

LINDELL RECOVERY NETWORK

# DIVORCE

*Beginning Again—From Brokenness*

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# THE LINDELL KEYS FOR RECOVERY HANDBOOK

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*The Marriage and Family Series*

# DIVORCE

*Beginning Again—From Brokenness*

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# A PERSONAL NOTE

*from Mike Lindell*

My passion is to see people recover from addiction! And that's why I'm proud to partner with author June Hunt and Hope for the Heart, and so excited to use the *Keys for Living* as part of the Lindell Recovery Network. People everywhere are struggling with addictions, wounds, and challenges in life. They need hope. They need help. And the *Keys for Living* provide that hope and real answers from God's Word.

This is the best material I've seen in biblical counseling and caregiving . . . with over 100 topics that speak to almost every presenting problem. There's nothing else like them. They take God's Word and apply it to life's challenges.

The *Keys for Living* are exceptional and outstanding resources for those who need help in overcoming the obstacles they face, and above all, to find Christ.

Read this book. Share it with others. Ask God in prayer to make it real in your life.

May God bless you as you do it!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Lindell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Lindell

Lindell Recovery Network



# INTRODUCTION

To this day, I still remember seeing the smile on my sister's lips, but not in her eyes. Hearing the right words of welcome, but with a void in her voice. Yes, I remember seeing, yet saying nothing.

I remember thinking, *She's smiling . . . but she's not. She appears present . . . but she's not. She looks together, but she's not.* Oh, I remember thinking a world of words to say, yet saying nothing.

How I wish I had said something. I wish I had spoken words of care, words of concern, words of compassion . . . or at least tried. Yes, I did care. I was concerned. I felt compassion, yet still I said nothing. When I was growing up, we weren't permitted to speak up and speak out. So I stayed silent.

Now, I hear the word *divorce*—"They're getting a divorce." My heart sinks . . . my heart hurts. Eventually, at long last, I do speak. "I'm so very, very sorry. What can I do to help?"

My endeared sister responds, "Don't worry about me. I'll be okay. Just reach out to my girls." (Good—here's something I can do for Helen.)

So I call her—a number of times—I bring food, I take flowers, I give little gifts to express my love. Periodically, she exclaims, "Remember to reach out to the girls!"

Then one evening after speaking in Kansas City, I receive an exasperated call. "Why won't you do the only thing I've asked you to do? Why won't you reach out to the girls?"

I'm stunned. I know I'm reaching out—reaching out with genuine love. The problem is, I'm reaching out to *her*, not to her little ones. And Helen is right.

Interesting—Jesus says, "*Whoever has ears, let them hear*" (Matthew 11:15). Clearly, I had ears, but I didn't have ears to hear what Helen was saying. Pay attention, encourage, affirm their tender hearts. As children, they also experience the pain of separation and the devastation of divorce. Yet they don't know how to process the pain.

When I return to Dallas with Easter fast approaching, I buy two brightly colored Easter baskets and one humongous bag of bubble gum, each individually wrapped. My friend Eleanor and I pick up the excited pair for a sleepover and they are tickled pink! The next morning we venture outside for the infamous "Bubble Gum Hunt."

Kathryn and Kimberly, ages four and two, giggle and run and find the gum—hidden between flowers, behind trees, below branches, beneath bushes. Younger Kimmy can't seem to say "bubble" gum so we adapt and have the best "Gubble Gum Hunt" ever!

I'll never forget the gleeful giggles searching everywhere for the last piece of "gubble" gum. Nor will I forget how I missed the cry of my sister's heart.

The Bible says, "*Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others*" (Philippians 2:4 NLT). From that point on, I became especially sensitive to the needs of these two nieces—not just their physical needs, but also their emotional and spiritual needs.

As Helen was going through her own agony, I clearly see how clueless I was about justifying my actions—simply doing what I thought was most loving—toward her. No, what was most loving to her was to be an encourager to her children. In truth, I needed to see my blind spot.

How easy to discount children of divorce. "They can't understand, they're too little, they're too young" . . . and the list goes on. Yet the common pain inside of kids is "No one talks with me about it." "No one explains what's really happening." "No one sees the hole in my heart." Even adult children of divorce continue to carry this pain. Only in exposing these wounds and treating them can they begin to heal.

We need to care enough to listen to the hurting and ask sensitive questions like "What are you feeling?" If we don't open the door to dialogue, they can feel invisible and ignored, depressed and dismissed, at fault and to blame. The role of those who care can be invaluable—literally life-saving and life-changing and it becomes precious when God puts us in this place.

When relationships are torn apart by divorce, I pray you and I will be used by God to "*encourage one another and build each other up*" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). And I genuinely hope we will have ears to hear and eyes to see how to encourage those in pain and how to secure the hurting in the love of the Lord.

June Hunt  
*Founder, Hope For The Heart*

# DIVORCE

## *Beginning Again—From Brokenness*

*“How could this be happening? I can’t believe it’s ending! What do I do now? Our marriage is over.”*

The papers lie on the table. Two lines are left unsigned. Two lives, once joined “until death do us part” . . . will they now be forever split apart?

Divorce is one of the most devastating experiences in life. People never enter marriage planning on being divorced. Within the heart of a newlywed, there is no thought, *Someday I’ll be a divorce statistic*. Couples who want to spend their lives together believe, “We will stay together, endure difficulties together, and live happily ever after—together.” But, regrettably, that’s not always reality.

Lying next to the words in the divorce decree is the Word of God—filled with words of help and hope and healing. The contrast between what is contained in these pages is poignant . . . the messages miles apart. The words in one can cut like a knife . . . the words in the other can heal the heart.

In the shadow of difficult decisions, the psalmist gives this assurance about the Word of God . . .

*“Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.”*  
(PSALM 119:105)



# DEFINITIONS



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*“Does God hate  
me because I’ve  
been divorced?”  
Absolutely not!”*



## Until Death Do Us Part: The Popular Pastor's Story<sup>1</sup>

Imagine the heartache in the headline: “Troubled Clergy Marriages”<sup>2</sup>. . . then reading the article only to find the focus is on *you*!

Picture the pressure all pastors feel to “*shepherd the flock of God*” (1 Peter 5:2 ESV). Yet this shepherd—not the flock—is the one in trouble.

Ministers are known for setting moral standards, sharing scriptural truth, encouraging and counseling, marrying and burying, and caring with concern.

This shepherd feeds his flock insightful truths straight from the Word of God. He shares scriptural truths on marriage and divorce and other timely topics. However, something seems amiss in the shadow of the steeple.

One day, one of his flock strays far away, then this sheep makes a stunning decision—she files for separation—and she is *his* wife! Later, with no biblical grounds—no immorality—she decides to end their marriage in divorce. How could this possibly be?

Some pastors have fallen victim to a wife's infidelity—and a sexual relationship with another man ultimately ends their marriage. Then, because of church doctrine, divorced men aren't allowed to serve as pastors. Some godly pastors discover themselves divorced, not only from their life partner, but also from their pulpits and their people.

Yet a wife may choose to divorce her pastor/husband for other reasons. She might say, “My husband isn't married to me, but only to the church!” She may quote Scripture: “The Bible says . . . ‘*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and give himself up for her*’ (Ephesians 5:25); however, I feel emotionally abandoned, so I have the right to divorce!”

Tragically, many wives feel neglected and ignored, believing their husband’s ministry matters more than they do. Their perspective is personal, their disconnect is deep, and their intent to divorce is decisive.

In this story—despite professional counseling, despite attempts to reconcile, despite the pastor’s hope—his wife maintains her decision for their divorce to become final. “I was stunned by the news . . . I didn’t want a divorce. I didn’t know exactly how to proceed to keep a divorce from happening. I didn’t know who to tell or how I should tell them. . . . The divorce my wife sought was legally granted to her.”<sup>3</sup>

Although the announcement of the divorce creates a major stir, ultimately the church stands by the pastor, choosing to keep him in the pulpit. The pastor feels encouraged and supported by the church. “Yes, I am saddened that my marriage ended in divorce. No, I do not live with an abiding sense of regret. . . . Regret is rooted in unresolved guilt. I knew I had peace with God.”<sup>4</sup>

Through the years, this man has kept his commitment: As long as his ex-wife is alive, he remains unmarried. Above all, he resolves . . .

*“I will fulfill my vows to the LORD  
in the presence of all his people.”*

(PSALM 116:14)

## What Is the Biblical Perspective of Divorce?

The meaning and means of divorce vary worldwide. In some countries and cultures, divorce is virtually unheard of—or even illegal. In others, it has become quite common. In some places, the hearts of people still hearken to God, while in others, hearts have become hardened to His Word and spiritual ears are deaf to His voice.

The perspective people have on divorce is influenced by multiple factors. However, God’s perspective on divorce is based not on cultural norms, parental views, or personal preferences. It is based solely on God’s virtuous character and His perfect purposes.

*“I, the LORD, speak the truth; I declare what is right.”*

(ISAIAH 45:19)

### Formal Divorce

- A legal judicial declaration that terminates a marriage contract<sup>5</sup>

*“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce’” (MATTHEW 5:31).*

### Emotional Divorce

- The result of a hardened heart toward one’s mate, creating an inability to give and receive love

*“Jesus replied, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning’” (MATTHEW 19:8).*

## Old Testament Word Definitions

**An Old Testament Hebrew word** for the concept of divorce is *shalach*, which means “to send away.”<sup>6</sup> This Hebrew word is used in Jeremiah 3:1, *“If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again?”*

**The Old Testament Hebrew verb** *garash* means “to drive out, cast out or put away.”<sup>7</sup> This Hebrew word is used in Numbers 30:9, *“Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her.”*

**The Old Testament refers** to a legal bill of divorcement or a certificate of divorce.

*“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house”* (DEUTERONOMY 24:1 NKJV).

- In the first century, “the Schools of Shammai and Hillel took opposite views of the biblical text, Deuteronomy 24:1, which allows a man to send his wife away ‘if she find no favour, in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her.’ The phrase ‘unseemly thing,’ is literally ‘nakedness of a thing,’ which the School of Shammai explained to mean, ‘A man may not divorce his wife unless he discovered her to be unfaithful to him. The School of Hillel, on the other hand, understood the phrase in the sense of ‘anything unseemly’ and declared: ‘He may divorce her even if she spoils his cooking.’ . . . The more lenient opinion of the Hillelites prevailed and was adopted as law.”<sup>8</sup>
- Conversely, in Matthew 5:31, when Jesus stated that a man must give his wife a certificate (or bill) of divorcement, He was clarifying God’s heart in allowing a Bill of Divorcement in the first place.
- In the case of marital unfaithfulness, divorce is permitted in the eyes of the Lord. If the husband failed to give his wife a Bill of Divorcement, the marriage vows were not severed. Women in that time could not live independently. The Bill of Divorcement severed the marriage vows and removed the obligation of those vows, diminishing the stigma. If a woman was merely “sent away,” then the husband would cause her to commit adultery when she married someone else. Therefore, a man who married a woman who had a Bill of Divorcement was not an adulterer.

*“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife  
must give her a certificate of divorce.’*

*But I [Jesus] tell you that anyone who divorces his wife,  
except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery,  
and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”*

(MATTHEW 5:31–32)

## God Hates Divorce

**Question:** “The Bible says, ‘God hates divorce.’ Does God hate me because I’ve been divorced?”

**Answer:** Absolutely not! The Bible does say that God hates divorce but nowhere does it say He hates the divorcée. God doesn’t hate the people involved in divorce—He hates the pain involved in forsaking the covenant relationship that He intended to use as an illustration of His everlasting love and commitment to us.

Another reason God hates divorce is because of what it does to people. Divorce . . .

- Severs a sacred covenant
- Rips hearts and lives apart
- Causes pain and loss
- Damages people for years
- Devastates families for generations
- Breaks up extended families
- Steals a normal childhood
- Robs families of security and stability
- Divides families who must “choose sides”
- Stirs up anger, bitterness, unforgiveness

God looks with compassion on all people everywhere and desires to save everyone from the brokenness in their lives and the wounds divorce inflicts. No wonder the apostle Paul gave this instruction:

*“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”*

(EPHESIANS 4:31)

## One Flesh

**Question:** “I’ve read that in marriage *‘two will become one flesh’* (Mark 10:8). If my spouse and I get a divorce, would we not simply become two separate people again?”

**Answer:** You have always been two whole, complete people, but you were joined together as “one flesh” in marriage.

- Imagine two pieces of construction paper that have been glued together for a long period of time—one red and one blue. If you try to separate the bonded paper, both will separate, but pieces of blue will be left on the red and pieces of red left on the blue.
- In marriage, two people “leave and cleave” as they “leave” their families of origin to “cleave” to one another in a new family unit. Thus, they are spiritually joined together.

When a marriage union is severed, both spouses are impacted for a lifetime.

*“For this reason a man will leave his father  
and mother and be united to his wife,  
and the two will become one flesh.’  
So they are no longer two, but one flesh.  
Therefore what God has joined together,  
let no one separate.”*

(MARK 10:7–9)

## What Is Separation?

Separation sometimes occurs when a couple experiences difficulty in their marriage relationship but they do not want to divorce. Separation serves as a “cooling off” period and a time for individual reflection and examination. It also allows time for the couple to receive counseling, coaching, or mentoring to help them resolve problem areas in themselves and their marriage.

Although a separation may occur within a marriage, nothing separates us from the love of Christ.

*“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

(ROMANS 8:38–39)

**Separation** in the context of marriage means a husband and wife live apart from one another.

*“To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife”* (1 CORINTHIANS 7:10–11).

**Separation** in a marriage context is never ideal, but is sometimes necessary—as in the case of abuse. If a spouse or child is suffering any type of abuse, it is appropriate to separate from the abuser for protection. Reconciliation should not be attempted until appropriate help and treatment has been proven to be effective.

*“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered”* (PROVERBS 22:24).

## Separation without Divorce

**Question:** “If a wife separates from her violent husband, is she not ultimately divorcing her husband or at least opening the door to divorce?”

**Answer:** No, the husband is the one who has opened the door to divorce by his violence, not the wife. He is accountable to God for his own sin as well as the consequences of his sin.

- Separation is not divorce and does not open the door to divorce, but instead opens the door to safety and obedience to God.

*“The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty” (PROVERBS 27:12).*

- Separation is siding with God regarding His hatred of violence.

*“The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion” (PSALM 11:5).*

- Separation from an abusive husband is trusting God to do what is best for her marriage rather than trusting in anything she might do.

