

## **Steve Kinsley: The Word Yes Can Change a Destiny In an Instant**

Kristi: Divorce is the largest financial transaction in most people's lives. Unfortunately, the decisions surrounding divorce are having to be made when emotions are highest. Making choices about assets can feel intimidating, especially when you're not in the best frame of mind. Make sure you know, how, what you do today will affect your financial future. My name is Kristi Tidwell and I'm with New Path Planning. I'll use my 20 years of financial experience to help educate and advise you during every stage of the divorce process. Visit [New Path Planning](#) for more information.

Craig: Welcome to Season 4 of the Robert and Easterling podcast. This is Craig Robertson

Matt: And I'm Matt Easterling. We want to thank everyone who has listened to our podcasts so far. If you haven't already subscribed, please do so on iTunes, Spotify, or your favorite podcast player. Craig and I are having lots of fun producing this show and we hope that you're enjoying it as much as we are. It's really hard to believe we are already on Season 4.

Craig: That's right, Matt. We've really enjoyed sharing the life stories of some great people. And we have even more in store for you for Season 4. As you know by now, we are board certified family law specialist with one of the most successful boutique law firms in Mississippi. As creative problem solvers, we take a holistic approach to the individual needs of our clients.

Matt: Joining us again. This season are licensed professional counselors, Eva and Roane Hunter from LifeWorks counseling. We're excited to continue our partnership with Eva and Roane. They provide a unique perspective as we help hurting people with the healing process.

Craig: We're also excited to introduce two new sponsors for Season 4, Kristi Tidwell and Kelly Engleman. Kristi is a certified financial planner and the founder of New Path Planning. Kristi's own walk-through divorce coupled with 20 years of experience, make her a perfect advocate for others on a similar path. And Kelly is the founder of Enhanced Wellness Living. Mississippi's leading functional medicine clinic. Her team's food-first approach to healing along with a variety of lifestyle and regenerative treatment options, sets you on a journey to take control of your health and live life well.

Matt: So now that we've told you what to expect this season - sit back, relax, take a deep breath. Everything's going to be okay. You found us and what you're about to hear is going to help.

Craig: Functional medicine and nurse practitioner, Kelly Engleman founded Enhanced Wellness Living, Mississippi's leading functional medicine clinic. With the understanding that one's healthcare plans must be in congruence with their beliefs and values, at Enhanced Wellness Living treatment focuses on you as a whole, rather than the symptoms or disease. Kelly and her team partner with you to understand the root cause of symptoms and to educate you on creating a lifestyle of wellness, energy, vitality, and longevity. Combining her revolutionary food first approach to healing with inspiration, education, integrity, empathy and balance. Kelly will empower you to take ownership of your health for life. Enhanced Wellness Living is proud to offer a variety of lifestyle and regenerative treatment options, including sexual wellness programs. Take control of your health and live life well with Enhanced Wellness Living.

Craig: Well guys, thanks for joining us again on another episode of our podcast. I'm excited today to have a guest who's going to offer a different perspective to marriage. As you guys already know, we are divorce lawyers and we work every day in marriages that end for one reason or another. But today my friend and my guest, Steve Kinsley, is going to share his story about his marriage and his wife with you today. So, Steve, thanks for joining me.

Steve: Glad to be here, Craig.

Craig: So, let's just dive right in, Steve. Tell us how you met your wife.

Steve: Sure. We grew up together in church. It was one of those things where we were kids together in the nursery and those kinds of things. I didn't think twice about. And then as we entered high school and got later into high school, we were on a mission trip together and just started talking and connecting and it just kind of bloomed from there. We started dating about our junior year in high school and we were together through high school. She went off to community college. I went to another university. We survived a breakup and then got back together and then married our junior year of college.

Craig: So, you guys were married really, really young?

Steve: Really young. Just barely legal to get married.

Craig: Tell us about Theresa. Tell us why you fell in love with her.

