

COUNSELING DIVORCEES ON FORGIVENESS

by
George A. Lotter

A Project Submitted to the Faculty of
WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

1987

Faculty Advisor : Wayne A. Mack, D.Min.

Second Faculty Reader : John F. Bettler, D.Min.

Chairman of the Department
of Practical Theology : George C. Fuller, Th.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PREFACE.....	vi
1	APPROACH.....	8
	Preamble.....	8
	Purpose.....	11
	Method.....	12
2	BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR FORGIVENESS.....	15
	Old Testament.....	15
	Words used in the Old Testament for Forgiveness.....	15
	Salach.....	15
	Kaphar.....	16
	Nasa.....	17
	Machach.....	18
	Forgiveness in the Lives of Three Old Testament Figures.....	20
	Cain.....	20
	Saul.....	21
	David.....	22
	Additional Reading.....	24
	New Testament.....	24
	Introduction.....	24
	Words used in the New Testament for Forgiveness.....	30
	Aphiemi.....	30
	Apoluo.....	22
	Charizomai.....	33
	Application.....	34
	Additional Reading.....	35

3	THE RESULT OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR PREVIOUS SPOUSE.....	36
	Introduction.....	36
	Realization of your Sins.....	38
	Seek Forgiveness from God.....	43
	Being Forgiven/Set Free: what it means.....	49
	Being Forgiven/Set Free: you are now able to forgive others.....	54
4	SEEKING RECONCILIATION.....	61
	Biblical Foundation.....	61
	Reconciliation between God and Man.....	61
	Reconciliation between Man and Man.....	67
	Reconciliation between Husband and Wife.....	68
	Cases for Reconciliation.....	70
	When to Seek Reconciliation.....	70
	When Not to Seek Reconciliation.....	74
	How to Seek Reconciliation.....	78
	Tentative Counseling Outline.....	78
	Prayer.....	78
	Start.....	78
	Continue.....	79
	Assignments.....	79
5	CASE STUDIES.....	81
	Introduction.....	81
	The Problem Identifying Questionnaire....	83
	The Information Questionnaire.....	85
	The Forgiveness Questionnaire.....	86
	Description of Cases.....	88
	Introduction.....	88
	Case Studies.....	88
	Case no. 1.....	88
	Case no. 2.....	89
	Case no. 3.....	89
	Case no. 4.....	90
	Case no. 5.....	91
	Synopsis of answers on the questionnaires.....	92
	Conclusions.....	94

Counseling Implications.....	97
Self-image.....	98
Alimony.....	98
Children.....	98
Ex-spouse remarried.....	98
Church.....	99
Guilt.....	99
Bitterness.....	99
Rejection.....	100
Infidelity.....	100
Dishonesty.....	100
Conclusion.....	101
6 A COUNSELING OUTLINE.....	102
Introduction.....	102
Outline.....	105
Interaction.....	105
Listening.....	106
Help the divorcee to handle emotions in a biblical way.....	108
Honesty.....	110
Empathy.....	111
Be available.....	113
Inspiration.....	115
Homework.....	118
Information.....	124
Questionnaires.....	124
The Personal Data Inventory.....	125
A general guideline on gathering information.....	125
Intention.....	131
Commitments to be asked for in regard to:	
Self-image.....	134
Alimony.....	135
Children.....	135
Ex-spouse remarried.....	136
Church.....	136
Guilt.....	137
Bitterness.....	138
Rejection.....	138
Infidelity.....	139
Dishonesty.....	139

Interpretation.....	140
Self-image.....	146
Alimony.....	147
Children.....	148
Ex-spouse remarried.....	148
Church.....	149
Guilt.....	150
Bitterness.....	151
Rejection.....	152
Infidelity.....	152
Dishonesty.....	153
Conclusion.....	153
Instruction.....	154
General guidelines.....	155
Self-image.....	159
Alimony.....	160
Children.....	160
Ex-spouse remarried.....	161
Church.....	161
Guilt.....	162
Bitterness.....	163
Rejection.....	164
Infidelity.....	165
Dishonesty.....	167
Implementation.....	168
7 WORKS CITED.....	175

Preface

Gratitude goes to God, our Father, who gave me the strength to start and finish this study. He surely opened up opportunities which made it possible for me to get this far and in the process taught me the principle of Psalm 18:29. May His name be honored by it!

Adelle, my dear wife whom God has given me, has been my constant support and encouragement; both practical and emotional. Without her I would not have been able to finish.

I want to thank my mother for all the years of praying for me, setting an example of godliness and helping me in many other ways to become what I am. Here one also remembers my deceased father who did everything for the benefit of his children.

Hans and Mariette Dreyer were always there to assist and encourage. May God bless them!

Marietjie Nelson did a tremendous job in helping me with the English grammar.

Professor Victor D'Assonville needs special commendation since he continuously exhorted me to finish the project.

My parents-in-law, Louis and Ansophie Wentzel, need to be thanked for their interest and support.

Dr. Wayne Mack and the staff of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation who taught me what biblical counseling is all about, a word of special thanks.

Finally, all the counselees who were co-workers in this project, my sincerest thanks. I learned a lot from them!

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

George Lotter
Potchefstroom
South Africa
December 1986.

CHAPTER 1

APPROACH

Preamble

This project was born in the wake of a personal struggle. In 1982 the author was divorced while being a minister in the Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk) in South Africa. This brought about the end of a ministry of about five years. Along with the divorce came the deposition as minister of religion which also meant "losing one's job".

Since the calling to be specifically minister of religion; to preach, to counsel...everything that a minister usually do, was taken away, a spirit of resentment towards

the previous wife started. Everything that was lost at that point was blamed on her: God's calling, the ministry, job, income, social standing, house, etc.

This attitude could have grown in a full scale bitterness and continuous resentment. However, the Lord through His Holy Spirit impressed it upon one's mind that it should not be that way.

The point of departure then for human forgiveness was the complete forgiveness God gave to man in Jesus Christ. This was the river bed in which the command to forgive others (in this case the previous wife) flowed.

Then the slow and difficult process of forgiveness started and also the seed for this specific project was planted. One realized a few things:

- * It is God's command to forgive.
- * It is clear from the Bible.
- * A Christian should forgive in all circumstances.
- * A divorced person, likewise, has the charge to forgive.
- * A short, popular, yet biblical description about forgiveness is needed for such people (i.e. divorcees).
- * Many divorcees have real problems and difficulty to forgive.

Many obstacles had to be overcome to come to a proper understanding of what biblical forgiveness really is and how it should be applied. It is for sure that it will

only one day (when we are with God) be understood completely since now we see " but a poor reflection" (1 Corinthians 13:12) but then fully.

One of the many one-sided and haughty applications of forgiveness is to only grant forgiveness but not ask for it. This is of course a compromise: an "obeying" of God's commands (which to a certain extent soothes the conscience), but has the sting of pride in it as well. As Robert C. Roberts says: "But most of us Christians do not walk so wholly in the presence of God...(1982, 46)". Again the Lord worked through his Spirit and showed that forgiveness should be asked for as well.

After all the different stages (initially no-forgiveness; then realization of the need for forgiveness; after that granting of forgiveness and eventually; asking for forgiveness) the liberation to know one has been going God's way, gave peace. (See the connection between forgive and the peace of Christ: Colossians 3:13 through 15.)

It is therefore with great gratitude that the author could - with God's help - proceed on the way of forgiveness and also be able to share something of what has been experienced; but also, on the other hand, share the results of what has been researched on this subject.

Alan Redpath says about David before his forgiveness: "If you would attain to any position of Christian leadership, you must recognize that there is a price to pay" (19 2, 198). To a certain extent this statement was true in the

preparation of this project as well: many difficult things have been happening in order to bring one to the point where forgiveness could not only be professed and taught to other people, but had to be wrought and practised in the deepest sense in one's own life!

Purpose

The purpose of this project will be to show how the forgiveness received from God will also have a bearing on the relationship of two divorced people. The biblical claim for forgiveness in general is focused here on counseling divorced people. Even if there is no contact between two divorced people anymore, the obligation still exists to seek and grant forgiveness since their invisible relationship with each other as believers, as well as with the Lord, will never be severed (see Luke 20:34 - 36). Christians are bound to each other with the bond of the blood of Christ and are therefore compelled to have peace with each other as they also have peace with the Triune God.

Divorced people are not different than other counselees who come for counseling. The reason why this project has a special focus on divorced people, is that there are usually many feelings, attitudes and actions that need to be addressed and where forgiveness is a real issue. (The case studies will show this.) Or to say it another way: divorced people are prone to experience things, feel and think in a way where they are tempted to have grudges,

carry resentments and even to hate. This should be realized and acknowledged. The purpose will be to prevent those attitudes, etc. to develop, but also to take care of and address the problem once it has started.

Unbiblical views on forgiveness will also be exposed like the notion that you should forgive yourself (1977, 7), sins which are minimized (1970, 112) and the idea that sins can be forgiven but not forget.

Furthermore, the project will deal with biblical references, give assignments etc., and in the end give a counseling outline for the counselor/pastor which can be very helpful in counseling the divorcee.

Method

Originally this project was written for counselors, pastors, laymen and divorcees. However, as the study progressed, one realized that the scope would be too broad to cover all those involved and in the end it was directed to pastors and counselors.

The following is important for the method to be used:

a. Often the assignments and reading lists as well as the instructions were written as if for divorcees/counselees themselves. The pastor and counselor can readily copy the assignments, etc. for direct use by the divorcee/counselee. Otherwise it will have to be adapted

for the specific purposes of the person who is being counseled.

b. It is imperative to read all the prescribed texts in order to comprehend the biblical thrust of forgiveness. Even if the text seems unrelated, there will be some connection to the material being discussed.

c. When reading the text, ask: what does this say about God? Also: what does this say about man? ALWAYS take note of the verb; then paraphrase the whole text in your own words.

For example, read Malachi 2:14 & 15:

It says about God: He is acting as witness between man and wife (verse 14) and the Lord made them (verse 15); for he was seeking godly offspring.

It tells about man who has broken faith with his wife (verse 14) and in verse 15 man is commanded to guard his spirit and do not break faith with his wife.

Paraphrasing it means: God is dissatisfied with the way man has been treating his wife and will act against this sin.

d. Often the space allowed for notes will be too little, but notes can be written down somewhere else as well, as long as the biblical message is being conveyed.

e. Material like books, concordance, tracts, cassette tapes etc. on forgiveness and related subjects to help understand the Bible better can be an additional help both to the pastor/counselee and the counselee.

f. It is crucial for the pastor/counselor and counselee to pray about everything; the counseling sessions, the reading of Scripture, the doing of homework...frankly everything connected to the counseling of divorcees. This is one of the most important elements in the method suggested: PRAYER.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR FORGIVENESS

Old Testament

Words used in the Old Testament for Forgiveness

Salach

This is used only in an instance where God forgives and is never used for man's forgiveness of each other. It has the idea of "let go", and "send away".

See Psalm 130:4 and write down how you understand it

.....
.....

Also read Daniel 9:9 and jot down what it says about God's forgiveness

Hence, "let go", "send away" of man's sin.

Check the following verses and give the main thought about forgiveness in every case:

Nehemiah 9:17

Psalm 86:5

Isaiah 55:7

Laird Harris says about Isaiah 55:7 the following: "So exciting was the openness of this offer of forgiveness that Isaiah (55:7) featured it as the heart of his invitation to salvation. So ready was their Lord to forgive, that Isaiah's listeners must forget all notions based on the reluctance of men to forgive each other." (1980, 626).

Kaphar

The original meaning of kaphar was to "cover" and in the transitive way meant "to cover over sin". The meaning was broadened to include "ransom" and "atone by offering a substitute". Except for a few places this always carried with it the idea of removal of sin or any defilement. See in this regard Leviticus 16:21 & 22 and note how the goat in

this case is the ransom, the substitute for the people of Israel's sins and how the people's sins were transferred to the goat and their sins were covered over by this act.

Write down anything else that struck you in Leviticus 16

.....
.....

See also Psalm 78:38 for the same meaning

.....

Nasa

In the same sense nasa is closely connected to kaphar because it also meant "bearing the guilt of another by substitute" (Leviticus 10:17 and 16:22). The idea of "lift up", "carry away" is very clear in this word. For the proper understanding of this, read Isaiah 53:4. To whom is the reference here?

.....
.....

This leads to the richer meaning of complete "taking away", "pardon of sin"...forgiveness! Now read Psalm 32:1 & 5 and note especially verse 1: "...whose transgressions are forgiven,..." and verse 5: "...you forgave the guilt of my sin". In all the abovementioned verses forgive is the translation of nasa.

Sins, then, are FORGIVEN because they have been LIFTED UP and CARRIED away.

Now read the following verses and in every instance write down how forgiveness is applied.

Genesis 50:17
.....

Exodus 10:17
.....

(Note that even Pharaoh, the heathen king, asked for forgiveness!)

Psalm 85:2
.....

Psalm 99:8
.....

Machach

Means "blot out", "erase". Just as "send away", "cover", and "carry away"; the thrust of this word is: whatever was, does not exist anymore...it is gone, taken away!

Look at the apt way this is described in Isaiah 44:22, offenses like a cloud and sins like the morning mist will disappear not to be found again. Also read Isaiah 43:25 and note how God deals with our sins

This is the exciting and altogether not always comprehensible element in the forgiveness of sins: it is

removed completely, taken away, invisible, it actually does not exist anymore.

Make a careful study of the following texts:

Psalm 103:3 & 12.

What strikes you when reading it?

Why is the expression east/west used and not north/south?

Because east/west signify no end, no border; it is limitless where north/south is limited by the North Pole/South Pole.

Hence, there is no end to God's forgiveness. (Think about what Jesus said in the New Testament that one should forgive seventy times seven - Matthew 18:22 - which means: virtually without end.)

In addition read Psalm 103:8,9,10 and see the abundance in verse 11

Read in this regard Isaiah 1:18 as well

Imagine the extremes mentioned here: it is just as good as a pure white shirt versus an oil clad smelling overall. Write down anything that struck you about this verse

The Lord uses through Isaiah these strong opposites to illustrate what He could do when He forgives man his sins.

Read Isaiah 1:1 through 18 and note the whiteness of snow

Jeremiah 31:34.

Is it easy to forget when someone has wronged us? Even if we sometimes think we have forgiven someone, the memory of it often remains. Here the Lord, who can remember everything because he is God and perfect, says He will remember their sins no more.

Anything else in this verse?

.....

Micah 7:18 & 19.

Here again one witnessed the complete destroying of sins: tread underfoot, pulverized and also hurled into the depths of the sea. What powerful language! Our sins are never to be seen or found again. They perished!

Write down how your sins are dealt with

.....

.....

Forgiveness in the Lives of Three Old Testament Figures

Cain

First read his history in Genesis 4.

In verse 7 the Lord asks Cain the crucial question which could have changed his life if he took heed to it.

In verse 10 the Lord gives Cain the opportunity to ask forgiveness after his sin by confronting him. (As in

Genesis 3:11, the Lord asks: WHAT have you done, not WHY have you done it?)

In verse 13 Cain let slip the last opportunity to ask for forgiveness by saying: "My punishment is more than I can bear", but instead of asking for forgiveness, wants to carry it by himself and it overwhelms him.

In verse 16 we find the most tragic words in the Old Testament: "...Cain went out from the Lord's presence...." They are just as tragic as the words about Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus and we read in John 13:30: "As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. AND IT WAS NIGHT". As Judas was in the New Testament, Cain was in the Old Testament: he refused to accept everything God was willing to offer him (including forgiveness) due to his hard heart.

Saul

Read 1 Samuel 15.

When Saul realized that he sinned (verse 24) he didn't turn to God for forgiveness, but begged a fellow human being, Samuel (verse 25). This attitude of Saul to rely on man in order to meet God is portrayed even after the death of Samuel (1 Samuel 28) when he wanted him back from death through a medium to consult him.

Saul didn't seek forgiveness for the right reasons i.e. because he had sinned against the Holy God, but because he wanted his own honour restored (verse 30).

He also said to Samuel: "...so that I may worship the Lord YOUR God", (verse 30) instead of the Lord MY God.

If one reads 1 Samuel 13 one finds no trace of repentance in Saul's attitude when he acted on his own and started offering without Samuel. See especially verses 13 through 15

Therefore no forgiveness and a life alienated from God (1 Samuel 31) which ended in a tragic death.

David

In the life of King David of Judah we see both parts of forgiveness: his eventual ignoring of his sin and consequent refusal to ask forgiveness of God and then the change to remorse and grief about his sin - his pleading for forgiveness and the happy ending when he sang "songs of deliverance" (Psalm 32:7).

We read about this event in 2 Samuel 11:1 - 12:23. To understand this even better, read Psalms 32, 38 and 51. When David first refused to admit and confess his sins, he says:

"When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long."

Psalm 32:3.

Read also Psalm 32:4 & 5 to see the results, mentally and physically on David for not confessing. Check also Psalm 38:2 - 10 and write down what happened to him before he confessed his iniquity - verse 18

.....
 After he repented and received forgiveness, it was as if God lifted his hand from David and he could be free and healthy again because he was forgiven! (See Psalm 32:4.)

God indeed restored him to the joy of God's salvation granting him a willing spirit. (See Psalm 51:12.) All this when he found and experienced God's forgiveness! David even went further: he wanted to tell other people about this and teach them the way to go. (Cf. Psalm 32:8 - 10.)

C. H. Spurgeon points out six reasons why one should "...make confession of sin unto God in private..." when he gives the exposition of Psalm 32 (Date unknown, 93):

1. Confession soothes and calms the mind of the sinner, it stills the conscience and put the sinner at ease.
2. God loves to hear the confessions of believers.
3. It brings the heart to earnest supplication to God.
4. When sin is confessed it "will work a holy contrition and a godly sorrow in the heart".
5. God's justice is enhanced.

6. Confession will cover sin and brings Christ close to him.

Confession of sin is a sine qua non for true forgiveness - here as seen in the Old Testament, but even more in the New Testament.

Additional Reading

- a. Gene H. Getz, *God's Man in Faith and Failure: David*. (Ventura: Regal books, 1979) p.130 ff.
- b. Vincent Taylor, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1946) p.20 ff.

New Testament

Introduction

In the New Testament a new dimension is observed as far as the forgiveness of sins is concerned. This is because Jesus Christ, the Savior sent from God, being God Himself, came into the picture. Like H. R. Mackintosh says: "People who take their religion from the New Testament discover that we have first to let Jesus show us what the Father is like, and that forgiveness, about which philosophy as such does not concern itself, is His characteristic gift". (1927, 83.)