*“Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on their lips. The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception” (PROVERBS 14:7–8).*

- Separation is protection.

*“But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one” (2 THESSALONIANS 3:3).*

- Separation is boundaries enforced.

*“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them” (TITUS 3:10).*

## Dating during Separation

**Question:** “I’ve been separated for more than a year. Some people have said dating would be good for me. Am I free to date now?”

**Answer:** Since you’re not free to remarry, neither are you free to date. The fact is, you are still married, and the purpose of separation is to give both of you the opportunity to focus and work on the individual attitudes and actions that harm your marriage relationship. Your goal is to move toward reconciliation, not divorce or dating. Keep your focus on what God desires for you, not the opinions of others.

*“Those who live according to the flesh  
have their minds set on what the flesh desires;  
but those who live in accordance with the Spirit  
have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”*

(ROMANS 8:5)

## What Is the Biblical Perspective of Marriage?

When God created Eve for Adam and presented her to him, His desire was that their marriage relationship mirror the loving covenant relationship God desires to have with all who place their faith in Him and yield their lives to His control. In their covenant marriage union, the man and the woman would become one—a living picture of God’s desire for marriage throughout all future generations.

Just as a beautiful flower garden doesn’t spring up in a desert wasteland, beautiful marriages also require cultivation—weeding out what threatens to overtake, trimming back what becomes overgrown, watering with the wise counsel of God’s Word, and shining the light of blessing through prayer.

But when relationships wither in the absence of intentional effort, or come under external attack, or misplaced priorities are allowed permanence . . . marriages meant to exist “until death do us part” can sometimes struggle to survive.

*“Make my joy complete by  
being like-minded, having the same love,  
being one in spirit and of one mind.”*

(PHILIPPIANS 2:2)

**Marriage** is a covenant agreement in which a man and a woman are legally and spiritually joined together as husband and wife.

*“She is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. . . . Do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth” (MALACHI 2:14–15).*

**Marriage** includes the uniting of two, one male and one female, into one flesh.

*“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (GENESIS 2:24).*

**Marriage** is symbolic of God’s covenant commitment to His people.

*“I [God] will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD” (HOSEA 2:19–20).*

**Marriage** is a picture of Christ’s sacrificial love for His bride, the church.

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (EPHESIANS 5:25).*

**Marriage** is designed to be permanent until the death of one of the partners.

*“By law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him” (ROMANS 7:2).*

## Annulment or Divorce?

**Question:** “I married a man who misrepresented himself to me as a Christian. He was not able to consummate the marriage. As a Christian, should I seek an annulment or file for divorce?”

**Answer:** Technically, either option might be available to you, depending on the laws in your local jurisdiction. The difference between a divorce and an annulment is that divorce is a formal declaration ending a marriage, while an annulment declares that the marriage was never valid. Common reasons typically considered grounds for annulment are fraud, bigamy, or mental incompetence. Specific examples include:

- Consent of the marriage was based on fraud, force, or threat. Fraud is also hiding the fact of having children from a prior marriage, a criminal history, serious health issues or sexually transmitted disease, and misrepresentation, such as marrying only to gain citizenship or the existence of a prior marriage at the time of a subsequent marriage (bigamy).
- Bigamy, knowingly marrying a person while you are legally married to someone else, is a crime in most places throughout the world.
- At least one spouse was under the age of consent without required consent of a parent or legal authority.
- At least one spouse was under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the marriage.
- At least one spouse was mentally incompetent at the time of the marriage.
- At least one spouse was physically incapable of consummating the marriage and the other spouse was unaware of the impotency prior to the marriage.

- Two persons were too closely related in the family to marry (for example, whole or half siblings, first cousins).

*“A man is not to marry his father’s wife;  
he must not dishonor his father’s bed.”*

(DEUTERONOMY 22:30)

## New Believer

**Question:** “When I married, my husband and I weren’t Christians. Now that I’m a Christian, my husband and I are unequally yoked. Should I divorce and marry a Christian?”

**Answer:** No. From the beginning, marriage has been an institution initiated by God. Any divorce results in breaking a covenant bond that God has established. The lifetime marriage contract has been transcultural from the most pagan tribe to the most advanced civilization. Realize, your changed life and testimony could be the cause of your husband coming to Christ.

God’s heart is that your relationship with Him will be a positive witness to your husband and create a desire in his heart to know God and have a saving relationship with Christ as well.

*“If a woman has a husband who is not  
a believer and he is willing to live with her,  
she must not divorce him. . . .*

*How do you know, wife, whether  
you will save your husband?”*

(1 CORINTHIANS 7:13, 16)

## What Are Biblical Grounds for Divorce?<sup>9</sup>

For many who divorce, the grounds (or reasons) for divorce vary. For some, it may be alienation of affection, abandonment, desertion, infidelity, or simply “irreconcilable differences.” But do these reasons form a *biblical* basis for divorce? The Pharisees asked Jesus that very question.

*“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”*

(MATTHEW 19:3)

### Bill of Divorcement<sup>10</sup>

**The document of divorce** was originally a legal certificate clearing a woman of the stigma of adultery, thus protecting her position in society.

**This legal divorce** was created to *protect the innocent party*, usually the woman when her husband sent her away for reasons other than adultery. (An adulteress would have been stoned.)

**The divorce document** gave women the legal status to remarry.

**If a husband sent his innocent wife away** without the Bill of Divorcement and she remarried, he would have caused her to commit adultery because her original marriage vows had never been severed.

**Jesus made it clear** that the Bill of Divorcement was a law written only to regulate the result of sin—a hardened heart, which destroyed the most sacred relationship—marriage.

**Many theologians believe** that the Bible specifically makes allowance for divorce in two situations:

- Sexual infidelity

*“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery”* (MATTHEW 19:9).

– Physical abandonment

*“If the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace” (1 CORINTHIANS 7:15).*

## Divorce Prior to Salvation

**Question:** “Before I became a Christian, I divorced and remarried. Should I divorce my second spouse and go back to my first mate?”

**Answer:** No. The Bible clearly says that remarriage to the first mate is unacceptable after marriage to another. God’s heart in giving these commands was centered around the need to caution against the complicated consequences of divorce.

Consider the difficulties in relationship dynamics that could arise if a couple divorced, married others, divorced again, and then reunited. Certainly some grace-filled people with truly forgiving hearts might be able to make such a remarriage work. However, the compounded complexities and challenges in their lives could have been avoided had they been able to resolve their difficulties *prior* to divorcing.

*“If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, <sup>2</sup>and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, <sup>3</sup>and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, <sup>4</sup>then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.”*

(DEUTERONOMY 24:1–4)

## Marrying a Divorcée

**Question:** “If I marry a divorced woman, does Matthew 5:32 really mean that I’m committing adultery?”

**Answer:** Taking a very literal view, if the woman’s ex-husband was sexually unfaithful, then she had biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage, thus your marriage to her would not be adultery. Likewise, if her ex-husband remarried after their divorce, she would be free to marry.

*“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”*

(MATTHEW 5:32)

## Marital Unfaithfulness

**A faithful spouse is permitted** (not commanded) to divorce a mate for marital unfaithfulness (fornication).

**This permission** was given to protect the faithful spouse.

**The Greek word** for marital unfaithfulness is *porneia*, which means “any illicit sexual intercourse.”<sup>11</sup>

**Sexual infidelity** is an act that automatically breaks the marital covenant.

**Jesus does not** *advise* divorce, but *allows* it. Some faithful mates are led to stay in a marriage and pray that the unfaithful partner will repent.

*“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”*

(MATTHEW 19:9)

## Abandonment

**Question:** Question: “I feel that my mate has deserted me emotionally. Is this a biblical reason for divorce?”

**Answer:** As painful as rejection is, the Bible does not identify it as a valid cause for divorce. The abandonment passage in 1 Corinthians 7:15–17 refers to *physical* desertion by an *unbelieving* mate, not emotional disconnection from a spouse. According to these verses . . .

- The *Christian believer* should not seek a divorce from an unbelieving spouse.

*“If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him”* (1 CORINTHIANS 7:12–13).

- The *believer* should not manipulate the unbeliever into staying in the marriage or manipulate the situation to drive the unbeliever away.

*“If the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances”* (1 CORINTHIANS 7:15).

## What Is God’s Heart on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage?<sup>12</sup>

The proposal was planned and captured on film. The wedding was in the works for months—every last detail carefully considered. The honeymoon, their first home, their first anniversary . . . almost everything mapped out, well in advance.

But as the years go by, the newlyweds get busy and forget to prioritize the most important part of their marriage—each other. Their focus turns to what’s missing in their lives rather than who in their lives is in need of affirmation and appreciation. They stop putting each other first and seek only what they can *get* rather than what they can *give*.

If only they had kept Christ at the center of their life together, how different could their lives have been?

*“A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”*

(ECCLESIASTES 4:12)

## God’s Heart on Marriage

**God presents** marriage as good and worthy of His favor.

*“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord”* (PROVERBS 18:22).

**God sees** the person you married as being your life partner.

*“They are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate”* (MATTHEW 19:6).

**God portrays** marriage as a picture of the sacrificial love of Christ (being willing to lay down your personal rights for your mate).

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”* (EPHESIANS 5:25).

**God set apart** the marriage relationship as the means by which He would bring children into the world and populate the earth He had created.

*“God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth”* (GENESIS 1:28 NLT).

## God’s Heart on Divorce

**God hates divorce.** *“I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel* (Malachi 2:16 NASB). God does not view divorce favorably, as it dissolves the “one flesh” spiritual bond of marriage.

*“Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery” (MARK 10:11–12).*

**God hates divorce** but He also hates sexual immorality and violence: *“Those who love violence, he [God] hates with a passion” (Psalm 11:5);* therefore, God allows for the possibility of separation in such cases.

*“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered . . . I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery” (PROVERBS 22:24; MATTHEW 19:9).*

**God may close His ears** to the prayers of one who breaks a marriage covenant through infidelity.

*“You flood the LORD’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant” (MALACHI 2:13–14).*

**God’s heart is for reconciliation**, even if there has been a divorce.

*“To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife” (1 CORINTHIANS 7:10–11).*

## **God’s Heart on Remarriage after Divorce**

**God allows** remarriage in cases where divorce occurred before the person became a Christian, the person was divorced without biblical grounds and the former mate has died or has had sexual relations with another, the person divorced an adulterous mate, the person’s former unbelieving spouse left the marriage.

*“If the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances” (1 CORINTHIANS 7:15).*

**God guards and protects** the faithful and just, without regard to marital status.

*“He guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones”* (PROVERBS 2:8).

**God heals** the brokenhearted, and He will still accomplish His ultimate purpose for you.

*“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”* (ROMANS 8:28).

**God promises** to meet your needs, whether you remain divorced or you remarry.

*“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus”* (PHILIPPIANS 4:19).

## Filing for Divorce

**Question:** **“My husband says he wants a divorce. Although there has been no adultery by either of us, he told me to file for the divorce. Should I?”**

**Answer:** Definitely not. Often the one wanting a divorce encourages the marriage partner to file so as to be absolved from the guilt of initiating the divorce. Then later, the other spouse can be blamed for the breakup of the marriage. If your husband wants a divorce, then he must be the one to obtain it.

Do not be the one to file for divorce, especially when there are no known biblical grounds for divorce. The Bible says . . .

*“If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage.”*

(1 CORINTHIANS 7:27 NLT)

## Biblical Remarriage

**Question:** “If I have experienced an unwanted divorce, initiated by my mate, am I free to remarry in the eyes of God?”

**Answer:** If your former spouse has died, remarried, or is sexually involved with another person, then biblically your marriage covenant has been broken and you are free to marry a Christian who is also biblically free to marry. However, know that God has a specific plan for your life that may or may not include marriage. Take time to seek His wisdom in all things, especially when considering remarriage.

*“Now to the unmarried and the widows I say:  
It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do.  
But if they cannot control themselves,  
they should marry, for it is better to marry  
than to burn with passion.”*  
(1 CORINTHIANS 7:8–9)



# CHARACTERISTICS



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*“Healing takes time,  
but help and hope are  
found in the Lord.”*



## Surviving Divorce, Thriving in Life: The Georgia Shaffer Story

Imagine learning you have breast cancer at the young age of 38

. . . then six months after surgery your cancer returns.

Imagine hearing the prognosis—just a two percent chance of being alive in 10 years

. . . then being served divorce papers during the fight for your life.

Imagine mothering your nine-year-old son while fighting cancer

. . . then realizing you'll see him graduate high school only if you get that two percent chance.

Imagine chemo, radiation, and a bone marrow transplant

. . . then losing your job because you're simply too weak to work.

Imagine feeling terrified when the divorce is declared final

. . . then realizing your son very likely may be raised by someone else.

Of life's saddest scenarios, few are more heartrending. Yet, consider how you might handle such heavy circumstances.

Meet Georgia Shaffer, whose son is nine-year-old Kyle. These are the type of realities that occupy her thoughts and steal her sleep. With the weight of burdens too heavy to bear, she knows her only hope is Jesus.

Often during her extensive cancer treatments she buries her head in her hands confessing, "This is too hard, God. I can't do this. This is too hard. Please help."<sup>15</sup>

And He does—He always does!

For the first time, Georgia learns to place all her pain in God's hands, and she deepens her dependence on Him. Like never before, Georgia receives the daily strength she desperately needs. Through it all, she comes to understand God's peace in a very personal way. . . . *"What joy for those whose strength comes from the LORD . . . They will continue to grow stronger"* (Psalm 84: 5, 7 NLT).

Georgia begins to grasp that the Lord has given her time to process her losses—to grieve and grow so she can eventually start anew. This avid gardener now asks, "What needs to go . . . what needs to go?"<sup>14</sup>

In keeping a compost pile, Georgia adds everything possible—fallen leaves, wilted flowers, dead plants. Yet in that pile—unseen to the naked eye—are microorganisms that actually promote growth. In much the same way, the losses Georgia has been experiencing are like her compost—heaped into a hefty pile then handed over to God for Him to do his unique work. Now she recognizes how, over time, the grieving process breaks down all that is dead and decaying in order to one day offer a fresh foundation for new growth.

For healing to take place, a choice must be made to address the causes of her anger—every hurt, injustice, fear, and disappointment. She must battle the betrayal, face the fear, and release resentment. In breaking down all the built-up bitterness and pent-up pain, the healing process begins.