Steve: Yeah. Theresa George was her maiden name - was just a lovely soul. She was gentle. She was sweet. She made me feel like a million dollars. She always affirmed me and those type of things. And, for a young man that affirmation makes you fall in love. She was just a great person. She loved people. She loved Jesus. That was one thing that was consistent throughout her life was her love for the Lord. And that is shown through with the way she treated people the way she treated me. She loved children. So, I knew I wanted to have kids. I knew she was going to be a great mom. And so those are the things that really caused me to fall in love with her, besides she was beautiful.

Craig: And you guys did that, you started having kids really young?

Steve: We had kids really young. So, I remember it was right before I started my last semester, she let me know that she was expecting. And so that really put the pressure on to get that last semester finished. To do all those plant trips as we called them back then to try to find a job. So, I graduated in December and our first one was born in February. So, we made the graduation, we moved to our first big person job, had a child and all within about two months.

Craig: Wow.

Steve: Yeah, I was 22 at the time.

Craig: You know, I'm not young anymore, but I say that parenting is a young person's vocation.

Steve: No doubt.

Craig: But y'all were really young though.

Steve: Yeah, we were really young.

Craig: So Steve, tell me about your life together.

Steve: So, in the early years I was having to work a lot of hours and we had a newborn at home, so that put a lot of strain on the marriage. And initially I was trying to establish my career - I was a computer programmer. There were crazy hours related to project deadlines and those types of things. She was a new mom in a new city and didn't know a lot of people. And at that time, Teresa, like I said, she loved people, but she was very much an introvert. So, it was hard for

her to meet people outside of my social circle. So, we, after the first few months in that position, moved back to where our family was in Jackson, Mississippi. We moved back and began attending the church that we met each other (at the time we met each other) and raised our family there. A couple of years later, we had surprise twins. A boy and a girl. Our daughter was an undiagnosed twin. She was the second one. And so we surprised ourselves and our family with a second child.

Craig: You mean, you didn't know you were having twins?

Steve: No, sonograms were not done on a regular basis back then. Theresa carried about 12 pounds of babies. We thought she had just gotten large and she carried them almost full term. The exciting part was my son Craig was born and then the obstetrician said, "I think there's another one in there."

Craig: Are you serious? You had no idea?

Steve: No, I'm serious. No idea. No clue. So, I walked out with two babies to the surprise of all the family.

Craig: Wow!

Steve: Yeah, obviously that was a shock. We were prepared for one. We lived in a small thousand square foot house. Our first house we had purchased. The kids had jaundice, so they were in the hospital for about another week, which gave me a week to find another baby bed, another car seat, an extra playpen and all those kinds of things that we needed to have two in the house. And that started an important part of our journey in our relationship because my daughter had some complications. Her digestive system wasn't quite ready for her to be born, so she was unable to digest breast milk or formula. And so, after a couple of months, she had begun to lose weight instead of gaining weight. We went into the hospital on August the 26th of the year they were born, and we almost lost her a couple of times. She got a slight infection and that infection became a massive infection and she spent her first Christmas in ICU. She pulled through - she's a fighter. And that church, that little church that I talked about (I call it a little church, that's the way I remember it), but those people gathered every night at the church and prayed for her for five months.

Craig: Wow! Talk about the challenges of being a young family and have unexpected twins and health complications. Talk about your life raising those children.

Steve: You know, those months in the hospital were really difficult because Theresa spent five nights at home in those five months and there was another little baby at home. I mean she would come home during the day so she could spend time with Craig and with Chris, our three-year-old at the time. We had family rally around us, but there was a lot of separation during those five months, which put unique strains because you're really focused on your sick child and trying to raise an infant and a three-year-old. You really didn't have much time to focus on each other so that was difficult for both of us, obviously. When we finally rejoined the family together, I mean, just such a relief we were together anyway, that things smoothed out for a while. But then, you know, raising those kids and the health challenges that continued, they weren't drastic like hospitalization, but it caused both of us to really focus more on the kids. I was still focused on my career. About that time, after the twins turned three, I started working on my own with my own company. So, a gentleman and I started a computer consultant company when they were three. Building a business put a lot of time demands on me and there were difficulties there, obviously. Anytime there's a focus away from each other, you have problems. I was also learning how to communicate. I wasn't a great communicator with Theresa during those days. I kept things internally, especially related to the business; when there were struggles, I didn't share them. I kept those internally. I felt like she had enough on her raising three kids and being at home and she was also a school teacher. She taught kindergarten during that time off and on with the kids. So, I had to learn how to communicate, and it took me a while.

