

Winning Him Without Words is a lifeline of hope and help for any woman who is struggling in a spiritually mismatched marriage.

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... they may be won over without words
by the behavior of their wives

1 PETER 3:1



winning him without words

10 Keys
to Thriving in Your
Spiritually
Mismatched
Marriage

Introduction

You are about to embark on an unexpected journey and we, the authors, Dineen and Lynn, will be traveling this unusual pathway with you. We are ordinary women and ordinary wives just like you. And, just like you, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and our redeemer. Our husbands do not.

On your journey with us, you will experience the wonder of Scripture as it comes to life, filling you with truths that will rock your world and leave you with a fresh perspective and optimism. You will discover that Scripture is living and active and relevant to your marriage.

We, Dineen and Lynn, believe that 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers,” is a firm calling by God to all unmarried believers. However, we also know that many of us arrive in a spiritually mismatched union and desire to honor God with our marriage. This book is for all of us who are traveling the path of the spiritually mismatched.

As we travel this route, you will discover that no matter how you arrived in your unequally yoked marriage, God’s plans for your marriage and your future are fantastic and may take turns that are often unexpected. Our Lord is the master of redeeming our past and our pain to reveal a life He has always desired for us to live. Because of this, you will discover a hope so wild that you will thrive in your zany yet challenging marriage.

We know too well that the married life of the unequally yoked isn’t an easy one, and we understand the struggle to be a person of faith within a mismatched marriage relationship. We have experienced the heartache of walking alone in our belief in Christ. And we understand the challenges of making a marriage work with a partner who doesn’t share the same worldview.

But we also have found healing and wholeness along the way, and it’s our greatest desire to share with you what the Lord can do in a unique marriage such as ours. And we don’t want one more woman to waste another minute searching for the truth God has so generously shared with us.

Our passion was set in motion in 2006, when Lynn followed God’s leading to start the online ministry Spiritually Unequal Marriage. During this time, God brought the same calling to Dineen’s heart and led her to Lynn. We complete each other for this ministry, sharing practical wisdom and heart lessons with our readers, and ultimately to honor and glorify God.

Our online ministry’s purpose is to bring hope, practical help, encouragement and healing through the Lord, Jesus Christ, to others who are spiritually mismatched. God put a burning in our heart to share the keys to living abundantly—to thriving—as we walk out our faith within marriage.

It’s our delight to share with you the victories promised to all of us through Christ. From this ministry we offer this book to you, our sisters, who are walking with us in a spiritually mismatched marriage.

Each of the 10 chapters provides a key principle to thriving in your spiritually mismatched marriage. Near the end of each chapter, we have included discovery questions designed to help move you closer to Christ and discover practical steps to grow in your marriage.

We know it won’t be easy to look deeply into places that have lived in darkness for perhaps years, but the promise of freedom awaits. At the end of each chapter is a prayer of commitment to “seal the deal.” Make these prayers your own and then watch what God does. You will not be disappointed.

God is anxiously waiting to unleash His wild hope in you and your marriage. At the back of the book are additional resources for you to use on your journey: a discussion about children in a mismatched marriage, specific Scriptures shared by our readers that can bring comfort and hope as you pray them for your spouse and for yourself, and ideas for creating a family faith record so that one day you can share what your spouse

missed before he came to faith. We have also included a study guide that can be used in a small-group setting.

We pray you will discover in these pages not just the promise of hope, but also that you will experience healing, find encouragement and realize you are not alone. You *can* thrive in your marriage. Ultimately, we pray that your life and marriage will bring honor to the name of Jesus Christ.

It's our pleasure and joy to pray for you. You can always find us at our website, <http://www.spirituallyunequalmarriage.com>

Come visit us whenever you can. We'll be there.

With hearts filled with eternal love,

Lynn Donovan and Dineen Miller

Meet Lynn Donovan

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

LUKE 15:11-32, EMPHASIS ADDED



Hello, my name is Lynn Donovan, and I am a prodigal daughter.

I arrived in my unequally yoked marriage during a period of my life when I was far away from Jesus. I left the faith of my childhood to chase the promises of happiness the world said belonged to me. Convinced that I needed only to reach out and grab hold of those promises, I bought into the lies that career achievements, expensive clothes and great vacations were certain to bring me happiness.

As a child, I attended church with my family. I came to believe in Jesus and I knew that He was the Son of God. I understood that He loved me and that I could pray to Him. Somehow, I knew that He was around me. But as years marched by and as I grew into young adulthood, my belief faltered. I conveniently ignored the lessons I had learned in my Sunday School days.

As a confident young woman (translation: arrogant), I knew what was best for me, and I firmly seated myself on the throne of my life and stepped onto the path of the prodigal.

It was during this time that I met my husband. He was different from me. He had life experiences I found exciting. He lived in a big city; he was a smart, science-minded guy who was well educated; and his perspective about living was fascinating and vastly different from where I came from. I was intrigued. We fell in love.

We were married within a year. We settled into a typical married life: We lived for career, the weekends and ourselves. I married fully aware of my rebellion against God's wisdom. I knew better. I remember it was about three years into our marriage when discontentment arrived and settled in my heart. I discovered that living the way of the world was proving shallow.

