

BEYOND BROKEN DREAMS

I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.

—ISAIAH 41:18

As I awake from a brief, unsettled sleep, the tension gripping my body draws me back to the shadowy stillness of the bedroom and the sense that something is wrong. What is the nightmare still clinging to my mind? I close my eyes again, the dark dread growing inside me. Even without looking, I feel the empty space in the bed stretching out beside me in the dark.

This isn't a dream. This nightmare is real.

I fight back the encroaching fear threatening to overtake me. Then the floodgates open and memories rush in. He's left me. I am alone. *How could he do this to me? How could he actually leave me?*

But he has, Linda. He has left you. The memory of a friend's words from the day before pierce my heart. My body trembles. I feel myself sinking into a dark hole. *He has left you.* Inside my head the tension grows like a balloon filling too rapidly, stretching to the breaking point. I cry out—terrible sobs breaking from the deep caverns of my soul.

That's how the day would often begin for me. Chances are you've been there. Perhaps you're there now, maybe not because your husband physically walked out the door, but because, in one way or another, he has left you emotionally. It could be another woman, an irrational anger that has closed the doors of his heart, or an eternity of nights when the silence between you gnaws relentlessly at your insides. You know the pain I'm talking about, and you're looking for a way out. You're looking for hope.

In the middle of this dark valley, one fact is absolutely clear: The pain that has entered your life is real. It is inescapable and will not go away. But what do you do with it?

If we bury our pain, it will only resurface somewhere else. If we slam the door on it, we will open another door along the way and find ourselves face-to-face with it again. Pain can change form, but it doesn't disappear.

But there's another transformation our pain can make. On my journey down this difficult path, I discovered that the one who created the majesty of the universe and brought life from the dust of the earth, the one who dissolved the power of death into the miracle of eternal life, the one who healed the lepers and paralytics, also promised to heal the broken-hearted and bind up their wounds.

He is talking about us. We are the brokenhearted. And the powerful God of the universe wants to heal our wounds.

Hope squeezes through the taut sinews of our fear and leads to life when we place our pain in the hand of the Creator. In his hands the brokenness of our hearts becomes fresh, warm clay that he molds into something beautiful and new. Only our Creator has the power to transform our pain into hope.

But you must linger with him. Keep your eyes upon his face, his words within your heart. Let his love hold you above the shards of broken dreams. Run to him now. Surrender to God the broken pieces of your heart. Let him hold you in the shelter of his arms. Let him carry you through the barren valley and along the road to springs of living water where hope resides.

*Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;
my hope comes from him.*

—PSALM 62:5