Craig: I think you're describing what a lot of our listeners can relate to because we focus so much on our kids and providing for them, whether it be domestically or out in the workplace, vocationally, that sometimes in a marital relationship, we lose sight of one another and that relationship and that partnership and all the things that make us stronger together.

Steve: Yeah, and I carried some guilt with me about that too because as a believer, I know what I felt like my Christian responsibility was to my wife and my kids and I felt I was failing in that. At the same token, I had these beliefs that had been instilled into me by my parents and my church and society as a provider that I need to do everything I could to provide for them. Well, I think what societies looked at back in those days was that was the primary role of father was to provide and the wife was responsible for raising the kids. In my heart, I didn't believe that and I wanted to be there for my kids. I didn't miss ball games and I didn't miss dance recitals; I didn't miss birthday parties and those kinds of things. In fact, I remember one time on the twins' birthday (the twins' birthday was also on Father's Day), I drove all night from Atlanta on a Saturday night to be there on Sunday morning. I was doing everything I thought I could

do. Looking back, I probably was misfocused and misaligned. On some of those values,

Craig: But you guys made it.

Steve: We did. We made it and we raised our kids well. They turned out well. We had some challenges in high school. As many parents do with kids learning to be adults and making decisions on friends and making decisions on what they felt was important. Maybe some challenges with drinking and those kinds of things that many of your listeners can identify with.

Craig: I'm parenting two teenagers right now, and I adore them, but they are a handful for sure.

Steve: I heard the child psychologists say that if your child jumps off a roof and breaks their ankle and you ask them why they jumped off the roof. And they say, I don't know, they're telling the truth that their prefrontal cortex is not developed.

Craig: Right.

Steve: So, decision making is not clear in them. And so, parenting through those things, there's really, really tough. And so, what we got through the high school years and our kids graduated, went off to college and there were some interesting dynamics that were happening with the empty nest. Theresa was still teaching school, but she had her summer. And she decided she was going to start doing short-term mission trips. And I was happy to write the checks to let her go do that. Spent three weeks in Hong Kong, one summer, three weeks in Ukraine in another summer. And, during the time that she was in Ukraine. The Lord really dealt with her about doing full-time ministry. And she told me later on that when she was on the flight home from Ukraine. The Lord told her that she would live overseas, but don't tell your husband yet. He's not ready.

Craig: That's funny.

Steve: Yeah.

Craig: And that seems like that's how it typically works. Sometimes, our wives pull us in those challenging directions.

Steve: Yes, sir, and it was a challenging.

Craig: So, talk about the shift in your life then. You've told our listeners about raising three kids, including one that was a surprise and some of those challenges associated with that, but you find yourselves as empty nesters and your wife starts going on these short-term summer mission trips and little did you know, she believed that she was being called into ministry, but you weren't quite ready.

Steve: I wasn't. So, we had, back before the year 2000, we had launched a telecommunications company with a few other men that I knew, and we had raised a bunch of money to purchase other companies around the country and do; we were growing rapidly, and the intent was to go public. We're all going to be wealthy, and I could write even bigger checks for her to go on mission trips and those kinds of things. And we all know you can look back at history, what happened to the markets at that time, the .com bust happened. We were within about 60 days of taking that company public and reaping those rewards and everything fell apart. And so, the company that we had founded wound up being owned by the bank that held all of our, all of our debt. So, I worked for a bank for a few years, basically doing the same thing I was doing, trying to figure out what the next, the steps were going to be.