Jesus came for the reconciliation of God and man,
man and man, and even between man and nature (Colossians
1:20).

See Matthew 26:28
.....
and Ephesians 1:7

Now compare the idea of Hebrews 9:22 to what was
already discussed in the Old Testament part in the
description of kaphar and nasa. Also read Leviticus
10:17,16:21 & 22.

Write down the common points between the Old Testament and
New Testament as far as this idea of offering goes
.....

Also write down the differences between what we read in
Leviticus 10 and 16 and what we read in Hebrews.

Read Hebrews 9 for this key
.....

The ground or basis then for forgiveness is the LOVE OF GOD.

In the New Testament it is portrayed by the life and
death of Jesus Christ. He was God's plan and way (John
14:6) to reconcile Himself with man. Read the following
texts and write down HOW it happened.

Romans 5:10 & 11
.....

2 Corinthians 5:18 - 20

.....

Ephesians 2:16

.....

Hebrews 2:17

.....

Jesus was the only way via whom God intended to forgive and set man free in this new dispensation which started with the birth of Jesus of Nasareth (Acts 1:22). God chose to forgive sins through his Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. This was prophesied in the Old Testament. See inter alia the following chapters: Isaiah 42, 53; Jeremiah 23, 33; Ezekiel 34, and then of course: Micah 5:2.

Not only is Jesus Christ the appointed Son of God to proclaim forgiveness (Mark 2:5) but also and especially the One to die for it (i.e. carry sin, cover it, bear it - Isaiah 53:4 & 11) and bring it about. In this regard read Isaiah 61:1 & 10, and write down what struck you there

.....

.....

See also how this was fulfilled in Him. Read Luke 4:18 ...

.....

.....

In Hebrews 1:1 - 3 we read (as was translated by Jay Adams): "It was in a number of stages and in a variety of ways that God spoke to our fathers in the past by the prophets. But

in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son Whom He appointed Heir of everything, and through Whom He made the ages. He is the radiance of His glory and the perfect representation of God's very being. He sustains everything by His powerful word. And when He had accomplished the cleansing of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heights." (1977, 587.)

No forgiveness whatsoever could be had without Jesus Christ!

Brown (1975, 701 & 702) summarizes the relationship between Christ and forgiveness in a very systematic way. He says:

1. "Just as the fact that man is a sinner has destroyed his relationship with God, so forgiveness takes the central place in Christian proclamation as the means whereby this relationship is restored. It stands as the action of God in the face of sinful behavior of man, and is based on Christ (Col 1:14; Eph 1:7) whose power to forgive sins is made known in preaching (Lk 24:47; Acts 10:42; 13:38)...."
2. "...the preaching of Jesus reached its climax in the forgiveness brought by him (Lk 4:18 - 21; 15:11 ff; Matt 18:21 and following)."
 Forgiveness "...is to occupy in the activity of Jesus as the one proper essential work he has . . . come to do."

3. "Forgiveness includes making of no account the sin which has been committed (Mk 2:5 par.; cf. Jn 8:11), and the acceptance of the sinner."
4. "The task of proclaiming the forgiveness which has been brought about by Christ is given to the church."

To recapitulate we state the following:

WE APPROPRIATE THE GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS
OF THE FATHER IN JESUS CHRIST.

God's readiness to forgive which was prevalent in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 18:23 & 32) has in Jesus Christ gone a step further: He supplied the One who will pay for the sins of man, someone who will "pay the debt".

(Cf. Matthew 18:27 & 28, compare also Luke 11:4.) Sin is then pictured as a debt, the sinner as debtor, it is wrong and it requires satisfaction, hence payment. The question to be asked then is: Who will pay the debt? It is the same as if you asked: Who will achieve forgiveness from God for us?

The only answer can be:

JESUS CHRIST!

It is of major importance to understand this properly if one wants to know what forgiveness is all about. What it comes down to is what Mackintosh said (1927, 24): "But neither judge nor Crown as such can forgive wrong; only the injured person can do that." This is in the same vain as the phrase Augsburgers quoted: "No one ever really

forgives another except he fears the penalty of the other's sins against him." (1981, 28.)

Now, all this Jesus did: He carried the burden of every one's sin on the cross (Isaiah 53:4), He paid for the wrath of God and God bore the penalty of other's sins Himself in Jesus Christ. (Compare Matthew 11:28.)

Read Matthew 26 and 27 and jot down short notes on how God really paid when He undertook to forgive fallen sinners and carry the injury himself, paying the debt Himself

.....
.....

See also Matthew 18:21 - 35 for how much God really paid for all the debt

.....

When dealing with the different Greek words and their meanings this whole thrust of what forgiveness in fact is in the New Testament and the centrality of Jesus Christ as Mediator and Agent of pardon will become clearer.

To end the introduction to the New Testament teaching on forgiveness, one finds an excellent statement of Mackintosh on it (1927, 84): "If older thought inclined to say that we can only believe in forgiveness because the Divine Son paid satisfaction to the Father we preserve the same vital and solemn interest by proclaiming that forgiveness is credible, and is offered in virtue of the fact that God is personally present in One who stood in with

sinners to the last, and, refusing to abandon them, went for their sake to the cross."

Words used in the New Testament for Forgiveness

Aphiemi

This is the most common word for forgiveness. In the original sense it meant "let go", "leave behind", later it also had the idea of releasing from guilt or punishment. Note that all along this word is used both for the forgiveness God gives to man AND man's forgiveness toward fellow man. It is as if these two actions are interwoven and sometimes very difficult - if not impossible - to divorce (Mark 11:25).

Read Matthew 6:12 - 15 and write down the essence of what is being said about forgiveness there:

.....
.....

(It is remarkable that the prayer for forgiveness in the Lord's prayer is the only supplication which is elaborated on - this stresses the importance of it!)

Read also Luke 5:20 - 25 and write down HOW God forgives

.....
.....

Compare also Mark 2:5 - 10

.....

Read Luke 17:3 & 4 where merely human forgiveness is at stake

.....

To further comprehend the full force of God's forgiveness read the parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11 - 24). Write down what struck you about this parable:

.....

.....

Note the father's unconditional acceptance and forgiveness never mind how the son broke his father's heart.

Norval Geldenhuys says about this parable (1951, 409): "When the sinner returns to the Heavenly Father, He does not reproach and punish him, neither does He humiliate him to the position of a hired servant or slave, but He accepts him in Christ as His beloved child - and gives to him the full status and all the privileges of real childship. And when a sinner has come to repentance, there is joy not only in his heart but also in heaven with the Father."

Also read the parable of the unmerciful servant and jot down what you think the main points are. We find it in Matthew 18:21 - 35

.....

Note the following:

- a. How much the debtor owed the king versus how little he was owed.

- b. The good way he was treated by the king in contrast with the way he treated his debtor.
- c. The fact that his debt was cancelled altogether, not even having to pay back anything (verse 27).

See also the following texts and make short notes on

what you read:

Acts 8:22

.....

Romans 4:7

.....

James 5:15

.....

1 John 1:9

.....

1 John 2:12

.....

Apoluo

Can be translated with "acquit", "set free", "release" and "pardon". Read Luke 6:27 - 38 and concentrate on 6:37 where the interwovenness is apparent again, the way it is said leaves the impression of: "only if you forgive, then you will be forgiven". This point will not be argued here but is important to bear in mind for the further explanation of forgiveness in it's two way prong: from God and to your neighbor.

Charizomai

Charizomai may have the meaning of "to be gracious to", "forgiving". Read Luke 7:36 - 50 where Jesus was annointed by a sinful woman.

Apply by writing down:

- a. The attitude and actions of the woman and how Jesus was inclined to her
-
- b. The attitude and actions of Simon and how the Lord dealt with him
-

Now write down Ephesians 4:32.....

.....

.....

Also underline the "feeling" words and the "action" verbs. The words "just as" refers to the Greek word which has the meaning of "to the same extent". Therefore; the very same way as in the abundance of God's forgiveness towards us, we should forgive others.

Check also Colossians 3:13 and write down the parallel idea

.....

.....

As far as the origin goes of charizomai there is a close connection to "grace". One thinks about God's grace (see Matthew 20:15, Luke 15:20). Otherwise put: God accepts

someone not on grounds of what the person did but on the foundation of God's love (Romans 5:17; 9:16).

Application

1. Read Romans 5 and write down how you understand the idea of grace

2. Think about the times when you were forgiven by God and write down the persons' names who you have forgiven to the same extent. (Remember Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13.)

3. Write down the names of people who have done something against you and whom you have not forgiven. Jot down next to the name why not.

4. Say in your own words how you understand forgiveness the way the Bible described it in the New Testament.

Additional Reading

- a. Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Autobiography of God*.
(Glendale: Regal Books, 1979)
- b. M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*.
(McLean Virginia: Macdonald Publishing Company,
1886)

CHAPTER 3

THE RESULT OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR PREVIOUS SPOUSE

Introduction

It is most important to confess all our sins to God after divorce. This includes the sins we committed in our marriages where we trespassed God's law and were not obedient to Him. But since we sinned towards our ex-spouse as well, those sins must also be confessed.

Robert Plekker suggests (1980, 105) that we:

Realize that we wronged the Almighty God; develop a hatred for the sin; develop humility (see Matthew 3:8 & 9); turn away from sin; and that we have a change of mind.

The divorcee must be told how God hates sin.

Read Jeremiah 7:8 - 11, 9:23 & 24.

Write down the sins mentioned there

.....
.....

Note especially God's warning in verse 11 and that He knows of all sins

.....

Also read Deuteronomy 26:15. Think about the principle: the higher you go, the more you see...God sees everything, also the innermost sins!

Read the whole of Habakkuk. Write notes on God's holiness as you experience it from the book

.....
.....
.....

On the other hand it is equally important to point out God's love to sinners. See Luke 7:36 - 50. Read the whole event and concentrate on verses 47 through 50.

Apply it to yourself: which of your sins have been forgiven?

.....
.....
.....

Read also Luke 15:11 - 31. Try and imagine the scene: this son still smelling of pigs (THE most unclean animal!) but his father running to embrace him. Note also in the parable how the elder brother thought the father was too lavish in

his love and forgiveness. (Remember from chapter 2 that the father in this parable is the picture of God in his continual love and forgiveness.)

The prerequisite, however, is CONFESSION OF SINS AND GUILT and also FORGIVENESS OF THE OTHER PERSON (in this case the previous spouse). This can be explained in the following way: In 1 John 4:20 it is written: "If anyone says, 'I love God', yet hates his brother, he is a liar". Translated to the issue of forgiveness this means: how can you attain forgiveness of God Whom you can't see and not forgive your brother who you can see?

Realization of your Sins

The important place to start is to realize your own sin. In John 16:8 it mentions that the Holy Spirit convinces us of our sins and this is done like many things the Holy Spirit does: in secrecy (cf. John 3:8). But - and this is very important! - the results are seen and have an effect just like wind blowing, for you see the trees bowing in the wind but you do not actually see the wind itself. If there is no realization of sin, one should pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal it to one. Read Matthew 7:7 & 8 and see how God will give to us when we pray...especially his Holy Spirit. How definite is this?

.....

To comprehend this properly, read verse 11 as well

.....

Hence, pray for the Holy Spirit to point out the sins which might be hidden deep below. In coming to terms with our sins the danger is always there of taking a detour which might be one of two:

Self-justification	Projection of guilt onto others

Self-justification:

See Genesis 4:9. Note Cain's "ignorance"; he pretended not to know. Do you sometimes do this with your sins? Jot down where you did just that

.....

See also Matthew 23:23. Why were the outward actions wrong?

.....

.....

See Matthew 25:41 - 46. These people did not know when to do good and tried to justify themselves accordingly (note the harsh punishment in verse 46). Read the verses and write down anything which is striking about their own guilt

.....

Projection of guilt onto others (also called
blameshifting):

YOU and not him/her/they. God always chooses the personal way. Remember Adam when God approached him in the Garden of Eden saying: "Where are YOU?" (Genesis 3:9). God there confronted him personally about his sin. Note also here that God had asked "What did you do?", (3:11) while Adam gave the answer "why he did" (3:12). God always confronts us with our sin, because that is the problem. Thus: the sin must be dealt with, not the reason for it.

This is general in a divorce situation: divorcees giving reasons why they got divorced, instead of acknowledging their sins. Think also of King David after his sin with Bathsheba. He was approached by Nathan who told him: "You are the man!" (We find this in 1 Samuel 12:7.)

Bryn Jones calls this realization of sin the first step to wholeness (1985, 5). He says: "Many in the Christian community will misunderstand your position, now that you're divorced. But your greatest struggle will not be with them or their theology but with the INNER GUILT that you're experiencing.

If your heart is convinced of guilt, it can be equally convinced of being cleansed of that guilt. Just as you came to Christ for salvation, repenting your former sins, come to Him afresh now and rediscover his help in time of need. The present issue is not what place you will have in the church or what ministry may or may not be open to

you. The greatest issue for you is PEACE WITH GOD AND YOURSELF."

Whether then one counsels a divorcee or is a divorcee oneself, this is the starting point: to realize one's own sin and have a heartfelt desire to deal with it in a way described by God in his word.

"Search me, O 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.

The first step, then, in the diagram portraying forgiveness, will look like this:

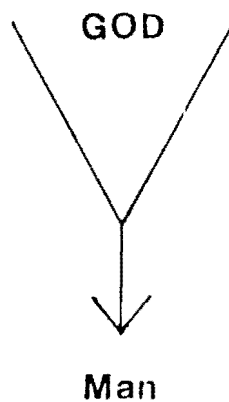


Diagram 1: God convinces you of your sins through
the Holy Spirit

Here we have the searching, revealing work of God the Holy Spirit penetrating into our lives to expose our sins.

Seek Forgiveness from God

In this part of the chapter the emphasis will be on the way one seeks forgiveness from God. Having realized your sins and knowing they are an abomination to God, this is the next step.

Spoerri suggests five phases in this process of seeking forgiveness from God (1978, 18). These phases are also found in Psalm 51, although intermingled. They are:

- Confession of sin/guilt.....Psalm 51:1,3,5.
- Repentance.....Psalm 51:4,17.
- Pray for forgiveness.....Psalm 51:2,7,9.
- Accept forgiveness.....Psalm 51:19.
- Restoration.....Psalm 51:10,12.

Read Psalm 51 carefully and underline the verses mentioned above. In a few words write down how YOU understand them:

Confession of sin/guilt

.....

Repentance

Pray for forgiveness

.....

Accept forgiveness

Restoration

(If there still is some uncertainty about what it really means in the process of forgiveness, continue to Psalm 32.)

Emerson (MCMLXIV, 96) tells us that the word used in Psalm 51:14 for "save" means deliverance or aid, but in the form used here it also means "freedom". (The Hebrew word is YASHA.) The conclusion can then be made that being saved from sin also has the meaning of being made free.

One will have to look into oneself with God's flashlight, seeing all the unholiness and dirt, and then turn to God. It is an action away from oneself to God.

This second step is vitally important. This is the way to salvation from sin...the only way which leads to real freedom!

Now read Psalm 32. Focus on verses 3 & 4 and 7 & 11 and answer the following:

What problems did David have when he did not confess his sins? (3 & 4)

.....

What happened when he eventually did confess? (7 & 11)

.....

See also Proverbs 28:13 and write down what is said there about confession

.....

The main issue here is: what do you DO with your sin? Read Daniel 9:4 through 11 and make short notes on what he did with his own and his people's sin

.....

.....

In the New Testament we are directed, with our sin, to Jesus Christ. When Galatians 3:24 tells us that the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ, this is exactly what happened: being confronted by the high standards of God and his claim to be holy, I realize there is only one way to get rid of my sin and that is to run to God and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ for with Him only will I find forgiveness.

Check on how holy God expects us to be: Leviticus 11:44 & 1 Peter 1:13.

Can you really, in yourself, be that holy?

.....

What solution then, could there be to your unholiness?

.....

Now read Romans 7:14 through 25 to see the solution that the apostle Paul offers

.....

This idea of looking away from oneself and trusting in God alone is beautifully portrayed in Psalm 123:2:

"As the eyes of the slaves look to the hand
of their master,
as the eyes of the maid look to the
hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the LORD our God,
till he shows us his mercy."

Another very important principle comes forward in this seeking of forgiveness: the whole matter of sin among people, and specifically divorced people, is not kept on an earthly plane but lifted up to the godly. It is like David and Jonathan, who said the Lord is witness between them, and "let God judge between you and me" (1 Samuel 20:23 & 42). In connection with this read: Deuteronomy 32:35 and Romans 12:18 & 19. What is the essence of what God says there?

.....

It is therefore not any more a person-to-person relationship or a mere interpersonal matter but is also between the person and God and God and the other person.

What is the conclusion for divorced people and how do divorced people apply this? If there is any resentment towards your former spouse, you ought not to take action yourself but turn it over to the Lord like turning over your sins which you cannot take care of yourself.

Read 1 Peter 5:7. What anxiety?

What else can I cast on Him?

Does this include anxiety about sin or the previous spouse?

.....

Psalm 130 gives us a good look at our sin and how God deals with it. Read the Psalm and concentrate on verses 3 & 4 and 7 & 8. Now explain:

What will happen if God keeps a record of YOUR sins? Try to think about this comprehensively

.....

How many sins have you committed in your lifetime?

.....

(A hint: calculate that you have perhaps sinned AT LEAST 10 times a day - probably more - and see how many this would be in your life-span.)

D. Guthrie gives the following exposition of Psalm 130:7: "Redemption (Hebrew: pedut) always contains the truth of the 'ransom-price' (cf. Ex. 13:13; Nu. 3:46,47). The steadfast love of the Lord reaches out to sinners by means of a price for sin which satisfies Him. Why does He forgive? Because of steadfast love. How does He forgive? Through a redemption price" (1970, 533). Here we see that God pays the ransom Himself by sending Jesus Christ. In Psalm 130 there is a prophecy of the One who paid for all the sins.

To summarize this part of chapter 3, namely "Seek forgiveness from God", the most important things to do are:

- * Go to God with your sin.
- * Place whatever is between you and your ex-spouse in God's hands.

The second step in the diagram portraying forgiveness will look like this:

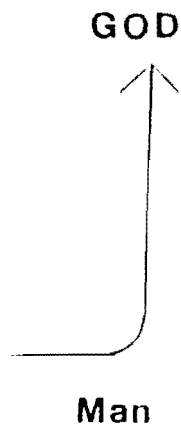


Diagram 2: The sinner looking to God / reaching to God for forgiveness

Here we have the upward surge of the sinner, looking to God alone for forgiveness.

