

Chapter Nine

Trusting the M.E.S.S. to be blessed

“Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” — Mark 10:9

Every marriage begins with a dream — but it survives only through **discipline, respect, and surrender**. The fairytale fades, the work begins, and the vows that once sounded poetic become the plow that turns two broken histories into one living masterpiece.

We both came from broken homes — places where love didn’t always look like stability, where silence felt safer than speaking up, and where trust wasn’t freely given but earned through struggle. We stepped into marriage carrying pieces from those pasts, hoping God would somehow make them fit. And He did — not by erasing what we’d been through, but by transforming our brokenness into purpose and turning our mess into ministry

Marriage is not about perfection; it’s about **partnership under pressure**. It’s learning that respect is not automatic — it’s cultivated. Love is not enough — it must be anchored in faith. Work is not punishment — it’s the tool that polishes the covenant. When God becomes the anchor, even two scarred souls can reflect His artistry.

A healthy marriage takes **work** to communicate through the storms, **respect** to listen when it hurts, and **love** that keeps showing up when feelings fade. But when a couple invites God to invest in that union, He transforms what once looked like rubble into redemption. The cracks become stained glass, catching His light in ways wholeness never could.

This is what it means to trust God when you marry a M.E.S.S.—to **Make Every day Something Special**, not because it's easy, but because His grace makes it possible. Two imperfect people, serving a perfect God, can become one extraordinary story of restoration.

When Grace Meets the Mess

Every couple has a unique “mess”—a combination of memories, habits, hurts, and hopes that somehow collide under one roof. What you bring into the marriage doesn't disappear at the altar; it gets magnified in the light of everyday life. The difference between those who crumble and those who are cultivated isn't perfection—it's persistence. It's the decision to keep showing up with humility, patience, and faith even when it's hard.

For us, trusting God with our marriage meant learning to surrender our pride and our plans. It meant understanding that forgiveness isn't weakness—it's maintenance. We had to choose grace over grudges and prayer over proving a point. There were seasons when love felt like work and faith felt like silence, but those were the moments when God was doing His deepest work.

When two people decide to stay rooted in faith rather than feelings, they begin to see the beauty behind the breaking. The same God who joined you is faithful to refine you—He doesn't waste pain; He repurposes it. Every misunderstanding can become a moment of mercy. Every setback can become a setup for strength. Every crack can become a canvas where God paints something new.

Marriage will test everything you say you believe about love. It will stretch your patience, challenge your faith, and reveal the places in your heart that still need healing. But if you let Him, God will take your mess and turn it into a ministry—a living testimony of what His grace can build when two broken people refuse to quit.

Two broken people, fully surrendered, can become one breathtaking masterpiece. Not because they got everything right, but because they kept letting God rewrite the story—one prayer, one apology, and one act of grace at a time.

Jackson and Christine

Jackson and Christine entered marriage with two very different understandings of love — shaped long before either of them ever met.

Christine grew up in a home where expectations were high and affirmation was scarce. Her mother loved her, but her love was expressed through standards, performance, and constant critique. Nothing was ever quite “enough.” Christine learned early that approval came with conditions, and she carried that belief into adulthood. Though her father remained in her life after the divorce, she struggled to build a close relationship with him because she never wanted her mother to feel replaced. That imbalance created a quiet emotional conflict that followed her into every meaningful relationship.

So, when she married Jackson — a man who treated her with gentleness, steadiness, and unconditional affection — she didn’t know how to receive it. Jackson’s calm and consistent love felt unfamiliar. He wasn’t demanding. He didn’t criticize. He didn’t push her to perform. Instead, he affirmed her, supported her, and made her feel valued without needing her to earn it. For a woman raised to believe love must be proven daily, his stability felt foreign... and at times, uncomfortable.

Jackson came from a completely different background. He grew up watching his father honor and support his mother — not loudly, but faithfully. In his home, affection wasn’t a competition, and love wasn’t conditional. His mother’s tenderness and his father’s steady encouragement taught him the power of gentle leadership. Jackson’s model for marriage was a partnership built on respect, support, and emotional safety.

But to Christine, his quiet strength looked like weakness. She misinterpreted humility as passivity and gentleness as a lack of drive. When pressures from her past collided with insecurities she hadn’t yet faced, Christine found herself seeking validation outside their marriage — not because she didn’t love Jackson, but because she didn’t feel secure in herself.

When Jackson discovered the betrayal, it broke something in him he didn't know how to put back together. His entire life, love had meant loyalty. Affection had meant safety. Respect had meant honor. And suddenly, the foundation he thought was solid felt shattered.

The pain was too deep, and they eventually divorced. But their story didn't end in bitterness. Through counseling, reflection, and spiritual growth — individually — they both gained clarity that changed them.

