

RELOAD CONFERENCE 2019

ELECTIVE: SINGING IN THE RAIN

- Welcome and introduction
- **Ice breaker:** Ask ladies to go into groups of 2 and chat to each other about a song/s that helped them through difficult times in their lives (for about 5 minutes). A few of them can share their songs with everyone.
- Play first part of the song “Singing in the rain” to the ladies
- Share **Isa. 54:11** with the ladies. “O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires.”
- Share personal testimony with the ladies.
- “In the Bible, we sometimes find that the city of Jerusalem is referred to as a woman – she or her, like in Ps. 46. Many times in my life, I have felt like I was this “afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted.” I’m sure many of you can identify with this feeling of being swept about by the storms of life – the one thing is not even over yet, then it’s the next. Or just when you think everything has calmed down, the next thing comes up.
- Well, I would like to share a few of the storms (and songs) in my life with you. I’ll start with when I got married to my husband, Alan Thomas. We got married on 14 December 1991. The first year of our married life was bliss; the “singing in the rain” part. Then the storm came up – my husband was retrenched after about one year of marriage. My eldest son, Stephen, was just born. We have just bought a house. We had to let go of our car. My parents offered to look after our baby, Stephen because we could not afford to have a nanny. It was a hard and difficult time. We only saw our little baby son during weekends because we lived in P.E. and they lived in Uitenhage. It’s about 30 minutes apart. But God carried us through. When he was about a year old, my husband managed to get a job again, so our child could come home. We could experience his first tooth that came out. Life was great again. He worked for a few years and then his company closed down! Another storm has hit! By this time, our second son, Lael, was born.
- At least, by this time, we could sort of pay a nanny to look after the 2 boys. We lived on a tight budget but we made it work. So, for the second time, I became the sole provider for our family. After a few years, he got

a job at a company that manufactured car parts. But that company closed down too. He was unemployed for another few years and started working as a sales representative at another company. I'm not sure what exactly happened but soon he was out of that job too. After that, he worked on contract for a lift company for a while and hoped that it would be renewed but it was not renewed.

- After so much job trouble, it seemed like something broke inside my husband because he just never really worked after that. He had jobs here and there and even helped someone with a grass cutting business just before our only daughter, Caryn was born. But that also didn't last very long. We even had to sell our house in 2012 because I could not keep up with the bond. We had to move to Uitenhage to live in my Mum's house. So, I became the main provider in our home for most of our married life. Life wasn't easy. But by God's grace, I maintained my song. Whichever church we were at, I landed up in the choir or the worship team. God sustained my spirit and kept me sane through all the years of having to provide for my family. He became my Song. He became my Source. He became my constant Companion. He became my Husband. He became my Provider.
- Beloved sisters, never give up your song; whether it rains softly or harshly in your life – never give up your song. Your song connects your heart to the heart of God. It creates the atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to move on your behalf. I do not pretend that it is easy to sing this song when things go wrong – it is extremely difficult. You see, beloved, that is what makes it supernatural! "Singing in the rain" is a spiritual exercise. It lifts your spirit out of your natural circumstances and you can face whatever may come your way. It is a sacrifice of praise. There's nothing pleasant about a sacrifice but all I know is that no genuine sacrifice goes unnoticed with God.
- All right, let me skip some years, otherwise we'll be here until next year this time! In about October 2015, my eldest son, Stephen, started complaining of severe headaches and blurred vision. We took him to the doctor who referred us to a specialist. In cooperation with a neurologist, they decided to remove the cyst that was discovered behind his right eye. The cyst caused the eye to protrude, hence the blurred vision. The cyst had to be removed. My child had to undergo an open brain operation – a craniotomy – to get to the cyst. Ladies, another storm has

hit our family! I'm giving you a summary of what happened but going through the trauma of hearing that your first child must go through such a dangerous operation, was a storm of a different kind.

