

The advance course was in San Antonio Texas and was 10 weeks long. I knew all along that if I were going to go to this course that I would take our baby boys. I never would have went through the hassle of doing all these last minute "jumps through hoops" if I had planned on leaving our boys for ten weeks (visiting them on the weekends). School would have been out for them for the summer, so it did not seem like a big deal to plan on having them with me while I was in San Antonio. I was going to be gone for 10 weeks, only coming down for the weekends. Reggie had never been to the store to shop for the boys, he had never prepared a meal for them, he had never prepared their lunches, or gotten their clothes together for them to wear to school. He bathed and dressed them in

the mornings because I worked nights, but I had laid the clothes out for them prior to going in to work.... so I did not feel comfortable leaving them in his care for such a long time. I knew when I came down on the weekend it would have been overwhelming to try to prepare clothes, meals, and lunches for the week. And of course I would need to go grocery shopping for anything that needed to be replaced and I would want to clean the house because I didn't want our boys living in a "hog's pen". In retrospect, I guess Reggie could have taken care of these things if I would have left him to it but I was particular (as most mothers are) how our babies would be cared for. Reggie was in charge of our finances, you can bet if he had to go away he would not have left me in charge of moving our stock around knowing that I never took interest in doing that before. I was aware of how the stock market worked and may have done just fine, but he would not have entrusted me with such a task... and I wouldn't mind, I'd rather leave that to him. I felt that way about the boys. He may have done fine, but he never done it before.... so I wanted to take them with me to ensure they were properly cared for --- as would any mother. If I were managing our investments I'd keep 80% of my investment income in secure investments. 10% would be in moderately secure investments, and only the final 10% I would be willing to place in high-risk investment. All this to say, how is it that Reggie, knowing that he has had very limited involvement in the total process of caring for the home and children would expect me to just saunter-off to school in San Antonio for 10 weeks and not take our baby boys with me. Surely their more valuable than anything going on on Wall Street. When I first mentioned to Reggie the idea about taking the boys with me he said that that would be a problem because the rooms they put the students in were too small for all of us. Being the optimist that I am, I assumed that would have been the only objection he would have had to my bringing the boys down or he would have told me so. So immediately I started working on the idea of getting a place large enough for us to stay. I didn't have much time to work on this because I was going to the field for a 2-week training exercise and my date to depart for that was coming up soon. The field exercise was in San Antonio and I had my cell phone with me so I contacted an apartment locator service while I was in San Antonio and told them my situation and exactly what I was looking for. I told them I was coming to San Antonio to attend a two-month course, I had two young sons and we needed to be located near a place where they would be walking distance to a daycare. She found me a Corporate Suite in the Medical Center area of San Antonio. She gave me the name of the nearby daycare and I called to see if they would have slots available for both boys... they only had a slot for Terrence, but said one would be opening later for RQue, she suggested that if I wanted to ensure a place is held for them I put down a deposit, so I gave her a credit card number over the phone for the deposits... all of this was done from the field. I still needed to discuss things with Reg, but meanwhile I did not want to lose either the Suite or the slots in the daycare. Both were reasonably priced and to lose them would have meant paying a higher price and maybe losing out on the convenience of the location of the Daycare to the Suites. So I made the necessary deposits and would talk to Reg when I got out of the field. This certainly wasn't something to discuss over the phone.

When I came home from the field I reminded Reg that when I told him I wanted to take the boys with me to the advance course he told me the rooms weren't large enough, I told him while I was in the field I found a place for us to stay and a school for the boys to attend. He hit the ceiling, he said that is going to be a waste of money because

