



PASTORAL COUNSELING CENTER

MISSION
 To provide counseling services by integrating
 psychotherapeutic techniques with biblical principles

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God Specializes in the Resurrection of Dead Marriages

I divorced my husband after 30 years of marriage, but God resurrected me and my marriage.

I was 19, and my husband was 32 when we got married in 1979. Although my husband and I had abusive fathers, we were Christians who chose to be led by the flesh, not the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we looked holy in church while selfishness, strife and every evil thing made our home a living hell.

I blamed my husband for all our problems and asked God to change him. The perfect victim, I also thought that since my husband was the head of household, the marriage could survive only if he changed.

Church counseling failed and conditions worsened. One October night in 2006, my counselor told me I was suicidal, evidenced by the chest pains I had endured for a week without seeking medical help. Although I denied the counselor's claim, I knew he was right. I really wanted to die. However, I rushed to the hospital because my shameful intention was now exposed.

On the hospital bed, bitter at man and disappointed in God, I decided to back-slide. At that moment of decision, the lighted room became dark. But God reached down through that darkness, and in a gentle voice, asked: *If you backslide, who will pray for your children?*

I did not care if I went to hell, but my children were not going. Helpless and broken, I cried out to God. At home, God led me to read the entire Bible, beginning with Genesis. To my amazement, I discovered that the God whom I previously thought was angry and punitive was a patient loving Father, continuously pleading with His wayward children to repent, and He would bless them. Hence, my hard heart opened to God's tender love, and my healing started. But because my husband was not changing, I reluctantly filed for divorce in December 2007. In 2009, after 30 years of marriage, the divorce was finalized.

Afterward, I hopped from one relative's house to another, ill-used my marital money, which I called "blood money" for selling out my family, and became penniless and tired. Finally, I cried to God for direction. In 2010, He sent me back to my husband's house. On Father's Day in 2011, God told me to ask my husband to remarry me. I was scared and told God, "No," but then obeyed. My husband told me, "No" many times, out of fear and the negative influence of others. During the 10 months I waited for him to say 'yes,' God taught me how to serve my husband by teaching me how to honor my husband continually, apologizing to him quickly, and loving him unconditionally.

The elders at my husband's church also did it right this time. They recommended counseling at Pastoral Counseling Center. It helped a lot because, among other things, my counselor emphasized the importance of developing a triad relationship with God as the center, doing things together, romancing each other, and discovering new things about each other. She was impartial, echoing our interests and concerns back to each other. I felt 'heard' for the first time in that journey and left our last meeting feeling healed.

We had a beautiful wedding at our home on August 4, 2012.

What I have and continue to learn is that the quality of my relationship with God decides the quality of my relationship with my husband. Because of that, I am not afraid for my marriage. God can transform and restore any dead marriage if one person, husband or wife, is willing to let God change him or her first. The journey is not easy and can be messy, but God will complete what he has started. To God be the glory, great things He has done.

Esther Jno-Charles



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I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Romans 12:1-2 KJV

Some Thoughts About Marriage

Because Marriage Counseling is one of the services offered at PCC, we maintain lots of resource materials for use by the counselors and the clients. I recently came upon a paper that had some pretty interesting statements about marriage and I want to share them with you.

Almost no one is foolish enough to imagine that he or she automatically deserves great success in any field of activity, yet almost everyone believes that they automatically deserve success in marriage.

A marriage is composed of two unique creations of God. Both have received gifts that need nourishment in order to bloom. Wise partners hang onto each other with open hands so that neither suffocates in submission.

A Christian marriage is a total commitment of two people to the person of Jesus Christ and to one another. It is a commitment in which there is no holding back of anything. Marriage is a pledge of mutual fidelity; it is a partnership of mutual subordination.

Real love means unconditional commitment to an imperfect person.

Marriage does not demand perfection, but it must be given priority. It is an institution for sinners. No one else need apply. But it finds its finest glory when sinners see it as God's way of leading them through His ultimate curriculum of love and righteousness.

A Christian marriage is similar to a solvent, a freeing up of the man and woman to be themselves and become all that God intends them to become. Marriage is a refining process that God will use to help us develop into the man or woman He wants us to be.

Marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman in which the independence is equal, the dependence is mutual, and the obligation is reciprocal.

It can be said that there are two basic causes for troubles in marriage. First, marriage troubles arise because one does not find in marriage what one expected to find. Second, marriage troubles arise because one did not expect what one actually found in marriage.

Thank you for reading.

Ellen Van Etten, Executive Director

FYI

PCC has a new intern, Sheila Mathew, who is a student at Nyack College.



Photo of Sheila, Myrna and Carlos Agosto, and Ellen who recently attended a legal workshop presentation for mental health professionals.

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