

Cahill Marriage Testimony

March 2017

Brian: I grew up in East Texas as the second born in a family with six children. I was saved at the age of 4 and homeschooled with a curriculum which included a focus on the Bible and learning from it in all of our school subjects. My Dad was involved in our school, included me in his projects around the house and spent many hours playing games with my brother and I.

I Graduated from High School a year early so I could attend a Christian Disaster Relief Academy and gain skills for serving others and sharing the gospel. I went through the training and then stayed on as the Sergeant Major to provide oversight for the guys in training. I learned about leadership as well as how to hold a standard and maintain discipline while keeping morale high.

Amy: Born here in Bryan, I was second out of what would become eight children. I was raised in a godly home with loving parents. At age 7 I trusted Christ as my savior and began a relationship with Him. In my teens I wrestled some with doubt that I had “done it right” but settled my assurance on 2 Tim 1:12 for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

I was homeschooled through high school, heavily trained in the word of God, and had the character forming that comes from daily sharing a household with many different personalities. I loved being part of a big family and wanted to be a wife and mom when I grew up and spent a large part of my teen years working with children. I also loved animals and spent a number of hours in the barn caring for everything from rabbits to horses. I was outgoing, confident, hard working and optimistic.

Amy and I got married while I was working on staff with the disaster relief organization. Not long after that we felt God’s leading that it was time to move to the next thing. We prayed and God opened the door for me to work in the IT department for a large TV management group in Dallas. We were also thrilled to be expecting our first child. We knew we wanted a big family and even came up with a naming scheme that made room for 10 children.

Over the next five years I received several promotions to become the manager of the department. I had a challenging and gratifying job which paid well. The downside to Dallas life was finding the right house. When we first moved there with no kids we settled into an apartment. We now had 4 kids and had been searching for a larger house with land and a short commute for almost two years. An opportunity came up to work at a smaller company, with a smaller salary in the Bryan/College Station area. This seemed like God’s leading so we moved to the area and started building our own house.

All through the move and housebuilding I wanted to be right alongside Brian – the helpmeet that Genesis talks about. Our 5th child was born as we slowly finished out the interior of our house.

The 6th came along as we ramped up production in the barn and garden and I was thinking maybe a little break wouldn't be too bad – after all, I had been pregnant or nursing for the last 7 years. In the months following the birth I wrestled with the desire to take a break from childbearing. I mentioned it a bit to Brian and he was fine with whenever the next one came, so I chose to trust God with the timing of the next child. Or so I thought. When I became pregnant with our 7th child I became angry with God. Like Jonah, I had been obedient but then didn't like the outcome and felt I had a right to be angry. I had trusted Him to take care of me and it seemed He was failing. I didn't particularly share this struggle with Brian, turning to prayer and Bible study and trying to force my attitude into what is becoming of a Christian. But my heart was not right with God and those attitudes of distrust and anger began to be directed at Brian as well – after all, it was all his fault, right? I became hopeless that I could actually deliver what was expected of me from God or from Brian. I grouped the two of them together as in cahoots with a mission to break me. I struggled with sadness for days, then would switch to attitudes of anger and the stirrings of rebellion. I would burst out with being overwhelmed and then demand that my work load be lightened in some way or another. I read a random email on depression and realized I had most of the symptoms. That was depressing. We reached out to a mentor couple who advised finding a local lady to talk with. The conversation that followed allowed me to share my feelings about the pregnancy with Brian.

It seemed unfair that we had discussed pregnancy timing and agreed on an approach but now I was the bad guy. I didn't know what to do with this new version of my wife. I wanted to take care of her but I did not like to be dictated to. I struggled with knowing when to hold to a goal and help us over the hump, and when to change direction. For the most part I held the course and took on any extra work that allowed us to keep on top of the priorities I had for our family.

Around this time, God provided the opportunity for a job change. It was a hard decision to move to a smaller company and even harder when my boss offered me a pay raise. But the new job had a flexible schedule and the ability to work from home. As Amy and I prayed we felt this was God's leading and made the change.

Then our midwife shared with me her concern for Amy and the need for me to take special care of her since she might not be caring for herself. I have always been one to step in and meet needs and this was no exception. I was already involved in many parts of the household life and started to pick up some more things to take some of the load off of Amy.

It was encouraging to have Brian rushing in to be my hero – but it was also threatening. As I communicated being overwhelmed, Brian took control. He ran things much better than I did and this made me feel inadequate. I lashed out at his perfectionism and energy, hurting him with my ungratefulness. My low point came when I googled how to shoot myself, then shut the browser before reading anything. Later that day I lay down to rest, but every time I closed my eyes I just saw images of me holding a gun to my head. I didn't really want to die but I felt like I was in a black hole. All I could do was cry out "God, God." Psalm 34:17 says that "the righteous cry and the Lord hears them and delivers them out of all their troubles." And He did. He already knew I would need help and had my sister visiting that day. She sat with me and for the second time ever, I called Brian home from work. I shared my feelings of self loathing and how even though our home ran ship shape and other moms considered me a rock star, it felt I was lacking in his eyes and I could never meet his standards.