Craig: Steve talk to the man that might be listening, because you talked about how you felt this, you didn't use the word pressure, but I'll use the word pressure, to provide for your family and to provide a nice life for your family and to be a provider, which you felt like was your role as the husband and as the father, but you stretch yourself out and were a part of the creativity associated with making a company, making something out of nothing, but then all of a sudden that doesn't go well and maybe through no fault of your own, but you're having to reevaluate what's important in life.

Steve: That's exactly right. So, during this, it was about three years that I stayed with the company and part of it was probably a misplaced responsibility to some of the people I'd hired into that business, made sure they, they were still having... And I think some of your listeners can probably identify with that too, is that we feel a responsibility for those we shepherd and bring into a business.

Craig: Well, your employees and the folks who had invested their money with you to be a good steward of it.

Steve: A lot of friends and family that had invested in that.

Craig: Absolutely.

Steve: Yeah. So, there was the pressures of that, but realizing there was going to be a finite end to that, and it was not going to turn out to be the dream that we had and so, the difficulty there was a lot of internal pressure and trying to determine how long I was going to stay in that and then what I was going to do next. And then at that time there was a former employer that was trying to encourage tech companies to come and help with some technology things in Portugal. And I said, oh, that sounds like that might be fun. And so, I came home to Theresa one day and just acted like I've had an epiphany from God or something. And I said, "Hey, I think we might need to think about moving overseas." And she got this big grin on her face and said, well, let me tell you what the Lord told me two years ago and told me about her experience in the Ukraine and her flight back where the Lord had told her that she was going to do ministry overseas. And I didn't really know what to do with that at the time. Theresa had been growing so much in a relationship with the Lord. That a lot of inhibitions related to introversion, meeting people. She had overcome those. She was just loved being around people obviously loved being around kids. She was still teaching kindergarten at that time. But she just really lit up when she talked about this opportunity, which caused me to reevaluate my own life about. What we should do and what we needed to do.

Craig: And how old were you when all this was going on?

Steve: About 45, 46 years old. I do remember really beginning to process that spent a lot of time reflecting on my life, what I wanted to do. It's one point late that year, I recall just really wanting to make a shift. I felt like I'd had some success. I'd had some personal professional success, and I want to translate that into something of significance. What do you want to do with the rest of your life? The kids are out of the house or headed out of the house. Sometimes they crept back in from college, but I began to evaluate that, especially in light of what her thoughts were.

Craig: Steve, you just told our listeners that you had an opportunity to possibly go to Portugal and Theresa shared with you that she had very different ideas on her flight back from the Ukraine that God had told her, or she had felt God speak and say that you guys were going to be doing vocational ministry overseas. How did you process that? You explained, I think some of our middle-aged listeners can relate to you. That you had some financial success and you certainly had raised your three children but that you were hoping to move from success to significance.

Steve: Yeah, so the process really took, probably took six months. And in evaluating it, talking to Teresa, spending time in prayer, I really began to feel

like I wanted to make this shift to potentially vocational ministry. Anyway, the things that bothered me were A. what do we do with what we have? Are my kids going to be okay? I have no training in this. I mean, I've been in church my whole life, but that doesn't prepare you to be a missionary in my mind. I had no formal education, but the Lord began to really soften my heart to those things. And so, one night, we were part of a Baptist church, so the only thing I knew was the international mission board and I applied to be a Southern Baptist missionary one night late. I woke up the next morning, I told Theresa, I said, okay, I applied to be a missionary. So, if you want to go with me, go apply. And that's how we began the process of going through that.

Craig: Well, I know that was a long process, Steve, but for the sake of time, after you went through the certification process, you found yourself in Africa.

