



# Life After Divorce

**W**e live at a time in our history where only one in two marriages will survive. This is a sad fact of life in a world going crazy. A world where we seem to be bloated on entitlement, and commitment is forever if it lasts for five years. Divorce will happen if we make it an option. But in saying all this, we must also be clear on the fact that abuse in any form must never be tolerated. There are times when a marriage that is toxic may never be repaired and should be ended.

It is said that it takes two to start a marriage and one to end it. But the truth about marriage is that if Christ is at the centre of a marriage, then it actually takes three to make a marriage and not two. A marriage based on Christ will never fail. It will be based on a love built on the principles of 1 Corinthians 13, which is the basis of most marriage vows. Remember also the classic words in a Christian wedding ceremony, “What God has put together, let no man put asunder.”

The problem today is that God has put too few marriages together. But this article is about divorce and the overcoming of it. As there seems to be too few marriages that are successful, there are also too few divorces that are as well. Some divorces are at the core of pain and destruction for the life of the people involved. The ripples in this pond extend far beyond just the ex husband and wife. While some divorces end amicably where the ex spouses remain friends and move on, sadly the norm is a battle of bitterness based on property disputes and custody battles. There is no such thing as grace or forgiveness in these wars of attrition and the only winners are those in the legal profession.

In order to have a life after divorce we need to accept the basic tenant of grace. For without grace we live in a prison of our own making. We are controlled by dark forces that will destroy our destiny and keep us under the control of those who have hurt us. If forgiveness is God’s solution then why is it so hard for us to forgive? At our organisation, Mission Serenity, my husband Graham and I are dedicated to restoring broken lives. All the work we do is Christ-centred and based on the simplest of solutions from scripture. The recipe for a good person is found in the beatitudes in the book of Matthew Chapter 5 and the principles of love in 1 Corinthians 13, to name but a few.

In every situation in which we minister, whether it be survival of childhood sexual abuse, addictive behaviour or relationship breakdown, the only way forward is grace. It is never any different. No two people are the same and God had made us all unique, as we know from the discovery of His genetic blue print we call DNA. While it is true that no two

people are the same, it can also be said that no two marriages or divorces are the same. Both men and women can be responsible for the marriage breakdown. The hurt can come from either side, but usually at the heart of divorce and relationship breakdown is an empty love tank. Couples whose emotional needs are met in each other do not breakdown or divorce. Sadly, emotional needs and an understanding of the language of love in families is neither taught nor understood and it should be part of marriage 101 classes for everyone.

If this is true in most marriage breakdowns then it can be assumed that there is a proportion of blame that can be levelled on both sides. Understanding this may make it easier to move on. The everlasting truth here is this: It can take grace to fix a marriage and grace to move on after divorce. Will you find love again? Well that remains to be seen in which context you mean love. Will you find another partner and live in a second chance happy marriage? You have a much better chance of achieving that if you are not torn by bitterness.

The destruction of divorce has its effects on more than the couple involved. What we do in a marriage is teach our children what to expect from a marriage. If this is the case and only fifty percent of marriages survive, then it is no wonder that the divorce rate is increasing. It has nowhere else to go. Everything we do in marriage and in divorce can have a positive or negative influence on the outcomes for our children and this must always be considered.

## **Soaring after Divorce**

Divorce, like the death of a loved one, needs to follow a certain path. There must always be a grieving process. You need to allow yourself a healthy amount of time to grieve the loss of your marriage. However, staying too long in this process is not healthy. We must always bury the dead or we live in the stench of death to our own detriment. Then we need to debrief our situation after the grieving process. There will be some valuable wisdom in any mistake. Mistakes are an opportunity to learn. Sadly experience is what we get just after we need it and we are told that those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. Part of a healthy debrief should be, what could I have done better?

Then it is time to forgive, so that all can move on into the next phase of life. We must forgive our ex spouse and ourselves. Often we need to forgive God. It was not God's fault that your marriage broke down. You made your choices and God gives us the power of choice. A choice made without consultation and the sanction of God will rarely succeed. As hard as it may seem in the heat of the battle that divorce can often be, there is life after divorce and it can be sweet if we take the lessons learned, apply grace to all things and give it to God.

We must all see the benefits of letting go. As we say at Mission Serenity, we should get busy living or get busy dying, and this is all based on choice. If you are struggling to get your life back on track it may be time to let go and let God. May He be your choice now and forever and may you have the meaningful life He always intended you should.

*Michelle Hood.*

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