

Kathryn Iwasko with Ron Iwasko. *Transforming Shattered Dreams: Hope for Wounded Parents in Global Service*. The Living Well Series – Vol. 5. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013. Paperback 192 pgs. ISBN-10: 1483931048

Reviewed by Valerie Rance*

Kathryn Iwasko, with inclusions from her husband Ron, writes a riveting book that assists and gives optimism to parents of prodigal children. Any parent can use this advice with out-of-control offspring; however, most of the stories and advice come from a missionary perspective. Iwasko divides the book into seven parts: Initial Responses, Pitfalls I and II, Losses, Healthy Responses: Regaining Equilibrium and Regaining Freedom, and Pathways to Transformation. Each section ends with reflection questions, which allows the reader to apply the information to his or her personal situation. The author weaves an encouraging tapestry of anticipation for parents of prodigal children, instructing them with practical guidance from their first reaction through a hopeful change of the situation.

Any family has difficulty adjusting to a child who walks away from the parents' faith and lifestyle. However, this defiance devastates a minister or missionary family to an even greater extent. It reflects poorly on the parents' spiritual leadership and ministry. For the missionary parents, it causes compounded guilt. They may believe that their call subjected their children to a foreign and maybe hostile culture; they deem that their busyness with the work caused their child's fall; or they perceive they abandoned their

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child in the States upon their return to the field (9). No matter the type of ministry, a prodigal child will bring about feelings of guilt and anger toward oneself and God.

When a parent first learns of their child's abandonment of faith, he or she experiences: shock, denial, anger, sorrow, and confusion (1-21). Iwasko assesses each of these initial reactions in part one. A wayward child is a loss, and one responds in the same way as a child's death. Every person will react uniquely (5); yet, all people move through a set of phases from impact to withdrawal/confusion then to adjustment and finally reconstruction/reconciliation (2-5). This sequence can last from months to years but if processed well, a person can achieve emotional healing.

Iwasko warns parents of pitfalls (in parts two and three) that cover the path leading to reconstruction/reconciliation. These snares consist of: blame, guilt, despair, rejection, humiliation, pride, enabling, intimidation, manipulation, and yearning (23-67). They can turn a person from coping positively to handling the situation negatively. Often hard to see, these dangers must be avoided. God can make one aware of these holes-in-the-road and provide him or her with the capacity to circumvent or deal with them. To do this, the parent must keep his or her "eyes, heart, and mind focused on God's Word and ministry of the Holy Spirit" (67).

In part four, Iwasko exams three types of loss: primary and secondary losses, loss of identity and family unity, and loss of trust. When a child turns his or her back on the family, the parents feel the loss on many levels. To become emotionally healthy again the parents must choose to move toward recovery. Thus they must "know His Word, believe His Word, and live His Word...Cleave to the One who is not willing that any should

perish but that all come to repentance (2 Peter 2:9)” (87). The loss may be great but God is greater.

Healthy responses to crisis can be found in parts five and six. Iwasko investigates the positive coping responses of: recovery from loss, resolving anger, release, acceptance, forgiveness, mending broken relationships, unconditional love, and hope (89-131). These beneficial reactions can only be achieved with the help of the Lord. “The omnipotent God always remains the answer for you and your child. You are both needy – you need hope and optimistic expectation and your wayward child needs forgiveness, restoration and unconditional love” (131). Iwasko admonishes the reader that no matter how bad the situation, to never lose hope.

In the last part entitled Pathways to Transformation, Iwasko looks at the impact of crisis on the marriage and family, the need for openness, brokenness, vulnerability, and how prayer and fasting assists the marriage and family through the problem (133-166). This section’s theme emphasizes that everyone will suffer and even though the anguish may look different, all distress can be employed by God to assist in personal growth and character development. People also learn that “God’s grace is sufficient and His promises are sure” (164).

Iwasko speaks from the heart as she allows the reader to enter her world of pain and suffering from the unexpected death of her son and the wayward life of her daughter. She writes from her experience and this adds weight to her explanations of how parents can survive and be resilient in the face of crisis. Her Bible based approach to sorrow brings hope to those living in the chaos of a prodigal child.