Being Forgiven/Set Free: what it means

The next step in the whole process of forgiveness, is to be convinced of and to experience God's forgiveness. This is crucial to know and be assured of in order to grant it to others and more specifically, the former spouse. Jay Adams says: "Christians need to confess sins to their heavenly Father and receive His fatherly forgiveness. In the same way, they must confess to any others that they have wronged and seek their forgiveness" (1981 [1], 58).

This is called "REALIZED FORGIVENESS" by Emerson (MCMLXIV, 72) and Small (1975, 19). Emerson says about this realized forgiveness: "One dimension of this dynamic is a context that allows one to be free. This freedom may be expressed as freedom from guilt, freedom to love, or freedom just to wait and see what must be done" (MCMLXIV, 72). Ferguson (1980, 82 - 84) explained this issue as far as sin goes according to Psalm 119 and stated that the solution lies in:

- * Beginning to seek God.
- * Beginning to treasure God's word; and
- * BEGINNING TO REJOICE IN GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION.

It is no use to seek forgiveness if there is not the conviction that one is really forgiven! It is the same as if a son asked his father some food while he is holding it

in his hands already. This is an extremely personal matter between the Lord and the individual and is very difficult to say exactly how it must be. There are, however, certain pillars the Bible has given us to stand on as far as the assurance of forgiveness is concerned.

Read Job 42:1 - 6 and put down the following:

- * What is Job's sin?
- * How does he deal with it?
-
- * What happened AFTER he had sacrificed and prayed for his friends? (See verses 7 - 10)
-

See that this was done (as in fact in the whole book of Job) in relationship with the living God where sins are forgiven and the only security is found.

Read (again!) Psalm 32 and note David's peace of mind after he has been forgiven and especially note the climax with which he ends the psalm.

Read Psalm 73. Check the verses and write down the answers:

- * 23 - 25: State why Asaph feels the way he does
- * 26 - 28: What is his comfort?
-
- * 28: What will he do after God gave him refuge?

Read Jeremiah 50:20 where Israel is mentioned. What will happen to your own sin?

.....
 What all this means is that one has peace with God. God is no longer enraged by our sins. John Bunyan wrote (Quoted by Emerson: MCMLXIV, 154): "...it is not until he felt himself fully within Christ that the meaning of the sin and the meaning of forgiveness became real".

Through Jesus Christ you are like the criminal who found pardon and was promised paradise (Luke 23:42 & 43). It is amazing that the Lord promises this man, with such a wicked life behind him, eternal life. This was due to God's grace for sinners and not due to any righteousness of his own!

Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts this in a striking manner when he says (1965, 86): "What am I? I am forgiven, I am reconciled to God by the Blood of his Son upon the cross. I am a child of God. I am adopted into God's family, and I am an heir with Christ, a joint-heir with Him." Powerful language! This is what a Christian really is: in the general sense but also in a specific way when he confesses his everyday sin and receives forgiveness.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:3 & 4.

- * To whom is Paul responsible here?
-
- * Why should we not judge ourselves?
-
- * What do these verses say about our self
image?
-

Now you can take heed of the exhortation in Hebrews
10:22: "...let us draw near to God with a sincere
heart in full assurance of faith, having our
hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty
conscience and having our bodies washed with
pure water."

The third step in our forgiveness process is again
from God to man.

In the diagram it will look like this:



Diagram 3: God grants forgiveness due to what Christ has done for us.

God grants forgiveness to us. God proceeds to forgive us and, what is more, gives us the assurance that it has been done. Therefore, thank God for this grace which He bestows on us through Jesus Christ!

Being Forgiven/Set Free: you are now able to
forgive others

ARE YOU GOING TO FORGIVE YOUR FORMER HUSBAND/WIFE IN
THE SAME MANNER AS GOD HAS FORGIVEN YOU?

This is the crucial question to be asked at this point. After you have received total absolution from God for all your sins, is this going to be reflected onto your previous spouse?

In the New Testament we find an often recurring pattern: God gives and then requires something from us. We find this basic pattern in three New Testament books.

Romans. The main lines are:

Chapters 1 - 11: What God has done.

Chapters 12:1 ff: Offer yourself as sacrifices.

Galatians. Here we see the theme recurring.

Chapters 1 - 4: "You are all sons through faith in Jesus Christ" (3:26).

Chapters 5 - 6: "Stand firm then..." (5:1) and DO.

Ephesians. If you read the whole book you see the following:

Chapters 1 - 3: an exposition of everything God has been doing for us in Jesus Christ.

Chapters 4 - 6: we are reminded to live
worthily of the calling we received.

This is called the INDICATIVE and the IMPERATIVE.

Indicative: what God has given, done, shown to you and for
you. It is in the past tense: it is there already.

Imperative: The command, the claim on you, the order to live
a godly life in gratitude for the indicative. This
principle is vividly demonstrated in the Old Testament in
Exodus 20:1 & 2. Read the verses and say:

* When did the Lord say these words?

.....

* What did He tell them afterwards (verses 3
- 17)?

.....

This self-same principle is applicable to
forgiveness. Having been forgiven, the emphasis is now on
what YOU are going to do with what you have already received
from God.

Jay Adams (1979, 184) stresses this point:

"Christians are forgiven people - and should be thankful for
it; that's what makes them unique. But this unique factor
carries a responsibility with it: because they are forgiven,
they must also become forgiving persons as Ephesians 4:32
says, 'and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving
each other just as God in Christ forgave you'."

Roger L. Crook explains this especially in
connection with divorced people (1974, 66): "If you continue

to be unforgiving in your attitude toward your partner, you are not likely to feel good about your divorce. A divorce based on an unwillingness to forgive, even in the case as something as serious as adultery, is not in keeping with the Christian character."

The Bible is very clear on this. Take, for example, what Jesus said when the sinful woman anointed Him. We read this in Luke 7:36 - 50 (note especially verse 47).

"Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven - for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

The question can rightly be asked: did this woman love much and was she forgiven because of that or did she love much because she was forgiven? From the context it is not very clear because the second part of the sentence seems to fit the second possibility. However, the issue remains the same. The focus is still: because of her being forgiven, she loves a lot. The indicative in her life led to the imperative. What God had done for her in Jesus Christ meant so much to her that she showed it by loving much (I think one may say that she easily forgave whenever someone sinned against her).

Now read Luke 7:36 - 50 and say in your own words how you understand forgiveness from this part of Scripture. Write this down as well

.....

Reread Ephesians 4:32.

What other qualities of a Christian are put on the same level as forgiveness and why do you think it is done?

.....
.....

Paul Thigpen summarizes this when he says: "Our failure to be merciful not only hinders our approach to God: it also locks us up in a cell next door to our debtor.

'Forgive (apolo), and you will be forgiven' (Lk.6:37)

could just as well be translated, 'Release and you will be released'" (1986, 44).

Read Luke 6:37 and note the condition before being forgiven

.....

The important question to be asked then, once one realizes that this must be done (granting forgiveness to one's former husband/wife), is HOW one should do it?

In the counseling outline (Chapter 6) this will be discussed at great length, but here are some preliminary remarks:

A. Ed Welch suggested (1983, Lecture to a singles group): "Do not simply express feelings, e.g. 'I am sorry', and do not try to manipulate the person into an apology. Rather, indicate that you are confessing sin (Will you forgive me for...?) and accepting full responsibility for

your behavior. The confession should be as public as the offense."

Dr. Welch also suggests the following "How-to's":

"Forgive when another has asked your forgiveness. Forgive cordially, fully, and often (Luke 17:1 - 5): forgive even when another has not asked for your forgiveness. You are not called to be a debt collector or a judge. You are called to love (John 15)".

B. Assignments:

a. Have you started the process of forgiving?
.....

b. At which phase are you in the forgiveness process?

c. If you haven't started yet, what is keeping you?
.....

d. What is keeping you from progressing from one phase to the other?

e. Read "Forgiveness in Counseling" in Jay Adams's book: "More than Redemption" (1979, 185 - 232). Underline or highlight the important parts and make a summary of them. This can be discussed with the counselor if necessary.

f. Read Mark 11:25. How do you understand it?
.....

g. Apply Mark 11:25 (first go and forgive before you pray).

h. Read and do the assignments of "Changing sinful thought patterns" in "A Homework Manual for Biblical Counseling" by Dr. Wayne Mack (1979, 176).

i. The following books have good suggestions on how to forgive:

- * Goldie Bristol: When it's Hard to Forgive.
- * Doris Donnelly: Learning to Forgive: and
- * Richard P. Walters: Forgive and Be Free.

To end this chapter, a quick review.

It is essential that all four steps be taken in the process of forgiveness (as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) in order to do everything possible to attain and to grant forgiveness. This is often a slow and painful process because it uncovers many sores and digs up many bad memories.

However, this is the way the Lord spelled it out to us. If this is not pursued and shortcuts or detours are taken, the results will be even more painful.

Now look at the completed diagram to see the finished way of forgiveness: the action, after God's forgiveness, toward the ex-spouse.

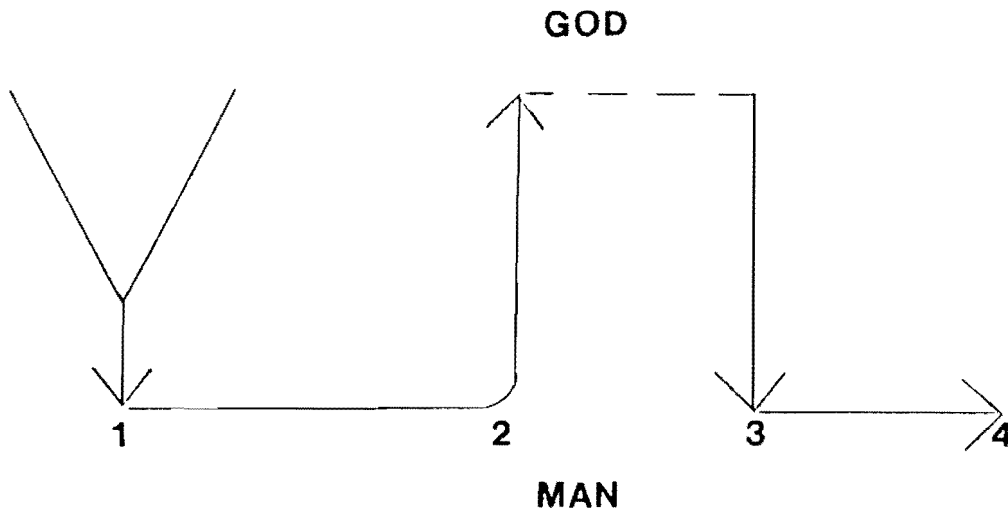


Diagram 4:--The forgiveness you received from God
must be reflected towards others

For a Christian, this is the only way!

CHAPTER 4

SEEKING RECONCILIATION

Biblical Foundation

Reconciliation between God and Man

In dealing with reconciliation, it is first and foremost necessary to properly understand reconciliation between God and man since this is the basis for all reconciliation between man and man, for the purposes of this project: also between husband and wife after divorce.

Reconciliation means to make peace again. No, more than that; it is to restore what has broken down completely and need to be mended properly. "Reconciliation properly

applies not to good relations in general but to the doing away of an enmity, the bridging over of a quarrel" (1970, 1077). This break between man and God came, of course, after the fall where man became estranged from God and virtually became God's enemy. Man's sin of rebellion and disobedience made him eat from the tree he had been strictly forbidden to eat.

In connection with this, read Genesis 2.

Write down what God had given man

.....

.....

Now read Genesis 3.

Write down what happened immediately after man had eaten from the fruit he was not supposed to

.....

Who was cursed by God and what curses had been pronounced on them? 1.....

2.....

3.....

This is then where the need for reconciliation originated. Romans 5:10 tells us about this break. Answer the following:

a. What was the position between God and man?

.....

b. How did we become reconciled with God?

.....

Also read 2 Corinthians 5:20. Note that this command is in the passive voice but is still a command:..."be reconciled"! Here we have a very good example of what reconciliation is: an activity of God where man is also included. Before reconciliation man and God were in two different camps, in opposing camps. To change this, the enmity had to be transformed to friendship. In order to do that the cause of the quarrel or the root of the enmity had to be removed. In the case between God and man SIN was the problem. By dealing with sin, reconciliation was brought about. Now read Ephesians 2:12 & 13.

a. Who brought you near to God?

.....

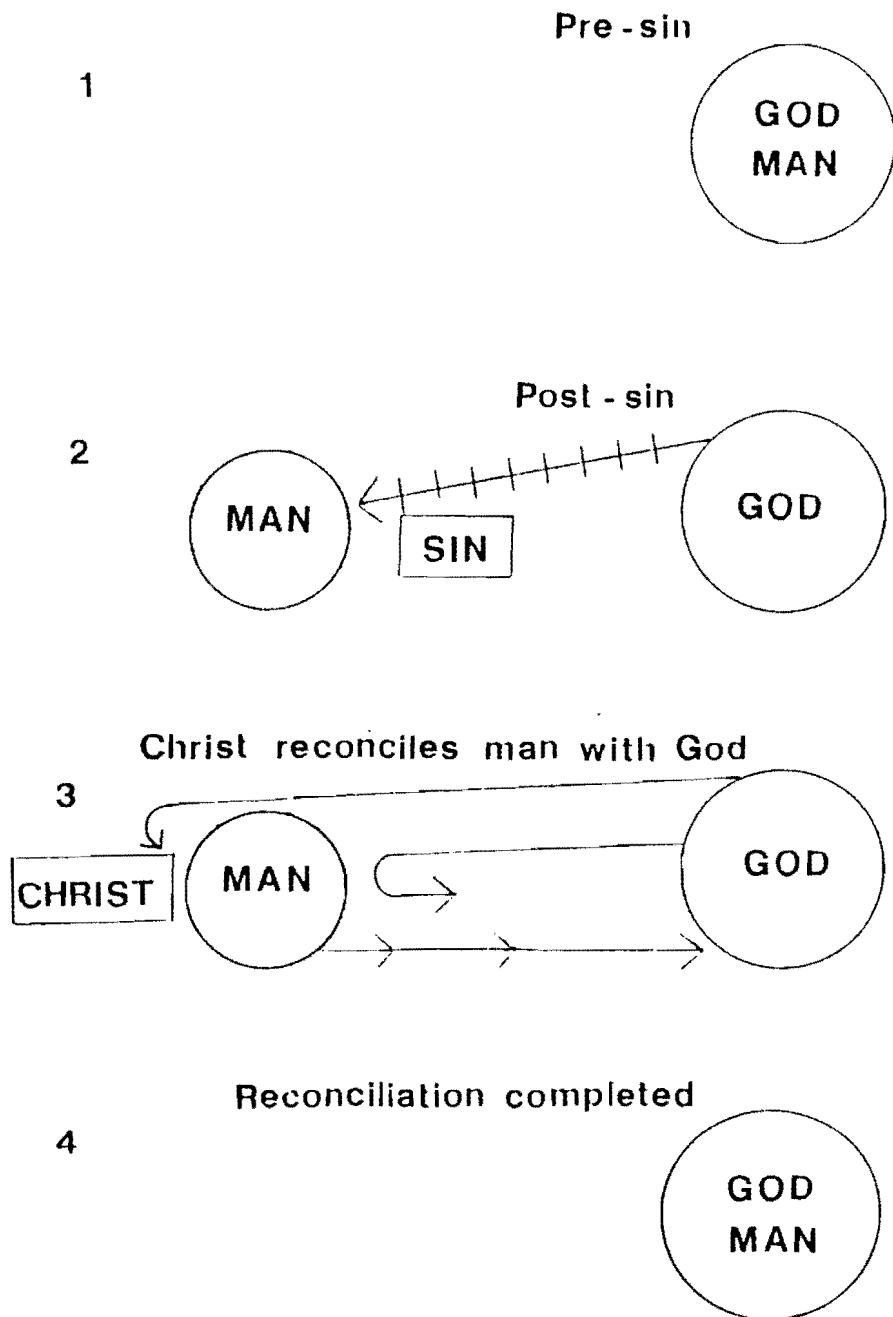
b. How were you brought near to God?

.....

In a diagram it looks like this:

Reconciliation: God - Man

Macro



Martyn Lloyd-Jones describes it in the following way: "God does not look upon me now as an enemy, He looks upon me as a friend, and not only as a friend, but as a child." And on the same page he says: "The real problem was how to deal with that state of enmity. It was so great, that nothing less than the death of Christ on the cross could deal with it" (1971, 150).

What happened is that Jesus Christ took the sin on his shoulders and died for it and because of it. That was the only way the enmity could be removed entirely. As explained before, man's SIN was the real problem and only by dealing with it, taking it upon Him (Isaiah 53:11 & 12) could Jesus change the enmity and bring God and man together in the same camp again.

Brown (1978, 166 ff.) summarizes reconciliation in the following way:

- * It is the work of God towards man (Romans 5:8 ff);
- * No sacrifice is acceptable to God without repentance and reconciliation (Matthew 5:24);
- * Reconciliation is incomplete until accepted by both sides (2 Corinthians 5:20);
- * Reconciliation means that we have peace with God (Romans 5:1);

- * God brought about reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21);
- * God uses man to proclaim the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19 & 20).

Note: If you are a Greek scholar, you can check on the meaning of "katallasso", "katallage", "apollasso" and "diallassomai"

.....

.....

For a brilliant explanation of the abovementioned discussion, one can also read "God's way of Reconciliation" by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1972, 176 - 198). It is studies on Ephesians 2. See chapters 16 ("Made nigh") and 17 ("The blood of Christ") where Ephesians 2:13 is expounded.

There is still another part of Scripture where the whole matter of God's reconciliation with man is discussed. See Colossians 1:19 - 23.

With whom is God reconciled in verse 20?.....

.....

What does verse 23 say about our responsibility once we are reconciled with God?

.....

It is therefore clear that any reconciliation should be founded on the basis of all reconciliation which lies with God who made friends again with man, although man became God's enemy.

Warren W. Wiersbe, in explaining Romans 5:11, says: "The word 'atonement' means 'reconciliation, brought back into fellowship with God.' The term is mentioned also in verse 10. In Romans 1:18 - 32, Paul explained how men declared war on God and, because of this, deserved to be condemned eternally. But God did not declare war on man. Instead, He sent His Son as the Peacemaker (Eph. 2:11 - 18) that men might be reconciled to God" (1982, 52).

Reconciliation between Man and Man

What is true between God and man, is likewise true between man and man: if there is a break (which is the case due to man's fall in sin) it must also be reconciled.

This is clear from Matthew 5:23 & 24.

