

## **The Woman Refugee**

Hello, ladies. Thank you for having me. I really don't want to be here tonight, but I was asked, so here I am. You may or may not recognize me. I've seen you and you asked me, "How are you doing?" And I quickly reply, "Great!" It is an automatic response I learned somewhere along the road. The truth is, I'm dying inside. I don't want to tell you that because it's awkward and it's vulnerable. And honestly, I am not sure you really care or want an honest answer. Plus, I don't want to let anyone see that side of me, not even God....if there is a God. Yeah, I said it! Sometimes I wonder! If He is really here, why is life so hard? No one really knows it's hard for me. I've got everyone fooled. On the outside, I look like I've got it all together. I try to dress the part. I'd say most people like me.

I have a husband who provides for our family. I work as well and I'm successful at what I do. We've made quite a bit of money. Spent most of it- but that's beside the point. I just work, take care of the kids and the house and the dogs. I do what is expected of me- go home and then start all over again the next day. My purpose used to be my job. I thought I would find some significance if I found the certain job or the right position, but at every turn, all I find is emptiness. Is this all I was made for? I've got talents and skills and experience, and I can outwork most anybody, but deep inside of me, I know there's got to be more. This can't be it! What? Just make enough money and save enough money so that I can retire early to lay on the beach or travel rest of my life. It sounds nice on one level, but I've watched others do that, and they don't seem very happy. NO! I want my life to matter. I don't want to go to my grave with the legacy- "She worked hard, took care of her family, retired, laid on the beach and the died." No! Where's the passion? I used to have more passion! Life seemed like an adventure. I couldn't wait to explore everything life had to offer. I wanted to get married, have kids and live happily ever after. Now, it feels like I've been duped. It hasn't turned out like I dreamed. Yeah, I still love him, but after so many years...you know....it feels a little more like a partnership. We each play our roles. He has always worked while I took a break from work to take care of the kids and then I went back to work when the kids started school. Oh, He helps out some in the evenings and coached a few of the kids' teams. But I've handled most of the parenting. I feel like it's all on me. The kids, the house. I need to take care of everyone else. I have little time for myself. Romance? I wouldn't really say that's my marriage. That's just for young idealistic couples! No. We're good friends. We've both done our fair share of aging- I'm not sure I'm as attracted to him as I used to be. I wish he'd take care of himself more. I feel there's a

pressure on women to keep young and keep in shape. I've had 3 kids and lost what seems like 10 years of sleep combined caring for infants. He used to seem more attracted to me, like I hung the moon. Now, I'm not sure he even likes me or understands me. I'll admit I don't really respect him much. I wish he'd lead our family more. I'd like him to want to go to church and pray with the family. My friend at the gym...he understands me. He seems so much more interested in me and my concerns. I like the attention he gives me. I know it's wrong, but we're just friends. Yes, my imagination has taken me places with him I shouldn't go, but that's as far as it goes. I must say that I also linger on those images on the reels on Instagram a little too long sometimes. It seems pretty harmless. I like built men who take care of their physical health. But the truth is...I feel dirty inside! I don't like this situation. I remember when my husband and I were so much in love. I remember how we would go on dates and how we just enjoyed being together. We didn't have any money, but it didn't matter. Now, it seems our whole life hinges on how much money we have or don't have. And he's always playing golf or on his phone or watching sports. What is he looking for? It seems he is longing for a different life. What's wrong with our life? Honestly, I get a little resentful. And of course, despite our lack of connection, he still wants to have sex all the time. Why would I want to have sex with him, he pays me very little attention and he doesn't seem like he even likes me. I know I nag him a lot and that probably keeps him from wanting to engage with me.

Sorry to throw all this on you. They told me they wanted me to talk, but only on one condition- I had to be real!

About my kids. I love my kids. I remember when they were little and they only wanted to be with me. I could hold them in my arms, and then, they felt safe. I miss those days. Now, I feel like they hate me. I don't really know what's happened. I know I've been busy. I have to do all their laundry and cook and keep the house clean. Then when I get a break all I want to do is veg out in front of the TV or scroll on my phone. I guess after too many times of turning them down when they wanted to spend time with me...they quit asking. I admit, I've been distracted. I've wanted to be a good mom but now they won't talk to me. They just want to hang out with their friends. When we do have a meal together, they are on their phones. I allowed the phones in their lives and now there's no going back. But it was to keep them busy that way when I needed time for myself. When did I give up on parenting? What's wrong with me? I guess I'm not sure I have much wisdom to give them, anyway. Do they know how miserable I am? Maybe that's why they don't

respect me? I want to connect with them, but I don't think I know them anymore. They are always so moody. They just go to their room and shut the door. They just want to be with their friends. I'm not even sure if they have faith. They accepted Christ and got baptized. But I worry that they are falling for the world's temptations. I don't know what they are watching on their phones or on their Ipad. I don't know if they are drinking or if they are sexually active. I hope not. But what can I do? I can't be with them all the time. I can pray for them...but does that really work?

