

## CHAPTER —✦ ELEVEN ✦—

**T**he next day Bob gave Catherine a full account of the Shirley Russo interview. “Now I want your reaction to this whole affair. Your opinion means a lot to me.”

Catherine said, “Switching parties is a mighty big step and it has ruined the careers of some who have done it. However, in your case it could work all right. Everyone would know that you were switching because of a matter of deeply held principle and not for personal gain. So I don’t think anyone would consider you to be a turncoat.”

“What do you think is right morally?”

“I am not sure it is a moral issue. Bob, there is no doubt that your convictions are more in keeping with the present Republican platform, but you could justify staying in the Democratic Party in order to change its position. And for that matter, the Republican platform could change — they might switch to the abortion side. But as a practical matter, we would have to admit these two points. One, for the fore-

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seeable future, your convictions will be closer to the Republicans than to the Democrats, and two, you will have no luck trying to change the Democratic platform. So, if there is a moral issue here, it must be in favor of switching.”

Bob said, “Okay let’s look at the practical side. Would I have a chance of beating Barbara Bickel for Congress?”

Catherine frowned. “That won’t be easy. Barbara is a smart, tough, energetic politician. But you are just as smart and just as tough, and I believe you could do it. You may be the only one in the district who could beat her. As Shirley said, the pro-abortion people would be so anxious to beat you that they may well engage in over-kill. The right-to-life people will be working their hearts out for you, but their effort will be less obvious, and thus less offensive, but more effective, because it will be mainly on a person to person basis.”

Catherine continued. “But the important thing to remember is that you would have a lot more to win than you would have to lose. The stakes are high and they are all in your favor. If you lose, you are out of the State Senate and you go back to Adamsville to a good law practice, which will be considerably better just because of your race for Congress. But if you win, you will be nationally known and will go to Washington as one of the brightest stars in the Republican Party. Bob, your ‘Drums of Moloch’ speech has already made you a national figure, so your race against Barbara would be the most closely watched congressional race in the whole country. If you win, the whole country will know that you beat a strong Democrat in a heavily Democratic district, and that you beat the whole pro-abortion organization. Richard Fairfield is right. You could very quickly become a leader in the Republican Party. If you could get re-elected two or three times, I really believe that you would have a better shot at the vice-president spot as a Republican than you would as a

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Democrat.”

“You make it sound mighty good, Catherine. Obviously you think I should switch. Tell me, will you join the Republicans too?”

Catherine laughed. “Since we don’t register by party in Missouri, the only people who have to make a public choice are elected officials and candidates. I have considered myself a Democrat all my life, but it has been at least 20 years since I have voted a straight ticket. I have been close enough to the action to know that there are Democrat bums and there are Republican bums. I have tried to avoid voting for bums. I have even voted in the Republican primary a few times. But I see no need for me to make a public switch at this time. Nobody would be interested anyway.

“I do have one request,” Catherine continued. “I have always been fascinated by Washington, D.C. If you do go up there, I would like to have any sort of a job in your Washington office.”

“Catherine, if I am elected to Congress, I want you to be in charge of my Washington office. In fact, I don’t think I would run unless I could count on you for that job.”

“Don’t worry. You can count on me — even if I have to become a dyed-in-the-wool Republican.”

Bob said, “I want to get this thing settled one way or the other, and I need to talk to my wife, my parents, and my law partner. And I need some time to pray about it. I believe I will take off for Adamsville. Call Maria and tell her that we have another big decision to make and that I am on my way home. Ask her to invite Mom and Dad over for supper tonight. Maria may be over at Jacob’s school, but should be home before long. Keep trying until you get her. Thanks Catherine. If the Lord is willing, I’ll see you Monday with the decision all made.”

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After supper that evening, Matthew, Hannah, and Maria listened as Bob related his conversations with Shirley Russo, Richard Fairfield, and Catherine.

“Well, that is the whole amazing story,” Bob concluded. “I thought of the verses in Proverbs, chapter 3, which say, ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths.’ I sure need some insight beyond my own and I sure need my path straightened out so I can see where I am going. Mom, I remembered your Bible School lesson a couple of weeks ago. You gave us four ways to know God’s will — like four lower lights we could line up to guide us into the harbor. You said God may speak to us through the Bible, through the trend of circumstances, through the advice of Godly friends, and through our own inner impulse. I prayed about this all the way home and now I want the advice of you three Godly friends.”

“Son, I am pleased by your whole approach to this problem,” Hannah said. “It is a big decision to make, and you must not make it for selfish reasons.”