Georgia grieves her losses—the loss of income and the loss of the lifestyle she once had. But looking back, she shares, "Honestly, I gained more than I lost. I wouldn't have told you that necessarily when I was in the midst of it. But you gain an inner strength you never knew you had. You gain that close, intimate relationship with God. You gain a sense of what really brings joy, what really brings meaning and fulfillment to your life."<sup>15</sup>

For those who think divorce “ruins” children, consider these words from her son, Kyle, “Mom . . . you taught me to trust in God, to rely on Him, and to never give up hope.”<sup>16</sup>

For those who think divorce has ruined their life, Georgia is quick to respond, “You don’t want to just *go* through the pain, you want to *grow* through it. But first, there is healing. Once you’re healed—you don’t want to just survive in this experience called divorce, you want to then move past that.”<sup>17</sup>

Georgia didn’t just survive, she learned from the Lord to thrive.

*“When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice.”*  
(PROVERBS 29:2)

## What Characterizes a Stable vs. a Stagnant Marriage?

In some countries, divorce is uncommon and divorce rates remain relatively low. But that doesn’t necessarily mean all of those marriages are thriving in a state of “happily ever after.” Sadly, social pressure and threats of scandal may be all that holds some of these marriages together—only to be *endured* rather than *enjoyed*.

Like any relationship, marriages go through many seasons of change. From the first bud of young romance to the fruitfulness of love in full bloom, newlyweds welcome sunny days and weather early storms. Over the years, some couples merely survive while others grow strong through the brisk changes that come when passions begin to cool, the winds of adversity pick up, and calamity falls like autumn leaves.

Many make it through to their winter years, but for some, once the nest is empty, they sometimes struggle to keep the warmth of hearth and home kindled. At odds without an outside distraction, two hearts can grow cold and distant.

Many people imagine a volatile explosion when a marriage ends in divorce. This is true in some cases where passions run high. But when a relationship is stifled and a marriage becomes stagnant, the desire to endure wanes and wedding vows dissolve into a divorce decree. If only more could resolve . . .

*“Let love and faithfulness never leave you;  
bind them around your neck,  
write them on the tablet of your heart.”*

(PROVERBS 3:3)

### Stable vs. Stagnant Marriages

**Stable Marriage:** Good communication

**Stagnant Marriage:** Poor communication/anger or silence

**Stable Marriage:** Sexual intimacy

**Stagnant Marriage:** Sexual apathy or infidelity

**Stable Marriage:** Time together

**Stagnant Marriage:** Time apart

**Stable Marriage:** Honesty

**Stagnant Marriage:** Deception

**Stable Marriage:** Conflict resolution

**Stagnant Marriage:** Conflict escalation

**Stable Marriage:** Financial responsibility

**Stagnant Marriage:** Financial irresponsibility

**Stable Marriage:** Emotional connection

**Stagnant Marriage:** Emotional distance, isolation, or abuse

A prayer of the afflicted person who has grown weak, pours out this lament before the Lord:

*“Hear my prayer, LORD; let my cry for help come to you.”*

(PSALM 102:1)

## What Are Divorce Danger Signs?

Long before one spouse considers moving toward divorce, danger signs are sometimes ignored. Budgets get busted, in-laws intrude, anger escalates, and kids create chaos. Soon criticisms increase as arguments accelerate, and date night becomes a thing of the past. Seemingly small things begin to separate and lead to discontent and disrespect. Eventually, passion pales and love is lost.

How quickly we forget . . .

*“Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.”*

(PROVERBS 10:12)

### Divorce Danger Signs

Consider this list of issues that might signal divorce danger. Place a check mark (✓) beside each that applies to your situation.

- Do you often align yourself with another person against your mate?
- Do you ask others, or expect others to lie for you?
- Do you avoid sexually intimacy?
- Do you typically disagree about important decisions?
- Do you disrespect each other?
- Do you dread being alone with your mate?

- Do you fail to maintain your marriage vows to love, honor, and cherish?
- Do you find yourself avoiding your mate?
- Do you often go through long periods of silence?
- Do you have conversations but fail to communicate on a deep emotional, intellectual, or spiritual level?
- Do you have the same fights over and over?
- Do you hide things from your mate?
- Do you lie to your mate?
- Do you sleep in separate bedrooms?
- Do you spend less time together than ever before?
- Do you spend more time with someone other than your mate?
- Do your thoughts about your mate often turn negative?

If you checked five or more of these questions, consider individual and/or couples counseling to examine the status of your marriage relationship.

## What Losses Are Associated with Divorce?

Divorce is often associated with one word . . . *loss*. A gradual change begins to seep in that soon moves from boredom to discontent. Dislike is followed by distrust, then a desire for divorce. Those suffering the pain of loss echo the cry of the psalmist:

*“May your mercy come quickly to meet us,  
for we are in desperate need.”*

(PSALM 79:8)

## List of Likely Losses

### Before Divorce

- Loss of belief in marriage as a lifelong commitment
- Loss of companionship
- Loss of confidence in your spouse's love
- Loss of the future as expected or planned
- Loss of hope that your marriage can be saved
- Loss of security due to abandonment
- Loss of trust because of betrayal

*“When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him” (DEUTERONOMY 4:30).*

### During Divorce

- Loss of the intact family
- Loss of financial stability
- Loss of home or other property
- Loss of the marriage itself
- Loss of peace due to anger and unforgiveness
- Loss of security from rejection or jealousy
- Loss of touch, intimacy, and sexual relations

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly” (PSALM 85:8).*

### After Divorce

- Loss of economic support
- Loss of extended family
- Loss of family traditions
- Loss of friendships and often church relationships
- Loss of a full-time parenting partner
- Loss of mutual friends
- Loss of previous lifestyle

*“I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things” (PHILIPPIANS 3:8).*

The list of losses seems endless and the emotional pain unrelenting. And yet, God graciously gives strength and peace.

*“The LORD gives strength to his people;  
the LORD blesses his people with peace.”*

(PSALM 29:11)

## Divorce or Death?

**Question:** “Which is more devastating—divorce or death?”

**Answer:** Divorce and death are both devastating when they result in the loss of a deeply loved spouse. But for the following reasons, divorce can seem even more so:

- With a death, joyful memories help ease the sorrow of loss . . . but with divorce, memories serve to heighten the pain of loss.
- With death, memories may be precious . . . but with divorce, memories are usually painful.
- With death, the heart is warmed with the experience of a loving successful marriage . . . but with divorce the heart is ripped apart with feelings of inadequacy and failure due to rejection.
- With death, there is closure and the possibility of finding comfort in the legacy of children or grandchildren . . . but with divorce, antagonistic behavior can last a lifetime when children are involved.

Yet, in spite of the pain of both death and divorce, the Lord promises to be with you, to strengthen you, and help you.

*“So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*

(ISAIAH 41:10)

## What Characterizes the Stages of Divorce?

Lost income, long soup lines, and loss of lives—all are common during America’s Great Depression. Even worse, the hopes of farmers are dashed as the sky darkens and swarms of locusts devour their crops. It takes years of sacrifice, hard work, frugality, self-control, and sacrifice before burdens begin to show a silver lining.

A similar devastation descends on the heart of a spouse who suddenly hears, “I want a divorce.” Days become dark and dreams disappear, overtaken by disaster. The dismal emotional drought seems unending. Yet God tenderly speaks to the one who is deserted. He will make up for your losses. His Word says,

*“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten.”*  
(JOEL 2:25)

### The Three Stages of Divorce: Turbulence Stage<sup>18</sup>

The initial stage of divorce is filled with a whirlwind of emotions, including guilt, depression, and low self-worth. On one side, the winds of rejection sweep away years of investment, erode identity, and what was once a firm foundation suddenly becomes shaky ground. This *time of turbulence* can last up to six months, a year, or even more, making the promises of God especially meaningful and hopeful.

*“When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.”*  
(ISAIAH 43:2)

### Deliberation

- “I don’t think I can stay in this marriage one moment longer.”
- “Is divorce the only option?”

### Decision

- “There’s nothing left to do . . . nothing left to save of this marriage.”
- “I’ve made up my mind. I want a divorce.”

### Denial

- “Divorce happens only to other people. This can’t be happening to me!”
- “You can’t be serious! You can’t go through with this.”

### Rejection

- “Am I so undesirable that you won’t try to make it work?”
- “I suppose there is nothing about me to love.”

### Avoidance

- “I feel uncomfortable at church and when with friends.”
- “People look at me differently now.”

### Fear

- “What is going to happen to me now?”
- “I’m afraid I’ll be alone the rest of my life.”

### Anger

- “I hate you for hurting not just me, but also the rest of the family.”
- “God, you could have changed things. You could have stopped this!”

### Depression

- “My heart hurts so much, it’s all I can do to just breathe.”
- “No one understands my pain. I feel like my heart has been ripped out.”

### Embarrassment

- “I can’t let anyone know this is happening.”
- “How can I face my family and friends?”

### Loneliness

- “I never knew I could feel so lonely, even when I’m with others.”
- “I feel so lost and alone.”

## Transition Stage<sup>19</sup>

A stage of adjustment begins when you recognize the need for change. As you get on with the demands of life, you begin to deal with your emotions honestly and turn your eyes inward for personal growth. If you root out resentment and allow your Redeemer to restore your heart, your life can have joy again. This *time of transition* can last from six months to two years or longer.

*“Though you have made me see troubles,  
many and bitter, you will restore my life again;  
from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up.”*

(PSALM 71:20)

During this time of transition . . .

**Reflect** on the relational dynamics of the marriage.

- “Many times I felt powerless.”
- “We were not equally balanced. I often felt like I didn’t have an equal voice.”

**Refuse** to dwell on past negative thoughts.

- “The past cannot be changed, but I can.”
- “There are so many things we could have done differently, but I will focus on today, not on the past.”

**Recognize**, divorce isn't all "your fault," but accept responsibility for what is your part.

- "I didn't want a divorce."
- "I recognize that I couldn't save our marriage alone, but I could have made our marriage better."

**Repent** of personal sin and selfishness.

- "I confess that many times I put my own needs first."
- "Our marriage could have been different if I had acted differently."

**Receive** God's love and forgiveness.

- "Thank you, Lord, that you love me and forgive me."
- "I am so grateful that I will always have your love and forgiveness."

**Relinquish** any thought of retribution and begin the process of forgiveness.

- "Even though it is difficult, I know that it is best for me and my family to forgive."
- "God, please help me forgive."

**Readjust** to life without a mate.

- "I haven't been alone in so many years."
- "My life is going to change and these changes will feel strange, but God will be with me."

**Redefine** who you are now.

- "I am no longer a part of a couple."
- "Even though I will no longer be married, I know who I am in Christ."

*"You will keep in perfect peace those  
whose minds are steadfast,  
because they trust in you."*

(ISAIAH 26:3)

## Thriving Stage

This stage reaches the deep waters of inner strength. Although some broken hearts may never be restored because of bitterness or harboring hatred, new beginnings can bloom in time if your hope has been replanted through knowing God intimately and walking in His ways.

*“I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed  
and have replanted what was desolate.”*  
(EZEKIEL 36:36)

During this time of new beginnings . . .

**Know** that God cares about your circumstances.

—“I could never have made it through such difficult circumstances without God. I know now that He cares deeply about every detail of my life.”

**Know** that God has been building your character.

—“This has been a difficult journey, but God has used it for my good. He has clearly grounded and solidified my character.”

**Know** that your strength comes from Christ, who lives in you and develops His character in you.

—“My dependence on Christ has grown tremendously. I am more grateful than ever that He lives in me, empowers me, and is developing His character in me.”

**Know** that now you can respond to pain experienced through divorce by choosing wisdom and compassion.

—“I realize that God has used my pain to greatly increase my compassion for others in painful circumstances. I can now comfort and encourage them with God’s comfort.”

**Know** that it will take time to heal from the pain of ending a marriage.

—“I know the healing process takes time and effort. I also know that one day the pain will come to an end.”

**Know** that your future can be positive, filled with hope and joy.

—“How grateful I am that God has a wonderful future planned for me. My hope is in Him, and I confidently wait on His plans for my life.”

**Know** that God wants others to see His love in your life.

—“I am confident that God will love and bless others through me. He never wastes our pain, but uses it for good.”

*“Such confidence we have  
through Christ before God.”*

(2 CORINTHIANS 3:4)

### Transition Timeline

Growth is not a solid, steady upward line. The normal pattern for emotional, mental, and spiritual healing will consist of moving in and out of the three stages of *turbulence*, *transition*, and *thriving*.

Don't think something is wrong with you or become discouraged if you fall back a few steps or if you seem to be in pain longer than someone else. Just as a broken arm takes time to mend and is tender to the touch, healing takes time, but help and hope is found in the Lord.<sup>20</sup>



*“Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me  
and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.”*

(JEREMIAH 17:14)

## What Characterizes Adult Children of Divorce?<sup>21</sup>

Most people readily recognize many of the negative effects of divorce on young and adolescent children, but how does divorce impact those same children later in life? And how does divorce affect adults whose parents choose to divorce when they leave the “nest” for college or venture out on their own . . . the children of parents who stayed together only for the “sake of the kids” and are ready to call it quits now that their children are grown? Even if parents don’t legally divorce, children feel similar pain when their parents physically or emotionally separate.

How difficult is it for adult children to put away the pain of the past? If only healing from the wounds of childhood was as simple as following these wise words of the apostle Paul:

*“When I was a child, I talked like a child,  
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.  
When I became [an adult],  
I put the ways of childhood behind me.”*  
(1 CORINTHIANS 13:11)

**Adult children of divorce** can demonstrate the lingering effects of . . .

- Assuming parenting responsibilities for younger siblings
- Being torn between mother and father
- Carrying the weight of inordinate responsibilities
- Experiencing the loss of childhood
- Finding themselves reversing roles with their parents
- Performing poorly at school/work
- Stressing over financial hardships
- Suffering emotional abuse and manipulation

They need to know the comfort of God’s healing compassion . . . *“For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help”* (Psalm 22:24).

**Adult children of divorce** can continue to display evidence of damaged emotions. . . .

- Feeling abandoned
- Feeling afraid
- Feeling angry
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling powerless
- Feeling rejected
- Feeling unhappy
- Feeling worthless

They need to understand the depth of God’s power . . . *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

**Adult children of divorce** can remain prisoners of previously established patterns. . . .

- Being stunted in emotional growth
- Blocking out parts of their past
- Experiencing trouble with close relationships
- Feeling “different” due to their parents’ divorce and not knowing what a “normal” family is like
- Judging themselves and others harshly . . . and without mercy
- Overreacting to situations they can’t control
- Needing excessive approval
- Taking themselves too seriously and struggling to relax and have fun

This can be reversed if the Lord is allowed to begin the process of healing their wounds from childhood and then carry out the process through adulthood. . . . *“Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything”* (James 1:4).



