

Wrapped in the Love of the Comforter

(video transcript)

By Karen Spiegelberg

What brings you comfort? Is it some hearty soul food? Is it your big comfy chair and a good book? Maybe it's your favorite sweatshirt and you're relaxing with family and friends.



I'm Karen Spiegelberg. Welcome to *A WORD for Women*—a show by women and for women where we build each other up in our amazing and wonderful God-given roles in life.

Today we're joined by Su Hanson founder of the *Comforter Ministry*. This is a unique ministry that provides comfort to women—women who are dealing with cancer. And it provides comfort in a very unique way both physically and spiritually.

Thanks for joining us today and welcome! Tell us about your ministry, how it began, and I know that you have a very unique Bible passage that's associated with the ministry.

[Su] Well, thank you Karen first of all for asking me to be here. Yes, I do have a very special Bible passage, and it happens to be front and center on the *Comforter Ministry* journal, and if I may, I think I'll just read it from here and share with you 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ."

[Karen] That's beautiful!

[Su] Yes, when I...a passage of some kind was running around in my head for a period of time when all of this was coming together, and when I actually found it, it brought me to tears because it was exactly what I was thinking about and planning. So yes, this is very near and dear to me.

[Karen] And why this...you were diagnosed with cancer when? And when did this all come about?

[Su] Um, over 15 years ago, October of 1996, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and friends and family surrounded me with their love and their support—cards, food, and gifts. One of the gifts I received was a beautiful, and here it is, a beautiful quilted comforter, and as you can see it's all full of hearts. And whenever I was wrapped in it I just always felt like I was wrapped in God's love. Like His arms were just tangibly around me.

So I recovered, recouped, everything's been good and wonderful since then, like I say over 15 years, but a number of years after that, I believe it was the summer of 2002, I learned of a friend in Houston, Texas who had just been diagnosed with cancer. And I can't explain it other than there was this compelling force that I send her this quilt. And it wasn't as though I didn't know other women who had cancer between '96 and 2002, but for whatever reason the first thing I thought of when I heard the news was, "I need to send Margie my quilt."

And so I did and along with a note trying to explain myself, and mentioning that whenever I was wrapped in the quilt how I was wrapped in God's love and I wanted her to have that same feeling. So off it went and it couldn't have been more than three weeks later and I get a phone call from another friend who shares with me that's she's just been diagnosed with breast cancer. Although I didn't say anything, my heart absolutely sank because I thought, "If only I had another quilt!" I could send to Cory so that she can feel wrapped in God's love experience and so forth. And that's when the thoughts started coming and so forth.

And so it was just probably another year of thinking about it and praying on it, feeling led that this was something to put together, and so a friend and I designed a journal that we thought would be wonderful to have God's Word in it—a Gospel message for the recipient, and so the two would go together to a recipient, a woman with cancer. Hoping that she would not only find tangible comfort from the quilt that she would have spiritual and lasting eternal comfort from God's Word inside this journal.

[Karen] That's beautiful. Um, who makes the quilts and how many quilts have been made? How many people have been touched? Tell us more about the women who make the quilts and some of the women who have received the quilts and the journals.

[Su] Well first of all let me very quickly to say I don't make them. And that was really the humorous part about this whole thing because here's this idea in my head and in my heart and then I kind of felt like Moses. I go, like I had to remind Him that "Lord, I don't make quilts. How is this supposed to come about if I'm not making the quilts?"

And again there were people in my life who did make quilts and so I approached three of them, and all three said yes and that's how it started. And now just last week there was another group that joined the ranks of my quilters from California. So we have 68 quilters or quilt groups but that's kind of a deceiving number because some of these quilt groups can have 6, 8, 10, 12 women in them. So I'm being very conservative when I say 68 from 18 states that have made 240 quilts that have comforted over 330 women from 31 states and Canada.

[Karen] Is there, over the course of time, you must get a lot of stories from women, a lot of letters. Is there maybe one, one of your favorites? You must have many favorites, but is there one of your favorites that you would like to share?

[Su] Oh, there are so many! I've jokingly said, I don't know when this could happen, but I could write a book just on the quilters, just on the recipients—there are just so many wonderful stories. I don't know that there can be just one, but I think I can throw out a number of things that might bring it all together as far as the recipients go.

They're from all walks of life, all ages—they all have their story. And that's the thing to remember, they all have their own story. You can't throw them all into one group. But I would say that the biggest thing that awes me is how inspirational they all are. Here you think you're doing this, this work of comfort and compassion as so forth, and reaching out to them with God's love and whatever, but when you read what they write or talk to you, you are the one who benefits, they are a blessing to you. But the inspiring words, the witness, while they are at the clinic in the chair while they are getting the chemo. And to their families, I get the journal entries from the husbands, from the sons, from daughters and sisters, and they just want you to know how wonderful their loved one was or is. I know; it's very emotional.

And preparing for this, I must say I spent a lot of time yesterday crying. But anyway, I think that's what stands out to me the most is how awe-inspiring they are and what wonderful Christian women they are—mothers, daughters, wife and so forth.

[Karen] I myself have requested a quilt from you for a friend of mine, and she is on the mend now and doing well and very much appreciative of your quilt and extra prayers. There's a website you can go to.

[Su] I would encourage you to go there, www.comforterministry.com You would go to "how the ministry works" and there are three different sections there that you can click on. If you're a recipient say and you lost your cover letter or you're just not sure what you should do or you just have something to share, you can click on that. If you are a quilter or any kind of participating—it isn't just quilting that I need in participation. If you would like to request one [a quilt], so again there are three different areas to click on and fill out the forms and I'll take it from there.

[Karen] Well, thanks for being with us.

[Su] Thank you.

[Karen] And praise God for the way the Holy Spirit is using you, it's beautiful. And I think the best way for us to close today is by re-reading that passage in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ."

To me that passage is just, well, comforting.

Thank you for joining us on *A WORD for Women*.

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