For the next few months, the struggles continued. I tried leading in various ways to address Amy's needs. However, every change was met with resistance. I drew hard lines in the sand. I didn't trust her so I started checking up on things, building resentment. We fought over many things. I read a devotional email on Ephesians 5:25 Husband, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Does Christ the all powerful one force us to do what he wants. No, instead he used his power and position to serve me. In this way he won my heart and I chose to submit to him. This is how I am to treat Amy. I am to love and serve her, not forcing everything to my will.

It took a while but I started backing off the pressure as I tried to understand my wife. We watched a little video that had a different take on the four personality types and Amy identified with the "fun" side of things. I picked up on this and started working on helping her get fulfillment in that area. Trying to live out 1 Peter 3:7 which says "In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life."

My personality was identified as "perfect" and through many conversations I began to realize how that drove me to drive others. I had worn Amy out with my desire to accomplish. Her initial requests for help had been overruled and in the process I had broken her trust in my leadership. I started prioritizing some social activities for Amy that I had previously considered "non-essential" My ability to work from home allowed me to watch the children and let her attend a ladies get together here and there. I said yes to activities that were merely for fun and not really on the goal list.

As Brian began to live with me according to knowledge of who I was and not just what we could accomplish together, I began to trust his decisions on how to run our family. I stopped fighting him on every change and instead began to cooperate and see how things panned out. Because I had broken trust with Brian by skirting his directives I started checking in with him on small purchases or changes, clarifying that my methods were in line with his desires. My openness to his questions about my activities began to rebuild his confidence in me. I was able to change my view of him from someone who pursued labor intensive goals, to someone who was willing to do the hard things for the good of our family.

Then one day we were talking about some activity and Amy said her social life was lacking but then took it back, and recounted several outings she had in the last two weeks. It was nice that she acknowledged my efforts to get her out. I wanted to say something grumpy but instead I heard myself saying "But you still feel that way, why?"

The question took me aback, I thought about it and recalled this lie of being socially deprived had started about two years ago when I had to cut several activities all at once. Not only was I able to recognize what fed some of my frustrations, but his pushing in to get behind the complaint and know my heart was so wonderful. For the first time in awhile, I felt like I had been really heard, that he and I both, really understood what I felt. Our conversations proceeded better after this – each learning a little give and take.

Another time he was standing in one of the bedrooms, lost in thought. I asked what he was thinking and he shared a house improvement idea. I instantly shot it down on aesthetic reasons

and the labor involved. It was so quick and so crushing I was kind of shocked with myself. It was just an idea, and he had taken a risk to share. I apologized and asked if we could start over on the discussion. Bad patterns were starting to be broken.

During this time we started ReEngage. We had a committed marriage but had gotten into bad habits of relating to each other. The biggest benefit began to be just spending purposeful time together and thinking out our words before sharing them. When the life maps were handed out, Amy asked me if I would be willing to testify of God's work in our marriage. I told Amy that I didn't feel like we had figured it out yet. She had been reading a book about someone who had battled cancer and was excitedly sharing with me how the husband had stepped up to do all kinds of things for her. I told her that I had done the same thing and instead of being a hero who was bragged about I was still the bad guy. I told her that there was a lot of hurt from the way she had treated me over the last year.

My heart had been softened towards him and I was ready to go back to that time and hear his side of things. He shared hurt, not accusations and the Lord gave me grace to see where I had been wrong and apologize. James 5:16 says "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." We were not physically sick, but our hearts needed healing. The ReEngage lesson on forgiveness asked us commit to change in an area where we had had to ask for forgiveness. Mine was ungratefulness. I began to purposefully say thank you about something he did every day. Some days I forgot, but it became easier to notice and appreciate the things he did. Thank you for mowing the lawn, it looks beautiful; thank you for changing that diaper; thank you for going out and working hard for us today; thank you for faithfully coming home every evening.

We still felt compelled to share our testimony, or at least write out all our thoughts if only to process them. And so we tackled the task of writing out God's work in our marriage. It wasn't easy, and it seemed that whenever we tried to write it brought up another issue that we had to work through. But each time we resolved an issue it was easier than the one before it. We were both learning how to trust each other giving our spouse the benefit of the doubt that they were not against us but on our team.

So here we are, still a work in progress. And it will continue to be a work in progress. Just because we managed to complete this testimony doesn't mean we'll have it together for the rest of our 50 years. However, we do have the hope of Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" Until Christ comes I can let Him be the one to perform in our marriage, not me.

God has started something good by putting us together, we know this. In fact, we have even named our children so their first initials will spell out LIFE IS GOOD. Although Satan would like to steal our love and trust, kill our affections and destroy our marriage, Jesus said "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10 Because our life and marriage are in His hands we trust that hard times are for our good, moving us through to a spot where we will experience communion with God - or our spouse - in a more abundant way.