“Changing sides always involves some risk,” Matthew said. “Some people may misunderstand. While we shouldn’t let our lives be controlled by what other people may or may not understand, we must remember that loyalty is important. We should show some loyalty to our political party, but it certainly doesn’t rise to the level of loyalty to God, country, or family. As you know, your mother and I switched to the Democratic Party back in the 1960s. Of course, there was no public announcement. It was just a private decision on our part. We admired the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, and appreciated the support he was getting from the Democrats. So we switched. We simply decided that the issues involved were more important than loyalty to any political party.”

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"Well there is good and bad in both parties," Hannah added. "I am glad we have both parties, because one party rule by either one would be bad for us all."

"Actually, your mother and I voted for the Republican in the last presidential race," Matthew continued. "We were concerned when it came out that the Democrat had vetoed a bill for the pledge of allegiance in the schools, and had authorized weekend passes for convicted murderers, and so forth. I know the news commentators kept saying this was negative campaigning, and that these things were not important, and that we should concentrate on the big issues, but as far as we were concerned these so-called trifling matters told us a lot about a man's character and convictions. We decided that here was a man who considered patriotism to be for the ignorant and unsophisticated, and considered crime to be the fault of society. The big issues may change from day to day, but the man's character and convictions stay the same, and this tells us how he will deal with those changing issues."

Maria said, "Bob and I have never put party loyalty above what we felt was the best interest of the country. I think the Democratic Party has done a lot of good for this country and I am truly sorry that the abortion issue is dividing up along party lines. But if that is the way it is going to be, then we may have to re-consider our party affiliation. It is hard to think of any issue more important to our country than the life or death of thousands of little babies."

Bob said, "Mom, you said I must not act from selfish motives, and I guess that is what is bothering me. Catherine and Richard have convinced me that I have much better opportunity for advancement with the Republicans than I have with the Democrats. They are right when they say I have hit a dead end. After that 'Drums of Moloch' speech I am not going anywhere with the Democrats. Now here are the Republicans

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dangling all of the kingdoms of the world before me again. Am I being tempted for the wrong reasons?"

Hannah shook her head. "The Republicans are not asking you to go against any of your convictions. As far as we can see now, there are no litmus tests that you have to pass. If that comes later, you can always say no."

Maria said, "Honey, we all know that you would not be acting from selfish motives or for personal gain. Your big concern is for the babies of America. If you had wanted to act selfishly, all you had to do was vote against HB 160, and you were practically guaranteed a seat in Congress and a great political future. When you made your 'Drums of Moloch' speech, you thought you were practically ending your political career. You didn't have the faintest idea that you might be promoting a career in the Republican Party. All that came later. Bob, you haven't made one selfish move throughout this whole affair.

"So let's look at where we are now," Maria continued. "I have been around the news business long enough to know that, in the eyes of the newsmen, you are a really hot item. After what you did up there on the floor of the Senate, they can't ignore you even if they want to. If you switch parties and run against Barbara Bickel, who was your main opponent in the big battle on the Senate floor, it will be a sensational story. The fact that they will expect Barbara to win, will cause them to give even more coverage to your race. They will want everyone to know about it because they will expect the outcome to be a great victory for the pro-abortion cause. And then when you win, and I believe you can win, think what a tremendous victory that will be for the unborn babies of America. Maybe some of these politicians, both Democrats and Republicans, who have been leaving the pro-life cause like rats deserting a sinking ship, will decide that the ship isn't

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sinking after all. Bob, your victory could refresh the whole pro-life movement."

Bob nodded his head. "Honey, as usual, what you say makes good sense. There would be a lot riding on a Hill v. Bickel race. To get in the race, and draw all that publicity, and then lose would be a small set-back for me, but it would be a great tragedy for the babies. So such a race would put a lot of pressure, not just on me, but on all of us."

Maria smiled. "I have never known you to run from pressure, or to get into anything without intending to win. And don't worry about me. I can take my share of the pressure. I have seen a little of it in the news rooms over the years. I'll be in this battle with you all the way."

Matthew said, "Son, this little wife of yours is just as smart as she is pretty. I believe she has about said it all. Let me add just a little more. I remember a couple of months back when you two were all excited about what you could do to help our people and to improve race relations and to help our country, if you could just reach some high government office. Well, all that still holds true. You could do it just as well as a Republican as you could as a Democrat, maybe better. So you may once again be in a position to perform a great public service. Now if this also advances your own career, there is nothing wrong with that. In fact you can't perform the public service unless you do advance your own career."