Jackson realized that no matter how much he loved Christine, he could not heal wounds he didn't create. Her struggle wasn't a reflection of his inadequacy; it was the echo of her childhood. He learned that love alone cannot rewrite a person's identity — that is the work of God, not a spouse.

Christine realized that she had spent her life performing for validation instead of accepting love. She began to understand how her mother's perfectionism shaped her expectations, how emotional imbalance shaped her choices, and how her distorted view of worth affected her marriage. The betrayal wasn't born from Jackson's shortcomings — it was born from her unhealed spaces.

Though they never reconciled romantically, both walked away wiser. They gained a deeper understanding of themselves, a higher respect for God's process, and a mature awareness of how childhood patterns follow adults into marriage unless they are confronted and healed.

Jackson and Christine's story is not a tale of restoration, but of revelation. It reminds couples that a broken marriage can still produce whole lessons — and sometimes God's greatest work is not in saving the relationship, but in saving the individuals.

Felix Speaks:

If I had to choose one word to describe what God has done for our marriage, it would be **grateful**. Grateful for Frankie's unconditional love — even in moments when I didn't deserve it or understand it. Grateful for my family. Grateful for what God did in me, and what He did in *us*.

I would be lying if I told you this journey has been easy. Not because we didn't love each other, but because we didn't truly **know** each other. Love is powerful, but without identity, it can easily become desperate. Throughout this book, we share personal stories not to expose our wounds, but to help other couples push through their own. Because truthfully — it's worth it.

But there's something important I need you to know: **God gave me the gift of trust from my wife.**

Trust was our saving grace.

After Frankie wrote her book *Choose to Win*, something shifted in her... and because of that, something shifted in *us*. There's a chapter in that book titled "*Choose to Trust*." She didn't write that chapter specifically for our marriage, but it spoke directly into the place where we were struggling.

One day, Frankie came to me and said, "Felix, I'm going to choose to trust you."

She didn't make me earn it. She didn't make me jump through hoops. She just made a **decision**.

Of course, she had told me before that she forgave me, loved me, or trusted me — but this time was different. She said she saw something in me. She saw genuine change. And hearing that meant more than I can explain.

A few years earlier, Frankie had been in a horrible running accident — one that took the life of the friend she was running with. She barely survived. Watching the woman I love — the mother of my children, my partner, my friend — lying there fighting for her life, changed something in me forever. Taking care of her during that season was the easy part. Watching her fight her way back physically, emotionally, and spiritually... that did something to me.

So, when she stood in front of me and said she was choosing to trust again, I realized something: **this was her way of fighting for us**. And because she fought, I owed it to our marriage to fight too.

We are not perfect. And like many married couples, we have had moments where divorce crossed our minds. But one day, we decided — a final one — to take divorce out of our vocabulary. It was

no longer an option. Removing that exit forced us to look inward instead of outward when things got hard.

And trust me... the hard seasons still came. But in those moments, we surrounded ourselves with a village that could remind us of what they saw when we were too angry or hurt to see clearly ourselves. God is our ultimate source — but don't be so quick to believe you don't need people. God places the right voices around you to help anchor your marriage when emotions try to pull it apart.

I felt a weight lift off me the day Frankie chose to trust me again. She didn't have to. I didn't always deserve it. But receiving that gift changed me. And every day since, I work to protect that trust, honor that trust, and never break it — because now I understand something:

In marriage, trust may be the greatest gift you will ever receive... and the greatest gift you must choose to give back.

Frankie Speaks:

When I look back over our journey, one of the things that helped me choose to trust Felix again was the way he took care of me after my accident. I had never seen him so present, so gentle, so steady. He didn't just help me heal physically — he showed me a level of love that softened places in me I didn't even know were hardened. In that season, God allowed me to see the heart of the man I married, not the mistakes, not the misunderstandings... but the *heart*.

I want to be honest — I had not been perfect either. For years, I only gave Felix the same level of trust and vulnerability that I wanted him to give me. I controlled what I shared. I rationed my emotions. I protected myself from being hurt, but in the process, I also blocked myself from being loved fully. Writing *Choose to Win* forced me to deal with emotions I had buried since childhood — feelings of loss, being misunderstood, not feeling loved the way I needed, and never feeling completely safe emotionally. I wanted a new heart. I wanted a clean slate. And through that process, God showed me something I had overlooked for years:

Felix was the gift He gave me — but I needed to trust the God in him when my insecurities told me otherwise.

Felix has walked beside me through betrayal from people close to me — family and friends — and he has always remained solid. He has never tried to change me. That kind of freedom... You don't experience it often. With Felix, I could breathe. I could be me. And I wanted him to feel just as free with me.