Read the verses and note the following:

a. If he has something AGAINST YOU. This is different from Matthew 18:15 where you have something against HIM! (The main idea is still: You must take the initiative).

b. No offering is acceptable to the Lord if man is not reconciled with his brother.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts this in a very vivid manner in his exposition of Matthew 5: "...we should, in a sense, even keep God waiting rather than stay. We must get right with our brother and then come back to offer the gift. In the sight of God there is no value whatsoever in an act of worship if we harbor a known sin... There is no value or

purpose in praying to God if you know in your own heart that you are not right with your brother" (1959, 228).

What happened between God and you must also happen between you and your brother: reconciliation must be sought and attained.

In The Journal of Pastoral Practice Vol. v # 3 (1983, 25) Tim Crater has a very good article on "Counsel on being reconciled to our brother". In this article he highlights the major issues as far as counseling goes. It is a very important article and should be given as homework for the counselee to read and comment on. Since the main thrust of this chapter is the reconciliation of husband and wife, this will not be discussed in detail. However, the principles brought forward in this article, are important for the topic but will be discussed at greater length later on. Hence, reconciliation amongst people is VERY important.

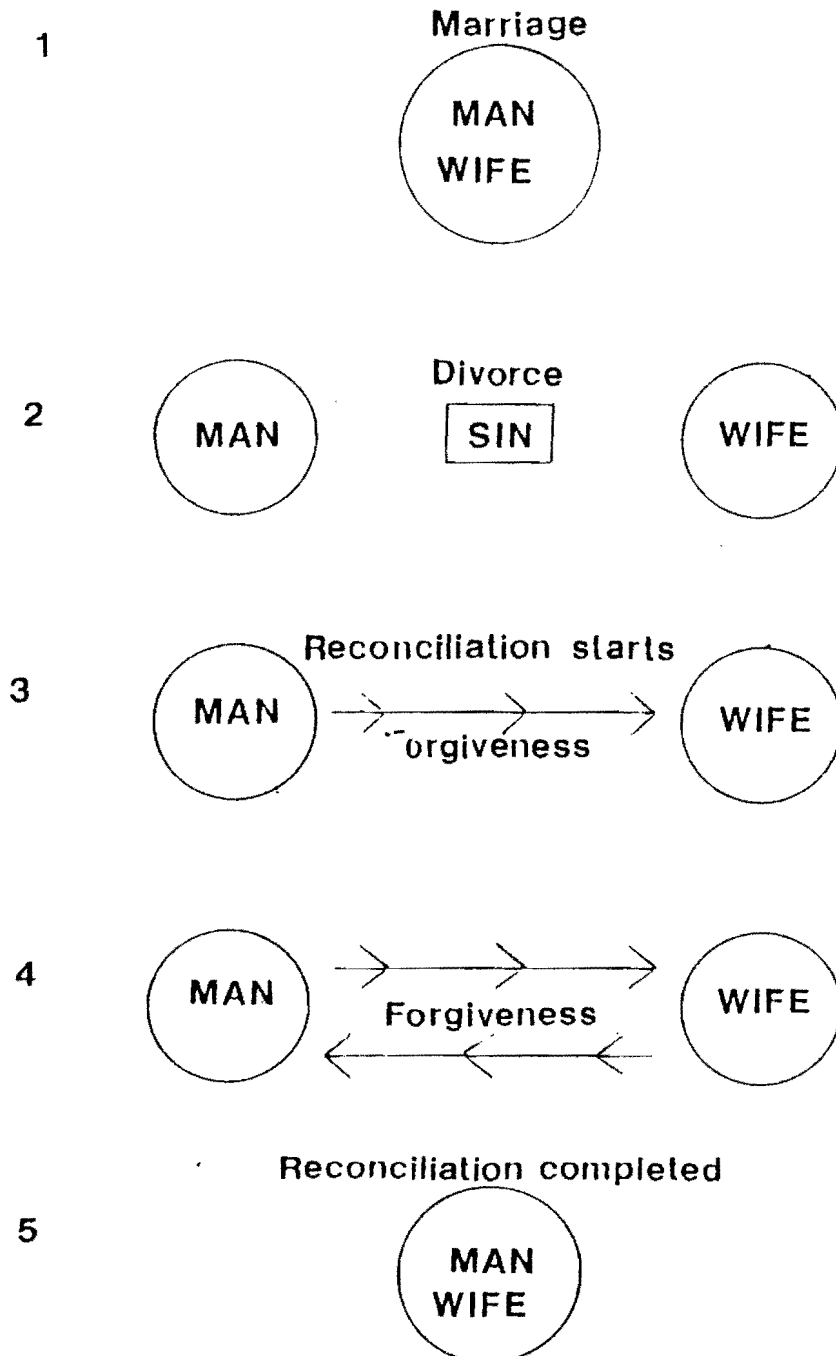
Reconciliation between Husband and Wife

We now come to what is the real issue: reconciliation and peace between two divorced people. The first part of the process is forgiveness. Having dealt with that area, we now turn to something more difficult: the getting together of the ex-husband and ex-wife to be reunited again. This can only be done when there is real forgiveness and when the ex-partners actively seek reconciliation. No loose strings must be hanging around!

In a diagram it looks like this:

Reconciliation: Wife- Man

Micro



Cases for Reconciliation

When to Seek Reconciliation

The Bible states it emphatically that marriage is a permanent bond and God-given institution.

Genesis 2:24 contains what God says about marriage. Check the verse and write down what this unity is like

.....

Matthew 19:5 builds upon these institution words. Underline the verse in your Bible and answer the questions:

Who put husband and wife together?

.....

In divorce: who breaks them up?

What was God's original intention with marriage? (Refer to Genesis 2:21 - 25 and Matthew 19:3 - 9)

.....

Although divorce has in fact been taking place and is a fait accompli, nevertheless one should seek reconciliation. Ellisen (1977, 54 - 55) puts it clearly in saying that "...it should be recognized that reconciliation is the primary desire of God". And on the same page: "The believer, furthermore, should never conceive of reconciliation as an impossibility, unless the other party has remarried or is living in a common law situation...To humbly beseech God for such reconciliation is to move the

arm of God who works miracles, for we can always be sure THAT RECONCILIATION OF MARRIAGE PARTNERS IS HIS WILL." Here then we have the essence of compulsory reconciliation: BELIEVERS WHO HAVE DIVORCED ARE COMPELLED TO RECONCILE. This is also clear from 1 Corinthians 7:10 & 11. Read, for a comprehensive overview on marriage, the whole chapter (1 Corinthians 7). According to the New Bible Commentary (1970, 1059 - 1060) the Apostle Paul is answering several questions put to him by the people in Corinth - all about marriage:

- 1. 1 - 7
- 2. 8 - 9
- 3. 10 - 11
- 4. 12 - 16
- 5. 25 - 38
- 6. 39 - 40

In this part dealing with when to seek reconciliation, we will focus on question 3. We presume the question was:

"Paul, are believers allowed to divorce? And if they are, could they remarry another person?" Now read 1 Corinthians 7:10 & 11 attentively and answer the following questions:

- a. Who actually gives the instruction in verse 10?
-

- b. Does this only apply to the woman or is here a general principle at stake? (For the context also read verses 15 & 27)
-
- c. If the partners in fact do divorce, what should they do? (They have only one of two alternatives)
-
- d. What special recommendation is given to the wife and to the husband?
-

Grosheide (1953, 163) points out: "Reconciliation should be undertaken by the wife with whom the divorce started". Hence, marriage was intended by God to be indissoluble, according to the marriage ordinance and divine institution of God, states Murray (1957, 71) and reaffirms it (1961, 29). Shaner (1969, 79) also holds this view firm.

To understand this properly, read Matthew 19:4 - 6. Write down what God had meant with marriage in the beginning

Also read Matthew 19:8. Why did divorce come about?

.....

Was your divorce perhaps due to the same reasons as mentioned above?

.....

Divorce was not originally intended by God says Adams (1980 [2], 27). The believer is therefore obliged,

according to the Word of God, to seek reconciliation (1980 [2], 55). Groenewald strongly agrees with this viewpoint (1971, 88 - 89).

It is also important to look at the Old Testament to see how God portrayed reconciliation there. Remember that God was the "Man" and his people his "wife" (Isaiah 54:5) and whenever his people strayed and wanted to divorce him, became unfaithful, God sought reconciliation. (Deuteronomy 32, Judges 2:18, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremia...this runs like a golden thread through the Old Testament!)

This theme of reconciliation is so prominent that the Holy Spirit as Author of the Bible deemed it necessary to devote a whole book on this issue of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration of the marriage in spite of something which is a legal ground for divorce.

The name of this book in the Old Testament is Hosea. Here is a very important assignment!

a. Read the WHOLE of Hosea.

b. Mark the following verses and jot down how reconciliation is applied:

Hosea 2:14.....
 2:19.....
 2:20.....
 3:1.....
 7:13.....
 8:10.....
 10:12.....

11:8.....
11:9.....
12:6.....
13:5.....
14:1.....
14:2.....
14:4.....
14:8.....

Conclusion.

The Bible is clear about the need for reconciliation between believers after divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10 & 11).

When Not to Seek Reconciliation

Insofar as Paul exhorted believers to seek reconciliation with their previous spouses if both are believers, he also grants freedom to divorce when one is an unbeliever and wants to divorce. This is found in 1 Corinthians 7:15: "But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace."

It is important to note that verse 15 stands amid verses 12 through 16 where the whole issue of marriage between believer and unbeliever is discussed. However, verse 15 is clear, even standing on its own. The Greek word used for "let him do so", "let him depart" indicates a

decisiveness (the word is "chorizo" = to separate by divorce) (1980 [2], 47).

According to Jay Adams, "This is a command; it is the one instance in which divorce is REQUIRED" (1980 [2], 48). John Murray puts this aspect in very strong terms by saying: "But there is also the note of severity, not indeed with respect to the deserted believer but with reference to the deserting unbeliever, and may be rendered in the legitimate paraphrase, 'let him be gone'. The harshness and terseness of the expression bespeak the severity of the judgement passed upon the deserting spouse and indicate the absence of any further obligation in the matter of conjugal dues" (1961, 69).

Certain very important consequences flow from this divorce where the unbeliever deliberately leaves the believing spouse.

- * There is no obligation to reconcile again (1985, 152).
- * The remaining (believing) partner is free to remarry (1980 [2], 48 - 49).
- * The remaining partner is obliged only to marry a believer (1 Corinthians 7:39).
- * The peace obtained by the divorce of the believer and unbeliever is essential (verse 15).
- * The believer need not fret about his/her evangelistic responsibility (verse 16).

- * In accordance with 2 Corinthians 6:14 - 18
the believer can have a clear conscience
about what happened.

A. Believer-believer as far as reconciliation goes:

B1+++++++B2 (Believers divorcing)

B1 B2 (Believers divorced)

B1 -----B2 (Believer 2 seeks
reconciliation)

B1----- B2 (Believer 1 seeks
reconciliation)

B1-----B2 (Final reconciliation:
both sides)

B. Unbeliever-believer as far as reconciliation goes:

----U----- B (Unbeliever departs)

U B (Believer let goes,
divorced)

U+++++++B (Believer not to reconcile)

U B----- (Believer free)

B-----B (May remarry
other believer)

How to Seek Reconciliation

Tentative Counseling Outline

Prayer

Before starting any reconciliatory action towards your previous spouse, PRAY! It is important to know God's will in this matter. It also prepares the other person. (What you cannot change, the Holy Spirit can!)

By praying, you ask God to intervene on your behalf. Read Psalm 18:6 ff. to see how God started doing things for this praying person.

Remember: the strength is the Lord's.

Finally: it is the Lord's will to reconcile; Scripture teaches it.

Start

In John 21:21 & 22 and Luke 13:24 Jesus puts the responsibility on the shoulders of the person in front of Him, not on another. The same applies here. Start by approaching your ex-husband/ex-wife. Write if the person is far away. Tell him/her the intention of your visit.

Do not blameshift.

Be polite and loving.

Accept responsibility for your sins.

If forgiveness has not been dealt with, do it! (Cf. the previous chapter on forgiveness.)

Continue

It is important to deal with the matters which have led to the divorce in the first place. Discuss them at great length even if it is hurtful. Do not try to cover up the unpleasant parts. Remember there might be some resistance from the other person, but continue in a godly manner, because: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Do not expect immediate results, but persevere. If you correspond with your ex-spouse, keep copies of the letters. This is for your own reference and also for the children if they should one day ask why you did not reconcile. Continue to pray and ask people at your church to pray for you in this matter as well. Trusting God to bring you to the fulfillment of what you are doing.

Assignments

- * Compare some good, biblical commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7:1, especially the verses dealing with reconciliation.
- * Write a hypothetical letter to your ex-spouse and give it to the counselor.
- * Write out a role play about what you are going to say when you meet your ex-husband/ex-wife.

* Recap what has been said about prayer, start, and continue, and paraphrase in your own words.

* Read Jerr Adams's book: Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage (Adams 1980 [2]).

* Also read the chapter "Vain Regrets" in the book by Martyn Lloyd-Jones called: Spiritual Depression (1965, 79).

* Take a concordance and write down all the texts where you find "reconciliation". Read them and make a note which applies to a. God-man

b. Man-man

c. Husband-wife.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Since this project started in August 1984, several divorced people came for counseling to the author. These were people from all spheres of life who were either already divorced or at the brink of divorce. In many of these cases the issue of forgiveness was touched upon.

As stated in the Project Proposal the intention was to discuss in depth five case studies. These cases were picked from a random group of counselees which were divorced.

The five were deliberately chosen on account of different factors as:

- * Age
- * Period of marriage
- * Period of divorce
- * Sex
- * Children/no children
- * Problem areas in marriage
- * Filed for divorce: active/passive
- * Perception/handling of divorce
- * Degrees of forgiveness
- * Duration of counseling
- * Main problem after divorce

As a result of these cases and the questionnaires filled out, the seriousness of this particular matter in counseling emerged again. One realizes that there is indeed a great need for sound Biblical counseling in the field of forgiveness since it touches the very heart of a Christian's life and his/her faith in the Triune God.

Over two years of research many questionnaires were also filled out by people attending marriage seminars, a single parent group and counselees. The questionnaires used were the Problem Identifying Questionnaire, the Information Questionnaire and the Forgiveness Questionnaire.

The Problem Identifying Questionnaire

This questionnaire was originally developed in the presentation of marriage enrichment seminars. It proved however, that it can also be used very effectively to ascertain real problems in the dissolved marriages of divorcees. It is also helpful to pinpoint the areas in marriage which led to it's breakdown and may still be the issue.

OFTEN THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE/ISSUES MAY BE THE UNDERLYING OBSTACLE TO COMPLETE FORGIVENESS.

Note that the areas mentioned are concrete matters; not attitudes, dislikes, and "abstract" or "spiritual" matters; hence the outwards signs of perhaps another deep-rooted problem. The advantage is that one can at least with a degree of certainty zero in on what was going on in the marriage. The divorcees filling out the questionnaire proved to be very honest in their answers.

For the purposes of the project one can check on what **WAS** the problem while the marriage existed. It may be a recurring problem in a new marriage. Even if reconciliation takes place, this might still be a problem if not properly dealt with.

It is important to focus on forgiveness in the area indicated in the questionnaire. (This will be explained later.)

The questionnaire looked like this:

Anonymous

Please circle what you consider the major problem in your marriage.

Money

Sex

In-laws

Alcohol

Children

Friends

Poor communication

Infidelity

Jcb/Work

Too little attention of spouse

Dishonesty

Church/Spiritual matters

Anything else? Please specify

.....
.....
.....

The Information Questionnaire

1. Name.....
2. Period divorced.....
3. Duration of marriage.....
4. Children.....number.....ages.....
5. Involvement of children in process of forgiveness e.g. alimony not paid, incite children against ex-spouse etc.....
.....
.....
6. Feelings towards my ex-husband/ex-wife:
Immediately after the divorce.....
.....
.....
Now
.....
.....
7. The most useful advice/counseling I received after my divorce.....
.....
.....
8. What I learned in the whole matter (during divorce and afterwards).....
.....
.....

6. I have asked forgiveness of my previous spouse.

YES NO

7. I still have difficulty in forgiving my previous husband/wife completely.

YES NO

8. I have granted my previous husband/wife forgiveness (as far as is humanly possible).

YES NO

9. I am convinced that God has forgiven MY sins in the marriage break-up completely.

YES NOT SURE NO

10. To me forgiveness means:

- a. I will not mention the matter ever again to X (my ex-spouse).
- b. I will not mention it ever again to anyone else.
- c. I will not mention it again to myself.

Any other comment:

.....

.....

.....

Description of Cases

Introduction

The five in depth case studies were done with two men and three women in a time span of more than two years (August 1984 to September 1986). All were willing to be questioned on this matter but for their own protection, their first names only will be used.

All are Evangelical Christians and grew up in God-fearing families. There are, however, many differences as indicated.

Case Studies

Case no.1

Johan is a man of 28 who came for counseling since his divorce in 1985. He was a seminary student but had to discontinue his studies after his divorce; for emotional reasons but also due to the church's attitude against divorce. He was in a pretty bad shape emotionally and had a lot of resentment against his ex-wife. Therefore, forgiveness was a big issue in Johan's life. He knew it had to happen but the thought of what his ex-wife had done, made him feel bitter and rejected. Money was also a big matter since his ex-wife had accused him of being a plodder and she

left him for a wealthy lawyer. After one year Johan still had degrees of resentment towards his former wife.

Case no.2

Marilie is a woman of 38 with three teenage children. Her resentment towards her former husband revolved around the not paying of alimony. When alimony was paid, no other problem really bothered her. Since she has already been divorced for seven years, she has accepted the idea and is otherwise a balanced person and a committed Christian. Marilie is a social worker.

Case no.3

Hans is an official at the local university. Since his divorce in 1983, he has been suffering a great deal: partly through what his wife did to him, and partly through what he has been doing to himself by taking all the responsibility of the divorce and tormenting himself ever since. This is even worse than what his wife had done.

For more than three years he has been going around like a specter...always referring to what has happened to him, always depressed about his state. His biggest struggle is the question where he sinned in their marriage and how his wife could have left him and married another man. He feels she is living in adultery.

If only he could realize that God has forgiven all his sins - including those he committed in his marriage -

things might start changing for him. In the more than two years since the author first saw Hans, there has been no change in him, although many people have been counseling him. He has in fact become more resentful towards his former wife and her husband.

One also suspects that the children enhances his problem since they are with his former wife and he has a terrible longing for them.