Steve: We did. In fact, it was not a straight path either because the certification process, they decided I was too fat to be a missionary. I had a body mass index that wouldn't allow me to go with the Southern Baptist. And we met a couple who were wanting somebody to go to Africa to serve their ministry. So, we joined a group called Mission Outfitters and went to Africa. And so, we spent the balance of that first year preparing to go. Finally got our house sold, finally got our money raised, finally got our visas and we left with two suitcases in a crate that had some computer equipment in it and flew to Johannesburg, South Africa.

Craig: Did you totally sell everything that you had, all your possessions?

Steve: We sold a lot of it and Theresa gave away a lot of it. Some young ladies got some nice wedding presents that summer as she gave away a dining room tables and sofas and those kinds of things. We did sell a lot. We put some in storage, primarily for our daughter that we thought if she wanted to furnish a house someday, she might, we might have some furniture for that.

Craig: Well, we were talking about parenting being a lifetime commitment. So, I can only imagine that leaving your young adult children behind was not an easy decision. Right?

Steve: So, my young, my oldest son had been married a couple of years. My younger son got married the year we were leaving, and they wound up living with my daughter in a house together. And so, we felt, we felt good about leaving them together at that point, they were young adults and had jobs and were moving forward and those kinds of things. And so, we took off for Africa and we didn't, we only knew one couple when we got there. They let us stay at

their house while we tried to get a lay of the land. And it was six years of ministry that we did. And the Lord always seem to change it. We worked with TB clinics. We work with hospice. We worked with orphan care. We spent a couple of years there where we actually received 18 American, young people that wanted to become missionaries and did some training with them. It was during this time that our family changed again.

Craig: Well, let's talk about that. And I've heard this story before. I'd love for you to share it.

Steve: Yeah. One of the projects we've worked with had a, we called it a farm school and it was really for kids who could even afford to go to public school because they couldn't afford to buy uniforms. They couldn't afford to buy supplies and those kinds of things. And this ministry had a couple of teachers and they brought kids in from the surrounding rural communities into the school. There was a report that a couple of the kids were being abused and my wife, Theresa went with one of the social workers to check this out and they found these two kids and they were being mistreated. And so, we managed to get them into the shelter, but while she was there, she began meeting the neighbors in this informal settlement. When I say that it's a squatter camp, they had little shacks built from tin or cardboard or whatever they had to build floors and those kinds of things. So, she met the family that was next door to these kids. It was a man and his wife that had four kids and they had taken in the children of his sister who had passed away from aids. So, there was a 13-year-old daughter, a nine-year-old son and a toddler. And Theresa was just moved by their story. And so, she started taking food to them on a regular basis, found out the 13-year-old and the nine-year-old were not in school. So, we managed to get them a scholarship to go to school and managed to get a scholarship for the toddler to go to a daycare type of thing. But the family would have had to buy diapers and they couldn't afford to buy diapers. So, they never took him. This little toddler would toddle around the squatter camp all day long and Theresa would go back weekly with food and check on. I mean, about a month later, she found the baby just face down in the dirt. He was burning up with fever, had snot running out of his nose, just lifeless and being the good schoolteacher she was, she found the uncle and the bar that was next to their house and got written permission to take him back to the project where we were, we had a medical clinic as part of that project. The doctor diagnosed him with a double pneumonia. His spleen was severely enlarged from malnutrition. He was just really; he was close to death. They felt like they could revive him with antibiotics, particularly for the pneumonia. The Doctor looked at Theresa's and said, could you take him home to make sure he gets this medicine?

Because if we send the medicine home, they'll sell it to buy food and he will never get the medicine. Theresa said yes, in an instant. And then she called me and said, I'm bringing a baby home. Now, understand I'm 47. We're 47 years old at the time.

Craig: I'm 47 right now. And I just can't even imagine bringing a toddler into my home.

