

----- **SPOILER ALERT** -----

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One of our local Christian radio stations in St. Louis, JoyFM 99.1, has broadcast a series of personal testimonies—“My Story in 99 Seconds”. As an exercise in converting my book into a “full spoiler” summary, I accepted the challenge to prepare the following 99-second story. Blessings!

It Was Out of Love – In 99 seconds

In 1976, within a few weeks of a “blind phone date” with my future wife Melissa, I was declaring my intent to marry a woman I had only seen in a photograph. When I learned the shocking truth that Melissa didn’t appear as the photo I had fallen in love with—I truly believed her explanation that she delayed our meeting for over six months as she hoped to recover from a severe medical reaction. With God’s help, I forgave Melissa of what I believed the deception to be, and we were married six months later.

Through joyful and difficult times, God blessed our marriage and enabled us to be a blessing to many others. Melissa was my best friend and the love of my life. After a 20-year battle with diabetes, Melissa’s health declined and within weeks of her death in 2007, she finally confessed to me the full deception she had kept secret for over 30 years. I learned that she was seventeen years older than I was and her “niece” and “two nephews”, about my same age, were her children. “Melissa” was not her real name, there never was any “medical reaction”, and the woman in the photograph was not Melissa. As a young man when we met, I’m certain that if I knew the truth at the beginning, we never would have been married.

Thankfully, Melissa’s deathbed revelation enabled me to forgive her and to help reassure her of God’s forgiveness and eternal salvation through her faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

As I processed the grief of losing my wife of over three decades, I also tried to understand God’s will in all of this. Was it His will that Melissa would deceive me into falling in love with her? No, that was Melissa’s decision. But God in His infinite wisdom and grace turned a bad thing to good—and I am now able to share my faith in Jesus with renewed vigor, as I see His hand through it all.

And that’s my story in 99 seconds.