Case no.4

Ann came for counseling since February 1986. She was the most recently divorced of all the cases and experienced everything very intensely. The counseling was on an irregular basis since she only came when some crisis occurred. When she filled out the questionnaire the first time, Ann thought she had forgiven but some actions of her ex-husband caused an explosion of resentment and something like a "nervous break-down" (one can also say a "breakdown of resources"). She wanted to give her children away and took to the road for a few days without anyone knowing where she was.

After about a month and a half, Ann voluntarily filled out the same questionnaire. There was quite a shift from the first one and it is apparent that her forgiveness is now complete although nothing changed in her ex-husband and his emotional blackmail still continues.

During this time she also had a tremendous growth in her spiritual life and has been progressing rapidly in her walk with the Lord. As case no.3 was the most "unsuccessful" case, this one is the most "successful" (humanly speaking) and one can be grateful to the Lord, for He has been bringing about the changes in her.

Case no.5

Annemarie has no children and works as a cooking matron in a hostel for students. Although at the point of contact with her she had already been divorced for more than a year, the bitterness towards her previous husband was obvious. She even used the word "hate" and this is connected to the fact that she is single and alone again. She realizes that she should not blame all men and look at them from a negative viewpoint, but this tendency persistently comes forward. After we had a discussion on forgiveness and she attended a lecture by the author on forgiving of your former spouse, she seems to be working hard on the matter. Her life is very simple and dictated by strict routine. There is little excitement in it so the opportunity to think more about her loneliness and present state is bigger than with the persons in the other cases. There is indeed much more counseling to be done.

Annemarie was the only person questioned for the case studies who boldly said she had not forgiven her previous husband and had not asked him for forgiveness.

Synopsis of answers on the
questionnaires

Case number:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Johan	Marilie	Hans	Ann	Annemarie

Age:

28	38	48	36	27
----	----	----	----	----

Period married:

2 years	10 years	16 years	10 years	3 years
---------	----------	----------	----------	---------

Period divorced:

1 year	7 years	3 years	8 months	1 year
--------	---------	---------	----------	--------

Sex:

Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
------	--------	------	--------	--------

Children:

None	3	3	2	None
------	---	---	---	------

Synopsis (continued)

Problem-areas:

Money	Sex	Infidelity	Infidelity	Infi-
In-laws	In-laws	Communication	Spiritual	deli-
Status	No emotional security		matters	ty

Degree of forgiveness.

Immediately:

10	2	5	6	0
----	---	---	---	---

After one year:

2	8	9	9	6
---	---	---	---	---

Filed for divorce:

Passive	Active	Passive	Active	Active
	(Initiated)		(Initiated)	(Forced)

Counseling period:

1 year	2 years	2 years	8 months	1 month
--------	---------	---------	----------	---------

Main problem due to divorce:

Self image	Alimony	Guilt	Guilt	Bitterness
Inferiority	Children	Self pity	Rejection	
Rejection				

Conclusions

Certain very definite conclusions came forward in the research with divorced people. These include general tendencies but also very individual problems. However, the forgiveness issue as far as the former spouse is concerned, tends to be applicable to all divorced people.

At the utmost one can say that the degree of forgiveness is different, but the phenomenon of struggling with forgiveness exists for every divorced person.

The study showed again that there is a need for divorced people to get good, solid, biblical counseling about the necessity to forgive the former spouse in order to live a God pleasing life and be freed from all the detrimental effects of not forgiving.

The following, then, are conclusions made by the abovementioned counselees coming from the questionnaires as well as from the counseling sessions we have had during two years. Other counselees also contributed to the conclusions.

* The most important conclusion is that believers who sincerely believe in the Triune God and endeavor to apply the biblical teaching to their lives, succeed and overcome the most difficult obstacles after divorce. The people questioned emphatically stated this and this is seen in their lives as well. It is a matter of by

the fruit they will be known!

Johan wrote: "The only security we have, is God's love", while Hans said; "without the Lord I am not able to do anything". Annemarie in turn wrote that what she learned was to turn to the Lord and trust Him instead of relying on man.

* Time heals many wounds. Although forgiveness must be sought deliberately, it was proved that the period directly after divorce was the most difficult to forgive. The persons, on the other hand which have been divorced longer had less resentment and were more convinced about having forgiven the former spouse. However, this makes the task of the counselor even more difficult because he has to proclaim the demand of the Gospel to forgive whilst there are still fresh wounds as a result of the divorce.

* Divorced people (like other sinners) often expect that God will punish them for their sins. When this does not happen, they punish themselves by feeling guilty and bearing the burden of their own sins. They constantly do introspection and disclose more and more sins they committed in their marital life. This of course leads to a dead end again and again. Especially the two men from the five cases above have suffered or are still suffering from this problem. Once the divorcee realizes that God has forgiven all his/her sins, the process of forgiving the former spouse can also start. If you are not convinced of

God's forgiveness, you are prone not to release the other person.

* All the divorcees questioned realize that they have to start a new life and look forward. Doing it, however, is very difficult for them. The whole matter of forgiveness is then a good point of departure. If in counseling the person sees and understands that being forgiven and starting to forgive can mean a new beginning this influences the other spheres of life as well. This is why the person in case no.3 cannot make a new start and forget those things which lie behind him.

* Everyone experienced what is being said in Psalm 116:10 & 11:

"I believed; therefore I said,

'I am greatly afflicted.'

And in my dismay I said,

All men are liars."

Hence, they were disillusioned by man and the high ideals they had for life with a partner were shattered. Man had shown himself as a sinner especially in regard to the previous spouse. This awareness could lead in two directions: a total distrust in man and suspicion towards him/her and/or trust in God alone. This happened to a great extent to all five people in the cases which were being examined.

* Something that was said by Johan (Case no.1) perhaps portrayed what many divorcees experience. He

said: if you hate after a divorce, it is perhaps easier than to love, then your pain is less and you feel as if you are in charge. What he most probably wanted to say is that hating is the most logical thing to do. Since one feels one cannot love anymore, one should hate. It also gives one the feeling of being in charge after many things have happened beyond one's control. This attitude (which is human) calls for confronting counseling to show the foolishness of this way of thinking and point out that forgiveness is the only option for the Christian divorcee.

Counseling Implications

The five cases discussed in this chapter brought forward certain general problems of divorcees which are closely connected to forgiveness. If proper, biblical forgiveness has not been received or granted, these problem areas will enhance the suffering of the divorcee and it will be impossible to live a God honoring life.

Having gone through a divorce himself, the author knows how some of the problems can harass one. On the other hand, working through the whole matter of forgiveness makes it easier to address the problems. These issues or problems will still occur, but dealing with them in a biblical way, makes all the difference! Then the divorcee will be able to obtain man's chief end: "to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever". (As put forward in the Shorter Catechism of the

Westminster Confession, question 1. See also 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Psalm 73:25).

The following issues should then be addressed in Chapter 6 as they surfaced from the questionnaires:

Self-image

This is closely related to a feeling of inferiority. It is often disappointment in oneself. If there is no forgiveness, growth in these areas will be hampered.

Alimony

This can become a "hot issue" if not dealt with properly. Due to every month's repetition, forgiveness is imperative also in this matter. Counseling will also have to include how-to's in dealing with this matter monthly.

Children

Due to a life long connection to the former spouse where there are children, this matter must be dealt with with great care.

Ex-spouse remarried

If forgiveness has not been granted to the other person and he/she not released (remember this is one of the root meanings of forgiveness) this could cause much strain and emotional suffering both ways. This problem goes hand in hand with problems connected to the children.

Church

One of the persons (in the cases mentioned) has serious problems with the church and how they could have allowed the former spouse to remarry since it is viewed as adultery. Thorough counseling and explanation of what forgiveness is and why the sinner can be restored to fellowship should be given here. It must be explained that the church should be an agent of forgiveness.

Guilt

Guilt over broken vows and feelings of resentment will have to be dealt with when approaching the divorcee about forgiveness. This often boils down to a wrong perception of God's forgiveness. The divorcee who feels guilty often has the inclination to "pay for his own sins" and do not accept that Jesus Christ died for ALL his/her sins.

Bitterness

As has been pointed out, Annemarie is the divorcee with the worst problem of bitterness. Again this occurred due to a lack of understanding (and practising!) of biblical forgiveness.

Rejection

It is very difficult to forgive the person who deliberately rejected one and have no hard feelings towards him/her. Counseling will have to include this matter as well.

Infidelity

As with rejection, this is also a tough issue since it includes not only the former spouse but also another party. Forgiveness will have to be extended to two other persons or even more.

Dishonesty

Lies about money, extra marital affairs, jobs etc. will leave a mark on the divorcee. Counseling will have to include getting the divorcee to forgive all the dishonesty as well.

Conclusion

The issues mentioned above are SOME of the problems divorcees stumble over. All of them to a greater or lesser extent are tied in with forgiveness. For the purpose of this project only these mentioned above will be discussed and counseling outlines for it will be proposed in Chapter 6. These problems concerning divorcees are not comprehensive but will hopefully help the counselor and pastor to guide the divorcee in his/her difficult plight.

CHAPTER 6

A COUNSELING OUTLINE

Introduction

In the whole matter of counseling divorcees on forgiveness it is imperative to provide an outline for the counselor and the pastor to work on. It is important to give the "how-to's" to the one who counsels, especially in the areas indicated in the case studies.

On the one hand good, solid, biblical guidelines will have to be given to the counselee in this important matter but on the other hand this must be made very PRACTICAL and APPLICABLE. Too much counseling on forgiveness is focused on biblical instruction only, without

giving any attention to how the counselee should go about in approaching and doing this. To give the counselee some biblical instruction and tell him/her "to forgive" without any accompaniment as to how-to, would be the same as to tell a soldier it is necessary to go and fight in a war, to motivate him, without providing him with weapons or giving him any training.

The compiler of this project has been subjected to the very same approach: every pastor told him to forgive his ex-wife but no one took the trouble (or perhaps had the skills!) to prescribe a method or suggest a way of going about this highly important matter.

Luke 3:10 ff. gives some indication of what should be done. When people asked: "What should we do then?", John the Baptist gave practical answers like: "share one tunic, don't collect any more than you are required", and "don't accuse people falsely", all very practical, down to earth advice.

In this chapter, the issues which emerged from the previous chapter will be discussed and an outline for the counseling of divorced people will be given, focusing on the following:

- * Self image
- * Alimony
- * Children
- * Ex-spouse remarried
- * Relationship to church
- * Guilt
- * Bitterness
- * Rejection
- * Infidelity
- * Dishonesty

The counseling outline will be presented in accordance with the method proposed by Dr. Wayne Mack of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation and taught at the Westminster Theological Seminary in the course: Introduction to Pastoral Counseling.

This approach is the most comprehensive and provides an umbrella under which all the relevant aspects of counseling can be found.

The counseling process will involve the following seven elements:

- Interaction
- Inspiration
- Information
- Intention
- Interpretation
- Instruction
- Implementation

In the counseling process, interaction, inspiration and information will be the same for all cases i.e. a general approach to all the problems mentioned. However, from "intention" onward the discussion will be separated and each problem will be discussed individually.

Outline

Interaction

Interaction is the establishing of the proper counselor/counselee involvement. In any counseling this is essential but with divorced people it is even more important since so many consequences flow from divorce like financial problems, rejection by the former spouse, resentment, social rejection, suffering of children after divorce, moving to a new city, job changes and many more. All these matters

should be addressed by the counselor when dealing with divorcees.

The following requirements are set by Van Der Merwe (1983, 91) for the counselor:

- a. Empathy
- b. Acceptance of the person
- c. Sincerity
- d. Reflection of feeling
- e. Indications of attention and encouragement
- f. Purposeful silence (listening)
- g. Summary and paraphrasing
- h. Interpretation
- i. Confrontation (show discrepancies)

All the items mentioned above are important for any counseling and should also be present at the counseling of divorced people. A scriptural guideline as far as the interaction or involvement is concerned will focus on:

Listening

James 1:19 says: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak...", and Proverbs 18:2 & 4 also stresses this principle by warning against judging the one side before listening properly to everything.

Job's friends are examples to every counselor by sitting down with him for seven days and seven nights without saying a word (Job 2:11 - 13). Apparently they also wanted to give him an opportunity to speak (and they would

listen!) because he is the first to speak (Job 3:1 ff). The suffering of Job was so big that no one wanted to or could say a word...not even a word of encouragement. What Job then needed was people like these friends who could listen to his tale of woe. However, they did not keep this up when they started out with their theological concepts trying to convince Job in a rational way what his problem was (Job 4:7 ff). At the end, however, the Lord complains about their wrong concepts of Him and it was Job himself who had to sacrifice on their behalf (Job 42:7 - 9).

Although then the book Job initially sets a good example to be followed, it later on also shows what should NOT be done in counseling people in hardships!

Charles R. Swindoll tells us about a man who came to see him (1980, 91) after he had heard that his wife had cancer. Swindoll continues: "But that was no time for him to be told a lot of stuff...even true stuff. He needed a listening ear, plain and simple."

The real need for the divorcee is to be able to talk and open his/her heart to whoever is prepared to listen. Remember: he/she had someone to talk to but now that very person is the cause of the misery in which the divorcee finds himself or herself.

There is a great emotional turmoil in a divorcee's life and the task of the counselor is to listen and guide the divorcee through that storm with the the Bible as a compass (see Psalm 119:105).

Help the divorcee to handle
his emotions in a biblical way

A. W. Tozer says about the emotions: "God never intended that such a being as man should be the plaything of his feelings. The emotional life is a proper and noble part of the total personality, but it is, by its very nature, of secondary importance. RELIGION LIES IN THE WILL, AND SO DOES RIGHTEOUSNESS. The only good that God recognizes is a willed good; the only valid holiness is a willed holiness (1966, 36)."

Jay Adams (1973, 109 - 110) also warns about the "emotional problems" which he calls "deadly euphemisms" and says that emotions are not the problem, but the wrong approach and handling of the emotions.

Therefore, the responsibility of the counselor is to check the emotions of the divorcee as part of his involvement. Then he should explain where the emotions are viewed and handled in an ungodly way.

Take for instance bitterness: once the counselor realizes that bitterness is an overwhelming emotion with the divorcee, he should - after listening thoroughly to everything the divorcee has to say and how he/she expresses all of his emotions in this field - tell him that bitterness is a sin since it implies unforgiveness (see Colossians 3:12 & 13).

Do not deny emotions since it is a God given part of man, but explain what can happen once emotions run amuck. (Explain the history of Cain in Genesis 4:5 - 10...see chapter 2 for the description of the tragic life of Cain. The counselor will have to show the catastrophic results once one gives free reins to his emotions as Cain did, and this while he was warned and had the opportunity to turn away, but took no heed.)

The whole matter of emotions is described well by Bob George, a "skillful counselor" as McDowall calls him (1984, 138): "Now, emotions always follow thought. When someone is depressed, we say he has an emotional problem. But emotional problems, except in severe cases of physical abnormality, are caused by improper thinking.

Emotions are only responders and have no intellect or intelligence of their own. They cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality or past, present or future. They merely respond predictably to whatever we are putting into our minds.

People watching a horror movie experience fear even knowing there is no reality to what they're experiencing, why do they feel fear? Because they are thinking frightening thoughts.

Whatever we put in our minds determines our emotions. If we think of a sad situation, we'll feel sad. If we think of an angering situation, we'll feel anger.

These things are true regardless of the reality of the thought."

All the emotions present with the divorcee will have to be analyzed and checked if they are taken care of in a biblical way. In the part of instruction this will be focused on again.

Honesty

Often pity forces the counselor or peer to shy away from the truth in the life of the divorcee. For instance: one tells the divorcee there is still hope for the marriage to be restored while one knows that the previous spouse is on the brink of marrying another person. Or: out of pity one agrees with the divorcee just to let him/her feel good while he/she has an unbiblical approach and is sinning by gossiping about the other spouse.

INVOLVEMENT WILL INCLUDE COMPLETE HONESTY.

In Ephesians 4:25 we find a very important statement about honesty and speaking the truth: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

By being honest, the counselor will be in the best position to help and serve the divorcee.

Blameshifting goes hand in hand with this matter. It is common for divorced people to put all the blame on the previous spouse. By being honest in his counseling, the counselor will also steer clear of this problem to a great

extent. Ephesians 4:26 & 29 will be the guiding texts to explain this and warn the divorcee about what he/she is doing while verse 30 spells it out clearly: grieving the Holy Spirit.

Verse 31 then gives the "put-off's": bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and every form of malice.

Verse 32 gives the "put-on's": Be kind, compassionate, forgiving.

Empathy

The honesty mentioned above does not exclude empathy, where the counselor has compassion and has the "in touch" feeling with the divorcee. It does not mean to become like the divorcee, but to try and understand how he/she feels. We find this empathy in Jesus Christ in at least two places in the New Testament: Luke 7:11 - 15 and John 11:33.

In the first place: Luke 7:11 - 15. Here we have the tragic death of a widow's son. Not only did she have the sorrow of her only son's death but also her support for the worldly goods had been taken away. And now we read in verse 13 that when Jesus saw her, "... HIS HEART WENT OUT TO HER and He said, "Don't cry." " Jesus had empathy with this grief stricken woman. He also went further and helped her. The important point, however, is that Jesus set the example of empathy with the suffering person.

The second example is found in John 11:33. In this remarkable event Jesus wept with the family of the late Lazarus. The weeping of Mary and the other people moved Jesus deeply so that he also started to weep. This fact is reinforced when verse 35 mentions again that Jesus wept. He, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, did not deem it humiliating to weep like the people with whom He was associated.

If He, the Lord, had done this, why shouldn't we, as his followers, do likewise? It is no shame to cry with someone in grief. In fact, it enlarges the empathy one has with the other person.

Often this is the deepest need of a divorcee: to have someone who really has empathy...gets into his/her shoes and see the world through his/her eyes. And in this Jesus set the example for us. In Hebrews 4:15 Jesus is described as our high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses, since He was also tempted and experienced the hardships we have.

The counselor can never, of course, do it the same way as Jesus did, but at least he can through prayer and a godly life, become like Christ (1 John 3:2). It will not fully happen in this life but we already have the hope for it in the future life.

Be available

To be available is the responsibility of every counselor but in the counseling of divorced people this is even more important. Proper interaction will only be established once the divorcee realizes that the counselor is readily available to talk to or whenever there is a crisis.

Since divorce touches all spheres of life like financial support, children, board, family, vocation, social standing, church membership and then of course the more emotional side: longing, rejection etc., it is only natural that the divorcee will want to discuss all these matters and would like some advice/counsel on most of these and more.

The need for this kind of support will perhaps cause the counselor to plug the divorcee into a singles group or activate the church members into getting involved in all these matters which need attention in the life of the divorcee. The deacons can also fruitfully help in financial support and in other practical matters. (See the reason why deacons were instated: Acts 6:1 - 5.)