# CAUSES



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*“With God,  
nothing  
is impossible,  
and hope is  
never lost.”*



## Saying “I Do” Again: The Jeff and Cheryl Scruggs Story<sup>22</sup>

“Cheryl . . . check out that guy. I think he’s staring at you!”

A waitress at an upscale dinner club, Cheryl glances toward the doorway of the restaurant and her eyes become fixed on the face before her. The most handsome man she has ever seen is indeed staring in her direction. Before long he’s seated in her section. Sparks fly between the two as she waits on the table.

As Jeff pays the bill, he boldly asks her out, but she respectfully declines. Undaunted, his sparkling blue eyes seem to hint that he knows one day Cheryl will say . . . “Yes.”

Erotic passion starts soon in their relationship. Cheryl admits her priority is to marry someone handsome and charismatic, someone whose good looks will sweep her off her feet. Sacrificial love—*agape* love—never crosses her mind.

Jeff and Cheryl move in together, and before long there is a nagging thought that Cheryl just can’t shake. She and Jeff don’t seem to connect on the deeper levels. Yet, despite destructive dating patterns in their relationship, Cheryl and Jeff marry, and for years experience the “good life.”

With plenty of money and plenty of friends, there are numerous distractions in Cheryl’s life, but gradually she can no longer ignore the gaping hole in her soul. Soon she recognizes just how shallow their relationship is—there’s no real heart-to-heart sharing. But since she has always dreamed of having a family, she plods on in her increasingly miserable marriage.

Seven years into their marriage, twin daughters arrive. Nevertheless, Cheryl again feels desperate for deep, intimate connection. She feels increasingly empty and realizes her cold resentment has turned into hot anger. Someone is to blame . . . and her finger points to Jeff.

Now she starts to divorce Jeff in her heart. Soon after her supposed “soul mate” surfaces.

A national sales meeting in Florida provides the opportunity for Cheryl to get away—alone. While talking to a man named Todd, she’s drawn in like a magnet with a soul-to-soul connection. First they just have conversations at work, then these conversations become addictive. Cheryl recalls: “I felt as if I were drowning . . . I could not control the intense obsession of the new emotional connection.”

Since Jeff’s company is moving him to Dallas, Cheryl decides to see Todd one last time—in a hotel. The emotional affair crosses the line to the physical. The affair continues even after they move to Texas. Then one day there’s a knock on the door: It’s a sheriff serving Jeff with divorce papers.

Now as a divorced mother of two in Texas, Cheryl finds new friends. Several sincere Christian women befriend her and invite her to church. She’s amazed at what she hears—truths from the Word of God. And the people around her aren’t “religious,” they have a *relationship* with Jesus Christ.

Cheryl is captivated and wants more. . . . She buys a Bible, continually reads it at home, and starts attending a Bible study on (of all subjects) the Song of Solomon—God’s book on marriage.

As God’s truth permeates Cheryl’s soul and spirit, conviction sets in. She accepts Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, and then it’s as if a veil has been lifted. “What have I done? How could I have done this to my family?”

Cheryl writes a long, apologetic letter to Jeff—the one who tried everything to hold the marriage together—and tearfully reads it to him in person.

Jeff's response? He's been hurt enough, and he's glad that's over—so he leads Cheryl to the door.

For five years following their divorce, Jeff burns with anger and resentment toward Cheryl, but soon his feelings begin to cool.

There's no doubt Cheryl is changing. Jeff can't deny the reality of her relationship with the Lord, which draws him and petrifies him at the same time. How can he fully trust her again? Jeff doesn't have the emotional wherewithal to go through this again. So he pulls back, fearful of revisiting unbearable pain. But Jeff is also beginning to realize the failed marriage isn't entirely Cheryl's fault. Jeff grows up in a Christian home. But now he's growing in his walk with the Lord and recognizes areas where he could have better connected with her.

A tragic car accident reveals his heart is still stitched to Cheryl. She is the first person he calls. Jeff wants her, and she quickly arrives to be by his side. Their relationship begins anew. From the ashes of divorce, they begin dating again and eventually remarry. Today, their heartwarming story is shared around the world.

Cheryl and Jeff begin a ministry communicating the root cause of wrong dating relationships in order to help restore individuals, couples, and marriages. Through their story of heartbreak and healing, other divorced men and women are truly finding hope, and even saying "I do" . . . again.

*"Forget the former things;  
do not dwell on the past.  
See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness  
and streams in the wasteland."*

(ISAIAH 43:18–19)

## What Are Common Causes for Divorce?

Numerous studies examine what causes commonly contribute to divorce: immaturity, lack of commitment, infidelity, unrealistic expectations, selfishness, unequal partnership, conflicting priorities, and abuse. Other factors that put couples at higher risk for divorce include marrying too young, experiencing financial difficulties, lacking religious affiliation, living together before marriage, having a premarital pregnancy, and being raised in a divorced family.<sup>23</sup>

Many of these difficulties can be overcome or even prevented. Often, the key is commitment. But commitment in a covenant relationship can never be one-sided. It's never a 50/50 proposition. It's always a 100 percent commitment from both spouses. Unless both are equally committed, trouble looms ahead.

Many cultures place enormous emphasis on physical attraction and physical intimacy but neglect the unseen inner attractiveness of pristine character and priceless integrity. As a result, many marriages are based on self-gratifying lust rather than self-sacrificing love. A spouse is often viewed as a chosen commodity, not a cherished companion . . . a procured possession, not a priceless person . . . a cistern from which to draw love, not a reservoir to fill with love.

*“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.  
But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh;  
rather, serve one another humbly in love.”*

(GALATIANS 5:13)

Some common causes for divorce throughout the world today include:

### Uncommitted view of marriage

- Believe “easy” divorce laws provide a legitimate quick escape from unhappy marriage relationships
- Consider financial and fleeting material gain more rewarding than an intimate marriage relationship

- Prioritize a successful career over a contented, secure spouse
- Look for self-centered happiness as the indicator of a good marriage
- Elevate personal rights and expect spouse to always agree with and accommodate those rights
- See common relational differences and difficulties as viable reasons to end a marriage

*“Some Pharisees came to him to test him [Jesus]. They asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?’” (MATTHEW 19:3).*

### Unrealistic view of marriage

- Look to marriage to meet all basic relational, emotional, sexual, and physical needs
- Anticipate never feeling lonely or being alone in the world again and living happily ever after
- Assume spouse will anticipate and fully meet all wants, needs, and desires without question or contention
- Expect to always have financial, relational, and emotional security without exerting any effort
- Count on the fulfillment of a lifelong dream of having a happy, healthy family without having to work at it
- Believe in the myth of the flawless mate and the perfect marriage absent of any gripes or glitches

*“Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 TIMOTHY 4:7–8).*

### Unbiblical view of marriage

- Consider physical attraction and enjoyment of another person to be of supreme importance and regard religious beliefs and practices to be of little or no consequence
- Condone living as man and wife prior to marriage to determine compatibility with no reliance on God’s direction or plan for marriage

- Anticipate finding true meaning and purpose in life apart from God, who has a perfect plan and purpose for every life
- Expect to automatically gain a very deep sense of connection and oneness with another person when there is no deep, intimate connection or oneness with God on which to build human closeness
- Look at marriage from only a human perspective with no regard for the picture it presents of a Christian's eternal, spiritual union with Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom
- Regard marriage as temporary, conditional, and revocable, not as a lifelong, irrevocable commitment based on unconditional, unselfish love and devotion to another person

*“The time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 TIMOTHY 4:3–4).*

### **Unresolved problems from the past**

- Emotional wounds left over from childhood
- Guilt over failed former marriage(s)/relationships
- Character flaws formed in childhood and left unaddressed in adulthood
- Identity issues, poorly developed thought processes and decision making skills
- Lack of social and relational skills
- Inadequate self-image and pattern of self-destructive habits and attitudes

*“So I tell you this . . . you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts” (EPHESIANS 4:17–18).*

### **Unsolved conflicts within the marriage**

- Marital unfaithfulness or other catastrophic events
- Domestic violence, verbal and emotional abuse, illegal activity, dishonesty

- Addictive behaviors, abandonment, conflicting priorities
- Contradictory parenting styles
- Money mismanagement, irresponsibility
- Mental or emotional disorders, physical challenges
- Interfering family members, friends, or other influences

*“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 PETER 1:14–16).*

## What Reveals Rifts in Relationships?

You may be unable to completely divorce-proof your marriage, but avoiding a divorce begins by identifying issues that can cause a rift in your relationship.

Some issues may cause tension in your marriage. Left unaddressed, problems can develop into struggles and become reasons for separation. When troubles are ignored and allowed to escalate, they can then lead to divorce. Like David, those with troubled hearts often cry out to God:

*“Relieve the troubles of my heart  
and free me from my anguish.”*

(PSALM 25:17)

### Checklist Revealing Relationship Rifts

**Evaluate:** What are you failing to do within your marriage that could turn into cause for a separation or divorce? Mark with a (✓) for both you and your mate, honestly assessing each other.

**Your**  
**You Spouse**

- Not addressing typical issues as a couple until they become huge sources of contention
- Not working on your relationship to keep it vibrant and growing rather than becoming stagnant
- Not communicating effectively by listening earnestly and speaking wisely to one another
- Not spending enough time together to feel connected and to make meaningful memories
- Not defining individual responsibilities within the relationship to keep a balance
- Not having realistic expectations of each other
- Not sharing personal problems, difficulties, challenges, joys, sorrows, thoughts, or feelings
- Not sensitively identifying and peacefully resolving problems when they arise
- Not having a weekly date night or planning romantic evenings or getaways
- Not complimenting or encouraging each other on a daily basis
- Not looking for new ways to express your love
- Not fanning the flame of passion between the two of you
- Not focusing on pleasing one another by identifying and meeting each other's needs
- Not surprising each other with unexpected gifts, plans, or outings

**You**      **Your  
Spouse**

- Not routinely holding hands or sharing other nonsexual touch
- Not doing fun things and frequently laughing together
- Not engaging in shared learning activities
- Not exploring new ideas or avenues of interest together
- Not sharing individual hopes, desires, dreams, ambitions, goals, and secrets
- Not praying for each other and with each other daily
- Not reading and applying God's Word daily to your lives and marriage
- Not serving side by side in a church and a ministry-focused endeavor
- Not sharing spiritual insights (what God is doing in your personal lives and as a couple)

God has many plans for every couple. Following His plans for your lives is part of divorce-proofing your marriage.

*"Many are the plans in a person's heart,  
but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails."*

(PROVERBS 19:21)

## What Relational Dynamics Often Lead to Divorce?

Couples in covenant commitment don't suddenly wake up one day and decide, "We're getting a divorce!" Just as the relationship took time to develop and deepen into love, so does it also take time to dissolve and disintegrate.

Rarely are both husband and wife on the same page as to the status of the marriage. As one spouse begins to become hard-hearted, the other soon becomes heavyhearted. Each would be wise to examine their own hearts and appeal to the Lord for help and hope.

*"Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting."*

(PSALM 139:23-24)

### Relational Dynamics Often Leading to Divorce<sup>24</sup>

#### The Hard-hearted Spouse

*"They made their hearts as hard  
as flint and would not listen to the  
law or to the words that the  
LORD Almighty had sent."*

(ZECHARIAH 7:12)

- Feels dissatisfied with the marriage and determines the spouse is at fault
- Takes offense at a minor, innocent event, blows it out of proportion, and then uses it to justify wanting a divorce

#### The Heavyhearted Spouse

*"I am feeble and utterly crushed;  
I groan in anguish of heart."*

(PSALM 38:8)

- Is blindsided and crushed by the marriage partner's dissatisfaction with the marriage
- Is totally unaware of wounding marriage partner, feels mystified, misunderstood, and maligned by false accusations

### The Hard-hearted Spouse

- Does not openly communicate anger but the dynamic of relating is affected
- Keeps a running mental journal of perceived injustices committed by partner
- Remains aloof and brooding while looking for a reason to break up the marriage
- Decides suddenly to leave because of a crisis or some outside interest
- Initiates pressure for the other spouse to get a divorce or files for divorce
- Feels completely justified, becomes resolute and determined to get a divorce

### The Heavyhearted Spouse

- Is aware of a difficult dynamic of relating but copes with partner's reactions
- Is aware of partner's negativism but not able to identify the exact problem
- Continues to deal with false accusations of being intentionally hurtful to spouse
- Is in total shock and despair that the spouse is seriously contemplating a divorce
- Files for divorce or resists a divorce and attempts to make behavioral changes
- Feels guilty, becomes defensive and then devastated by the breakup of the marriage

The writer of the book of Hebrews gives this word of advice to those who seek to live their lives in accordance with God's design:

*“Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”*

(HEBREWS 3:13)

## What Enticements Easily Entangle Some Spouses?

Everything God intends to use for our enjoyment and benefit, Satan intends to use for our destruction. What is called the easy life can quickly become the hard life, for the more we desire the treasures of this world, the more we strive to have them. The result is that temporal, worldly treasures steal our hearts away from God's eternal treasures and harden us to His life-changing love operating in our lives.

Likewise, the hearts of many spouses are turned away from their marriage partner to the lure of other eyes or the lure of other treasures that steal what rightly belongs to a covenant marriage partner.

Sadly, earthly treasures abound and enticements are easily found. What first appears to be no problem to the marriage steals away time, thoughts, emotions, and eventually becomes an enormous entanglement.

*“Do not love the world or anything in the world.  
If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.  
For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh,  
the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—  
comes not from the Father but from the world.”*  
(1 JOHN 2:15–16)

### Categories of Enticements

According to God's Word, worldly desires can be divided into three categories:

#### Lust of the Flesh

##### — Privilege

The desire to claim the right to special entitlements and have license to do as one pleases regardless of the impact on others or the opinion of others

*“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross” (PHILIPPIANS 2:5–8).*

#### — Pleasure

The craving to indulge in decadent or erotic activities to gratify sensual desires with no regard for the pain it may bring to others

*“The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure” (ECCLESIASTES 7:4).*

#### — Prosperity

The drive to attain riches and affluence, success and wealth in order to amass a fortune regardless of the cost in failed relationships

*“Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God” (PROVERBS 30:8–9).*

### Lust of the Eyes

#### — Possessions

The yearning to acquire ownerships, goods, assets, and belongings without regard for the devaluing of personal relationships

*“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys” (LUKE 12:33).*

#### — Property

The enticement to accumulate land, houses, estates, acreage, farms, or ranches with no regard for the resulting loss in relationships

*“You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions” (HEBREWS 10:34).*

— **Prestige**

The longing to associate with certain individuals, public figures, socialites, prominent groups, communities, or nationalities to the point of neglecting and devaluing loved ones

*“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited”* (ROMANS 12:16).