He trusted me with everything — our finances, hard decisions, personal matters, professional choices — he placed so much confidence in who I was. All I had to do was trust him with my heart. He wasn't asking for control; he just wanted partnership. He wasn't asking me to shrink; he wanted us to grow.

At some point, God began to show me *me*. And as painful as that was, it was liberating. I saw the ways I operated out of fear. I saw how I sometimes placed Felix under a microscope, while living in a glass house myself. Once I recognized my own reflection, forgiveness came easier. Trust came easier. Grace came easier. Because now it wasn't about fixing him — it was about being healed enough to see him clearly.

I realized that Felix wasn't one of my students, or one of the children I raised, or someone I had to over-parent spiritually or emotionally. He was my partner. My friend. My covering. My leader. And it was time for me to let him lead without punishing him for the past.

I made a decision — one that set both of us free: **I released Felix back to God.**

Not to control him, not to monitor him, not to question him... but to honor who God was shaping him to be. I stopped trying to be both mother and father in our home. I stopped trying to carry everything. I stopped trying to manage outcomes. And in that release, God restored what fear had been stealing for years.

Trusting Felix wasn't just for him. It was for *me*. I no longer wanted to live guarded, suspicious, or emotionally tight-fisted. I wanted love to feel like a gift — not a responsibility.

And today, that's exactly what it is. A gift. A choice. A freedom that is hard to describe... but easy to feel.

I choose to love the man who lets me love him. And that choice has brought peace to my life and our marriage that I wouldn't trade for anything.

The Making of a Masterpiece

Marriage is sacred work. It's not a fairy tale, and it's not a competition. It's a covenant—a daily choice to believe that the same God who brought you together is strong enough to hold you together.

We learned that God doesn't fix marriages by making them easy; He strengthens them by making them holy. He doesn't remove the tension; He teaches you to grow through it. He doesn't promise perfection; He promises presence.

When you've both come from broken places, love can feel risky. Trust can feel fragile. But that's when faith matters most. Because faith says, *"We may not have it all together, but together, with God, we have all we need."*

Every marriage has its breaking points—moments when it's easier to walk away than to work through. But those are the moments when God does His finest work. He takes two people who have every reason to give up and teaches them how to stand.

We are living proof that when you trust God with your mess, He won't just clean it up—He'll use it. He'll turn arguments into understanding, pain into patience, and fear into faith. We've learned that marriage isn't about finding someone perfect; it's about becoming perfect in purpose together.

When love is anchored in Christ, it survives what it shouldn't and flourishes where it couldn't. What once looked broken begins to shine. What once caused pain begins to produce purpose. And what once felt like a mess becomes unmistakably, undeniably, a masterpiece.

When you choose to **Make Every day Something Special**, even the arguments become lessons, and even the waiting seasons become worship. The mess doesn't mean failure—it means formation. It's God molding your marriage into a masterpiece that reflects His glory.

Key Takeaways Chapter Nine : Trusting the MESS to be blessed

- **Marriage Requires Work: Love Grows Through Effort.** It's choosing to communicate even when it's uncomfortable, to forgive when it's undeserved, and to serve when it's inconvenient.
- **Childhood Wounds Shape Adult Love.**

Both couples reveal that unhealed childhood expectations — whether pressure, perfectionism, or emotional imbalance.
- **Gentleness Is Not Weakness.**

Jackson's quiet strength and Felix's consistency were often misunderstood, proving that emotional maturity can look unfamiliar when a partner has never experienced safe, steady love.
- **Trust Must Be Chosen, Not Earned Through Punishment.**

Frankie choosing to trust Felix — and not making him “work for it” — became the shift in their marriage. Christine learned too late that trust cannot grow where insecurity is in control.
- **Healing Begins With the Mirror, Not the Microscope.**

Both Frankie and Christine discovered that breakthroughs came when they dealt with themselves first. When individuals heal, clarity replaces fear and grace replaces accusation.
- **Presence Speaks Louder Than Apology.**

Felix caring for Frankie after her accident, and Jackson's consistent love throughout their marriage, show that actions often rebuild what words alone cannot repair.

- **Marriage Thrives When Partners Release Control and Embrace Partnership.**

Felix trusted Frankie with finances and major decisions; Christine realized she had been operating from fear. True partnership requires letting each person lead where they are gifted while trusting God to guide the process.

- **Your Village Matters.**

Both couples demonstrate the power of having mentors, leaders, and friends who speak truth when emotions cloud judgment. Marriage needs God AND community.

- **Love Is a Gift — Protected, Chosen, and Matured Over Time.**

Whether a marriage is restored (Felix & Frankie) or hearts are restored separately (Jackson & Christine), the lesson is the same: love grows where trust is nurtured, healing is welcomed, and both partners choose courage over comfort.