

COPING WITH DIVORCE

By: Name withheld

In 19 --, my marriage of -- ½ years became a national statistic: that of; (one out of every two (2) marriages end in divorce.)

I don't want to embarrass anyone here, but I would like to ask you to stand if you, your parents or your child has been touched by divorce. Now give yourselves a hug from me because you have survived a very life-changing event. You are a survivor! God bless you.

I am not here today to tell you how to get over a divorce. I don't think there is one! Ask any one of our speakers today how she "got over" her situation, and I think she would tell you that she hasn't gotten over it; she just learned to live with it. To cope, as Virginia said, "coping is struggling successfully." What I hope to try and do today is to give you some ways to cope or help someone else cope to with a divorce.

Divorce knows no boundaries. It happens to teachers, lawyers, bankers, preachers, laborers, Christians, and non-Christians. Rich or poor, married a few months or married many years, divorce is in every segment of our society.

I have taught classes on stress, and I just couldn't understand why divorce and death were linked together as the highest "stress limit" until I went through my own divorce. *Now I do!*

Divorce is a death of sorts; death of a marriage, death of a family, and death of dreams and hopes in that relationship. And the person has to go through the same emotions as those involved in actual physical death.

First, I cannot even begin to imagine getting through a divorce without God. He was the One I could talk to and turn to when I could not talk to anyone else. He is the One who has gotten me this far. I confess I was not strong enough. I would have blown-up into a million tiny pieces on my own without God.

I spent a lot of time in God's Word, especially the book of Psalms. When I get to heaven, I want to meet David! What a way he had with words, and being able to put his feelings into them. Another reason I want to meet David is that he made some terrible mistakes but was a man after God's own heart! This gives me hope!

Every morning for the first year of my separation and divorce, I read Psalms 121:1 which says, "*I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help....*" And at night I would go through the Psalms and pick out an encouraging verse, or verses, which entreated the Lord for help.

Verses such as....

Psalms 27:14, "*Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!*"

Psalms 40:1-3, "*I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord.*"

Psalms 71:20-21, "*You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.*"

These verses gave me hope as they did David and thousands who have read them throughout the years!

If you are going through a separation or divorce or if you know someone who is, please invite them to "church"; maybe to attend Ladies Bible Class on Sunday or Wednesday night. If not that, send them a note with an encouraging Bible verse to let them know that God loves them and knows they are hurting!

Secondly, a person going through a divorce needs support----- mentally, emotionally, physically and financially. All of these are intertwined. You are physically exhausted because all your energy is spent emotionally and mentally from just trying to make it through the day. There were days when, if I was able to fold a load of clothes after work, I was doing well! This is a very good time for

Satan to slip in and grab you spiritually. As a preacher told me, “You have to watch out for yourself now, because Satan is after you. He already has your husband.”

Most divorces leave both parties hurting financially. It is especially true of most women because they do not have the earning capacity that the man does. I had been a stay-at-home mother for 19 years. I worked before my children were born and had a good job, but I gave it up to stay at home and raise my children, and I thank God for that opportunity. But it was a daunting thought to know I had to find a job after being out of the workforce for 19 years.

The business world had changed greatly with the advent, and state of the art of computers. So what do I do? I went back to school! Was it hard? You bet it was! Working all day long and going to school four nights a week from 5:00 till 9:00, then coming home and doing my household chores and being a mother to my son still at home was tough. There were days and nights that I thought, “why am I doing this?” and thinking about quitting,, but again, God was there with me to help me make it through those doubting times.

I was so thankful when I could at last tell my parents when we separated. I received their unconditional love and support, which I needed. No questions, just their love and their support. Please remember this if nothing else; someone going through a divorce does not need questioning and probing as to “what-happened?”, and who is at fault?” They need support and encouragement. And if their family, friends, and the church do not provide that support and encouragement then they will go elsewhere until they do find it!

Thirdly, I want to emphasize encouragement. Throughout my separation and divorce God put those people in my life that helped me and encouraged me. I have one dear friend who sent me a card every week for the first year—*every week!* I would go through them at different times, re-read the words of encouragement, and think...*someone cares!* She will always have a special place in my heart. There is no way I can repay her, but to be there for her when she needs me.

Other friends sent me notes and cards of encouragement. I remember one friend, Kay, who wrote me to say that she could not wait to see what God was going to do in my life.

Two ladies I worked with at High School, Ann and Joyce, have a special place in my heart. There again, they gave me unconditional love and support. They cried with me, they laughed with me; *they were there for me!*

I never knew or appreciated just how traumatic a divorce is until I went through it. That is life, isn't it? We never understand some things until we experience them. I actually stood in front of a mirror and practiced saying, "I'm Martha and I'm divorced", or just, "I'm divorced", so I could say it without crying.

Ladies, I can't stress enough the importance of showing love and support to someone going through a divorce. It was the last thing I ever wanted to happen, but it did, and life had to go on.

And let me inject here that the person going through a divorce needs genuine love and support, not an inquisition! I had to take classes in psychology, relationships, and managing conflicts. Do you know that each of us has a "comfort zone?" This is an arena around us usually about 3 feet in which we feel comfortable for people to approach us. Some people need larger areas, some smaller. We allow our close friends and family to come closer inside that circle and be close to us. And we use body language to give our feelings without saying a word!

After my divorce, I could tell when someone was coming toward me to "get the dirt" on my divorce. I could tell by the look in their eyes! And I was very surprised by their boldness in asking me questions when they usually just said, "hi" in passing! When someone wanting to know "the story" approached me, I found myself adopting a "defensive" posture; crossing my arms over my chest, saying to myself, (you aren't going to hurt me, or get anything out of me!) I quickly made the decision that if I wanted to talk about it to someone I would, and if I did not. I would not! I was not rude about it, but I simply either changed the subject or did not answer their question!

If a person wants to talk to you about their divorce, they will. If they don't want to talk to you about it, don't ask! And don't take it personally. It might be that they simply cannot talk about it that day it is too emotional. It might be that later on they will be able to talk to you about it. And if they do talk, ***LISTEN!*** Many times, all someone needs is to be able to pour out their feelings and get them out of their system!

My main concern was my sons. I wanted them to come through this experience as unscathed as possible, and I vowed to make my divorce as “Christian” as possible. And I like to think I did.

God has blessed me during the past six years. I went back to school and finished my degree, graduating from a University with a Bachelor’s of Business Administration degree with honors! My sons are doing well. I have a good job, it drives me crazy at times, but they all do that!

Ladies, remember that God loves you! He truly does! You and I are his daughters and He is a loving father to His children. He cares when we are hurt and are hurting, and He is always there for us; we just have to call upon Him.

If I can ever be of assistance to you or anyone you know who is going through a divorce, please let me know. I want to help others going through this trying time in their life as others helped me.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Your friend in the Lord.....

Note: Names and dates have been withheld but the events of the above are true in every detail. God bless those who have experienced the devastation of the terribleness of divorce.