the Army is not going to reimburse you if you stay off post so any expense you have will be on your own. He said that I have to stay in the rooms at the guesthouse or I won't get reimbursed for the expense of the hotel room. I told him I made all the calls necessary to ensure that I would get reimbursed and the people at finance told me what I need to do to get reimbursed. I offered to give him the names and numbers of the people I spoke with so that he could verify for himself that I would be reimbursed. He insisted those people didn't know what they were talking about and I was too quick to believe anything they told me and he told me I would not get reimbursed if I stayed off post. He said staying off post and not getting reimbursed for it was foolish and a waste of money. He told me he wouldn't have it! I'm staying on post in guest housing and the boys are staying here in Killeen and that's that! I thought Reggie was being ridiculous. The biggest aversion he had to my taking the boys was the fact that he thought I would not get reimbursed for lodging, even if I weren't going to be reimbursed for lodging I would have wanted to bring them with me. This was very do-able. I am a professional with the responsibilities of a professional, I am also a mother with the responsibilities and duties of a mother. Some times we have to be flexible and pick up additional costs to do what's in the best interest of the children. I reasoned with Reg that because we were not going to have to pay a family care provider during this period (my brother-in-law's sister changed her mind about coming down to work for us. She went back up to Chicago with her husband. She was separated from her husband and living in Philly with my sister's family) my sister Angie is an elementary school teacher and she don't work during the summer plus she had broken her leg doing yard work and was going to be laid up for the summer so she suggested coming down to stay with the boys in San Antonio, a great change of pace and nice summer break for her two kids. Though of course if I would have asked her to stay here in Killeen with the boys she would have done that as well, but San Antonio was a much better break for everyone, though Reg didn't see it that way. Reggie once again laid down his infamous ultimatum. He told me that if I take the boys to San Antonio he would file for divorce. I told Reggie these ultimatums have got to stop. I asked him how can I ever feel secure in our relationship if there's always this "cloud of divorce" hanging over my head. I told him I don't feel a sense of commitment on his part, I told him he will divorce me over anything. Reg told me that "divorce" is the only language that I understood and the only way for him to get me to do what he wanted was to promise me a divorce. I tried everything to convince Reggie that I did not want a divorce, I did not want taking the children to San Antonio to result in divorce. I told him there is lots of room for us to compromise. I don't have to bring them there for ten weeks. I told him I could bring them to San Antonio for 5 weeks and then they could stay in Killeen for the other 5 weeks, he said no. The best he could do was offer to bring them up to San Antonio for one-week midway through my course. That was unacceptable to me, I really could have hated Reggie for making this so difficult. If there weren't so many people involved in getting me placed in this course at the last minute, plus the fact that I held up a slot for someone else that could have used it, I would have just told them to cancel my enrollment. This was beginning to get too insane. I consciously came to the conclusion that I knew my marriage was not going to last very long if all Reggie has for compromising in our marriage is the promise of divorce. I decided that I was not going to back down from this.... in order to avoid divorce, I backed down, on numerous occasions withdrawing my paperwork and remaining on active duty. This case was different, he's

asking me to leave our babies for 10 weeks with weekend visitation and daily phone calls, that's not parenting---- not my way of parenting anyway. I thought that if he insisted on my remaining in the army the least he could do is be supportive with my desire to care for and parent our children. Why should I be forced to remain in the army and forced to neglect our children. I reasoned that 10 weeks away from the boys is a very long time and I knew that to compromise and do what Reggie wanted me to do was only good for the moment, this compromise and the 10 weeks spent away from the kids would have been negated with the onset of the next ultimatum. I wondered how many more ultimatums would we have to go through and at what cost before we end up in divorce court. I decided the buck stops with the boys, Reggie can tread on me and tread on me he did, but I will not allow him to use the boys the same way. On my honor, if I knew that compromising with Reggie and leaving the boys in Killeen while I go away to this course would have been the absolute last time he would have given me this divorce ultimatum, I would have compromised and did things his way, but to be faced with the idea that he would threaten divorce again and again and again until we were either divorced or he learned that there was another way to work things through in our marriage (which wasn't going to happen in the immediate future), was not an option I wanted to take. I decided that leaving the boys for ten weeks with no guarantees of Reggie's commitment to our family would have amounted to nothing more than prolonging the inevitable.

Here we were again in another major crisis, a major decision between two mature, supposedly intelligent, college educated adults turned into a family crisis involving the potential destruction of the entire family unit. I did everything I could think of to try to convince Reg that I don't want a divorce, I am not refusing to go along with him because I want to be in control of my family, Reg was constantly accusing me of wanting to "wear the pants" in the family, he even had his own descriptive derogatory term for what he accused me having (referencing my anatomy) but I will not mention it here, it's rather humiliating and quite embarrassing. I have managed at this point to not put anything derogatory in print, so I won't begin now. I have never, throughout all the disagreements and aggravations, and disappointments, and challenges I've had with Reggie, said anything foul or obscene to him or called him out of his name. What's in the heart comes out of the mouth, so it says in scripture. What is the condition of this man's heart I've often wondered.... he's said some pretty foul and ugly things to me.