Steve: Yeah. Well, Theresa said, hey, it's going to be for 5 days. We got five days of antibiotics and then we'll bring him back. And, the interesting part is for the interest of time, he never left. He started living with us at that point. The uncle would come by the project and check on him and see how well cared for he was. He truly cared about him, but he couldn't afford to pay so that was one less mouth he had to feed. At the project, his brother and sister would come and see him daily, so it was a good dynamics there. But one thing that Theresa always said was she tells the story is how the word yes can change a destiny in an instant cause the minute she said, yes, yes, I'll bring him home for five days. That turned into the story that we have now.

Craig: The word yes can change the destiny in an instant.

Steve: Yeah. Isn't that amazing. It is.

Craig: And so, you said yes.

Steve: I said yes, because I thought it was five days, honestly. But I distinctly remember, about three months into this, because we had packed up his clothes every time, we brought him cause we expected the uncle to bring him back. I was praying one morning, and I said to the Lord, I said, if he doesn't go back today, he doesn't go back. And he never left us. Now, there were some challenges in getting them adopted. We were told we would be the last people that could ever adopt that child. We were American, we were white. We were on visitors' visas. I couldn't have a job in South Africa. I couldn't legally earn money in South Africa. And so we were told by all the agencies, we tried to work with, that we'd be the last people that we give that child to. But there was a social worker that came through the project to help us get the other kids that were in the shelter, formal standing with the ministry as a, as foster kids. And they took our case as well. The social worker called back about a month into that process and said, don't you want to adopt this child? And we said, well, sure, we just want the ability at least to not let anybody take him back from us. And so she said, well, foster care is for kids who are going to go back. I said this child's not going back.

And so literally 60 days later, I received a text that said, your paperwork is done. Come get him. He's yours. I never met the judge. I never had an attorney. I never paid a dime. So, it was just a supernatural event that caused us to have our fourth child.

Craig: Well, I had the opportunity to go to South Africa about 10 years ago with our mutual friend, Jason Hester and I can remember being in Africa, just thinking about how big... Number one how big Africa is, and number two, how big the problems are there. In fact, you know, when you don't have roads and you don't have just basic social systems in place, it's not a surprise that the global orphan crisis is what it is. We could talk about that probably in a whole other episode. But one of the things I was inspired to do is when I came home, I thought, well, the problems that we have here in the United States are so small compared to the systemic issues that they're dealing with and some of these developing countries. And so, I want our listener to have true perspective on what a real miracle that was for two white foreigners in Africa, suddenly, the adoption paperwork is done because that it's easy to say that. But to imagine that happening based on my limited perspective in Africa is really amazing.

Steve: The government itself had a policy that they wanted all their kids to stay in Africa. They didn't want to have all their kids leave. Because then there's no future. And so, there was government policy for about not only international adoption, but particularly interracial adoption. And particularly to Americans, there was anti-American sentiment for adoption. At that time, there was not an agreement that the Hague agreement, which was kind of a global orphan agreement, South Africa was not part of that. And so, they weren't operating under the same rules as other countries. And so, it was true. The fact that I never had to meet with the judge. In fact, I'd never had to pay a dime in a country that operates on bribes and other forms of craft. It's a supernatural event. And we know that the Lord wanted us to have that child. There's no doubt.

Craig: Tell our listeners about the transition back home, and then integrating back here in the deep south with an African son.

Steve: Sure. We'd been there about five years and our daughter got sick with a lung issue and she was a single mom at the time. So, we knew then that it was time to transition back and so we came back and for the next year I had to go back and forth and kind of shut things down and we had to get Alphonse immigrated to the US and there were some complexities in that while the adoption was easy, the immigration became difficult, not only financially, but just red tape.

Craig: You had left behind your vocation and had moved into vocational ministry. So not only did you have the challenges of getting your family back to the United States. You also had to start earning a living.