**Pride of Life**

— **Position**

The hunger to secure a rank, title, status, standing, or place of importance regardless of the negative impact on personal relationships

*“Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven”* (MATTHEW 18:4).

— **Popularity**

The need to gain the admiration, approval, acceptance, fame, recognition, regard, or esteem of others more than that of a marriage partner

*“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ”* (GALATIANS 1:10).

— **Power**

The aspiration to have control, dominance, rule, command, force, strength, or clout with no regard for the damaging effects it has on the life of a spouse

*“Though the pride of the godless person reaches to the heavens and his head touches the clouds, he will perish forever, like his own dung”* (JOB 20:6–7).

With the quick and easy availability of pornography, sex partners, gambling, drugs, and other vices, enticements are as close as a phone, computer, or television. Honoring the marriage covenant and remaining faithful to a spouse in thoughts and actions requires sacrificial love, strength of character, and solid, godly priorities. Jesus gives this warning and admonition:

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,  
where moths and vermin destroy,  
and where thieves break in and steal.*

*<sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,  
where moths and vermin do not destroy,  
and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

*<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

(MATTHEW 6:19–21)

## What Are Reasons Not to Reconcile?

No easy-to-follow formula exists that will tell you which is the better choice—to get back together after a separation or divorce or to stay apart and rebuild a new life without your ex. But remember this: With God, nothing is impossible, and hope is never lost.

Before deciding whether reconciliation is a good idea for you and your family, there are several things you need to consider:

### Reasons for *not trying to reconcile with your ex*:

- Your ex abused you, your kids, or others.
- Your ex lied or cheated on you . . . more than once with no sign of genuine remorse or repentance.
- Your ex is pressuring you to get back together without receiving help or making any changes.
- Your intuition is telling you not to trust your ex, and you can’t explain why.
- Your ex has exhibited no commitment of exclusivity during the time you’ve been apart.
- You feel emotionally manipulated or controlled by your ex.
- You still harbor bitterness and resentment toward your ex.
- Your ex doesn’t listen to you or puts other things before you (hobbies, work, friends).
- Your ex’s words/actions are often incongruent and inconsistent.
- You like your life the way it is, and you have a peace about leaving it that way.

*“The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty” (PROVERBS 22:3).*

### Reasons for *trying to reconcile with your ex*:

- You are 100 percent certain you split up for the *wrong* reasons.
- You and your ex can talk openly and honestly about the reasons you broke up, the changes you both need to make, and the possibility of getting back together once you begin making those changes.
- You are mutually committed to seeking God’s will and help in the reconciliation process.
- You both understand that getting back together will take time and require hard work on both of your parts.
- You have realistic expectations for getting back together and for your future relationship.
- You don’t need your ex to feel whole and healthy.
- You and your ex have made positive individual changes in the time you’ve been apart.
- You are mutually willing to be open with your feelings and expose your weaknesses to each other.
- You support your ex’s current plans, future goals, and life dreams.
- You have jointly made a sincere commitment to forgive and be reconciled.<sup>25</sup>

*“For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man” (2 CORINTHIANS 8:21).*

## What Is the Root Cause of Divorce?

Most people are looking for someone—a marriage partner—to meet their inner needs, but that will never happen. God did not create one person to meet all our needs. And while God gives us special people to be with, to learn from, to be sharpened by, He also wants us to allow Him to be the one who meets our deepest needs.

*“God is able to bless you abundantly,  
so that in all things at all times,  
having all that you need,  
you will abound in every good work.”*

(2 CORINTHIANS 9:8)

### 3 Inner Needs

We all have three inner needs: the needs for love, significance, and security.<sup>26</sup>

**Love**—to know that someone is unconditionally committed to our best interest

*“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you”* (JOHN 15:12).

**Significance**—to know that our lives have meaning and purpose

*“I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me”*  
(PSALM 57:2 ESV).

**Security**—to feel accepted and a sense of belonging

*“Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge”* (PROVERBS 14:26).

### The Ultimate Need-Meeter

#### What do our inner needs reveal about us and our relationship with God?

God did not create any person or position or any amount of power or possessions to meet our deepest needs. People fail us and self-effort also fails to meet our deepest needs. If a person or thing could meet all our needs, we wouldn't need God! Our inner needs draw us into a deeper dependence on Christ and remind us that only God can satisfy the longings of our hearts. The Lord brings people and circumstances into our lives as an extension of His care, but ultimately only He can satisfy all the needs of our hearts. The Bible says . . .

*“The LORD will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.”*  
(ISAIAH 58:11)

All along, the Lord planned to meet our deepest needs for . . .

**Love**—*“I [the Lord] have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness”* (JEREMIAH 31:3).

**Significance**—*“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’”* (JEREMIAH 29:11).

**Security**—*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”* (DEUTERONOMY 31:8).

Our needs for love, significance, and security can be legitimately met in Christ Jesus! Philippians 4:19 makes it plain, *“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*

### **WRONG BELIEF:**

*“There is no love in my marriage. Life is so short, I have the right to seek happiness and personal fulfillment elsewhere.”*

### **RIGHT BELIEF:**

*“God wants me to love and respect my mate by drawing on the resources of His indwelling love and strength. I will look to God to provide personal fulfillment.”*

*“His divine power has given us everything we need  
for a godly life through our knowledge of him  
who called us by his own glory and goodness.”*  
(2 PETER 1:3)

## How Can I Have an Eternal Relationship with Christ?

The end of a marriage is sad for many reasons. A love relationship that's meant to endure "until death do us part," but instead ends prematurely, breaks the heart and wounds the spirit. You may feel discarded, deserted, and neglected . . . alone, abandoned, and rejected.

But know that God Almighty *loves you* with an everlasting love. Never will He leave you or forsake you. He offers a relationship that never ends—even after death. God longs to be found by you, and He has made a way for you to enter into an *eternal relationship* through Jesus Christ. God promises in His Word . . .

*"You will seek me and find me  
when you seek me with all your heart."*

(JEREMIAH 29:13)

### 4 Points of God's Plan

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, there is hope. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will receive His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD,  
‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future.’”*

(JEREMIAH 29:11)

### 1. God’s Purpose for You: *Salvation*

- What was God’s motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”* (JOHN 3:16–17).
- What was Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (JOHN 10:10).

### 2. The Problem: *Sin*

- What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God’s standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway”* (ROMANS 7:18–19 NLT).
- What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *“Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God”* (ISAIAH 59:2). Scripture also says, *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (ROMANS 6:23).

### 3. God’s Provision for You: *The Savior*

- Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (ROMANS 5:8).

- What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (JOHN 14:6). The Bible says, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”* (ACTS 16:31).

#### 4. Your Part: *Surrender*

- Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”* (MATTHEW 16:24–26).
- Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your “good works” as a means of earning God’s approval. The Bible says, *“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (EPHESIANS 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you’ve humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

“God, I want a real relationship with you.  
 I admit that many times I’ve chosen to go my own way  
 instead of your way.  
 Please forgive me for my sins.  
 Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross  
 to pay the penalty for my sins.  
 Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.  
 Change me from the inside out and make me the person  
 you created me to be.  
 In your holy name I pray. Amen.”

## What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . .”* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*“Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word  
and believes him who sent me  
has eternal life and will not be judged  
but has crossed over from death to life.”*

(JOHN 5:24)



# STEPS TO SOLUTION



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*“God is with you in  
the midst of change.”*



## Divorce Care: The Steve Grissom Story

Divorce can deliver blows so devastating that your mind will invent ways to protect itself. When you cannot face the unwanted facts of divorce or bear the painful impact, you can spiral down into the depths of depression. This is the awful dark dungeon where one man finds himself living.<sup>27</sup>

He lives a lie during the first two years. Most people call it denial when they don't want anyone to know what's going on in their lives. Pride tells them, "This doesn't happen to people like me." But hope tells them, "Reconciliation is possible." It's hard to admit, "This happened to me, and I need help, and I need to tell people' rather than keeping it to myself."

After 13 years of marriage, Steve Grissom's wife begins pulling away emotionally, pulling away physically—pulling away from *him*. Her withdrawal is dramatic, and when Steve asks what's going on—pressing for an answer, any explanation—all he hears is, "Nothing's wrong."

She keeps pulling away and he keeps pushing—he wants a reason why. Finally she drops the bomb that bursts his heart: "I just don't love you anymore."

Steve feels nausea, numbness, and extraordinary emptiness. He knows some things need to be fixed . . . not everything is great . . . but surely it hasn't come to this! Hearing the word *separation*, he panics and leaps into action. He does everything he can to save the marriage—but by then it's too late.

In a state of shock, he repeatedly asks himself, *How did I not see this coming? How could my heart not have known? How could her heart have changed so drastically?* The biblical book of wisdom says . . .

*"Blessed is the one who always trembles before God,  
but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble."*

(PROVERBS 28:14)

After four long years of separation and then the arduous process of divorce, a judge declares an end to the marriage. The long ordeal has ended. Now what will he do with the rest of his life?

Just deciding what to do with his wedding ring becomes a big deal. He keeps wearing the token of their vows until the day he knows the divorce is final. To some this may seem silly, but to Steve, it was gut-wrenching. Even after the divorce, he remains plagued by the question: What do I do with my wedding ring?

No longer married, he takes off the ring and puts it in a drawer. But that reminder is all that remains of his marriage, and it gnaws at him. So out of sheer frustration he finally decides to have a “funeral” for it. He goes to a nearby bridge over a small creek and drops the ring into the water. Watching the ring roll off the railing and drop down . . . seemingly in slow motion . . . into the water below is a heartrending moment. Yet even then, Steve remains willing to reconcile. But he knows it isn’t healthy to keep holding on when he’s the only one.

Steve admits, “I believe . . . you never completely heal from divorce.”

“The Lord has healed me in many, many ways, but you can never really heal completely. There is scarring.”

Outward appearances can be deceiving. Many don’t see the sadness behind a smile or the broken heart hidden deep inside.

*“But you, Sovereign LORD,  
help me for your name’s sake;  
out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.  
For I am poor and needy,  
and my heart is wounded within me.”*

(PSALM 109:21–22)

## Key Verse to Memorize

No one walks down the aisle of marriage expecting to be divorced. Yet divorce happens. And when it does, you can feel like a tsunami has come crashing into your world, leaving devastation in its wake—as though you’re fighting for every breath as powerful waves sweep over you time and time again with no sign of stopping. You feel profoundly alone . . . like you’re perpetually drowning.

Yet based on the Bible, you are never alone, and with the Lord in your life, you will not drown. No matter what the waters of life look like or how raging the rivers may feel, you can rest in His promise . . .

*“When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.”*

(ISAIAH 43:2)

## Key Passage to Read

When a spouse files for divorce, your self-worth and identity can take a brutal beating. You may feel unlovable, even worthless. But as you lean into God and take steps to grieve the loss of your marriage, you will not only accept your new place in life but also be able to embrace it. Realize, it won’t be easy and it won’t be soon . . . but it *will* come. God is with you in the midst of change.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the healing process following a separation or divorce is to forgive—not just your ex, but yourself as well—for any offense committed. But keep in mind: You are still valuable and lovable and have much to offer the world around you. You remain God’s precious prize. And with the Spirit of Christ to bring healing, you can grow wise and share wisdom with others.

The words of the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 8 offer great hope for the divorced person who is questioning what the future holds.

*“I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love.*

*Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,  
neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—  
not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.*

*No power in the sky above or in the earth below—  
indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us  
from the love of God that is revealed  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

(ROMANS 8:38–39 NLT)

## How to Have a Transformed Life

The divorce is final. Now you find yourself thinking: *Who am I now? What am I worth? Who can I trust to love me? The one person I thought knew me best and, at one time, loved me most has rejected me. Will anyone ever truly love me again?*

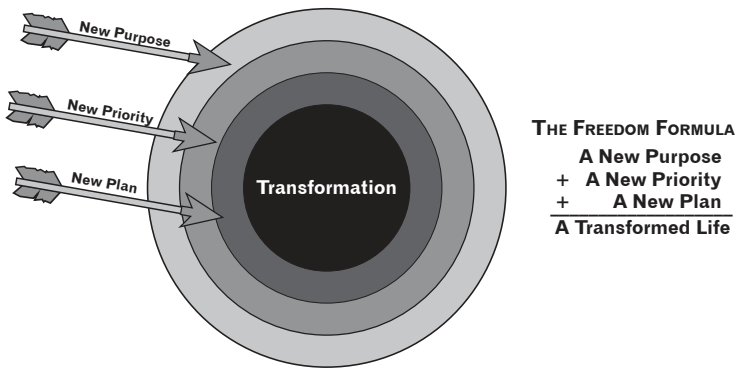
Divorce is an extremely personal process because it touches the very core of a person’s identity—an identity often formed around the roles a person has played (for example, husband/wife, parent, lover, provider, protector, comforter, companion, and friend).

Divorce eliminates many roles, leaving behind hurt, confusion, and a large void. During this time, the need is great to hold on to one indisputable truth: *You have immense value!* Because God made you in His image and redeemed you through the blood of His Son, *you are* deeply loved. Your focus now is not on finding a meaningful role in another person’s life, but in having a transformed life in Christ.

*“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord,  
continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him,  
strengthened in the faith as you were taught,  
and overflowing with thankfulness.”*

(COLOSSIANS 2:6-7)

## Reaching the Target: Transformation!



### Target #1—A New Purpose

**God’s purpose for me** is to be conformed to the character of Christ.

*“Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son”* (ROMANS 8:29).

— “I’ll do whatever it takes to be conformed to the character of Christ.”

### Target #2—A New Priority

**God’s priority for me** is to change my thinking.

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (ROMANS 12:2).

— “I’ll do whatever it takes to line up my thinking with God’s thinking.”

### Target #3—A New Plan

**God’s plan for me** is to rely on Christ’s strength, not my strength, to be all He created me to be.

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).*

—“I’ll do whatever it takes to fulfill His plan in His strength.”