"For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bare good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."
Luke 6:43-45.

I firmly believe that my God given role was to care for our children (and our home), my job, a job Reg would not support me in leaving required that I go away to a place where it was very possible for me to take our children and care for them, I opted to do that, when my husband opposed I remember that my daily bible readings had been in the book of Ruth, I remember how Ruth told Naomi to go kneel at Boaz's feet and tell him that he was her kinsman redeemer. I remember thinking that if I take this posture with my husband, kneel at his feet, take on a posture that would display total humility that Reggie may be able to hear what I am saying to him. At Reg's feet I pleaded for him to

understand a mother's heart, know that I cannot leave our children for these 10 weeks. God's way for me to parent our children is not from afar and by phone. I explained to him that I have been responsible for seeing to their daily needs, I asked him to please not keep me from caring for them. I pleaded at his feet for us to agree to 5 weeks here and 5 weeks in San Antonio, I told him that's how we would compromise on this issue, instead of either one of us keeping them for 10 weeks on either end, we would each have them for 5 weeks, in his infamous words (and I kid you not) Reg said, NO, NO, NO! He sounded like a two-year-old having a temper tantrum. I know what to do with a two year old having a tantrum, but what do I do with a 37 year old man having a temper tantrum. I suggested to Reggie that we call our church Pastor . We were not members of the church we had been attending, but we had been attending there for several months and we both had a great respect for the anointing of this Pastor we had only known from our seats. Reggie said we don't need to go see a Pastor, he said I should go seek counsel from some older women in the church and maybe they can tell me what my duty is--- and that is to be obedient to my husband. Ludicrous he called this idea about compromising. He said that it is clearly stated in scripture that the husband is the head of the wife, and with this being true anytime we come to a stalemate on an issue (such as we are now) my duty is accept his judgment. I took his advice about seeking counsel from a female church elder. I would have much preferred that we both would have sought this counsel together, when he refused for us to go together to a church elder, I suggested that he seek advise from a male church elder, He was convinced that it was not himself that was misguided or had the wrong idea about how to resolve this issue, it was obviously me. I had this lady on hire to type up my class assignments after I had completed them. She was mother at her church and very active in activities at her church. When I first contacted her over the phone to hire her to type my assignments, she began sharing Jesus with me. When I went by her house for the first time to drop off the assignment I needed her to type for me, she started the session off with prayer and she said she will say a prayer over each assignment before sending it in. At the close of the time I spent with her she said a parting prayer for my family. After the prayer she explained that she don't know why she had to say this special prayer for me to continue to lift my husband up and to diligently pray for his spirit, she said that is the message that was put on her heart just now and she knew that it was the Holy Spirit talking to her. I had never met this lady before and had only had two phone conversations with her (the 1st was to hire her service and the 2nd was to get directions to her house). I knew that this lady was anointed and she seemed to have been tuned in to one of the most basic needs of our family and that was prayer----- prayer for the head of our home, and I know that I had not been lifting Reggie up in prayer nearly enough. So when Reg told me to seek counsel from an elderly woman at the church, I knew the perfect person. I called her and told her over the phone the issue Reg and I was dealing with including the fact that if I do take the children with me to San Antonio Reggie will file for divorce. Over the phone I told her about the times before when we were in Germany and were faced with divorcing time after time after time the accusation has always been the same, my lack of obedience to my husband. I told her I want my marriage to work and willing to do whatever is necessary to "fix" me if I'm "broke". I told her ultimatums have been the only means of negotiating in this marriage since the beginning and it can't go on. I told her my husband wanted me to seek counsel on my duties as a Christian wife and that's why I contacted her. She told me to fast and pray and