Steve: We had to re-establish residency. I had to prove sources of income to get home studies completed for transition. I had to have a home study done in the United States to transition him back just as if we were doing an adoption even though he was already legally ours, but we did manage to get him back and then I had to find a job. A real job. And my technology background allowed me to find something locally that that was really beneficial. Here we are back in the deep south again. Theresa decided to homeschool Alphonse first couple of years. She was a great reading teacher and foundational teacher from her days of teaching kindergarten. Alphonse was doing well in the first couple of years of school. But then, Theresa started having some health issues and it turned out that she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Craig: Wow, Steve. So what an amazing journey that you've taken our listeners on, and you guys find yourself in Africa, you add to your family with this little boy. You have this miraculous adoption and this challenging immigration and reintegration into life in the deep south and then it turns out your partner is sick.

Steve: If you go Google, pancreatic cancer, it says it's like a four-month cycle. We immediately got off the internet because we didn't really want to face that we may have only had four months left, but again, that was not God's plan for our life. Theresa went through chemotherapy, went through radiation and she lived another three years, which really helped us transition and prepare Alphonse for losing a mom for the second time.

Craig: Take us to that moment, Steve, where the words were spoken by the doctor and not only did he say cancer, he said pancreatic cancer.

Steve: At first, I didn't understand the gravity of it because it was just a shocker. It's like she was having back pain and so she went in for physical therapy and it just wasn't getting any better. They finally did an MRI and found the cancer. I really didn't understand the gravity of it. They said, we're going to send you to a Surgeon and my first thought is that we're going to get cut this thing out and keep going. That surgeon called me that night and said you know we're not really talking about a surgery for the cancer. We're talking about putting a port in for chemotherapy that's why you're coming to see me. Then he explained to us the next day, when we had the appointment, that it was inoperable and that it was terminal. When you hear the word, terminal. That's the one that's the gut punch. And so, I called one friend immediately because we were going to do

biopsies on it and all that kind of fun stuff and that friend came off the golf course and spent the day with me to drag me back off the brink, because the thought of losing your partner and the thought of being a single dad to, at the time, eight-year-old, when you're over 50 years old, it was really daunting.

Craig: So, Steve, you and Teresa had lived a life of challenges. You had a surprise twin. You were on the Eve of financial windfall only for it to not materialize as a middle-aged man, your life took a U-turn and you find yourself in Africa, in the epicenter of the worlds HIV crisis, you meet your fourth son. You go through the bureaucratic process of returning to the Us, and then not long after it seems like the water was still, the word cancer was spoken. The word terminal was spoken. You thought you had a very short window of time. And it was a short window of time, but it was longer than maybe you had first expected. Put words to what those three years of that fight with cancer was like for you and for your family and Alphie and Theresa.

Steve: Yeah. Theresa was very much the matriarch of the family and so it hit all the kids hard. Alphie, at the time, probably too young to really process what was going on. Obviously, he did over time, but there's a shift. There's a shift in a relationship when that happens too, because you're so focused on the fight that you shift from partner to caregiver. That's another shift in relationship because she was such a fighter, but she had to spend her energy fighting and I had to spend my energy still working. Thank goodness for family again, because both her parents and my mom and lots of friends, including your wife, very supportive and spent a lot of time with Theresa. But the shift to caregiver is an interesting shift because it's not as intimate even emotionally because you're looking at the future and you know what it looks like. You don't know when it's going to come, but you know what it looks like unless there's a complete, utter miracle.

Craig: Was there a period that Teresa, that she was ready to let go?

Steve: That was the later. Through the first two years she was all out fighting, and she was fierce in that but there came a time. It was, again, a strange situation, but she had been off chemotherapy for about three weeks and was really feeling pretty good. And she decided to go pick up Alphie from school. Cause we had transitioned from homeschool to public school at that point. Since he had started school, she had never picked him up. She just had not been healthy enough to, and she was feeling good that day. And I said, well, is your mom going to ride with you? No, I'm just going to go.