"I agree," said Hannah. "If God sees fit to bless you with high office, you should rejoice and you should use that office to serve Him. You are going about this in the right way — seeking God's will. If all the lower lights line up, then you should let them guide you in. If you do decide to switch parties and file for Congress, your father and I will help you all we can. I think I have made talks in just about every county in this district, and I am willing to make a lot more. Give this a

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lot of prayer. Don't get in a hurry and run ahead of God, but if you are convinced that you know His will, don't hesitate to act. Let's pray about this right now."

After the four of them knelt and prayed earnestly for several minutes, Matthew said, "Thanks for the good dinner, Maria, and thanks to both of you for including us in this big decision. We appreciate being made a part of this. Now it is time old folks were in bed, so we will say 'good night'."

The next day Bob told Sherman Miller that he needed his counsel and advice on a matter that would take some time to talk about. Sherm said, "Why don't you and Maria come over after supper? My wife has a club meeting, but the three of us can talk as long as you want."

That evening, Bob, Maria, and Sherm sat in the Miller living room as Bob brought Sherm up to date on the whole Shirley Russo proposal.

Sherm said, "Well, being your partner is exciting to say the least. I think it is a great idea. Bob, you should be a Republican and I think you would have a great future in the party."

Bob laughed. "Sherm, I appreciate your enthusiasm. But do you think you could be a little prejudiced?"

"Of course I am. I am prejudiced in favor of the Republican Party and I am prejudiced in favor of you. That is why I want you to switch. And I think you could win. Senator Fairfield is right. This district isn't as Democratic as most people think. You were away in college at the time, so you probably don't remember, but I was the Republican chairman of this district about 8 or 10 years ago. I know committee people in every county in the district, and I know a lot about the political complexion of the whole district. I can give you some help, especially in the primary."

"Do you know Barbara Bickel?" Bob asked. "She will make

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a strong candidate.”

“I just know her when I see her,” Sherm replied. “But I have heard a lot about her, and I would say that you and Barbara are on opposite sides of almost every issue. Abortion would be the biggest issue in your race, but by no means the only issue. I know this district well, and I can say that your convictions are more in line with what the voters believe than are hers. Your job would be to get that across to the voters. I think you can do it.”

Bob said, “As you say, abortion would be the big issue, and if I switch parties, that would be the main reason for it. But would I really help the abortion cause by switching parties? Suppose the next Republican convention adopted a pro-abortion plank in their platform? I would be right back where I started, in a pro-abortion party. If I stay where I am, I would still be in the state Senate and could help with more legislation restricting abortion.”

Sherm said, “It is true that we have plenty of pro-abortion Republicans — some of them recent deserters from the pro-life side. I am sure the next convention will see a strong move to water down the pro-life plank in our platform. But Republican Congressman Robert M. Hill would have a lot to say about that. Having just defeated the whole pro-abortion camp, in what is considered to be a strong Democratic district, you would be a powerful voice in favor of keeping our strong pro-life plank. And Bob, that could be extremely important. It is vital to the whole pro-life movement, that at least one of the major political parties stay on their side. If both the Republicans and the Democrats officially endorse abortion, there isn't much hope for the unborn babies, is there? You could be the very man who keeps that from happening.”

Maria said, “I agree with Sherm. Helping to keep the

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Republican Party in the pro-life camp could be the very job that God has had in mind for you all along. Remember when David Mullins quoted old Mordecai from the book of Esther, 'And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' Maybe David had it right, but was a little off in his timing."

Bob smiled. "Okay, you both are making good sense. But if I get in this race, with so much at stake for the pro-life cause, I will be duty bound to make a 100% effort to win. I won't be much help to the firm of Miller and Hill for most of next year. It doesn't seem fair to you, Sherm."

"We won't worry about that. In the first place, I know you well enough to know that some way or another you are going to keep your files up to date. In the second place, your well-publicized race for Congress will make our firm well-known all over the state and will bring us some good law business. But we will need more help. In fact we already need help, and I have been keeping my eyes open for a young lawyer that we can bring in on a straight salary basis. What do you think?"

"I agree," Bob replied. "We should get someone who is settled enough to stay with us, and not go running off to Washington."

Sherm laughed. "I'll keep that in mind."

On the way home Maria said, "Honey, this is more important than just Democrat-Republican politics. We are dealing with the lives of thousands of little babies. You are in a position to help save those lives. I believe God has been guiding us in this direction all along. I think you should run for Congress as a Republican."

Bob nodded his head slowly. "It does seem that Mom's 'lower lights' are lined up and leading in that direction. I agree that this is what God wants us to do. Yes, Maria, I am convinced that this is God's will for us. So let's remember what

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Jesus said. 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.' "

Maria put her hand on his shoulder. "Honey, I know we are in for some tough times, but we will not look back. We'll give this our very best, and, with God's help, we will win."