she will do the same then she told me to come by her house the following day at 6 pm. When I went over Claire's house that next evening I had expected for there to be no one there except me and Claire, to my surprise there were 2 other cars in the drive way, Claire answered the door and said, that she called a couple of her prayer sister over because this was larger than something she wanted to handle alone. She asked me if I mind having them present and I said, No. In retrospect, I believe that was a very wise and prudent thing to do, if I were Claire and I had to give counsel in such a dire circumstance that could have such devastating consequences, I would want to have other elders there as well. She started the session out in prayer, beginning with the scripture stating "when two or three are gathered in my name...." after prayer she went to scriptures in the bible that talked about the women's responsibility to God and family and my relationship with my husband. She also talked about my husband's responsibility to God and family and his relationship with his wife. The evening was concluded with a 30-minute very intense prayer session. All of the ladies there provided special words in prayer and encouragement for our situation. Before departing Claire told me that the Spirit is with me keep focused on God and He will change Reggie's heart. She said the Spirit is not showing her a divorce for us. She said she was directed to share with me that it's very important that I trust God with this completely, she advised me not to get the courts involved (I told her earlier in the evening that Reg told me that if I took the boys he was going to come down to San Antonio and get them while I was in school and file a restraining order against me so that I couldn't take them back, I told her that ever since he said that, I have been thinking about getting a restraining order against him before he get one against me because once I start school in San Antonio I'm not going to be able to fight him over this). The final thing she said was for me to not worry about being reimbursed for the lodging in San Antonio, she said, this is God's Will and He will take care of that. When I came home Reg asked me how things went. I told him it was very uplifting, I told him about the other prayer sisters being there and I told him she told me to keep lifting him up in prayer and things would work out. I told him that she said she does not see divorce in this for us. We never talked about this anymore since that night. Things were going very well for us, no conflicts, we even planned and carried out a 4th of July cookout and entertained several of Reggie's colleagues over at our house. I believed that because things were going so wonderfully for us Reggie had had a change of heart and he believed the same, he assumed that I had had a change of heart. Neither of us brought up the issue because neither of us wanted to spoil the peace and harmony we had been enjoying for the past few weeks. As we got closer to my report date(the 15th of July) and plans needed to be finalized we did eventually have to discuss childcare arrangements. Reg called home from work during lunch one day (a few days after our cookout) and asked about the plans for when my sister come. It was obvious that he was under the impression my sister was going to stay here in Killeen with the children while I go up to San Antonio. I could feel my heart sink, I told him, " my sister and her kids are coming up to San Antonio with me and the boys Reg, I told you that weeks ago". He told me he thought I had changed my mind after speaking to those ladies from the church. I told him no, I hadn't changed my mind, but I thought all the peace we were having was because he had had a change of heart. We were both disappointed (I say "both" because I'm certain Reg was just as disappointed as I was that the old beast had reared it's ugly head again). In just seconds our lives were catapulted back to where we were months ago.

Reg told me that if I insisted on taking the children then count on going to divorce court. He told me that when my sister and her family come into town I had better make other living arrangements for them because they are not welcome in the house. I told him that was ridiculous, I would never tell him any of his family would not be welcomed in our home. I told him that he could invite any one of his family members to come here and care for the boys in Killeen if he insisted on them staying in this "dink" town all summer long when they could be in San Antonio. It was getting closer to time for me to leave and Reg continued to threaten to come and get the boys and file a restraining order against me if I take them, so I went against the advice given to me a couple of weeks earlier by the church elders and had Reggie served with a restraining order. I didn't know what else to do, Reg continued to promise me that he was going to take the boys from their school in San Antonio and I didn't want to be forced into court once my classes had started. I reasoned that since Reggie was still making the same promises as he had earlier when I first went talk to the ladies of the church, it was obvious that the Holy Spirit is not working on him, his heart hasn't been changed. So naturally I took matters into my own hands. I did the only thing I knew to do (in the flesh) and that was deal with Reggie myself. A mature Christian would have let Reggie continue to make his threats, she would have continued to lift him up in prayer, but getting the courts involved (especially after I had been given what I consider a credible Spiritual warning against it) was an obvious act identifying the fact that I was not yet ready to allow God to take charge of my life and the circumstances in it.