And, about an hour later, I got a call from a stranger. So, I'm with your wife, she's been in an accident and she's okay. But just wanted you to know where she is and she had blacked out. For whatever reason, we still don't know the reason, but she blacked out and crossed the median, hit a mail truck head-on and they rushed her to UMC. And fortunately, the only thing that she ended up with was a broken arm and a broken heel where she had tried to put on brakes, I guess, even in her unconscious state, but that affected her physically for sure. She had to do some therapy, physical therapy. She couldn't walk well. And so she used a wheelchair and a walker to get around. There were times at that point where she was she said I have about done all that I can do. I think I need to go

Craig: Were you there when she passed away?

Steve: Yeah, I was.

Craig: Talk about that.

Steve: Yeah. So, the other thing that happened from the accident is looking back now, she started having mini strokes. She would, she would just kind of zone out for a while. And so the day before she passed, she had a rough day and I took the day off of work and stayed with her. Just kind of set up with her all night. She just wasn't having a good day. And the next morning I could tell we probably, I knew that her blood counts were low. There was some bruising and those kinds of things that were signs of that. I called our oncologists and said, we're coming, we're going to come in and we do a blood transfusion. So, when the ambulance arrived, though, they checked her blood pressure and said, you know, we can put her in the ambulance but she's probably not going to make it all the way to the hospital. And so, Theresa never wanted to pass in the hospital. Never. And so, we made the decision not to go. I called the family and not only was I there, but a good part of the family was there. Alphonse was not, he had left with my daughter to go to the coast. It was the day after school ended and so he wasn't there, which looking back again, I think that was a good thing. I was able to tell her goodbye. I was able to tell her I was going to take care of Alphonse. That seemed to relax her at the time, but she just she's went to sleep. It was a very gentle, very gentle going and the family was there. We were able to pray together and. So, I couldn't have asked for a better way for her to pass because it was on her terms. It was in the place where she wanted to be, and she was surrounded by a lot of the people she loved.

Craig: Well, one thing that I'll always remember about your wife is that woman could pray heaven down and it's almost like she had one foot in heaven anyway. Now, she had moved on and she was healed too.

Steve: She was healed.

Craig: So, Steve, you're now widower and a single dad.

Steve: Yeah.

Craig: Talk about as we have these last few moments, talk about the transition now to this phase of your life.

Steve: Yeah. So, for me, the best part about having Alphonse there was, it gave me a reason to get up every day I had motivation. He didn't have a choice. I didn't have a choice, but that was advantageous to me. So, it gave me a reason to get up. Gave me a reason to get back to work. Give me a reason to get back to a routine, get him on a routine. He was like fifth grade at that time, and he's now a junior in high school. So, we've been doing this for six years now. It's had its ups and downs, raising kids, raising teenagers, transitioned in teenage and not having a mom at home has been tough. There's not been that day-to-day maternal influence. Now he's got again, great support. Theresa's sister has always been his second mama and she's been a great support. Of course, he's got a sister and two sisters in law that adore him. He's got nieces and nephews that adore him. So, he's had great support from that standpoint, but the transition has been tough. Single parenthood is not for the faint of heart for sure.

Craig: Wow. How many years were you guys together?

Steve: We were married 37. She passed away just about three weeks before our 38th anniversary.

Craig: Steve, in closing, as you reflect on those 37 years with this amazing woman, what thoughts come to your mind?

Steve: First of all, thankfulness, because every marriage has their struggles. I've talked about some of the ones here that we had, but man, the relationship far outweighed any of those struggles. I mean, there were times that I wondered if we should go on and but those were way overshadowed by the good times and just having a partner in life, I couldn't have asked for a better one, especially those last two. It was the last 15, 16 years when she was just in her element. So much of Africa, when I look back now, I got a son and I had six years of adventure, it was really the ultimate calling on her life that she got to participate in. I know she wouldn't trade those years for anything and seeing her fully alive was one of the best things that I ever experienced. When you can see your

partner come alive into what is ultimately their purpose in life. She got to experience that.

Craig: Well, Steve, I don't know that there's much I can add to that except my gratitude to you and my appreciation on behalf of our listeners for your vulnerability and sharing your story with us.

Steve: I appreciate you and appreciate the opportunity.