The precondition is, however, that the counselor, whether a pastor or a professional counselor, should be available in the first place and also open up the resources available to the divorcee and inform him/her about it.

Being available will also include the possibility to counsel the ex-husband or ex-wife. Often the divorcee has

an urge to get some message conveyed to the previous spouse but cannot do it alone due to different reasons. There may also be unfinished business related to the divorced spouse like: forgiveness, financial affairs, children or anything else that has not been cleared. The counselor can then act as a go-between to the divorced couple.

Especially in the field of forgiveness the counselor's availability will be needed sorely. At certain times he will have to be the mediator to initiate forgiveness on both sides.

Finally the availability of the counselor will have to reflect and point to the presence of God where at the end and in the long run the divorcee will have to seek his/her ultimate support and comfort.

In Isaiah 43:2 ff. it says:

"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."

And verse 5:

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you....".

For the interaction in the counseling process, it is then necessary to listen, help the divorcee to handle emotions in a biblical way, be honest, empathize and be available throughout the process of counseling.

Inspiration

Inspiration is the whole dynamics of giving HOPE. The divorcee, like any other counselee, is often a shattered person; devastated by everything that happened to him/her. A person in this situation needs a lot of encouragement and support.

The mistake has often been made by churches and individual persons to proclaim divorce the "unforgivable sin". Hence, while already being in a state of suffering as a result of the divorce, many people would suffer even more due to demands made on them, and rebuking done in a loveless manner without giving any hope. And this is something divorcees badly need: hope!

Hope to know they have not committed the unpardonable sin.

Hope to know that God still loves them in spite of their marital failure.

Hope to know there is always a new beginning possible with God.

Hope to know that some day this trial will end.

Hope to know other people do not reject them in the way they imagine.

Hope to know that their sins will be forgiven if they repent and confess.

Hope to know "...the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down..." (Psalm 146:8).

The divorcee then will have to be counseled on the fact that God is there and in charge of his life and that through God's help and the counselor as instrument in God's hands, he can work through all his hardships and conquer them because Jesus Christ has carried all his burdens already (see Isaiah 53:3 & 4). Besides, if he/she is a Christian, the Holy Spirit is living in him/her (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Josh McDowell puts it in the following way (1984, 165): "So what does an intelligent faith in God's control do when faced with circumstances or ill-meaning people who challenge that control? Intelligent faith examines the evidence, looks over God's track record, we might say, and decides that God has not lost control. God knows what's happening, and He is in control working His will. You may not know what God knows, but you do know that He knows."

In the inspiration part of counseling one will also have to show how God has helped other divorcees. This is the principle found in Hebrews 12:1 - 4 where a score of believers are looking on while you are running the race. Many of them have been running the same race and through

God's help finished successfully. Now they are there encouraging the believers to continue and persist to the very end because it is with God's help one can advance against a troop and with God's help one can scale a wall (see Psalm 18: 29).

The divorcee will have to be shown how other people in the Bible overcame the problems of bitterness and forgave. Here the history of David can be used as an example. (We find it in 1 Samuel 16 through 30.) Read especially 1 Samuel 26 to see how David treated the person who was pursuing him in order to kill him.

Gene A. Getz made certain observations on David which could be valuable in giving hope for the twentieth century believer (1979, 149,157). They are:
"David's failures were always related to the fact that he failed to consult God regarding His will; conversely, his restoration was always correlated with renewed communication with God." And: 'Each time David acknowledged his sin and truly repented, God forgave and restored him to fellowship with Himself."

Homework

To support the hope-giving part of counseling (inspiration), the counselor should also make use of homework so that the divorcee can (except for the formal counseling) also see and experience for himself/herself that the Bible is in and of itself a hope-giving book because it contains the promises of God.

This is described in Psalm 33:4:

"For the word of the Lord is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does."

Or, as it was adapted by Marie Post:

"His eye is on all those who fear;
To those who hope, the Lord is near
According to his word." (1976, 63)

Homework will have to consist of:

Prayer.

In accordance with 1 Timothy 2:1, write out what must be prayed for as far as requests, intercession and thanksgiving go. (What specific problem does the divorcee have to take to the Lord?)

Keep a journal of how and when the Lord has been answering prayers, perhaps even in a different way from what one expected!

Every item for prayer must be written down and brought along to the counseling session.

Contact other believers who are divorced.

Let the recently divorced person make contact with some other Christians and check how they overcame the difficulties of divorce; especially how they forgave their previous husband/wife.

This assignment may also include joining a singles group or single parents group of the church. Meeting these people will help to make the divorcee see that other people have been going through the same ordeal but with God's help, they have finished the course and kept the faith (see 1 Timothy 4:7). Also read 2 Corinthians 1:3 & 4 where this principle is applied. Now check how many times the word "comfort" is being used in this chapter (from verse 3 through 7). Give all the shades of meaning of comfort in this chapter.

.....
.....

Check all the "one another" texts in a concordance and write down the applicable ones where believers are also compelled to take heed of what other believers say and do to them.

(For instance: 1st Thessalonians 5:14.)

.....
.....
.....

Read the chapter "Ready to restore" in the book by Jay E. Adams, called: Ready to Restore (1981, 14).

Have the divorcee make a summary of this chapter to be handed in. A discussion on it can follow in the following session.

Write down how you understand justification by faith.

A study of Romans will be very good or else carefully read Romans 5 through 8. Special verses can be selected like Roman 5:5 - 8; 6:23; 7:6; 8:1. Often it is very difficult to grasp that God is "for us" (Romans 8:31) because it does not appear that way. Still, it is the responsibility of the counselor to stress this point since it is crucial in giving hope. Justification by faith is one of the most important themes in counseling. Also read Colossians 3:1 - 3 and paraphrase what is said there about our relationship with Christ.

.....

 Another important text to take cognizance of is 1 Peter 1: 13 & 14. Write down what it says there about the effect of our relationship with Christ.....

Read Psalm 46 and focus on
verse 7.

How does one see verse 7 in the context of the whole
Psalm?
.....
Does Psalm 46 still apply to our lives?
.....
How does it apply to the divorcee's life? (In what has the
divorcee experienced God's presence?).....
.....

C. H. Spurgeon explains God's presence in a
threefold way: He says God is there in his glorious
presence meaning his presence is testified by eminent glory.
Secondly, God is there in his gracious presence. By the
token of his grace and favor toward people (especially in
the Old Testament temple) God is present.

Thirdly, God is there in his providential presence. This is
where God assists or defends his people (date unknown, 346).

This theme (of God's presence amongst his covenant
people) is found all over the Old Testament.

Read Psalm 90 & 91 to see the reality of God's presence
among his people. In Psalm 91:14 - 16 we read of God's
reassurance that He will be with the one who loves him.
Also in Haggai 2:4 the presence of God is the motivation
for the people to work and the sign of his blessing.

In the New Testament the fact of God's presence becomes very real in the coming of Jesus Christ... Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23, see also Isaiah 7:14)! In Matthew 28:20 Jesus repeats the promise often made by God in the Old Testament.

In what situation was it said?.....

Note in that verse the force of the present continuous tense. Note also the idea of "for ever and ever"; the words in the English translation: surely...always...end of age.... Hence: the presence of the Triune God is something ETERNAL.

In the same vein we find the words spoken in Acts 18:10; note the comfort and reassurance of the Lord's words to the apostle Paul. This is supported by the fact that there are people to help Paul.

Here we find another dimension of God's presence: the provision of fellow man to help the one in need. This is a great encouragement since it is very human to feel lonely when in distress. One not only feels rejected by God but also by man.

As a good point in case look at Elijah when he fled from Jezebel (we read this in 1 Kings 19) and was convinced he was the only one to remain of God's followers (verse 10). Then the Lord assured him of at least seven thousand who were still faithful to the Lord.

Through ages this has been an important way the Lord has been giving hope to his children: by providing men and women to support his beloved in difficult times. There is another very important point to this:

As New Testament believers we know that Jesus Christ was rejected by God in order that we would never be rejected by God. As it is written in the form for the Lord's Supper (in the Psalter Hymnal) about Jesus Christ: that He has "...taken the curse from us upon Himself that He might fill us with His blessings; and has humbled Himself unto the deepest reproach and anguish of hell, in body and soul, on the tree of the cross, when He cried out with a loud voice: MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME? that we might be accepted of God, and nevermore be forsaken of Him...(1976, 145)."

Information

Since divorce is a very complicated matter, a great amount of information will have to be ascertained to be able to judge and counsel properly. Divorce is complicated because it involves so many people: both the divorcees, children, in-laws, family, new husbands/wives (after remarriage) and it involves so many facets of life: job, money, housing. Besides: there are great psychological fluctuations going on in a divorcee's mind with emotions like resentment, guilt, feelings that everything is one's own fault and then again feelings that everything is the other one's fault; often an aggressiveness and often self-pity.

All these things will have to be checked in the information part of the outline.

Questionnaires

The following questionnaires can be used to gather information on the divorcee (see chapter 5):

- * The information questionnaire.
- * The problem identifying questionnaire.
- * The forgiveness questionnaire.

(To be used specifically to check in the area of forgiveness.)

The Personal Data Inventory

This inventory can be acquired from the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) at Laverock, Philadelphia. It is very useful for a broad spectrum of information needed in the counseling process.

A general guideline on gathering information

To get a clear picture of what is the present state of the divorcee coming for counseling, the counselor will have to gather information from the PAST, the PRESENT, and how the person sees the FUTURE. (That is in addition to the abovementioned ways of procuring information from the person.)

The Bible is especially applicable in this regard when it says in Proverbs 18:13:

"He who answers before listening
that is his folly and his shame."

Past.

Ask penetrating questions on the divorcee's marriage.

- * How long they dated before marriage?
- * Why they married then?
- * What attracted them to each other?
- * Was it a "shot-gun" marriage?

- * What markers were there in their marriage?
(Important happenings.)
- * Was the ex-husband on national service when they married?
- * What was the influence of their jobs on both parties?
- * Was the man's headship respected?
- * What religious differences were there?
- * Was anything brought into the marriage that caused tension?
(Previous jail term, illegitimate child or children, rape or some sexual problem, alcohol or drug addiction, previous divorce, unfinished business with former boy/girl friend.)
- * How they dealt with dissensions/crises in their marriage?
- * Were they emotionally one?
- * How did they express their feelings?
- * What was the relationship after the birth of the children?
- * Was there any adulterous relationship during the marriage?
- * What other outside factors influenced their marriage?

The main purpose of this elaborate questioning is to get a complete picture of the divorcee's marriage as far as possible. For the counseling on forgiveness it is essential

to have a clear picture of all matters which can affect the person and hinder his/her progress towards forgiveness. Often a small, apparently trivial matter in the marriage before divorce can become a huge stumbling block and can prevent someone from forgiving completely. Therefore, all the areas mentioned above will have to be investigated.

Note: The counselor should write down all the answers and circle those areas where he suspects the problems may be. It may be necessary to come back to one specific point later in the counseling.

Ask questions about the divorce itself.

- * What is YOUR reason for the divorce?
- * Where did the break start?
- * What did you do to save the marriage?
- * What were your feelings at that stage?
- * Did you have a lot of resentment while the divorce proceedings were going on?
- * How did you interact with your spouse at that time?
- * Did you feel guilt while divorcing?
- * Did you perceive your divorce as a sin?
- * Did you ever think about the issue of forgiveness towards your spouse in this time?
(If not, why not?)
- * What actions/words/thoughts from your spouse hurt you the most at this time?

- * What did you pray about in this phase?
- * What passages in the Bible did you read at this time and what did it mean to you?

Note: 1. The questions which started with "did" must not be answered "yes" or "no" only, but explained by the divorcee.

2. Be very attentive to the halo data when these questions are answered. Look at the person's body language: eyes (sad, glowing, wanting to cry?), forehead (frowning?), tensions around the lips?, neck (twitches?), hands (shaking, nervous?), bodily posture (erect, bowed?) ...anything which is projected by the body. Listen to the voice; what message is being conveyed: intolerance, resentment, sadness? Is the person prone to crying? Everything that could be indicating how the divorcee is still feeling about the divorce and the divorced partner should be carefully observed.

3. Take time to clear all confusing answers. Do not say: I understand, before checking thoroughly what is meant by a statement.

Present.

Continuing with the data gathering, it is essential that the counselor now focus on the divorcee's present situation. The information gathered about the past must be compared to the situation as it presents itself in the life of the divorcee at the point of counseling. This is

important because it might be that the divorcee has worked through the problems of the past but that the problems confronting him/her now enhances the crisis and hampers a biblical solution to whatever the problem is. It may especially be detrimental to the process of forgiveness.

Furthermore, the divorcee could have forgiven the previous spouse but something completely new could have occurred which might pose a problem in the present situation. These matters will have to be investigated and dealt with properly in order to apply the principles set forward for counseling divorcees on forgiveness. Therefore, it is crucial not only to acquire all the information about the past but also those much needed data for the present situation.

Here everything that leads to the full comprehension of what the present position of the divorcee is, should be pursued. The following information then will have to be obtained:

- * What feelings does the divorcee still have about the divorced partner?
- * What does the divorcee think of most concerning their resolved relationship? (I.e. what is foremost in his/her mind about the marriage?)
- * What form of contact still exists between the divorced partners?

- * Check on the terms of agreement concerning the divorce and make sure it is adhered to.
- * Check if forgiveness has been asked for and granted. (Cf. the phases in chapter 3 and ask what phase the person is in.)
- * How is the divorcee accepted socially? (Is the divorce perceived as a "curse" in society?)
- * Is reconciliation a possibility between the two divorced people?
- * What is the divorcee's self-image at this point?
- * Does the divorcee have a problem with loneliness at this stage?

Future.

The wise counselor should not only gather information concerning the past and present situation of the divorcee but also as to how the person sees the future. This will, of course, not be very different from what the person is feeling and viewing in the present situation, but can be an indication of what to work on in the future. Remember, life is dynamic and the situation of the divorcee can change from day to day.

Therefore, gather information on the following as well:

- * How does the divorcee see the future?
- * Is there hope for him/her?

- * Is he/she thinking of reconciliation?
- * Is the divorcee perhaps considering remarriage in the future?
(Do a thorough investigation on this if possible.)
- * Check on matters like distrust or anything which can be an obstacle to a restored/new relationship.

In collecting this data, it is imperative to give HOPE all the time, since the divorcee will need a lot of encouragement.

Note: In the phase of gathering information it is extremely important to take notes, jot down important statements, draw pictures...in a few words; do not try to remember everything, but WRITE DOWN all the facts. This method does not only give a good reference to all the applicable information, but helps the counselor to order his own mind and helps him to get the necessary insight into the problem of the divorcee (Fn.12).

Intention

Intention is not a separate part of the counseling but is interwoven into the whole process. The main idea is to work on the commitment of the counselee (in this case the divorcee), to get certain undertakings from the divorcee like: I will do the homework, I will stick to agreements made via the counselor with my previous spouse, I will do

all the assignments given to me, I want to work on this matter of forgiveness and through God's help forgive my former husband or wife.

The intention as being used in this project means the pledge the divorcee gives to undertake and work on while the counseling is going on. Whereas up to now the counselor has been the major initiating party, it will now rest with the divorcee to initiate the intention and to make a commitment to do certain things on his own and independently pursue what he intends doing.

However, the intention goes even further and also includes sticking to agreements made in counseling for when the counseling is terminated. (This can include for example continuing to refuse to gossip about the previous spouse in front of the children...in fact not saying anything harming about the former partner whatsoever!) This could have been a problem earlier and perhaps have been dealt with in counseling while the counselor obtained a commitment of the divorcee not to mention it again. Intention then, is a part of the counseling process which is supposed to be a continuing element in the lives of the divorcees.

A good example of commitment is given to us in Luke 14:25 - 30 where Jesus explains the cost of being a disciple: if one chooses to follow Christ, he must be prepared to submit all he has in the service of Christ and there is NO TURNING BACK.

Even if this is being said in connection with the discipleship of Christ, it is also applicable to the commitment asked for in counseling. The whole matter boils down to this: is the divorcee prepared to make his own ways subservient to that of God? Apparently his own ways did not work (otherwise his marriage would have remained intact!) and now it is the counselor's task to show him God's way. (Fn.13.) In Deuteronomy 8:16 - 18 this principle is illustrated very well. The people of Israel thought it was their own power which had given them the wealth, but God says: no, the real reason why you have it is because I have given it to you. Paraphrased this means: their own plans and methods did not bring them what they expected it to, only God's ways and methods really worked.

This should be explained to the divorcee as well. It must be shown that human plans failed, that God's way is the best way to follow and that God's plans are the only plans which can really succeed and in the long run be to the advantage of the divorcee. (Cf. Roman 8:28 where the apostle Paul says: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.")

James 4:7 - 10 prescribes what one should do in coming to the Lord and although it is an exhortation one also finds here a definite choice, an intention, a commitment to be made. Read especially verse 8 where a deliberate command is given - as well as verse 10.

Intention as part of the counseling will rely heavily on the personal responsibility of the divorcee. If the divorcee is not prepared to take responsibility for the commitments he/she makes, it will hamper the counseling process and be harmful to a God honoring solution of the problems facing the divorcee. Biblical counseling cannot be done in a haphazard way and the divorcee (or any counselee for that matter!) cannot accept only those things which he likes and ignores the counseling he does not like.

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the problem of a
weak self-image with divorced
people:

- * No negative self-talk.
- * Reading of ALL prescribed texts in the Bible.
- * Prayer for every issue connected with the discussed problem.
- * To keep a complete journal of what other people said.
- * Not to discuss this problem with anyone without the counselor's approval.

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the problem of
alimony with divorced people:

- * Not to discuss the matter with everyone.
First consult the counselor.
- * Not to take legal action impulsively before consulting the counselor.
- * Not to threaten the former spouse if alimony is deferred.
- * Keep a clear, understandable budget.
- * Live according to sober, biblical principles.

(The counselor will have to explain them.)

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the problem of
children with divorced people:

- * Not to use the children as a rubberball in bickering between divorced partners.
- * No gossip/harmful talk in front of the kids about divorced partner.
- * No unreasonable demands to see or visit children.
- * No unreasonable refusing of children to visit other parent.

- * Children not to be given negative messages for other parent.

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the problem of the
ex-spouse who remarried:

- * Not to try and break up the new marriage.
- * Not to contact the new spouse in order to gossip about the former partner.
- * Pursue forgiveness if not done already.
(This is central to the whole project but must be looked into in this area as well.)
- * Not to gossip about the new spouse.
- * Not to gossip about the minister/church where they were married.