A few days later I drove to Austin to pick up my sister and her children from the airport. The flight came in after midnight so I didn't bring the boys with me. I left them home with their dad. Reg warned me earlier that day that if I brought my sister and her family into our home he was going to throw them out, so if I don't want a show-down I'd better take them to a hotel after getting them from the airport. Over the past few years that Reg and I were married he's said some ugly-ugly, foul, derogatory things to me and about me, but he has never done anything that I would consider violent or physically abusive, I didn't expect him to carry out this threat of putting my family out of the house (but I did ensure that I had the number to the police department on my person in case things appeared to be getting out of hand). When I came home from Austin with my family it was about 2am. We unloaded the car brought all of the luggage upstairs. I had expected Reg would meet us at the door if he was serious about my family not being allowed to stay. Then naturally I would have had no choice but to bring them to a hotel if he wouldn't allow them in the house. Once we were in and unloaded I breathed a sigh of relief and said praise God, Reg has had a change of heart, he does not intend to make a scene. I chatted with my sister for a bit then I told them where everything was if they wanted to shower and all before going to bed and I told them to help themselves to anything in the kitchen if they wanted a bed time snack.... then off to bed I went. I changed into my pajamas, got down on my knees and said my prayers, then crawled into bed. By this time Reg had gotten up out of bed gone into the main hallway, I'm not sure if he had gone upstairs or not but he came back into the bedroom turned on the light and started speaking to me loudly about those people not being welcomed here and that he was going to throw their things into the streets (another man's wife and children he's threatening to throw into the street. How would he feel if one of my sisters' husband's had threatened to throw his wife and kids in the street---- I guess for him, without an

ounce of feeling the role of being the provider and protector of his family, he may not be able to relate). The boys were in the room and they were awakened from the lights and loud talking. Reggie left the room, opened up the front door (the automatic water sprinklers had come on, if he had put their bags outside, everything would have gotten wet) and appeared to be getting ready to go upstairs, I told him this is insane, I am going to call the police, he followed me into the bedroom and watched me call the police. I was hoping he would say something to stop me like, "no don't do that, calling the police isn't necessary, I'm not going to throw your family out". He said nothing, he just sat in a chair in the corner and watched me call and talk to the police. They had a series of questions to ask and they insisted that I stay on the phone until someone arrives at the house. Reg had calmed waaay down and by the time the police had arrived he seemed like a different person. He appeared so courteous and respectful as he greeted the officers at the door in a cordial and friendly manner. Before the police had arrived he told me that he was going to tell them that I am a crazy woman, unstable and under treatment by a psychiatrist for psychosis, he said he was going to deny anything I tell them. The police spoke with us both separately, and they had me call my sister down (she had just gotten out of the shower) to speak with her. Then they brought me and Reg together and spoke with us both. Once they were satisfied that everything was okay they left. Reg immediately called his mom, there's no reason to even discuss here the attitude and tone she'd taken with me regarding this incident. She coddled her son and ensured he was properly advised and counseled (by her) regarding his career and the hazards I had imposed on his reputation and future success by not considering the repercussions involving the police could have on someone of his status. All I'll say about that is Reggie was not sitting down, watching TV, minding his own business when I called the police---- he posed a threat, and if I had not called the police early in this event, things could have easily gotten out of hand. It was because I called the police that Reggie did not continue on his rampage. There were only a couple of days between this incident and the time we left for San Antonio, things were civil between us all. We were talking and no more scenes were created. But Reg was more certain than ever before that divorcing me was the only thing to do. He accused me of plotting and scheming to ruin his career and that fiasco with calling the police was part of my master plan. These accusations sounded to me like the rantings of a lunatic (to ruin his career would mean to also rob my children of their future and security---- why is this man so focused on "him" and "his" career.... does he not realize we are a unit... a family unit! if one fall, we all fall---- God who is this man that you have given me to father and raise our children... I don't know him, trust him, or believe in his commitment to our family... but I trust you Lord and I know that everything will work out for good for those who love You. Thank You Jesus!)