### My Personalized Plan

As I struggle through the turmoil of divorce and seek to heal, I will renew my personal identity. I will embrace the reality that I am deeply rooted in Christ and firmly fixed in these eight essential biblical truths:

1. **My identity** (whether married or single) is in Christ, not in a role or in another person.

*“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (GALATIANS 2:20).*

2. **I am complete in Christ**, not an incomplete single if I don’t remarry.

*“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority” (COLOSSIANS 2:9–10).*

3. **My happiness** comes from inner virtues and attitudes, not outer circumstances.

*“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (GALATIANS 5:22–23).*

4. **My purpose in life**, whether married or single, is to honor and glorify God.

*“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. . . . Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 CORINTHIANS 6:19–20; 10:31).*

**5. I choose to draw from my resources in Christ** to continually walk in forgiveness with regard to myself, my ex-spouse, and others who may hurt me.

*“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (COLOSSIANS 3:13).*

**6. I choose to live in the power of Christ** and to draw on His strength to overcome temptations.

*“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 CORINTHIANS 10:13).*

**7. I am free** (as a single) to be concerned with the things of the Lord.

*“I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband” (1 CORINTHIANS 7:32–34).*

**8. I can be** an even more effective witness in the lives of others because of my suffering.

*“Those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good” (1 PETER 4:19).*

## How to Mend a Marriage

If you are in a troubled marital relationship and questioning whether the marriage can be restored or is instead destined for divorce, be assured that the present condition of your marriage doesn’t necessarily determine its future fate. You and your spouse will do that by the choices you make beginning right now and in the future.

Stop and assess where you are in your marriage. Have you recently begun to grow apart, or has the distance between you been growing incrementally over a long period of time? Have you emotionally separated? Are either or both of you contemplating or talking about divorce?

The farther apart you and your spouse currently are, the more difficult it may be to reverse the direction you are headed. If you desire to work on preserving the relationship, first renew your love for your Savior. Then turn your attention to your spouse, and perhaps you will be blessed to see the renewal of your spouse's love for you.<sup>28</sup>

*"You have forsaken the love you had at first.  
Consider how far you have fallen!  
Repent and do the things you did at first."  
(REVELATION 2:4-5)*

Before you seek to renew your commitment to your spouse, rekindle your love for the Lord. . . .

**Concentrate** on making Jesus Christ the sole source of your fulfillment in life.

- Set aside a special time each day to pray and study God's Word, personalizing verses that speak to you about the intimate love relationship God desires to have with all who believe in Him.
- Memorize meaningful Bible passages regarding the love of God and what He has done for you.
- Work through a devotional (such as *Seeing Yourself Through God's Eyes*) or other resources pertaining to your identity in Christ and how God views you as His cherished child.
- Study the character of God and ask Him to open up your eyes to see multiple ways in which He expresses His love to you each day.

**Become** the whole person God created you to be (caring for your body, soul, and spirit).

- Concentrate on eating healthy and having meals at a regular time each day.

- Find ways to exercise on a regular basis to increase your physical strength and build stamina.
- Get out in the sunshine, work in the yard, walk the dog, or go somewhere special to elevate your mood.
- Go with friends to church activities, music concerts, sporting events, game nights, or other activities that bring you enjoyment and require your participation.

**Recognize** your need for God’s help and the support of others.

- Pour out your heart to God and ask for His wisdom, comfort, and direction.
- Reach out for counsel from others who have proven themselves to be wise and godly people.
- Ask God to direct you to a relevant, vibrant Bible study group that honors God’s Word.
- Find a trustworthy Christian who will pray with you weekly and for you every day.

As the Lord leads you to try to mend your marriage . . .

**Eliminate** dishonoring actions and attitudes (for example, anger, sarcasm, unfair criticism, inconsistency, selfishness, self-righteousness, arrogance).

- Suggest to your spouse that the two of you sit down separately and make a list of the ways you have dishonored one another by your actions and attitudes.
- Plan a time with your spouse to share the damaging attitudes and actions you each separately identify that need to stop in order to renew your love relationship.
- Forgive one another for wrongs committed and earnestly seek to honor each other moving forward.
- Work with a mentor, coach, or counselor to choose ways the two of you can rebuild your relationship on a firm foundation.

**Focus on** finding solutions that will renew and enrich your relationship with your spouse.

- Work through a biblically based marriage workbook with your spouse.
- Seek God’s will regarding seeing a biblical Christian marriage counselor together.
- Attend a Christian marriage enrichment conference/weekend.
- Make a bucket list of fun/meaningful activities you both enjoy or would like to explore and make plans to do each of them together.

**Make** an effort to open up your spouse’s heart if it has been closed to you.

- Be kind and tenderhearted.
- Exercise empathy and understanding.
- Take ownership of your own offensive behaviors.
- Offer meaningful, tender touch.

**Become** a more effective communicator.

- Be an attentive listener and repeat back what you hear to assure understanding.
- Listen to different positions, viewpoints, and ideas from your spouse with an open mind and heart.
- Validate honest expressions of your mate’s thoughts and feelings without judging them.
- Openly and clearly express your thoughts and feelings, goals and desires, convictions and aspirations and ask for feedback to ensure you are being understood and to obtain your spouse’s perspective.

As the Lord leads you down the road to reconciliation, remember these wise words . . .

*“Be devoted to one another in love.  
Honor one another above yourselves.”*

(ROMANS 12:10)

## How to Begin the Healing Process

For some who don't reconcile, there can be fairy-tale thinking that often precedes a desired divorce: *When the divorce is over, I can finally get away from this person who's brought so much pain into my life.* Or so some think. But rarely does it work out that way. Instead, you might find yourself distraught, maybe even disgusted, at the ways your former mate keeps coming at you even after the divorce decree has been signed.

So, how do you get out from under the painful impact of a divorce? By stepping into the healing process—one that can be lengthy and difficult. Think of it as a journey—one best not taken alone. As you begin, seek counsel from committed Christians who are willing to walk with you through the grief process. This may mean asking for the support of your pastor, joining a divorce recovery group, or visiting a Christian counselor.

Wherever your healing journey takes you, draw comfort in knowing what the psalmist knew . . .

*“He has put his angels in charge of you  
to watch over you wherever you go.”*

(PSALM 91:11 NCV)

## Steps to Healing after a Divorce

### Get ready for an ongoing battle.

- Remember, divorce is not an event, it's a series of battles, and you need to prepare to battle the unexpected.
- Remember, divorce can feel like a war—one that goes on and on and on—a war that no one “wins” and where there is considerable wounding.

*“My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word”*  
(PSALM 119:28).

### Take it one day at a time.

- Remind yourself that you don't have to accomplish everything in record time—you can proceed at your own rate of recovery.
- Remind yourself to stay focused on your own personal needs and those of your children.

*“So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time” (MATTHEW 6:34 TLB).*

### Soak up as much Scripture as possible.

- Look for verses that provide comfort and hope, write them on cards, and post them in places where you'll be reminded to refocus.
- Look for Scripture set to music and sing along as you listen throughout the day.

*“In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” (PSALM 56:4).*

### Pour out your heart to God in times of need.

- Connect the need you feel in the moment to one of God's attributes (for example, when weak, thank God for being all-powerful).
- Connect descriptive words to the names of God (for example, *faithful* Father, *shielding* Shepherd, *devoted* Defender, *just* Judge).

*“Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge” (PSALM 62:8).*

### Feel the pain.

- Find ways to deal with unwanted feelings rather than dismiss them with distractions or temporary relief (for example, overworking, playing video games, eating).
- Find healthy outlets to consciously process your feelings as they come up (for example, talking with a friend or counselor, writing or journaling, exercising, crying, or just feeling what you feel.)

*“You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will restore me to life again and lift me up from the depths of the earth” (PSALM 71:20 NLT).*

### Be open to wise input.

- Take advantage of inspirational Christian books, uplifting music, and helpful seminars that can strengthen and equip you during this time of growth.
- Take time to cultivate new relationships with people who are further along in their healing process than you are.

*“Happy is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gets understanding”*  
(PROVERBS 3:13 NCV).

### Get plenty of sleep and take care of yourself physically.

- Make sleep a priority—this is essential for facing the physical and emotional challenges you confront each day.
- Make sure that what you eat or drink has nutritional value.

*“He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake”*  
(PSALM 23:2–3).

### Take time to laugh and have fun.

- Engage in new activities that allow you to laugh and play (for example, watch an old TV sitcom, take up a new hobby, read humorous books). Laughter releases endorphins that produce a feeling of well-being.
- Engage in social and recreational activities that give you an opportunity to meet new people and build supportive relationships (for example, join a community or church sports team, visit a few local, shared-interest groups, get involved in a book or arts club).

*“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones”*  
(PROVERBS 17:22).

### Build and work your support network.

- Identify at least one friend with whom you can share your deepest feelings.
- Identify a support group to help you through your recovery process and commit to attending meetings regularly.

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10).*

## How to Overcome Damaged Emotions Following a Divorce

Ending a marriage is not merely a legality—emotional stages also need to be addressed. Expect to experience a wide range of emotions both during and after divorce. One day you will feel grateful for a newfound freedom, and the next day you might find yourself moping around the house mourning the loss of the life you used to have.

Friends, family, and well-wishers may try to hurry you through your recovery and may even tell you how to react. Don't let their good intentions derail your healing process, especially when you know their approach is wrong for you. Each person recovers in a unique way. Another person's pace in adjusting to divorce will vary from yours.

During divorce, normal emotions sometimes get stretched to a whole new dimension. Anger morphs into rage, sadness spirals down into depression, loneliness lures you into isolation. Unless you consciously and constructively deal with these emotions, you will stay stuck in your pain and chained to the past.

The prophet Isaiah addresses the importance of putting past hurts in the past—not dwelling on them but focusing on the new way God is making for you now.

*“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.  
See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness  
and streams in the wasteland.”  
(ISAIAH 43:18–19)*

## Dousing the Flames of Anger

Anger is a primary emotion experienced during divorce. It occurs when a need or expectation isn't met and hurt, injustice, fear, or frustration is felt. There are degrees of anger, ranging from mild irritations to hot explosions.<sup>29</sup> The anger may be directed toward a former mate, "the other woman/man," family members, yourself, or even the circumstances that brought you to this place.

But be aware, anger ignored is anger easily reignited. Here are six practical ways to snuff out the flames of anger before they reignite as rage:

**Make a list** of people, circumstances, events, and situations you have felt angry about in relation to your divorce. Try to identify the *real* issue behind the anger (for example, hurt, injustice, fear, frustration).

**Change your physical position** as soon as anger starts to surface (for example, stand up, stretch, and audibly sigh; massage the back of your neck).

**Identify and spend time** with people who consistently exhibit a positive outlook. Being around optimistic people will give you more energy and lift your spirit.

**Make a list** of things for which you are grateful. Find a place where you can write without interruption. On paper, remind yourself that there is always something for which you can be grateful.

**Do a deep-breathing exercise.** Sit up straight in a chair, inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth. Repeat this exercise five to 10 times.

**Do something to break the cycle.** Some people wear an elastic rubber band around their wrist. Whenever you find yourself becoming angry or have negative thoughts, try this technique and gently snap the rubber band to interrupt the negative thought cycle.

*"Don't sin by letting anger control you."*

(PSALM 4:4 NLT)

## Growing beyond Grief

It's normal to feel sad when a marriage ends. Although painful, grief is a healthy, emotional response to loss. It's the combination of sorrow, strong emotion, and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you. Grief is a sick-in-my-heart, sick-to-my-stomach, deep sighing kind of pain. You're hardwired to feel it, and it's *unreasonable* to think you can move through a loss like divorce without experiencing grief.

While grief is work, it does a specific job, too. It allows you to feel the full weight of what's happened, but also to make room for healing to begin. It sets the stage for creating a promising future.

Here are six ways to move beyond grief to growth after divorce:

**Give yourself permission** to grieve.

- Acknowledge the loss of a relationship that you expected to last for the rest of your life.
- Take as much time as you need to get through the grief process.
- Resist the temptation to numb the pain through destructive behaviors.

**Watch for and walk through** each stage of grief . . . more than once, if necessary.

- **Denial:** “This isn't happening to me. It's all a big mistake. We can work it out.”
- **Anger and Resentment:** “How can my spouse do this to me? What did I do to deserve this?”
- **Bargaining:** “If you stay, I'll change. If I agree to do (whatever *it is*), can we get back together?”
- **Depression:** “If only I can get through this day . . . this week . . . this month . . . this year.”
- **Acceptance:** “It is what it is. I would rather accept it and move on than wallow in the pain.”
- **Forgiveness:** “Yes, I was deeply hurt by this, but I no longer feel the need to make my ex pay. God will make it right in the end.”

**Let the tears flow** freely.

- Don't be afraid to fully grieve.
- Set specific time parameters. When your time to cry is over, get back to life with new determination.
- Stay in bed for a day or go away for a weekend if it helps.

**Write a letter** to your ex-spouse.

- Get off your mind and onto paper everything you wish you'd said to your ex-spouse but did not say for whatever reason.
- Write down your resentments from the marriage, your fears for the future, and what's been lost through the divorce. Then safely burn the letter, releasing its contents as an offering to God.
- Record the good things you remember about your courtship, marriage, and family experiences.

**Write a letter** to God.

- Honestly share your feelings with Him.
- Ask Him to give you insight into His heart for you and His plan for your life now.
- Thank God for the good moments He allowed you to have with your ex-spouse.

**Express your feelings** creatively.

- Use music to express your feelings. If you play a musical instrument, create a song that matches your mood.
- Use magazine photos, online images, colored and textured papers, and items from nature to create a picture that expresses how you feel. If you like to paint or draw, express your feelings that way.
- Create a scrapbook (book of memories) with words and pictures to capture the precious times you had in your marriage.

*“You changed my sorrow into dancing.  
You took away my clothes of sadness,  
and clothed me in happiness.”*

(PSALM 30:11 NCV)

## Lightening the Load of Loneliness

Loneliness is probably the most common emotion people experience before, during, and after divorce. It's that empty ache in your stomach, the twinge of abandonment you feel, if only for a short time. It can be painful, scary, and even confusing. It happens to everyone at one time or another—whether married or single. But *being lonely* and *being alone* are two very different things.

Just because you've divorced doesn't mean you are choosing to be alone. You choose where you want to go from here. If you choose to remain alone after divorce, you can do so without being lonely.