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the deteriorated
relationship between the
divorcee and the church:

- * Subject oneself to the authority of the church even if one feels unjustly treated.
- * Do not join another church until every matter has been discussed thoroughly.

- * To stick to the biblical approach of solving the interpersonal problems.
(The counselor will have to explain for instance Matthew 5:23 & 24 and Matthew 18:15 ff., et al.)
- * To keep a good record of all that has been said (preferably in writing).
- * Confess your own sins first before accusing the church. (The counselor will have to explain that the church consists of people who are human and accordingly there will be people who sin - as the divorcee sins also!)

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the problem of
guilt with divorced people:

- * Intention to do what the Scriptures say about getting rid of guilt even if it does not fit into the divorcee's framework.
- * Not do anything to enhance the guilt.
- * Not try and conceal the guilt.
- * Drugs/alcohol will not be taken to get rid of the feeling of guilt.
- * Guilt will not be discussed with any person who has an unbiblical approach to guilt.

The counselor should be the person to speak to concerning this matter.

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the problem of
bitterness in the life of a
divorced person:

- * A commitment to follow the Bible's instruction on this matter closely.
- * Not to act impulsively when bitterness flares up.
- * To pursue forgiveness which is a prerequisite to end bitterness.
- * To avoid bitter words like: "that horrible person, he is awful, I resent her...."
- * To check voice and the way words are articulated. Listen to bitterness in pronouncing words and change it.

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the issue of
rejection with divorced
people:

- * Pray for the person/persons whom one perceives as rejecting one.
- * Not to resort to self-pity.
- * Not to withdraw from all people.

- * Not to kindle wrath against anybody who rejected one.
- * To prepare a list of everyone who did not reject the divorcee. To realize everyone is not the same.

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the problem of
infidelity when counseling
divorced people:

- * Not to mention the matter in every conversation with the other person.
- * Protect the honour of the one who practiced infidelity.
- * Not to tell everyone about it.
- * To work towards forgiveness.
- * Not to take revenge on the outside party/parties with whom infidelity was committed.

Commitments to be asked for in
addressing the problem of
dishonesty in dealing with
divorced people:

- * Not to cover the dishonesty in falsity (see Proverbs 27:5 & 28:23).
- * Not to view dishonesty as the major sin.

- * Not to dig up from the past everything that points to dishonesty.
- * Not to label the other person with all kinds of psychological terms.
- * Not to distrust all people due to a bad experience in marriage.

Note: The following could be the intention asked for in ALL the cases:

- * Not to gossip about the previous spouse.
- * To consult the counselor before acting impulsively.
- * To follow the biblical instruction.
- * To pray about every matter.
- * To commit oneself to forgiveness.

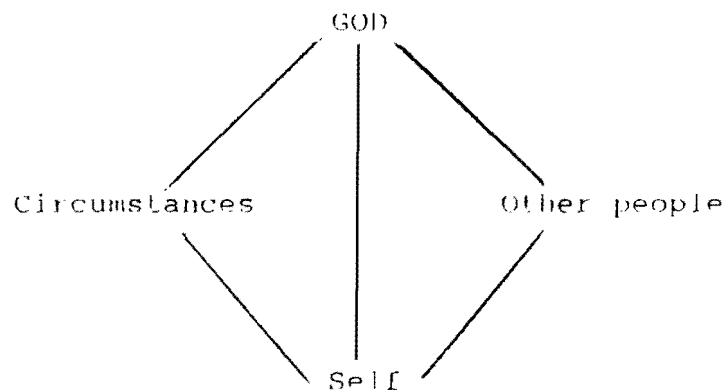
Interpretation

After all the data have been gathered (check Information) and all the commitments have been made (check Intention), then the counselor can proceed to start with the interpretation. Interpretation will mean looking carefully at all the facts, comparing them, considering matters like the emotional state of the counselee, the halo data observed, preliminary conclusions made. In the interpretation phase the counselor will refer back to his notes taken down while the counseling was in progress, perhaps check on the diagrams or pictures drawn while taking down notes.

Jay Adams suggests that one uses the "three-R formula": review everything, reverse everything, revise everything in order to get a complete picture afresh of everything that has been gathered in the counseling (1982 [1], 79). All in all: everything which could help the counselor to construct a complete picture of what is the REAL problem of the counselee and how to address it biblically.

In compiling the full picture, the counselor should bear in mind the four big realities in which the counselee finds himself/herself. Along with the counselee the counselor will try to pinpoint in which of these realities the real problem lies.

The realities are:

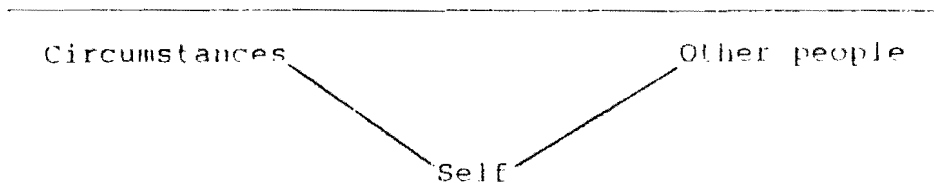


Hence, the four realities which must ALWAYS be borne in mind are God, the circumstances, other people (or another person) and yourself. None of these realities can be wished away since they do exist and will always exist. Note that overarching all the other realities, is God. This means

that God is in charge of everything and that the other realities are subservient to God. (Does not David say in Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it...."?)

The other important thing to note is that in spite of closer and sometimes demanding realities like the circumstances and other people, there is always a straight line between the believer and God. To put it in a different way: no other reality can block the relationship with the living God.

Many problems occur, however, because people often only see the other realities:



By doing this they exclude God from their lives and from the solving of their problems in a God-willed way. What they see and react to are only the human things and there is nothing bigger than those things they see i.e. what is happening to them or what other people are doing to them. Even worse: what they do themselves! (Everything can be focused on themselves also.) For these people there is no hope because there is no God in their lives. Everything

starts and ends with themselves and the things of this world.

The counselor will then in the interpretation be very sensitive in trying to find out if the counselee does perhaps not have a wrong perception of the importance of the other realities over and above the main reality of God's existence. Perhaps his/her views are so clouded by all the other realities that he/she does not see God who is the most important.

In the Bible we find two very good examples of the abovementioned wrong view (which is often very human but not godly since it has no consideration for what faith really is: "...to be certain of what we do not see." [Hebrews 11:1]):

* In Joshua 9:3 - 19 we read about the Gideonites and how they deceived the people of Israel. Note where this went wrong: (verse 14) when they sampled the food...they only looked at the reality as THEY observed it, but the REAL reality (God Himself) they did not see! So they committed themselves to a life long pledge not to do the Gideonites any harm.

* 2 Kings 6:15 - 17 has a similar message. The servant of Elisha was panic-stricken because of the multitude of Arameans...they were real, but he never saw God's reality behind it until Elisha prayed and his eyes were opened and he saw the hills full of horses and chariots

of fire. God's reality, although not seen, was greater than any human reality!

In the interpretation phase the counselor will have to answer to himself the following important questions about the counselee because it is crucial to know what was the direction the counselee has been taking in dealing with the problems. (Although the word "counselee" is used in this part, it encompasses the divorcee as well.)

The questions are:

- # What did the counselee do with God's providence? (Was it acknowledged in his/her life or not?)
- # Did the counselee trust in the Lord or in himself?
- # What unbiblical shortcuts have been taken in resolving the problems?
- # How did the counselee react to what happened in the past? It is: react towards other people and the circumstances?
- # How is the counselee reacting at present? Is there perhaps an ungodly action/thought still going on as a result of the problem?
- # Does the counselee have the inclination to continue in the future in an ungodly manner?

For good examples of people making wrong decisions and reacting in a way that enhanced their problems rather

than solving them, one should read the history of Lot (Genesis 13, 14 & 19) and David (1 Samuel 27:1 - 28:2, 29:1 - 4 and 30:1 - 20).

Read all the verses mentioned above. Then check Gene A. Getz's book "Abraham: Trials and Triumphs", chapter 5 (1976, 53). The wrong reaction to problems and hardships (persecution in this case) is explained well by Getz in "David: God's man in faith and failure", chapter 11 (1979, 116).

Interpretation will also consist of pointing out where the counselee made wrong decisions or took the easiest route out. A very good example of this we find in the history of Abraham (Genesis 12:10 ff). Instead of relying on the Lord, he made his own decisions and went wherever he thought was the right place. Besides, he lied about his wife Sarai. The one mistake forced Abraham to lie and make another mistake. He even repeated this lie. We read in Genesis 20 that he told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister. Again he took the easiest way out to save himself and nearly brought a terrible calamity upon Abimelech and his people (Genesis 20:7)!

Jay E. Adams refers to Cain (see chapter 2 of this project) in regard to this reaction toward problems: "The story of Cain in Genesis 4:3 - 12 involves a warning that God gave of the possibility of great complicating problems that would follow any failure to handle another problem immediately (1982 [2], 80)." However, the counselor should

not only in a negative way interpret what has happened to the counselee, but should also look for instances where biblical instructions were indeed followed and where decisions were made according to God's will. Even if it seems that these reactions did not have the desired effect (like a husband trying to be reconciled with his estranged wife while she remains cold, or a parent forgiving his child while the child continues to cause suffering to the parent) the counselee must be urged to continue and be encouraged in this biblical pursuit.

Therefore, the counselor must work both ways in the interpretation of the problems of the counselee:

a) Rebuke and counsel to leave aside the wrong actions and reactions which are not in accordance with the Bible. The counselee must be shown how these actions did not bring any salvation, but only enlarged the problem.

b) Admonish and encourage where Biblical guidelines were followed. As far as the interpretation goes for divorced people, the counselor will focus on the following (note that this is not necessarily the only problem but should be looked into anyway since it occurs often):

Self-image

The unbiblical approach here would be to have a man-centered view on what really grants someone his self-image. Hence, many people will feel good and secure if other people are nice to them and accept them. This is a false control

point and should be unmasked and proved false. The divorcee which derives his/her standing in life from whatever the divorced spouse thinks and does, is on a totally unbiblical road.

Alimony

Often divorced people (especially women) suffer a great deal due to the ex-spouse not paying alimony or paying too little. This often leads to bitterness and a feeling of helplessness which can drive the divorcee to gossiping and self-pity. Here the counselor should listen very carefully and decide which are not God-honoring attitudes and point them out to the divorcee. The corrective would be to trust completely in the Lord for the everyday caring and to take this matter (like everything else) to the Lord also. (See Acts 4:29 & 30.)

Children

In interpreting the problems of divorcees, the following will surface which need to be addressed:

* Seeing the child born out of the marriage as "my child" and not the child of the other divorced partner as well. (This is often reflected in the way people speak.) This attitude will lead to a sinful selfishness as far as the child is concerned and could result in bitter and hard battles in order to "win" the child to the one or the other side. In the long run this struggle can be very detrimental to the child himself.

* Ensuing from the above, is the tendency to use the child as a "rod" to punish the previous partner. Since there is no contact anymore and the divorced spouse wants to get even with the other one, the only "instrument" is the child which still has contact with both parents. Often this is done because one of the partners still loves the other one.

Ex-spouse remarried

Here the counselor will often find that the ex-spouse did not seek reconciliation and at this point it is too late since the previous partner has married again. Feelings of guilt and remorse might appear and this may lead to bitterness in the remaining partner who is still single.

Self-pity can also occur. All these results are contra-productive and sinful. The counselor will have to be very attentive to understand this dynamics and handle it.

On the positive side it could be shown that if there was real forgiveness, God can acknowledge this new marriage and even bless it. The counselor will have to feel his way carefully to deal with this part of the interpretation.

Church

In dealing with problems connected to the church (like the person in the case study) it is often necessary to explain to the counselee that the church is no human organization only but in the first place God's called people. Many divorcees may have serious difficulties with the church during or after their divorce. Through a series of questions the counselor will have to ascertain if this is not an issue with the counselee, hence: see if there is perhaps a wrong view concerning the church as only a human institution where one can join and withdraw at random and where discipline can be escaped by leaving the church. This is not the appropriate place to discuss the problem in depth but the counselor will have to be alert to this problem in interpreting the whole matter of divorced people.

Another focal point as far as the church goes, is that the divorcee does not always see himself/herself as being the church (see 1 Corinthians 12:12 - 27 and 1 Peter 2:9) but often as an outsider especially after the trauma of

a divorce where one feels excluded from many things, sometimes even from the fellowship of believers. Thus it is imperative that this misconception be traced and stamped out. The believer, whether divorced or not, is still a member of the body of Christ, should not be rejected and should not withdraw due to the divorce.

Guilt

A very important clue for a counselor will be to check on the counselee's handling of his/her guilt. It often occurs that someone is trying to compensate for what he/she has done by self carrying the guilt. The person is expecting punishment but when it does not come, the punishment becomes self-inflicted and is done by feeling constant guilt. It is a way of "paying for the sins". This often goes hand in hand with self-pity and feelings of inferiority.

Closely related to the aforementioned, is the case where someone wants to "buy" grace with his/her guilt. It is a form of works righteousness but here the "instrument" to buy it is guilt.

A person will argue in this way: "I have sinned but now I am going to do something which will make me acceptable to God again. This will be to have this permanent guilt. Surely God will see it and repay me for it". This of course is unbiblical and the fallacy of it will have to be explained to the counselee. Redemption comes by the blood

of Jesus Christ alone and not through something man does. In the long run such a person will have no comfort but only work harder and harder at being guilty and this will enhance his/her misery.

Another theme which often occurs among divorcees is that someone is so struck down with his/her own guilt and sins of their broken marriages that they hardly acknowledge any sin in the other partner. They usually take ALL the responsibility for the marriage break-up and would not want to hear that their ex-partner also sinned and that the other one's sin(s) could have contributed to the divorce.

They are only concerned about the plank in their own eye (cf. Matthew 7:4) and about removing it, but they do not read further to see that when you have done that, you can proceed to remove the speck from the other one's eye as well (verse 5). The counselor then should be sensitive to it that the divorcee does not take more blame on him/her than is necessary. Guilt about one's own sins is appropriate and should be dealt with biblically but God is not going to hold one responsible for other people's sins.

Bitterness

In interpreting everything one gathered about a counselee, it is also necessary to pick up any form of bitterness. This can result in:

- * Trying to punish the other person but eventually punishing oneself.

- * No forgiveness towards the one who sinned against one.
- * An increase in bitterness which effects everything and everyone around one.

Rejection

Rejection is closely connected to self-image, therefore the counselor should be aware of the same dynamics as far as rejection is concerned.

Also look for the following wrong ideas: God has rejected me and so has everyone else. In getting to the root of this often perceived rejection, ask: "Tell me where God has rejected you. " Then ask: "Who else has rejected you?" (Bear in mind when dealing with rejection what is being said in Psalm 27:10.)

Guard against self-pity which is often a by-product of rejection. Expose where rejection are only perceived or made up in the mind of the person. In giving hope as far as rejection goes, always refer back to Romans 8:31 - 39. It can always be used for correction and rebuke as well.

Infidelity

Whenever divorce was caused by infidelity of the other partner, look for a negative view on sex in general which may result from it. Also be aware of guilt about neglecting the other spouse which eventually led to infidelity.

Counsel the divorcee that it is sin to resort to adultery yourself and no solution to what the other spouse has done. Check what is the attitude towards the person with whom the infidelity was committed.

After collecting all the data about the infidelity, probe into the feelings of the divorcee about the infidelity because that will give the final clue as to the instruction.

Dishonesty

If dishonesty was a serious stumbling block as was pointed out by the case studies, interpret the following as well:

- * Was this dishonesty a lifestyle?
- * Did the actions of the other spouse create or enhance the dishonesty?
- * Will the previous spouse's dishonesty influence the divorcee as far as a new relationship is concerned?
- * Does the divorcee feel an accomplice to the previous spouse's dishonesty?

Conclusion

Once all the data have been gathered and interpreted, one can proceed to move to the very important phase of instruction. Interpretation is always a very difficult matter and must be done with prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It must also be done with deep consideration as to all the facts and information available. The book by Jay E. Adams: *Insight and Creativity in Christian Counseling* is very helpful in the area of interpretation.

Instruction

The counselor cannot fit the instruction phase of the counseling in a watertight compartment and will have to instruct along the whole path of the counseling process: interaction, inspiration, information, intention, and interpretation. However, in the instruction part the focus will be much more on specific instruction as to how to deal with the problems which came forward in the cases examined.

It must be borne in mind that the major thrust of this project is to bring to bear the issue of forgiveness in the case of divorced people. Everything that will be discussed about the instruction in this part should be related to the matter of forgiveness. It will necessarily touch upon other counseling issues which are important since no counseling can be forced into a straight jacket of one issue only.

General guidelines

The very first principle in instruction will be to stress the importance of the presence of the Triune God in the problem.

Read again Psalm 46:7 and write down what it means that God is present

Also read Matthew 28:20 and indicate what this means to the world and to the person himself/herself

Jay Adams puts this forward clearly when he says: "Above all else, the counselor must help the counselee to put Christ in His rightful place in the center of the problem (1981, 28)."

The second overall principle in instruction will be to turn everything over to the Lord.

Read 1 Peter 2:21 - 23 in this regard. What did Jesus do when He suffered?

Also read 1 Peter 4:19. What general exhortation is given here?

Now read 1 Peter 5:7. What anxiety will have to be cast on God and what is the reason for that?

(For a good, short explanation on all the verses in 1 Peter, check the commentary by Jay Adams on First Peter: "Trust and Obey". See there the important connection in 1 Peter 5:7 between being proud and casting everything on the Lord (1980 [1], 150).

Thirdly, God's will and the comfort it brings to the believer will have to be explained thoroughly.

See Romans 8:28. Who is the acting party in this verse?
Why is this comfort unchangeable?

The fourth principal concerns the responsibility of man himself.

In the instruction to divorcees it is very important to point out to the divorcee/counselee that he/she remains

responsible for his/her own actions, thoughts and words, notwithstanding what any other person does. Refer to

- 1. Matthew 5:23 - 24.
- 2. Matthew 18:15.
- 3. Luke 13:22 - 24.
- 4. John 21:19.

Write down in each case how man remains responsible:

- 1.
.....
- 2.
.....
- 3.
.....
- 4.
.....

Note how Jesus in every case answered the person behind the question. He knew people only wanted to have objective answers, interesting statistics (like the person in Luke 13:23) but Jesus always answered more...He gave them a command, he involved them, pointing out THEIR responsibility.

The next principle is always to make a biblical analysis of the problem.

