

**The DISTORTED LENS of
Lena's Loneliness.**

DISTORTION: *"I would rather live alone than in this lonely marriage. I love my husband, but I am just not in love with him anymore."*

After enduring 13 years of struggling emotions, Lena finally confides to a friend how there is no romance or excitement in her marriage. *"I love him, but I am not in love with him. He is a good man, but there is no passion between us."*

Internally Lena has felt their marriage was a mistake, but rather than consider divorce as a "real" possibility; she has chosen to stay with Swayze. However, life does not hold meaning to her as it once did. *"Life feels vapid"* now she finds herself performing life's duties in a perfunctory fashion. The chasm between them is growing wider, as Swayze seems distant, not caring about her annual plea for "more communication." Lena makes her annual appeal to him not wanting to be perceived as a nag, *"I need you to talk to me more about your feelings."* Swayze doesn't change, so Lena stuffs her needs back inside and sucks it up again. But inside she is dying an insipid, slow emotional death.

Lena's childhood was tumultuous; she had been praying to meet a Christian husband, one who desired to be in ministry as she felt a spiritual calling on her life since receiving Christ. It was a whirlwind of a courtship, *"three months and poof we were married."* Both Lena and Swayze were desirous of being in the ministry. Their dating life consisted of going to church every night the church doors were open, attending other churches when theirs did not have meetings and then ministering to alcoholics and those down-and-out, the remainder of the week.

"Our life is one-dimensional," Lena woefully confided to her friend after 13 years of marriage. *"We never found out anything about each other while dating, except the God-dimension. He does not communicate, and it feels as though he does not take the leadership role, the burden is unbearable under this load of emotional weight, I am so lonely in this marriage."*

Lena internally wondered from the night of their wedding if their marriage had been a mistake but was grateful *"Swayze was a good man. He was a godly man, handsome, a great provider which garnered the admiration of other women. There must be something wrong with me not to feel "in-love."* She "knew" it was "a sin" to get a divorce, so she never let anyone including Swayze know her deepest struggles. At the time she did not understand how she held a faulty belief about her faith, which she would learn much later. She believed it was her responsibility not to disappoint God by divorce. Although her initial disappointment arrived on the honeymoon when Swayze confessed to her that he had been with other women sexually before her – one of them was at the church where they



From old Luxottica
c a l e n d a r -
Trademarks and
copyrights held
exclusively by
Luxottica Italy 1989.
Artist is Paola
Casagrande. Private
calendar collection
belonging to Crystal

ministered. She felt devastated and defiled as she had saved herself for marriage. *“It was an awful feeling realizing how I felt sickened, immediately losing respect for him on our first night of marriage. In my naivety, having never truly understood men, I carried the family disgrace from my grandfather’s shameful debacle. My grandfather, while a Pentecostal minister ran off with a woman in his congregation left an indelible mark on my soul.”*

“I perceived that my husband couldn’t control his hormones, which somehow caused me to feel trashy. That opened an inner doubt as colossal as the Grand Canyon regarding the man I had just married. Internally, without sharing this burden openly with anyone, I began questioning why we married so rapidly after three months of dating. I did not feel like a treasure to him any longer. The purity I held in esteem lost its value with his revelation of sleeping with other women. Our church had taught us that it was better to ‘marry than to burn.’ Since neither one of us wanted to be in sin, I then perceived he married me as a solution to assuage his hormones., not because I was special.” Depression and doubt set in immediately during our honeymoon.

However, Lena determined to be faithful to her vows. But after 13 years of feeling lonely and depressed, she was being tempted with ungodly thoughts. In spite of her feelings, she prayed that God would help her to love Swayze. They worked side by side in the ministry for 11 years, but with the changes in the church leadership, the chasm between them was even deeper now since they were not working together any longer as a team.

REFLECTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What would you say is missing from Lena's life?

What commonality do you find with Lena’s dilemma?

What coping mechanisms does Lena wear to hide her loneliness?

How did Lena’s unspoken expectations play into her situation?

What faulty beliefs were in her mind that caused her think that everything she thought was a sin?

What do you think were Lena’s motives for marrying Swayze within 3 months?

Did Swayze ever have a chance in Lena’s mind to be the kind of husband she desired?

What is the possibility that Lena projected some of her “own stuff” on Swayze. Discuss:

Hint: Projection is thinking you are looking out the window when you are really looking in the mirror. What alternatives did Lena have to reframe her situation of feeling trapped?

Is being in ministry the only way to serve God to the fullest capacity?

*CoDevelopers of O for the Soul:
Joni LeRette Flores and Crystal Anzalone*