Reg had the earlier restraining order turned into a petition for divorce. Texas law states that once a petition for divorce has been made, there must be a 2-month period before it can go before the judge. The count down for the 2 months had begun around the date I left for San Antonio. By September 01 he would be able to put the petition for divorce to the courts and all the legalities to dissolve our marriage would begin. Every weekend I tried to make up with Reg and encourage him to reconsider this drive towards divorce. Everything leading up to the divorce being filed was all very, very ugly and more horrific than anything either of us could have imagined that we would have been through with our family. This sort of drama you can only imagine happens to "other

people". I tried to get Reggie to see that none of this behavior was characteristic of either of us. I told Reg, "I never used the phrase "restraining order" in all of my life, to get a restraining order against my husband was not a thought I conceived" Reggie planted that seed by telling me he would get a restraining order against me----- yet I know my husband, I know Reggie well enough to know that that is not a thought he would have conceived.... I wonder who planted that seed in his mind. Also I explained to him that God had cleaned out our house many times before and just as it says in scripture, if we don't put Godly things in the place of the demons that were driven out, they will return with others 7 times worst than the ones before.

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says; 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Luke 11:24-26

And that is what's happening in our family. I asked him if he can't see the evil forces at work here. I told him we were targets for Satan very earlier because we were a Christian family raising 2 others to know our Savior. I told him Satan would be overjoyed to see our home collapse, he can have more pleasure with each of us individually than if we were a united front. When we left Germany the minister told us that when we get to Texas we'd better RUN to a church. He told us we needed to get into the word and strengthen ourselves or we were in for a lot of trouble. I pointed out to Reggie that we didn't take his advice. We went to church every Sunday and sat in the back. We said our prayers every night and read daily scripture. But we were not actively seeking God or Godly ways or anything more than just doing these things out of habit. I told Reg we both failed in our Christian responsibilities in our marriage and we should not allow Satan the victory. To realize the areas for improvement and having a real commitment towards improving on our imperfections in marriage is over half the battle....Reg was dead set on moving on with the divorce. Nothing I would say seemed to give him any sense that we have a greater responsibility to work things out in our family than to just give up

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." Mathew 10:34-39

Once I started my class in San Antonio the days went quickly. Nearly every evening when I came home from class we'd take the kids to the outdoor pool that was on the premises. Me and the boys came home every weekend to spend time with Reg. Every weekend I tried to reconcile with my husband. He was cordial but not receptive. He would not even entertain the idea of reconciliation. During this period of time I was completely optimistic that Reg and I could work through this. I thought that Reg had been in church all of his life, he has got to recognize how well embedded Satan is in all of this and he would not give up so easily on a Victory for Christ. There were times that the thought of divorcing Reg and being free of his controlling and irrational ways was quite

elating. I could visualize me and the boys going on and doing fine without him. We'd live in San Antonio (or Germany) the boys would visit their dad according to the Texas Standard Possessions law for child custody, me and the boys would continue our yearly trips to Disney, I would go back to my maiden name, the boys would use Mott-Singleton as their names, we would join the growing number of single-parent households headed by women.... any stigma attached to that is completely non-existent anymore, sad to say but it's the norm----- so our family would be quite normal. I was elated about the idea of being able to make decisions regarding the care and well being of our sons without Reggie's approval or criticism. In my mind the first thing I said would change would have been the amount of Tylenol given to our boys. Reg gave these children chewable Tylenol like candy. Que got it for excessive coughing and Terrence got it for colds (to decrease drainage and not cause problems with his ears----I didn't have a problem with this, but sometimes he gave it to Terrence prophylactically because his brother was getting it.). I was concerned about the use of the Tylenol as often as he was giving it to them because it was treating the symptoms but not the cause. I was concerned that so much use of this medication at such tender ages could cause problems with their little kidneys or livers. I was even concerned that it could later lead to drug dependence. The children learn that drugs make them feel better so they begin to drug seek.... and it grows from over the counter drugs, to prescription drugs, then to illegal drugs... Reg was the Doctor and for me to question him was an obvious sign of my disrespect for him and his judgment. Reg assured me that I am overreacting and that was just nonsense. He told me that I give them Vitamins everyday and the same idea of teaching them dependency can be applied to that also. So I laid off and I pray to God he knows what he's doing. Other things I was excited about being able to do for my boys with Reg out the picture is being able to cut their hair, turn off the TV and encourage them to play with their toys and have more physical activity. I would be able to let them watch their German cartoon videos (or any foreign language videos) without being put down and criticized, accused of filling their heads with nonsense. Reg told me one time that allowing Que to go to the German school and encouraging him to speak German used up his "brain space" there would be things that he now won't be able to learn or retain because the space was used up by the needless German he was getting "crammed" down his throat. Reggie was sincere, angry, and expressed this same idea to me on more than one occasion. When Reg first expressed this idea to me about allowing them to use up their "brain space", I thought I misinterpreted his meaning or missed the thought he intended to convey, so I spoke real slow and repeated what I heard him say and paraphrased my interpretation of his expression and asked him if he really believed what he's saying. He confirmed that I did not misunderstand him, he meant exactly what he said. God will hold me accountable for any lie that I tell in this book----- I know that. I am not making this up. Sad, but true..... I wish it were not true. But Reggie believed that I was compromising the boy's "brain space" by sending him to the German school and speaking German (the little that I knew) with him at home instead of English. Needless to say the idea about divorcing Reg could have been very, very, very appealing if I were just thinking about me. Then my thoughts turned to the boys. I thought about how they would miss their dad. I thought about the type of men God intended for me to raise them up to be. I thought about the role model parents are supposed to be for their children, I thought about so many things, but the minute I began to think about things from the boys' perspective, divorce didn't seem like