Prayer... I remember when I really believed God heard my Prayers. I'm not sure about that. I don't feel holy enough to pray. Every time I think about it, I think about all my sins. I know drink too much. At first I just had a glass of wine with dinner. But as life got more stressful, it's like I have to have one or 3 glasses at night just to take the edge off. I've got all that anger raging within me too that I let slip out every once in awhile, and I already alluded to my thought life....it's like an Adult Bookstore. They say it's a male issue, maybe I'm weird but its definitely a temptation for me. Yeah, and I swear , a lot under my breath or in my head. Even at my kids and my husband if I get really upset....it's a bad habit. I worry about what I look like all the time. It's everywhere. Botox, weightloss, diets. The media is constantly reminding me what I don't have and what I don't look like. I feel like I'll never be as skinny as I once was. Or have the wardrobe of all the other moms in my neighborhood.

Truth is- I'm a pretty despicable human being.

How can God want to hear from me? How can He be proud of me? How can He love me?

Yes, we go to church most of the time. I was raised in church, and I vowed to raise my kids in church. But it's gotten easier to not go since Covid. We say we will watch online, but then we end up sleeping in. When we do go, I just sit amongst the crowd. I feel like a stranger. I don't know these people. I kinda like it that way- that way I don't have to put forth much effort. I sit there like a beggar with my hands out, hoping for some crumb of bread from God. The music is too loud most of the time. I just want to get through it. I see other people who seem to be getting into it, and I'm a little envious. I just don't really get it! Why are they so special that God ministers to them? Then the pastor speaks. Every now and then, it seems like he is really speaking to me and my situation. I feel a connection to God, and it feels good. I feel hope. He will read a scripture, and it seems applicable to my life. Sometimes, I think God is

speaking to me from His Bible. I own a Bible, and it's somewhere in my bedroom. I don't bring it to church. I would be embarrassed if anyone saw how new and unused it looks. I wouldn't want anyone to see me fumbling through it. They put the words up on the screen anyway, and I've got the Bible app on my phone. I've never really read the Bible. That seems more like something a seminary student or pastor does. I've heard of people quoting scripture, but I just think they're showing off. I don't have time to read the Bible anyway. I'm way too busy. But I look around me and I wonder if the other women in the audience are like me. I size them up. Do I look better than them? I guess if I'm doing better than the next girl, then I'm okay. But I'm not sure. I see some women who seem different. They seem to have a glow about them. A joy. I don't want to seem weird or anything. But they seem to have a Peace about them. A few of them have smiled at me and said hello and they genuinely seemed to care about me. They don't even know me. Why would they care about me? I secretly wish they would take some time with me. Maybe they have some answers that I've been seeking. I'm drawn to them for some reason. I know my way of life isn't working out too well. I wish they would invite me to lunch. I would go. I'm longing for a meaningful conversation. Goodness knows, my husband barely talks to me. But he wouldn't understand me anyway! I'm a woman. I need another woman, who can relate. I wish women could encourage each other more. I feel like we are always competing. We size each other up. Who can be the best mom, Who is the most in shape, who has the best wardrobe?.....

When I think about Jesus and how He had his disciples, I wonder what that was like. Something about that image appeals to me. They were always together encouraging one another. I like the idea of women on a mission together. I'd like to be around some good ladies. All the friends I hang out with just make me more depressed. They are always dressed to the T and seem like their marriages are perfect and kids are perfect. They just want to pose as if everything is great and put their faith in money, success and pleasure. I'm tired of all that. I know there's more. I wish there was a good group of women I could be a part of. You'd think I could find a group like that at my church, but I look in the bulletin, and I don't see anything but Bible studies. That intimidates me. I'd have nothing to offer. Where can I find real answers? Where can I find something to fill this emptiness inside? Where can I find help for marriage and my family? Where can I find hope? Where can I find fulfillment and purpose in life? Where? Where? Where?

I have no idea.

I'm a refugee, wandering around this earth. I'm lost. I can't take it much longer. I need rescue. I need someone to reach out a hand to me. I need to know there is a God up there, and He loves me. I need help. I'm crying out on the inside.

But you wouldn't know it. I'll just pass you by and smile at you. But I wish you would stop me. I wish you would reach out to me. I'm sorry I've been so stand-off-ish or even rude to you. I now know how much I need you. Would you give me another chance? I know you've invited me to things before. But now I'm ready. I need this! Please don't give up on me.

I'm waiting on you.