I felt lost and desperately unhappy.

Thoughts of my faith and of Jesus wouldn't leave me. An unexpected yearning grew inside—a yearning for Jesus. He was in relentless pursuit of that little Sunday School girl, and finally my discontentment allowed me to hear His voice. I returned to the faith of my childhood. The prodigal daughter came running home to her Father.

I hurried home, hand in hand with Jesus; and as I went, I dragged along my new husband, who kicked and screamed from the beginning. To say he was miffed about this “new man” in my life is a serious understatement.

After all, he didn't believe in this “God stuff.”

I quickly realized that my husband and I were at odds about a great many things. We were living in a marriage where we each held a different worldview. Our core values did not match. We were unequally yoked.

Through the early years of our marriage, I had recognized and struggled through this unique spiritual mismatch. I felt lonely. If I mentioned my faith or the name Jesus around my husband it was like lighting a short fuse to a bomb. Within minutes tension would ramp up in our home, so I quickly learned that in order to keep the peace, I had to hide my faith.

I just wouldn't talk about it. Not an easy task for a woman. An entire part of my life, which was growing in importance, became a secret from my life partner. My heart ached to tell my spouse about the changes taking place in me. But my husband wasn't interested. I was baffled about this turn in our relationship. I wondered how I could be married and yet feel so lonely.

I wanted us to attend church together, like other couples. He wouldn't go. Arguments over issues in the news or over local politics and even over how to raise our kids became frequent in our house. It seemed to me that we were taking opposing sides about everything. The pain we both felt from our mismatched life was real and, at times, almost unbearable.

I hurt. He hurt. And the cycle went on and on. Years of the hurt cycle began to take a toll. Would we make it? During this period, I knew clearly God's desire for marriage. I desperately wanted to honor Him, but what little peace we still had at home, the one place where peace should breathe, was disintegrating. I needed some godly advice, and I was desperate to find another woman who knew what I was feeling.

I discovered a couple of books—*When He Doesn't Believe* by Nancy Kennedy and *Surviving a Spiritual Mismatch in Marriage* by Lee and Leslie Strobel—that helped me gain perspective. But I wanted more. I longed for support as I struggled with the loneliness of loving the Lord and loving my husband, who was an atheist.

Years passed and slowly over time, Jesus arrived in our marriage. First, He began to work in me. Then the power and supernatural love of Jesus Christ began to transform the relationship between my husband and myself. Finally, both my husband and I experienced a peace in our home that had eluded us for many years. I moved from being frustrated and angry with my spouse to feeling earnest love and respect for him. Today, we are thriving in our marriage in spite of our spiritual differences. I have learned the keys to living life to the fullest with my husband and with Jesus as my Lord.

The healing in my marriage is a gift from God. I found the way through the unique struggles of attending church alone, finding common ground with my spouse and maintaining love when our hearts are divided over moral and spiritual issues. I discovered the amazing reality that through Jesus, a woman can live happily in her unequally yoked marriage.

Today, my husband and I are head over heels in love. We laugh together, raise our daughter and son as one, live for the adventure of life, and are at peace with my faith. We still face disagreements from time to time, just like any other couple.

Our marriage is far from perfect; but we are healed and happy. The Lord has done so much in the heart of my husband. I continue to trust that God is moving him forward in his journey toward the cross. I pray every morning the words of Romans 10:10:

*For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified,
and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

Throughout our marriage, I've had the profound privilege to enjoy a front-row seat as I watch the Lord pursue my husband's soul. And I fall on my knees in utter amazement as the Lord continues to set me on paths of new adventures and unimaginable dreams. I have been part of the story where God orchestrated a landscape contractor named Joe to play a part in praying with my husband in the yard.

I giggled with glee when a Mylar balloon arrived out of the sky to gently rest against our back door. My husband brought it in and read to me what was written on it: "Baptized." He asked, "Do you think this is a hint?" We laughed until our sides hurt. Of course, it was a hint!

Each day is an adventure and a lesson in love. I look forward to every minute of what the Lord has for me, my husband, our children and the world around me.

I can confidently tell you that no matter what may happen with my husband and his faith, I am living in triumph. I am living the abundant life that Jesus promised in John 10:9-10:

*I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.
He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief
comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come
that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

All of this abundance came about because I met Jesus Christ on this crazy, mixed-up journey of an unequally yoked marriage. My husband's unbelief was the catalyst to my deep and vibrant faith. For that, I can say I am truly thankful.

I am an ordinary, everyday kind of woman. If the Lord will work the extraordinary in my life, He will do the same for you. It is my fervent prayer that you will discover the healing and restoring power of Jesus Christ in your life and marriage.

Thank you for joining me for the journey ahead through the pages of this book. I pray that your life will be forever changed and that the name of Jesus will be honored within your marriage.

Please write me and tell me what the Lord is doing in your life.

With eternal love,

Lynn Donovan

Meet Dineen Miller

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28



One of my most vivid childhood memories was the feel of the water trickling over my head at my baptism. I was four.