such a great idea. I thought of our family (me and the boys) being a lab experiment for Reg. He married, made a couple of kids and because we didn't do what we were supposed to do, he'll just leave this family and start another, making a mental note of the things he would do differently and the things he would do the same. My baby boys, his first born sons would take a "back seat" to another woman's children. Instead of them (my baby boys) being his only Princes in this lifetime he would have other children that would have priority over their affections. Sure he would always love them, call them, pay his child support and have them visit him according to our custody arrangements but their lives would be shattered. They would have deprivations that they would not understand because Reg and I would fail to see eye to eye or work out a compromise on their behalf.... yet every Sunday whether they are with me or visiting him, they would be dressed in their Sunday best and off to church. They'd see me and dad Praising and Worshiping our Lord but unable to get along. They'd see the separate lives me and their dad would now have, he with his new family and me with our family and it would all seem normal. During this time in San Antonio I continued to try to reconcile with my husband for all the reasons stated above. When Reggie appeared to continue to reject my efforts I decided to go ahead with the idea of divorce, but I will suit him on behalf of my sons for the havoc and destruction his decision to not live up to his end of the bargain would have on their lives. I prepared letters to present before the court as I prepared my case and advised my lawyer to take our divorce into "discovery" and deposition everyone on my list for statements. I continued to read my bible daily, in fact I would spend hours reading, (before I would only read one verse or chapter a day). There were times I would read an entire book in the New Testament before putting the bible down. It was during this time that I began to not entertain the idea about the pleasures and rewards of divorcing my husband. I began to see the idea God had intended for the family. The Holy Spirit had visited me a couple times this summer giving me direction (He told me to join the church). I began to see a change in the direction and attitude I had been taking about all of this. Still I had lots of growing to do, but clearly I was on the right road.

This was a wonderful summer with the children and the time spent with my sister and her kids, but it was a very difficult summer for me and Reg. One of Reg's problems with me having the children in San Antonio was his insistence on the fact that because the work would be so intense in the Advance Course that I would not have time to spend with them. He was right, the work was very intense and could have been overwhelming, but God gave me strength, endurance, wisdom, knowledge and clarity of thinking in order to aid my success this summer in the course and allowed me lots of quality time to spend with the kids. I even had time to work on these lengthy court papers. I stayed up many late nights to get my class reports and lectures done (Angie stayed up with me most nights keeping me company), but the time I spent eating dinner, playing, and swimming with the kids was all worth having to burn the midnight oil to get my class assignments done. Reg had gone to the Advance Course the summer before, so he knew how intense and demanding the classes were. We had a wonderful summer in San Antonio. The only dark cloud was the discord I was having with my husband.