In instructing the counselee the counselor will always have to show how the counselee must analyze his/her

problem in a biblical way, hence not looking on the human side only but asking: what is God saying to me in this matter, what has the Bible to tell me, what biblical principles are applicable in my situation? Wayne Mack gives very good guidelines in this regard(1979, 86,168).

The sixth principle is to always ask about and check for forgiveness.

Not only is it the main theme of this project but also an integral part of any counseling as was pointed out before. It is in fact the nerve center of the Christian life: forgiveness from God for all our sins and the granting of forgiveness to others. This is the only way for complete reconciliation!

After the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9 - 13) the only supplication being worked out broader is the one about forgiveness (verse 14 following the prayer). This principle has been explained thoroughly in Chapter 3 but it will be good as a follow-up to check Proverbs 19:11, Mark 11:25 and 1 Peter 4:8.

Now write down how each verse deals with the matter of forgiveness

The six abovementioned principles should be held onto when giving any instruction to the divorcee about forgiveness or any other matter as arising from the divorce. It may not be that comprehensive but is some handle to take hold of the very difficult issue of counseling divorcees.

Next, the different problems which surfaced from the cases will be addressed as far as forgiveness goes and the proposed instruction for it will be given. It is in the first place for the counselor but written in a way which addresses the counselee himself/herself.

Self-image

a. Read "Gaining an accurate self-image" by Dr. John Bettler in the Journal of Pastoral Practice (Vol. vi, no.4, 1983, p.46) and following series. Point out where he is touching upon your own problem.

b. Write down where your self-image is still connected to what your previous spouse thinks about you.

c. Explain (by writing it down) if your perception about yourself has changed after you have asked forgiveness of God.

d. Also explain if your forgiving of your previous spouse has had some influence on your self-image.

e. Do the homework in Wayne Mack's Manual (Vol. 1) about Inferiority Judgments (1979, 93).

Alimony

- a. Do the homework in Wayne Mack's Manual about Finances.
- b. Read Haggai 2:8 and write down the consequences this text has for the Christian.
- c. Draw up a complete budget and bring it along to the counseling session.
- d. Read also Matthew 10:30 and Psalm 23. Now jot down what struck you about these Scripture portions.
- e. Reread all the verses given in Chapter 3 whenever the alimony is not paid. (Remember: there will have to be constant forgiving when the alimony is not being paid!)

Children

- a. Take a concordance and read all the texts about children. What does the Bible say about children and how should parents bring them up?
- b. Write down what plan you will pursue to forgive the ex-spouse when he/she hurts you through the children. (Due to children, there will always be some kind of contact between divorcees; therefore this plan is imperative.) Let the counselor help in compiling such a plan.

c. Set out on paper how the command to forgive has been worked out in you and your ex-spouse's case and how this can be explained in an easy way to the children. (Not only will this way force you to forgive, but also set the example to the children...an example they will have to follow also in their lives whenever there is need for forgiveness.)

Ex-spouse remarried

a. Remarriage places an extra burden on the divorcee to forgive. Not only has the previous spouse to be forgiven, but now also the new partner. Check out if there is any resentment towards him/her. If there is, the same counseling applies as with the previous spouse.

b. Instruction should be given not to interfere or gossip about this new marriage or the new partner.

Church

a. Forgiveness must be granted to the members of the church who have hurt you. (The counselor will have to monitor this carefully.)

b. Forgiveness will have to be asked also where the divorcee sinned as well (perhaps not subdued to church authority, or gossiped about the way the elders handled the divorce).

c. The counselor can mediate (if the counselor is not the minister himself) between the church and the divorcee if there are serious problems and tension exists between them.

d. The divorcee will have to be encouraged to ask fellow church members to pray for him/her.

Guilt

Very little needs to be said concerning guilt since this is one of the major reasons why there should be forgiveness.

a. However, a quick check list can be helpful to the counselor and the divorcee:

- * If there is guilt, what caused it?
- * How was the guilt dealt with up to now?
- * Is the guilt connected to not forgiving?
- * Has the guilt been causing self-pity?
- * Have other ways/means been pursued to get rid of the guilt? (Liquor, drugs etc.)

After checking the abovementioned, also see if the person:

- * has gone to God with his guilt;
- * has dealt with it in a proper way;
- * turned to his previous spouse if the guilt has a bearing on him/her, and

* approached it in a biblical way and not in a merely human way.

b. Cf. chapter 3 especially the part about being forgiven/set free: what it means. The different texts there can be given as homework and study material.

c. The most important element in counseling the person with guilt, is to explain clearly the reconciliation through Jesus Christ with God. This will have to be the most important emphasis when dealing with guilt.

Bitterness

Here again the vital element of forgiveness is needed. Whatever has caused the bitterness will disappear once there is complete forgiveness. In the information phase the counselor should listen carefully as to what exactly caused the bitterness. These areas must be sensitively uncovered and with much love and empathy be refuted.

In the instruction, the counselor will give specific homework like: to avoid "bitterness" words, to point out whenever the divorcee shows physical signs of bitterness or hatred, or give the slightest indication through his/her voice that there is still bitterness present. (Refer to the commitments being made earlier.)

a. Indicate that bitterness is sin.

b. Point out the harmful effects of bitterness (to everyone around you, health, unhappiness).

c. Show by way of contrast how liberating it can be when bitterness is sworn off and replaced by total forgiveness.

d. Explain that bitterness hurts the person who is bitter more than the one towards whom the bitterness is directed.

Rejection

Often rejection is "more in the mind" than real. The counselor has a big task in persuading the divorcee that the rejection he/she feels is mostly in their minds and not reality.

a. In instructing the divorcee God's acceptance should be made very clear. (Cf. Psalm 27:10 and Romans 8:1.) Josh McDowell says about this acceptance (1984, 132): "To accept your acceptance in Christ, to the point that you can feel accepted even when rejected by others, comes through a maturing process over a period of time. You must inform your mind and emotions with what is true of you according to God's Word. This surely is Paul's meaning when he instructs us to 'be transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Rom. 12:2). You must look at life from God's perspective and not man's. Your response must be to accept, affirm, and act upon God's facts that are true of you. You can accept your acceptance."

b. The other important facet about this acceptance by God is that when the divorcee (or anyone) is being forgiven by God for his sins, he will also feel accepted completely and although people may still reject him/her, the acceptance by God will be the overriding principle and foundation of joy.

c. The counselor will start with:

- * the divorcee's position before God;
- * the result of God's acceptance;
- * the joy of being forgiven; and
- * acceptance because one has been forgiven.

Then one can address the following:

- * To be accepted by God is the most important thing.
- * The rejection by man can be changed also once one knows God has accepted him.
- * The rejection by man is not always what one thinks it is.

Therefore, apparent rejection is not the end of everything and can even be a start of something new with God.

Infidelity

There is a special need for forgiveness where infidelity is at stake. The sin of infidelity (being the same as adultery) comes very close to a person since he/she feels there has been sinned against his/her very body. The

counselor then will have to take extra trouble in dealing with this matter. Note the following:

a. Emotions will play a great role in this matter. Allow for it but warn the divorcee not to get carried away by it. Deflate the heightened emotions before anything about forgiveness can be explained. There is little or no room for biblical instruction when the emotions run amuck.

b. Check if the previous spouse and the person involved in the infidelity are completely forgiven. If this is not done, start with square one again. Explain again the Biblical foundation for and necessity of forgiveness. (See chapter 2.)

c. Ask the counselee again for a commitment to start working on forgiveness.

d. Pray with the person in order to show that this matter is bigger than human actions alone.

e. A letter can be a good idea to prove that the divorcee is serious in his/her intention to forgive the other one who committed infidelity. It will remove the emotion from the matter and give ample time to think it over properly before despatching it.

f. Reading the Old Testament book of Amos can show how God dealt with his people when they had shown infidelity.

Dishonesty

As with all the other problems occurring in the dissolved marriages of divorced people, dishonesty is also in the first place a sin against God. Thus, it must be pointed out that if someone has procured forgiveness from God for this sin, man should also be forgiving. This principle of course applies to every other matter discussed previously.

From the case studies examined, dishonesty was the least of the reasons why the people questioned got divorced. Anyway, this was mentioned and should be dealt with. Note the following:

a. Dishonesty by the other partner in marriage does not give the divorced person a right to be dishonest himself/herself. The divorcee then should pray that he/she is kept from that sin as well.

b. Forgiveness for dishonesty would mean never mentioning the matter to someone else again. (Cf. the forgiveness questionnaire.) The counselor will have to warn the divorcee not to tell everyone how the other one cheated him/her.

c. Forgiveness will also mean to carry the burden caused by the other one's dishonesty or even pay the debt left over from the dishonesty. (Isn't this what God did when He let Jesus die for us: paying the debt himself

and not charging it against our account?) The counselor will have to inquire as to what extent there were problems caused by the dishonesty (whether practical or spiritual matters) which the remaining divorcee has to cope with. Encouragement as far as this is concerned is needed very much.

Implementation

The final part in the counseling outline is implementation. In this specific project: how to implement forgiveness in a post-divorced situation. To put it differently: how is the divorcee to go about in doing these things which have been discussed in connection with forgiveness of the former spouse?

Understandably, forgiveness will have to touch all the areas mentioned i.e. self-image, alimony, children, ex-spouse remarried, relationship to the church, guilt, bitterness, rejection, infidelity and dishonesty. Forgiveness will have to be like an umbrella which covers all the different aspects brought forward by the research done in this project.

The main object of the project was to give guidelines to the pastor and counselor in dealing specifically with the area of forgiveness when dealing with divorcees. Implementation will show how this could be brought to bear in the lives of divorcees.

A guideline will be the following:

1. Go back to chapter 3 (The results of God's forgiveness in your relationship to your previous spouse) and check in what phase the divorcee is. Have the person realized his/her sins, sought forgiveness from God, accepted his/her own forgiveness and finally: granted forgiveness? Help the divorcee to gradually move (by prayer and support) from the one phase to the other. Do not proceed until the previous phase has been reached properly.

2. Approaching the divorced husband/wife for the sake of forgiveness is the next step. Visit the previous partner or if he/she has left town, write a letter.

The following can be an example:

Dear,

It is quite a while that I am wanting to write to you.

The reason is that I want to ask you to forgive me for everything I have done to you. I realize that you must have been suffering a lot through my actions and words. Since our divorce I have been confessing my sins to the Lord and am convinced that He has forgiven all my sins. Now I ask you to forgive me as well, since I have not only sinned against the Lord but also against you by
(confess specific sins if necessary).

I am praying for you and ask that you pray for me as well.

Cordially,

.....

Note: * If the divorcee deems it necessary, all the sins can be mentioned.

* The person asking forgiveness should also grant for giveness even if it is not asked for.

3. Together with the counselor the divorcee should plan how he/she will be approaching the matter of forgiveness. This will include a plan of action (what to do, when to do it, how to do it). Dates for the finishing of certain assignments will have to be set. (Here the counselor will have to be aware of procrastinating in this crucial matter. The divorcee will also have to bring a concept of letters to be written asking for forgiveness, if the abovementioned example is not used.

4. In doing what God expects of us namely forgiving, we can rely on God's sources (according to Goldie Bristol):

- # Abiding in Christ (John 15:1 - 7).
- # The Holy Spirit (John 16:13).
- # God's Word (Psalm 119:105). (1982, 102)

She also says in her book "When it's hard to forgive":
 "Forgiveness is not our natural reaction. It is often impossible to be forgiving without God's help. Since forgiveness is basically a spiritual problem, it needs a spiritual solution...It is only as we begin to fathom the depths of His forgiveness that we become willing to forgive others (1982, 103). "

Therefore, for all forgiveness, the foundation will always be the forgiveness of God Himself extending to us and encompassing our forgiveness.

5. If the divorcee is nervous or hesitant about meeting the previous spouse, the counselor should accompany him/her and be present. The counselor may need to be present only a few minutes to gap the initial bridge between the divorced couple. They may be afraid of each other or do not know what to say at the start of the conversation. There the counselor can be the catalyst and keep them to stick to the subject or schedule separate meetings with both. Before such a meeting takes place, there must be prayed for guidance and wisdom to say the right words.

6. A role play is also a good idea before the real meeting. Walters suggests a rehearsal which will include: fantasy, practicing with an empty chair or rehearsing it with a friend. He continues to say: "There are three benefits from this: practicing what we are going to say will make it easier to actually say it; as we practice we will learn a lot about ourselves, our behavior, and about the other person; and our attitudes begin to change (1983, 98)."

7. If the whole matter of forgiveness is too big to deal with in totality all at once, it could be broken up in smaller particles. Ask God to help the divorcee to forgive the smaller things first (for instance: the dishonesty about a few dollars) and from there move to bigger things (like rejection or adultery). Remember it is not the right words that count, but the attitude of the heart and the way it is

spoken (Cf. 1 Samuel 3:8 - 10 where Samuel did not speak the correct words as told to him, and 2 Chronicles 30:18 - 20 where the people sacrificed even while they were not purified; but their hearts were pure)!

8. In the forgiving of the former spouse, prayer is the single most important element. As David prayed to God in Psalm 18:6; everything started to happen and David was rescued (see from verse 7 - 19 how everything - the whole creation! - reacted on God's command) the believer can still be assured of God's help when he prays.

Ann, the divorcee which was case 4 (see chapter 5) experienced this in a very special way. After her initial filling out of the questionnaire she thought she had forgiven her ex-husband, but only through constant prayer of other Christians and her own struggle with the Lord, she realized that it was not yet done completely. Everyone continued to pray for her and the result (which the Lord brought about) was amazing! In fact, she insisted in filling out another questionnaire on forgiveness after about a month and a half and the difference was considerable. She acknowledged it to the author and it was apparent from the questionnaire that this woman has REALLY forgiven. It is also seen in her everyday life. It is as if she now has peace, and nothing her ex-husband says or whatever he does can rock the boat of her life anymore. She is liberated by

God's forgiveness and is spreading that liberation to her ex-husband, and everyone around her.

How great things can turn out for the one who prays!

WORKS CITED

- Adams, J.E. Competent to Counsel. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970.
- _____. The Christian Counselor's Manual. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973.
- _____. The Christian Counselor's New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977.
- _____. Matters of Concern to Christian Counselors. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977.
- _____. More than Redemption. A Theology of Christian Counseling. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979.
- _____. Trust and Obey. A Practical Commentary on First Peter. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980.(1)
- _____. Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.(2)
- _____. Ready to Restore. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed publishing Co., 1981.(1)
- _____. Update on Christian Counseling Volume Two. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981 (2)
- _____. Insight and Creativity in Christian Counseling. A Study of the Usual and the Unique. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1982.(1)
- _____. How to Handle Trouble. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1982.(2)
- Augsburger, D. Caring Enough to Forgive. Venture: Regal Books, 1981.
- Bristol, G. When it's Hard to Forgive. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1982.
- Brown, C. et al., Dictionary of the New Testament Theology. Devon: Paternoster Press, 1975.
- Bettler, J.F. "Gaining an Accurate Self-Image." Journal of Pastoral Practice. Vol. vi, no.4 (1983): 46.
- Christian Reformed Church, Psalter Hymnal. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed

Church, 1976.

Crook, R.H. An open Book to the Christian Divorcee. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974.

Crater, T. "Counsel on Being Reconciled to our Brother." Journal of Pastoral Practice. Vol. v, no.3 (1982):25.

Donnelly, D. Learning to Forgive. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979.

Ellisen, S.A. Divorce and Remarriage in the Church. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.

Emerson, J.G. The Dynamics of Forgiveness. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, MCMLXIV.

Ferguson, S.B. Taking the Christian Life Seriously. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980.

Geldenhuis, N. Commentary on the Gospel of Luke. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1951.

Getz, G.A. Abraham: Trials and Triumphs. Glendale: Regal Books, 1976.

_____. David: God's Man in Faith and Failure. Ventura: Regal Books, 1979.

Groenewald, E.P. Die Eerste Brief aan die Korinthiers. Kaapstad: N.G.Kerk-Uitgewers, 1971.

Grosheide, F.W. The First Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1953.

Guthrie, D. The New Bible Commentary Revised. London: Intervarsity Press, 1970.

Jones, B. "Is There Life After Divorce?" New Vision. May-June 1985.

Harris, R.L. et al., Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Vol. 2. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

Lloyd-Jones, D.M. Studies in the Sermon on the Mount. Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1959.

_____. Spiritual Depression: It's Causes and Cure. London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 1965.

_____. Romans. An Exposition of Chapter 5. Assurance. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971.

- . God's Way of Reconciliation. (Studies in Ephesians chapter 2). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972.
- Mack, W.A. A Homework Manual for Biblical Counseling vol.1. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979.
- . A Homework Manual for Biblical Counseling vol.2. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980.
- Mackintosh, H.R. The Christian Experience of Forgiveness. London: Nisbet & Co., 1927.
- McDowell, J. Evidence for Joy. Herts: Word Publishing, 1984.
- Murray, J. Principles of Conduct. London: The Tyndale Press, 1957.
- . Divorce. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1961.
- Ogilvie, L.J. Autobiography of God. Glendale: Regal Books, 1979.
- Plekker, R.J. Divorce & the Christian. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1980.
- Redpath, A. The Making of a Man of God. London: Pickering & Inglis, 1962.
- Roberts, R.C. Spirituality and Human Emotion. Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1982.
- Shaner, D.W. A Christian View of Divorce. Leiden: E.J.Brill 1969.
- Small, D.H. The Right to Remarry. Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1975.
- Spoerri, P. Die Dynamic der Vergebung. Basel: Brunnen Verlag, 1978.
- Spurgeon, C.H. The Treasury of David vol.1. Mclean: Macdonald Publishing Company, date unknown.
- Swindoll, C.R. Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back. New York: Bantam Books, 1980.
- Taylor, V. Forgiveness and Reconciliation. London: Macmillan and Co., 1927.

- Thigpen, P. "To set the captives free." Discipleship Journal. Issue Thirty, 1986.
- Tozer, A.W. Man, the Dwelling Place of God. Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1966.
- Van Der Merwe, W.J.P. Pastoraat aan die Depressiewe Persoon met Besondere Toespitsing op die Skuldvraagstuk. Stellenbosch: Th.M verhandeling, 1983.
- Viljoen, E.M. Tug in die Kerk van Korinthe in die Eerste Eeu. Potchestroom: P.U. vir C.H.O., 1985.
- Vincent, M.R. Word Studies in the New Testament. Mclean: Macdonald Publishing Company, 1886.
- Walters, Forgive and be Free. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.
- Welch, E.T. How to Forgive. Lecture to a Singles Group. Philadelphia, 1983.
- Wiersbe, W. Be Right. An Expository Study of Romans. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1981.