Here are six ways to help lighten the load of loneliness:

**Analyze your thoughts** when you feel lonely.<sup>30</sup>

- Ask yourself: “What am I *thinking* that is making me feel so lonely?”
- Say to yourself: “I need to pray for wisdom and give myself time to figure out what is going on inside me.”
- Use words to counter your feelings. This will lessen the strength of your painful emotions and take charge of them. Example: “I am not alone, God is always with me, and He knows what I need.”

**Evaluate your emotions.**

- Ask yourself: “Why am I *feeling* this way? What lies am I believing about myself or others?”
- Say to yourself: “It is not the end of the world. What is the worst thing that could happen? God is powerful enough to help me through this.”
- Identify your losses: “Is my need for love not being met? Is my need for significance unmet? Is my need for security unmet?”

**Find ways to resolve** your feelings of loneliness.

- Look for erroneous thinking, such as overestimating the severity of your present situation. Counter negative thoughts with positive ones: “I am not alone.” “I can handle anything with God's help.”

- Curb catastrophic thinking by emotionally detaching from the situation long enough to make a truly objective appraisal of the *real* impact it is having on your life.
- Practice thinking positively to increase the likelihood of having a positive outcome.

**Immerse yourself** in inspirational music.<sup>31</sup>

- Listen to Christian radio in your car and at home.
- Look for inspirational music on CDs or the Internet of your favorite musical artists and styles.
- Sing songs that contain Scripture written as prayers to God.

**Explore** the lives of Christian role models.<sup>32</sup>

- Watch movies or documentaries on the lives of Christian leaders who have experienced divorce or other adversities in life.
- Read biographies about Christians who felt abandoned or betrayed and yet rose above it with God’s help (for example, Corrie ten Boom, David Livingstone, Amy Carmichael).
- Be encouraged by studying the life of Christ in the book of Matthew, the story of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37–50, and the book of Ruth.

**Get together** with other people who share your interests.

- Be curious about and genuinely interested in others.
- Be kind and generous to those with whom you come in contact.
- Be persistent . . . even if a particular group doesn’t seem to be a good fit. Once you’ve made a friend or two, nourish those friendships with time and attention.

*“Do not be afraid or discouraged,  
for the Lord will personally go ahead of you.  
He will be with you; he will neither  
fail you nor abandon you.”*  
(DEUTERONOMY 31:8 NLT)

## Quieting the Voices of Guilt and Regret

*If only . . .* two small words behind two big emotions that can cast a long shadow in the minds of those who've already divorced or are facing the possibility of it. "If only I'd been more aware of my spouse's needs." "If only I'd been more patient . . . more understanding . . . more observant."

Whether appropriate or inappropriate, rational or irrational, the feelings of *guilt* and *regret* can come from nearly any place or event imaginable. And these feelings can keep you, as a divorced person, from re-engaging with life or growing through your divorce experience. But guilt and regret don't have to control you. You can quiet the voices of these menacing messengers.

King David knew well the grief of guilt and regret. After committing adultery with Bathsheba and facing the fallout that followed, David found freedom from his guilt and regret and penned these words as a song of gratitude to God. . . .

### PSALM 32:1-5 (TLB)

Here are six ways to help you find freedom from guilt and regret:

**Affirm** finding joy and relief from guilt in God's forgiveness. . . .v. 1

*"What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over!"*

**Accept** responsibility for any true guilt related to your divorce. . . . v. 2

*"What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record."*

**Admit** the misery and frustration holding on to guilt has caused in your life. . . . v. 3

*"There was a time when I wouldn't admit what a sinner I was. But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration."*

**Attest** to God’s loving pursuit of you even when guilt makes you want to hide from Him. . . . v. 4

*“All day and all night your hand was heavy on me.”*

**Account** for what guilt has cost you in your life. . . . v. 4

*“My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day.”*

**Align** your thoughts with God’s truth. . . . v. 5

*“I finally admitted all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said . . . ‘I will confess them to the Lord.’ And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.”*

## How to Take Personal Responsibility for Your Part in the Divorce

Just as it takes two to form a marriage, more often than not, it also takes two to fracture a marriage. While one spouse may ultimately carry more responsibility for the marriage’s demise, no one is a perfect partner . . . because no one is a perfect person. Regardless how the weight of responsibility for the divorce is distributed, fingers always point both ways. When hurt, human nature is quick to shift blame rather than accept responsibility.

But there is another option. Instead of turning a finger outward, both spouses would do well to first turn a finger inward and engage in self-examination . . . to pinpoint the personal problems each brought to the marriage relationship. Sadly, we often learn more from our mistakes than from our successes. As hurtful as divorce is, that hurt can be multiplied over and over again if we fail to look at, learn from, and subsequently change the damaging thought and behavior patterns we practiced during a failed marriage.

The Lord is pleased and responsive when we pray, *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23–24).

Some helpful questions to ask when seeking answers from God about your part in the failure of your marriage, come right from His Word—from the characteristics of love described in 1 Corinthians 13:1–7.

*“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.*

*<sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*

*<sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.*

*<sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.*

*<sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”*

### Faults & Failures Inventory

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any of your faults and failures related to your marriage as you answer the following questions:

#### Did I (or do I) . . .

- Y / N** Speak openly and honestly, yet respectfully and graciously when addressing conflicts rather than interact harshly, critically, rudely, or in a condemning manner?
- Y / N** Share knowledge, insight, and opinions humbly and sensitively in a compassionate, considerate way rather than with a prideful, boastful attitude that communicates, “I’m right and you’re wrong.”?
- Y / N** Make personal sacrifices in the marriage relationship with an attitude of joy and a quiet, humble heart rather than with an air of resentment and rebellion, feeling infringed upon, manipulated, or used?

- Y / N** Practice patience, tolerance, stamina, and understanding under stress rather than exhibit impatience, exasperation, anger, and irritability?
- Y / N** Show kindness, gentleness, helpfulness, and regularly perform basic acts of thoughtfulness rather than fend for myself and refuse to extend basic courtesies without being asked?
- Y / N** Rejoice, support, extend praise and compliments for accomplishments rather than harbor envy and resentment, offer criticism, and withhold affirmation?
- Y / N** Overlook offenses, quickly and thoroughly forgive rather than always remember an offense, take revenge, and delight in failures?
- Y / N** Seek to please, protect, defend, trust, hope, and persevere rather than expect to be honored, catered to, taken care of, and pleased?

While it is sometimes deceptively satisfying to list the faults of your ex, there are always three sides to every story: **my** side, **your** side and **God's** side. The truth is, no one except God is 100 percent right in thought and action 100 percent of the time. We are all accountable for whatever percentage of the wrong belongs to us. Even two percent fault requires that we . . .

**Recognize** the wrong.

**Confess** the wrong.

**Take responsibility for** the wrong.

**Seek forgiveness for** the wrong.

**Break** the pattern of repeating the wrong.

**Establish** new Christ-like characteristics to replace the wrong.

*“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

(EPHESIANS 4:22–24)

## Rewards of Taking Personal Responsibility

**Frees** us from being focused on the offenses and the offender and from being emotionally hooked to that person in a negative way throughout our life

**Clears** our conscience so we can move forward without holding on to guilt and becoming bitter and closed to positive, productive relationships

**Allows** us to escape the victim mentality that often develops when we focus on the faults, failures, and offenses of others rather than on our own imperfections

**Turns** our attention to developing Christlike character in us

**Promotes** personal, emotional, and spiritual growth and healing

**Removes** baggage we would naturally carry into future relationships

*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.  
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves  
be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

(GALATIANS 5:1)

## How to Tell Others about Your Divorce

Telling others that your marriage is in trouble or that you are getting a divorce can create a great deal of pain. When going through a divorce, you want and need the support of your family and friends more than ever. But how do you tell them your marriage is over without creating undue stress for them and yourself? Whom should you tell? When and how much should you tell them?

There are no hard-and-fast rules to follow when breaking the news of your marriage ending. Telling family and friends very likely will be painful and awkward, depending on how amicable or adversarial the relationships are.

Generally, it's best to get the news about your divorce out in the open after your plans are definite. If you have children, telling them will be the most difficult of all.

As you prepare to take this crucial step of telling others, first talk to God in prayer and share your worries and concerns.

*“Give all your worries and cares to God,  
for he cares about you.”*

(1 PETER 5:7 NLT)

### **General Guidelines for Telling Others about Your Divorce**

**Practice** what you're going to say and how you want to say it.

- Decide how much you're comfortable telling others and what details are appropriate to share with which people.
- Don't let others push you into giving more information than you're comfortable sharing.

**Tell others** only when you know the timing is right and you are in the right environment to disclose the information with a degree of safety.

- Make sure you and your spouse are in a good emotional place before telling both sets of parents about the divorce. (Example: Don't tell them after having a bad fight.)
- Give family members the news only when they have the rest of the day to privately process their emotions. (Example: Avoid doing it during a family party or holiday celebration.)

**Be gentle and direct** when telling your loved ones about the divorce.

- Ask for support from your family, being careful not to control their behavior toward your mate.
- Be aware that your family may be suffering the loss of your marriage along with you if they have a positive family history with your mate.

**Decide** ahead of time how you are going to respond to others' reactions.

- Do your best to take others' comments and reactions in stride. Some friends and family members, may make negative comments about you or your spouse. Try not to react to them.
- Avoid placing blame when announcing the divorce. This will make the news easier for others to digest.

**Be prepared** to answer questions about your divorce.

- Be honest and direct in the answers you give. If you are unprepared to answer at that moment, say: "I'd rather not say," or "I'm not comfortable talking about that right now."
- Do not respond to negative comments made about your mate. Politely but firmly tell those making the comments that you prefer not to discuss the matter.

**Handle** unsolicited advice from others carefully.

- Don't let family and friends fan the flames of anger or regret with negative comments about your spouse (Example: "I always thought she wasn't good enough for you.")
- Learn to confront others' negative comments with the truths of God's Word.

*"Let your speech always be gracious,  
seasoned with salt, so that you may know how  
you ought to answer each person."*

(COLOSSIANS 4:6 ESV)

### **How to Tell the Children about Your Separation or Divorce**

**Be absolutely sure** the separation or divorce is actually happening before telling the children.

**Put aside** any hurt and anger you may feel toward your spouse before telling your kids.

**Tell all** of the children at once. Make sure both you and your spouse are present when telling them.

**Remain calm** and avoid blaming your spouse.

**Provide** a general reason for what is happening, but also be prepared to offer specific, age-appropriate details about why you are getting divorced.

**Be sensitive** to how the children react to the news. It's as common for kids to have no reaction as it is for them to cry or get angry.

**Welcome** their questions to the extent that you can be clear and honest in your responses.

**Give** your children time to adjust to the news, but remain available to them when they want to talk. It will take time for them to see how the future plays out, so it is important that you be patient with their needs and maintain a steady presence in their lives.

**Reassure** the children of your unconditional love for them. (Children need to be regularly reassured that the divorce is not their fault.) Assure them that God is watching over all of you and will help everyone as they trust in Him.

**Realize** that no matter how your children respond, they will be greatly impacted. Look for changes in their performance at school, behavior and attitude at home, and interactions with friends and siblings.

**Repeatedly remind** your children of *your* love for them, but also of *God's* unfailing love and faithfulness toward them.

*"For your unfailing love is as high as the heavens.  
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds."*

(PSALM 57:10 NLT)

## How to Help Children Heal After Divorce

Divorce separates more than a marriage when children are involved. Suddenly there is a split between parents and each “side” of the family. Children can feel torn in two when their hearts are loyal to both their mother and father, and they don’t understand why their family is now broken.

Anxiety and anger are often reactions children face following a divorce. Depending on their age and level of development, they may have a limited understanding of what is happening. One of the most important truths that children need to understand is that God is always with them, and that He will never leave them.

*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you;  
he will never leave you nor forsake you.  
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”*

(DEUTERONOMY 31:8)

### Helping Children of Divorce Heal

Here are six essentials for helping children heal after a divorce:

#### Make home a safe place.

- Create a haven in your home where your children can feel safe and secure.
- Reassure your child that even though you and your spouse are separating, your love for your child will never end.

*“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever”*  
(1 CHRONICLES 16:34).

#### Make more memories.

- Replace old routines with new traditions to transition between sadness over loss to hope for the future.

- Spend intentional time together building connection with conversation at mealtimes, bedtime stories, and daily prayers.

*“Impress them [God’s commandments] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (DEUTERONOMY 6:7).*

### **Embrace emotions.**

- Plan constructive ways to help your child process their emotions as they come: anger, anxiety, depression, fear, grief, etc. (for example, counting to 10, talking it out, praying, crying, resting, playing).
- Talk about ways your child can express their emotions appropriately (for example, writing in a journal, drawing, physical exercise, or play).

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7).*

### **Let go of loneliness.**

- Allow children to withdraw periodically, but not entirely. Although the family structure is now different, help your children know they are not alone in their situation.
- Enlist your children to be responsible for daily tasks to contribute to their sense of belonging.

*“God sets the lonely in families” (PSALM 68:6).*

### **Fend off fault-finding.**

- Consider the possibility that your children may think the divorce is their “fault” or that they could have done something to prevent the divorce, even if they don’t verbalize this out loud.
- Confirm to your children that divorce is between adults in the family and that they have no fault in the breakup of your marriage.

*“The conduct of the innocent is upright” (PROVERBS 21:8).*

### Encourage expression.

- Realize, as your children begin to navigate their “new normal” they may hold back from expressing their emotions honestly.
- Invite your children to share what they think and feel so you can evaluate their current needs.

*“I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also” (2 CORINTHIANS 6:13).*

## How to Manage the Financial Matters of Divorce

Going through a divorce is stressful and trying. Not only are you dealing with the emotional toll that comes with divorce, but also with the logistical challenges of splitting up.

The division of financial assets during a divorce gets complicated. Figuring out how to pay the bills while navigating the divorce, who keeps the house or if it needs to be sold, how to divide marital assets (and debts), and how to protect your credit are only a few of the issues couples face as they head through the divorce process. A poorly handled divorce can cause both spouses unnecessary stress, damage their credit scores, and lead to costly litigation.

But a little planning and preparation before starting the divorce process can make a world of difference to the final outcome.

*“A well-thought-out plan will work to your advantage,  
but hasty actions will cost you dearly.”*

(PROVERBS 21:5 VOICE)

## Preparing Financially for a Divorce

**Select** a qualified financial planner, if needed, to help put your financial house in order.

- Ask professional and business friends for recommendations.
- Choose someone you are able to trust completely—someone with whom you can develop a good rapport.