Although I couldn't read, I would sit in my bed at night with the small Bible I'd received that special day, loving the feel of the parchment and the sound it made as I turned each semi-translucent page. I think that was my first experience of God's holiness.

Although I didn't grow up in a Christian home, my mother was diligent about exposing me to church as a young child. God ingrained Romans 8:28 into me from an early age. I knew before I ever read this verse that He brought something good out of everything.

I basically wandered in and out of God's presence throughout my teenage years and young adulthood. During this time I met my husband, and like so many college students, I became enamored with my career and the future with him. We did life just like we thought we were supposed to—got married, had kids, built our dream house.

Everything seemed perfect, yet I found myself wishing I could hide under the covers instead of facing the world each day. I had everything I could imagine wanting in my life, but I still felt unexplainably empty and dissatisfied. I wanted some kind of purpose in my life. I *needed* purpose.

Then, just as I'd started down the path of going back to college for my second degree, God inserted Himself into my wandering path and grabbed my attention. He let me know that it was time to quit living for myself and start living for Him.

From that moment on, I was enamored with God and His Word. I remember carrying my Bible around constantly those first few weeks, because it was like reading the latest *New York Times* bestseller. I suddenly sprang out of bed in the mornings, instead of wanting to hide.

I found a church, dove into ministry, and pursued God like I never had before. Shortly thereafter, my husband bought a Bible. I figured that by just reading it, he would become as enraptured with it as I had been. He'd gone to church sporadically as a child and during college when he was searching for answers in his life. I thought surely he would soon join me in my walk with Christ.

Not so. The Bible wound up collecting dust, and my hope lagged. I would ask him to come to church, but he would always refuse. About a year into my faith journey, my husband finally confided to me that he'd decided he was an atheist. I was devastated. The thought hadn't even entered my mind that he would make such a decision. And though he'd chosen not to share my faith, he gave me the freedom to pursue my own.

But on Sundays, I would see other families and ache for my husband to come around. Many Sundays I wept, resentful of my husband's disassociation with my faith. To me, it was my life; to him, it was something I did, like a hobby. I felt alone and misunderstood, and I found it easier to keep my faith to myself than to face the conflicts it seemed to stir in our house.

Thus began my journey as an unequally yoked spouse.

We moved to Europe several years later for my husband's work. I felt confident that this was where God wanted us, and I expected an adventure, which it was until our girls started school. Our oldest, nine at the time, was picked on, ostracized and even "mobbed." (What we Americans know as stalking, Europeans call mobbing. Since this time, school officials along with parents have actively addressed this growing problem.)

I railed at God, wondering why He would allow such a thing to happen. I prayed and prayed, but nothing changed. Life became more about survival from one day to the next.

During this time, God taught me His amazing faithfulness. He taught me how to wait, trust and believe. I also discovered a group specifically for the unequally yoked, and I realized for the first time that I was not alone. The group I joined met monthly to share the ache in our hearts. We focused on aligning our hearts with God and living the 1 Peter 3 model of witnessing to our husbands.

Together, we studied *Beloved Unbeliever* by Jo Berry and *Spiritually Single* by Marcia Mitchell. Through these books and the precious women I grew to love dearly, God started to change my heart and move my perspective from me and what I wanted to what was truly at stake: my husband's eternal security.

That's when I learned to adore my precious husband and appreciate the man who'd taught me more about forgiveness than anyone besides Jesus. I began to realize how this man, even though he didn't share my faith, had helped me to grow in so many ways. And I learned that I needed to look to God for my deepest needs—not my husband, who was never intended to fill that role.

My husband and I found a sort of harmony in our marriage that embraced a respect for one another's choices in faith. Over the years, God has continually shown me how to love my husband unconditionally. So much of our past conflicts became the strength of our marriage when we faced a life-threatening crisis with one of our daughters. This strength was the source of our unity when she was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor, and it continues to bring us closer as we support each other through her ongoing recovery.

God is teaching me that life is not a problem to be solved but a gift to be enjoyed. I used to think that one day our lives would be free of trials. Now I understand that these trials are vital to our faith deepening and for us to draw closer to a God who loves us more than we are able to comprehend. God lets us go through the tough stuff so that we can each grow closer to being a reflection of the image of Christ.

This training allows each of us to be a vessel of revelation to those around us of God's amazing goodness, mercy and grace and a reflection of Jesus to our husbands.

Sometimes survival is all we can do, and God asks nothing more, but He never intends for us to stay in that place. He wants us to thrive in our lives and in our mismatched marriages. And, ever the gentleman, God leaves the choice to us.

So what do you choose, dear friend? Choose to thrive, because I am so excited to be on this journey with you. It is one of the greatest honors and privileges of my life. This is Romans 8:28 in full swing, the chance to see God bring good—healing and hope—from the sharing of what He's done in my life. And He'll do the same for you, because you are His beloved one and His desire is for you.

Get ready to thrive. God's waiting to show you the way through the pages of this book. I hope that one day you'll share your story with me and let me know how God brought you to experience His wild hope.

Praying and believing,
Dineen

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