

The DISTORTED LENS of

Ursula's Unworthiness

DISTORTION: "I am too messed up to be loved."

Ursula is 48 years old. Her children have grown up and moved away. She began experiencing depression as a teenager which she attributed to her multiple-monthly menstrual cycles and the humiliation she suffered as a result. Ursula recounts a particularly embarrassing start to her "time of the month" at work: One time I thought my liver fell out, plopped right on my chair. I had to scurry, across the span of the department, down the hall to the restroom. Everyone in the office saw. I stayed in the bathroom, washed out my skirt and cried, only to return, with a wet skirt and a huge glob on my chair. Ursula's shame had begun long before taking on full-time employment, though. Her lack of self-esteem coupled with the desire to belong had erupted in poor choices as a teenager, leaving her feeling sordid and guilty. She thought she must be God's comic relief – or that she could not escape His wrath. Perhaps God was punishing her for youthful behavior. Married shortly after graduating high school, Ursula's husband was jovial, relaxed, liked by all. She could not bear to tell her fiancé, her past secrets, but thought surely getting married would fulfill her emptiness and alleviate her depression. Much to Ursula's dismay, the cycles continued and worsened. Instead of her husband's good nature rubbing off on her, Ursula began to resent he was always able to laugh, and relax while she tended to the "grunt work" – making sure the housework was done, meals prepared, kids' homework done, laundry fresh. Her husband began to distance himself; he stopped telling her he loved her or sharing words of affection. Their lives became rote. Ursula plummeted deeper into depression, though continued her duties, all the while wishing she could evaporate. She no longer lives, but exists. Ursula prays and prays, but the cycle does not end. She strains to hear from God, to find the "right road," but God is silent, and she circles the same mountain. Then it happens. Her husband tells her he no longer loves her and is leaving; Ursula is abandoned to fend for herself. She believes this is God's punishment, for her inability to "pull herself up." Ursula thinks her husband, deserves a better life; God is delivering him from me. "I ruined his life. I ruined my own." Ursula feels she is powerless to make positive change. This is the way my life has always been, why should I have false hope it will ever get better?



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REFLECTIONS for DISCUSSION

What is wrong with this picture? Anything?

How would you counsel Ursula?

Is Ursula powerless to make positive change? Why or why not?

Is God punishing Ursula? Why do you feel this way?

Have you ever thought God was punishing you? Why or why not?

Do you think God is offended by the expression of our real feelings? I.e., as if we fear more pain might be unleashed on us if we express how we really feel? Please elaborate your thoughts.

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