**Set up** a new personal/family budget.

- Do a thorough assessment of the current family budget and try to determine what may change for you financially in the future.
- Put together a written budget that is as realistic as possible, making sure to:
  - ♦ List your fixed expenses—everything that is a regular expense and essential for day-to-day living.
  - ♦ List your sources of income—all the places where money will come from to provide for you and your family to live.
  - ♦ Compare your expenses with your income. Will there be enough funds coming in on a monthly basis to meet the budget, or will there be a shortfall?
  - ♦ Stop overspending. Buy only what is necessary. Cut back on discretionary expenses wherever you can.
  - ♦ Look for additional sources of income (for example, a higher-paying career, a second job, a roommate to share living expenses).

**Compile** a list of all assets (for example, real estate, cars, time-shares, furniture, life insurance policies, savings bonds, retirement or brokerage accounts, etc.).

**Establish** credit in your own name if bank accounts and credit cards were held jointly with your spouse.

**Close out** all joint charge accounts. Notify creditors in writing that you're no longer responsible for your spouse's purchases.

**Learn** what your tax filing options are before the divorce is finalized. Look for ways to reduce your income taxes because of the divorce.

You can rest in this promise of God as you work through all the financial details of your divorce.

*“God will use his wonderful riches in Christ Jesus  
to give you everything you need.”*

(PHILIPPIANS 4:19 NCV)

## Preparing Legally for a Divorce

Because divorce itself is a lawsuit, the law plays an important role in your divorce. A marriage can be dissolved only after one married partner files suit against the other partner in a court of law. Legal matters are complex and specialized, so unless you are an attorney yourself, hiring a competent attorney is a wise investment.

Your attorney can help you file the proper documents with the court, estimate income taxes, and make sure they get filed in a timely and proper manner. An attorney can also handle many other details you might overlook during this time of crisis.

Here are some items to consider from a legal standpoint:

**Recognize** the importance of having a legal advisor available as early as possible—perhaps even before a final decision to divorce is acted on.

**Determine** your own objectives and desired outcome related to division of assets, child custody, and alimony payments. Be prepared to discuss these with the attorney you retain.

**Plan** to interview at least two or three attorneys who specialize in family law.

- Ask friends, family, and business associates for referrals and references.
- Do a preliminary phone interview with the attorneys you are considering.

- Ask about the attorney’s background and experience, including how long the attorney has been practicing family law where the divorce will be filed.
- Discuss the attorney’s rates and fees, including the amount of the retainer fee and if there will be any additional costs such as court filing fees, photocopies, phone charges, etc.
- Find out if the retainer agreement is still valid if there is a delay in your divorce or if you will get a refund on the retainer should the attorney decide to drop you as a client or you decide to use the attorney only partly through the divorce proceedings.
- Make sure the attorney has a proven record of protecting the client’s assets while the separation and divorce are taking place.
- Ask for one or two former clients’ references to verify your attorney’s ability to mediate and negotiate fair child custody settlements and alimony agreements.

**Review** a complete list of all family assets and another list of all family debts.

**Change** name and address information on all documents that could affect you legally (for example, bank accounts, beneficiary designations, ownership on all property titles, etc.).

**Pray** this prayer often: “Lord, help me to turn over to You the things that are out of my control. Bring peace to my troubled heart. Take away my fear. Help me to know that You are still in charge.”

*“For God gave us a spirit not of fear  
but of power and love and self-control.”*

(2 TIMOTHY 1:7 ESV)

## How to Know If You're Ready for a New Relationship

Unfortunately, many people who are “single again” try to fill the void in their hearts by dating too soon. When you start a new relationship before fully healing from the pain of an old relationship, you can turn an already difficult time into a disaster. As with any loss, large or small, time is needed to grieve and to reassess who you are, where you've been, and where God wants to take you in the future.

So, how do you know if you're ready for a new relationship . . . when it might be time to start dating again?

### Questions to Consider Before Dating After Divorce

Here are 10 questions to consider before jumping back into the dating pool:

- Y / N** Has your divorce been final for at least a year . . . or maybe even two?
- Y / N** Have you spent time working on establishing a healthy identity apart from the presence of a date, girlfriend/boyfriend, or wife/husband?
- Y / N** Have you developed a variety of friendships (with married people, single males and females) since your divorce in order to expand your horizons,?
- Y / N** Are you content to stay focused on cultivating friendships in the beginning and waiting for romantic involvements later?
- Y / N** Have you written down a list of the qualities or issues in life that you refuse to compromise on once you're involved in a relationship again?
- Y / N** Are you committed to telling your date how you feel about the hard issues?
- Y / N** Do you have a plan for talking to your children about the person you're dating?

- Y / N** Are you committed to waiting for God’s best even if it means remaining single for longer than you like?
- Y / N** Have you made purity a priority in your life since your divorce, and have you overcome any troubling attitudes or habits that contributed to the failure of your previous marriage?
- Y / N** Are you continually seeking God’s direction in all aspects of your life, including dating?

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways submit to him,  
and he will make your paths straight.”*  
(PROVERBS 3:5–6)

## How to Find Freedom in Forgiveness

Forgiveness is one of the toughest issues for anyone, but especially those who have divorced. Ending a marriage involves severing a sacred commitment, and forgiveness doesn’t come easily. But you cannot live and build healthy relationships unless you first forgive. To *live* is to *forgive*. It’s a tough challenge given the fact that most of the time we consider ourselves recipients of unkind acts rather than perpetrators of them.

All you can do is apologize and ask for forgiveness from those you have wronged, and forgive those who have wronged you. You forgive by releasing all your pain into the hands of God. You may feel like you’re letting the offender “off the hook,” but you’re not. Your part is to take people off your “hook” and place them on God’s “hook,” thereby transferring the weight of unforgiveness for a myriad of offenses onto Him. Forgiving those who have deeply wounded your heart is the key to unlocking the door to “new beginnings.”<sup>33</sup>

*“Bear with each other and forgive one another  
if any of you has a grievance against someone.  
Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*

(COLOSSIANS 3:13)

## Forgive

(an acrostic for the word FORGIVE)

**F—Forget** the past and focus on the future.

- Know that the Lord can use every experience in your life to mature your character.
- Know that you are not alone in feeling pain; the Lord is with you.
- Know that God still has a plan and a purpose for your life, whether single or married.

*“No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead”*  
(PHILIPPIANS 3:13 NLT).

**O—Open** your heart to letting go and letting God take control.

- Do release all your past pain to the Lord.
- Do surrender your present struggles to Him.
- Do freely give God all of your feelings of frustration or fear of the future.

*“In Christ we can come before God with freedom and without fear. We can do this through faith in Christ”* (EPHESIANS 3:12 NCV).

**R—Refuse** to stay stuck in brokenness or bitterness.

- Seek to salvage the good that came from your marriage relationship (children, grandchildren, other family, friends, etc.), holding on to what is good and letting go of what is not.
- Speak the truth in love, with words of grace, most especially to yourself.
- Keep short accounts, refusing to allow disagreements or discord to fester and infect your life.

*“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (COLOSSIANS 4:6).*

**G—Give** grace upon grace.

- Avoid viewing your ex as your “enemy.”
- Avoid holding on to hurts.
- Avoid voicing grievances from a victim mentality.

*“Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God’s grace” (2 CORINTHIANS 1:12).*

**I—Identify** your own faults.

- Confess your contributions to the failure of your marriage.
- Seek forgiveness for wrongs you committed against your ex-spouse.
- Accept God’s forgiveness, even if your ex is unable or unwilling to forgive you.

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 JOHN 1:9).*

**V—Vow** to pray for your ex-spouse.

- Pray that your ex-spouse will allow the Lord to meet his/her inner needs.
- Pray for protection from all harmful influences.
- Pray for godly influences to bless your ex-spouse.

*“As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you” (1 SAMUEL 12:23).*

**E—Entrust** your future to God.

- Thank God for working in your life, according to His good purpose.
- Thank God for being your Protector, Defender, Savior, and Friend.
- Thank God for His promise to never leave you nor forsake you.

*“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (MATTHEW 28:20).*

## My Prayer of Surrender

“Dear Heavenly Father,  
Thank you that I am your child and I am precious to you.  
As my perfect Father in heaven,  
You see all, know all, and you have complete control of all things.  
You are sovereign over all my life.  
Because your very nature is love, there is nothing that can happen  
to me that does not first pass through your fingers of love.  
You are wise and plan the best course for me  
and are powerful to fulfill what you have planned.  
I will rest in your love and protection.  
I choose to trust you with the events of my life,  
knowing that you will use them for good.  
I cannot demand time and attention or love  
and understanding from a mate.  
I surrender myself and my marriage to you, Lord.  
I will look to you to meet my needs and give me what is best for me.  
I also surrender my children to you, Lord.  
You love them more perfectly than I possibly can.  
I trust in your loving care to meet their true needs.  
I surrender all thoughts of self-pity and revenge  
whenever I am dealt with unjustly or harshly.  
When my mate fails to be concerned or considerate,  
I refuse to harbor a critical spirit, because I know  
that a bitter root will bear bitter fruit.  
Thank you, Lord, for the presence of Christ in me that gives  
me strength. I rest in your promise that  
*‘I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength’*  
(Philippians 4:13 NKJV).  
Loving Lord, I give all control to you. I yield my will to your will.  
Thank you for being completely trustworthy.  
I pray this prayer, placing my total trust in Jesus.  
Only through Christ will I be able to remain true to this commitment.  
I pray this prayer, placing all my hope in Him. Amen.”

## The Rest of Steve Grissom's Story

Walking through the experience of divorce, Steve Grissom receives help from his church, and individuals come alongside him during that difficult time. Now Steve feels a leading from the Lord to help others recover from divorce, and he knows that churches could have a big impact. However, most aren't equipped with staff on hand, trained, and ready to deal with all the complexities of divorce.

Flowing from his years of experience in broadcast journalism, Steve sees a way to equip churches with the ongoing resources they need. He knows a single weekend seminar isn't enough to help people recover from the trauma of divorce. They need a much longer period of time for sustained support and healing.

So Steve creates a video course curriculum featuring clergy and counselors, experts in divorce matters, and other individuals who have experienced divorce themselves. Filmed in an interview format, the *DivorceCare* videos seem more like watching a TV newsmagazine show than a “preachy” counseling training. The curriculum helps churches form support groups that facilitate discussion and start the healing process. A companion program is also developed for children—called *DivorceCare for Kids*—to help kids navigate the impact of divorce on their level.

*“Two are better than one,  
Because they have a good reward for their labor.  
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.  
But woe to him who is alone when he falls,  
For he has no one to help him up.”*

(ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10 NKJV)

Now remarried, Steve and his second wife, Cheryl (who also went through a divorce), help equip churches to minister to people facing major life disruptions—specifically divorce and grief. They left their careers in broadcasting and pharmacology to begin Church Initiative, a non-profit that helps equip churches with practical help and support groups to minister to people dealing with life crises.

Above all, Steve learns that the God he serves is all about *hope*.

The person who has been through a divorce—maybe wants to get back together but can't, or maybe is the instigator of divorce and can't get the marriage back together. Remember, that ours is a loving, forgiving, restorative God; that if you turn to God, He will rebuild your life whatever your circumstances. If you sinned in getting a divorce, He can forgive that. If you are the recipient of a divorce you didn't want, He can rebuild your life. He rebuilt mine and has blessed it immeasurably. . . . So there is hope . . . there is hope no matter what your circumstances.<sup>34</sup>

The impact of divorce is heavy, but God can use those who have gone through a divorce to minister to and impact another's life for His good purposes. The Bible tells us to comfort those with the comfort we have been comforted with from God.

*“The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort . . .  
comforts us in all our troubles,  
so that we can comfort those in any trouble  
with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”*  
(2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4)



# SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE



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*“First seek the counsel  
of the LORD.”*

(1 KINGS 22:5)



God's Word offers the hope and promise of a changed life. The Lord will renew your mind—transforming the way you think, act, and live—as you saturate yourself in His Word. In the following questions, the bold-faced words serve as prompts to help you more easily memorize the verses related to this topic. May God's truth come alive to you, flourish in you, and flow through you.

Why should you not focus on your **momentary troubles**?

*“For our light and **momentary troubles**  
are achieving for us an eternal glory  
that far outweighs them all.  
So we fix our eyes not on what is seen,  
but on what is unseen, since what is seen  
is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”  
(2 CORINTHIANS 4:17–18)*

What will happen if you live with a **hardened heart**?

*“Blessed is the one  
who always trembles before God,  
but whoever **hardens** their **heart**  
falls into trouble.”  
(PROVERBS 28:14)*

Where is God when you **pass through waters** and **walk through the fire**?

*“When you **pass through** the **waters**,  
I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you **walk through** the **fire**,  
you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.”  
(ISAIAH 43:2)*

Why should you **pay no attention** to the faults of others?

*“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust  
in your brother’s eye and **pay no attention**  
to the plank in your own eye?”*

(LUKE 6:41)

What is necessary to **guard your hearts and your minds**?

*“Do not be anxious about anything,  
but in every situation, by prayer and petition,  
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.  
And the peace of God, which transcends  
all understanding, will **guard your hearts**  
**and your minds** in Christ Jesus.”*

(PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7)

What can help you learn to be a person  
who is **slow to become angry**?

*“Everyone should be quick to listen,  
slow to speak and **slow to become angry.**”*

(JAMES 1:19)

When I want to **take revenge**, what does God tell me to do?

*“Do not **take revenge**, my dear friends,  
but leave room for God’s wrath,  
for it is written:  
‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’  
says the Lord.”*

(ROMANS 12:19)

Instead of insisting on my own will,  
what will happen if I choose to **wait  
for the Lord** and His will?

*"I remain confident of this:  
I will see the goodness of the LORD  
in the land of the living.*

**Wait for the LORD**; be strong and  
take heart and **wait for the LORD.**"

(PSALM 27:13–14)

How can you **forgive the grievances** you  
have against one another?

*"Bear with each other and **forgive**  
one another if any of you has a  
**grievance** against someone.  
Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*

(COLOSSIANS 3:13)

Who will be a **father** to my children if my husband  
leaves and the children become **fatherless**?

*"A **father** to the **fatherless**,  
a defender of widows,  
is God in his holy dwelling."*

(PSALM 68:5)





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## ENDNOTES

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