- Thank God for faithful friends, brothers, sisters and family who prayed with us through this difficult time in our lives. The doctors predicted that Stephen would be in hospital for weeks and recovery would take months. Well, the operation took place on a Friday, in April 2016; he was discharged on the Sunday after that! It felt like I just batted my eyes and he was up and about again, in spite of what the doctors said! What an awesome, mighty God we serve! My child has fully recovered and we give God all the praise!
- During all this time, there was another storm raging in our lives. Things were not okay in our marriage. On the surface, everything seemed fine. But they were not. I will not give much detail but just to give you an idea – my husband and I lived in one house, slept in one bed but we lived past each other. We would give each other a peck in the morning and again in the evening and that was it. No talking or joking. We just addressed each other when we had to talk about the children. Or if we did talk to each other, we disagreed about something. He used to walk with me to get a taxi in the morning and met me again in the afternoon at the same stop. No talking to each other while we walked to the taxi stop in the morning or when we walked back home in the afternoon. It was terrible! I could give many reasons why it was like that but I choose not to right now. I refuse to play the blame game. The point is, we have drifted apart and we didn't know how to fix it.
- We have lost each other. I thought we have lost each other for good. But I only realized much later that God had other plans.
- I felt rejected and unloved by my husband. Frustration became a regular visitor. At some point in my life, it must have moved in because that was how I felt most of the time. It brought other companions with it. Invisible, yes I felt invisible. Other people would say I looked beautiful in an outfit – except the one my heart so longed to hear it from. Loneliness – this one was dark. How could you have a companion in your life and still be so utterly alone? Emotional pain could cause an actual physical pain – I felt it in the vicinity of my chest. Sometimes my stomach would ache for no apparent reason. My hair started falling out. (And I was blessed with a healthy head of hair.)

- Searing questions would torture my already fragile mind, “Where did it all go wrong? Where have we lost each other? What have I done wrong?” These relentless questions turned into stated accusations, “You are such a bad wife. You are such a bad mother. You are just not right for him.” Let me add: it had not always been like this. We loved each other. We took care of each other. Our love for each other was crowned with the birth of three beautiful children.
- Beloved, I almost lost the plot. But God in His immeasurable grace towards me, carried me through. I say “carried me through” because I couldn’t walk anymore – or so it felt. I kept on serving the Lord and concentrated on my relationship with God and my children. I would pour myself out during every praise and worship session. Many a night, I would get up and lay on my face before the Lord, crying out to Him for help.
- Bless God for my precious children, Stephen (now 25), Lael (now 21) and Caryn (now 13). They made my life worth living. They were the reason for me to get up in the morning. They were my reason to go to work every day. I should actually use the plural and say “reasons”! They made me laugh and they made me sing. They made my birthday, Mother’s Day and any other day extra special in my life. Their laughter, silly stories and childhood prayers kept me going. Sometimes, when I came home from work, I would linger just a little bit longer at the door before I entered the house – just to listen to their laughter.
- My second son, Lael, blessed me with a song one day. It is called “Through it all”. The chorus goes like this,
 - “Through it all, through it all,
 - My eyes are on You,
 - Through it all, through it all,
 - It is well;
 - (Repeat)
 - So let go, my soul and trust in Him
 - The waves and winds still know His Name
 - (Repeat)
- This song carried me through many dark days and nights in my life. I would put it on repeat on my cell phone and listen to it wherever I found myself. My kids would jokingly ask me, “Mummy, is that the only song on

your phone?” This song became so important to me at that time of my life.

- My sister, Lizelle, also blessed me with a song called, “On my knees” by Jacqui Valesques. She always said how this song reminded her of my love to talk to the Lord. Prayer became a lifestyle.
- Another storm soon hit my family. My husband was diagnosed with colon cancer in January 2018. The doctors gave him just 6 months to live but God graciously gave him 9 months. During these 9 months, God did an incredible work of grace in his life. He has changed completely.
- He would ask me how my day was at work. (This was something new to me!) He would ask if he could rub my feet after a long day at work. I would sometimes pinch myself to check if all this was real! And he just wanted to sit close to me. My husband transformed into the man I have always wanted. The Lord’s grace was just so unmistakably evident in his life. At times, my heart would ache as I asked myself why it had to take something as drastic as cancer to change things for in our lives. But the Lord always consoled by giving me a song and most importantly – His Word. (Zeph. 3:17 was one of the many verses that He would give me.) The Lord gave my husband a song too – “I surrender” sung by Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. On his death bed, he repeatedly asked that we play him that song. The Lord called him home on 24 October 2018. It’s still not easy but I am still singing in the rain.”