When the tragic events of September 11th occurred, I was confident that this would touch Reggie in a special way and give him a stronger sense of family and a broader view of one's own insignificance in comparison to the sacrifices you make for children, the sacrifices you make for family. Strangers were risking their lives to save the

lives of strangers. People were sacrificing all over the country in any way they could for people that they didn't know. I thought he would consider reconciling his family and vow to get closer to God so that we can have a successful marriage. Each of us focusing on self and what is our responsibility in the marriage and not let the other person's action dictate our action. We'd continue to lift each other up in prayer.... but 9-1-1 had no effect on this man.... in fact when he read in the local paper the statistics on the number of people that withdrew their divorce papers he was surprised. He didn't see any reason to re-think the choices he was making regarding his family. He scoffs at the idea of us being in the last days. He says people have been talking about being in the last days for generations

“Knowing this first; that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For this they willfully forget; that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” 2nd Peter 3:3-13

Reg insisted that I go lease an apartment for me and the boys. I found one that would come available in October (I didn't want anything less than 3 bedrooms). I found a place, signed a lease, and prayed that this would only be a temporary situation for us. It was so very disturbing to me that Reggie continued to claim that throughout this process no matter what, he was going to do what is in the best interest of his boys. He said he was going to do right by his sons. He would say that he feels so bad for them because they have to go through all of this as a result of a selfish, evil, unstable mother. I couldn't see how Reggie could remotely claim that he was looking out for his sons, not even on the very basic level of human needs. The very basic needs for all mammals is food, water, and shelter----- to look at shelter alone, it wouldn't take an Einstein to see that of the options available for this man to support his family in attaining was not the option that was in the best interest of the children. We were living in a 4000 sq ft home (approx 1000 sq ft per person), when he put us out of the home we went into a 1000 sq ft apartment (<400 sq ft per person). It seemed more reasonable to me that Reggie would leave and obtain an apartment for himself, leaving his family in the home. This is just a point, it is by far not what I would have wanted to happen. My focus remained on eventual reconciliation of the family. It would have made it more difficult to maintain some

semblance of a normal family relationship as long as I did if Reggie would have moved out and taken "his half" of our furniture and appliances with him. Although I had leased the apartments in October 01, it wasn't until January 02 that we were staying at the apartments 100% of the time. Before then Reggie allowed us to come home and stay over several days.

Christmas this year (2001) was another example of Reggie's callous attitude for the responsibility he has towards his children. I was scheduled to work on Christmas day (3pm-11pm). Reggie was off on Christmas Day, he was on call Christmas Eve meaning that he would get off work Christmas morning. Me and the boys stayed at the apartments on Christmas Eve. We had so much fun tracking Santa Claus on the Internet. As it got closer to bedtime the computer would tell us what percentage of children were still awake. As it got later in the evening it would tell us what percentage of homes Santa had to pass over because children in the home were still awake. Terrence had already fallen to sleep shortly after he was put to bed. I showed Que (on the computer) that Santa had already passed over our house because someone was still awake. On the screen of the computer it had a big frantic flashing red sign saying "go to bed", I had Que read it and as we looked over the other stats on the Santa tracking screen whenever the sign popped up I had Que point at each word and read the sign. After we finished looking at the screen, he got up and ran into the bedroom. He said he didn't want Santa to skip over our house. (I enjoy the boys so much, I pray we all, the four of us will be able to track Santa on the computer together this year, 2002, I miss being together as a family). We celebrated Christmas, Christmas morning, then called Reg around noon or so (we didn't call in the morning because we knew he would be asleep because he was post call) we arrived around 1 or 2pm, when it was time for me to go to work (I was able to go in at 6pm instead of 3pm, that was a blessing) I was getting myself together and doing the last minute things I needed to do before I left the house and Reg said, "you need to take the boys to the apartments." I told him I was going to leave them here (at the house) so that they could spend Christmas with their dad. He said, "Dei, we didn't talk about this." I said, "what's there to talk about, you're off, you're gonna be off for the next several days, today is Christmas, you're they're dad, they would want to spend Christmas with you. What's there to talk about. I wish I was off and could spend Christmas with them." He said, "just take them to the apartment please." I was appalled and hurt for the boys. They didn't know what was going on, they had no clue. I brought them to the apartment and they enjoyed the rest of Christmas with their Oma. They played with their toys and had no clue their biological father, the only dad they have ever known had rejected their presence and was treating them (these beautiful, wonderful baby boys) like un-loved stepchildren.