

‘Father’ of Christian Marriage Ministries Says He Plans to Divorce

Ray Mossholder is credited with saving 11,000 marriages

The man widely regarded as the father of Christian marriage ministries is filing for divorce from his wife of 42 years and plans to remarry. Ray Mossholder, whose Marriage Plus Ministries (MPM) is credited with saving more than 11,000 couples from divorce, says he is “ashamed and disgraced.”

Mossholder, who is 64, announced the news of his marriage breakup in a letter

to supporters in which he referred to “the story of the shoemaker who was so busy that his own wife had to go without shoes.” He added: “I have been that shoemaker. I make no excuse for it. I won’t even blame the devil for what has been my own fault.”

MPM was the first ministry of its kind when Mossholder founded it in 1971. He has written three books, including Marriage Plus, published by Creation House—and endorsed by the likes of Jack Hayford and Pat Robertson—and spoken at seminars across the country and in more than 20 other countries. Mossholder and his wife, Arlyne, were board members of the National Association of Marriage Enhancement, and had been heard by millions on their radio and TV broadcasts.

The ministry was born out of struggles in the early years of the couple’s marriage, when he almost left for another woman. They shared the testimony of their healing, but Mossholder wrote in his letter that he was “often hypocritical when I

talked about how great [our marriage] was. What I taught was truth, however, it seemed that we were never able to apply it in our own marriage.”

Mossholder said the marriage had “dissolved in words that killed whatever reserve we had to continue together.” He had failed Arlyne, God and his supporters, he said. “I know I am violating my own teaching on divorce. I don’t feel I deserve heaven. I can only hope for the blood and grace of Christ to be sufficient.” Mossholder asked people to forgive him and pray for them both, signing off as “your broken friend.”

Terry Kirk, pastor at the Mossholders’ Central Christian Assembly of God in Baltimore said he had reacted with “shock and disbelief” when told of the split at the end of December. He also felt “great sadness for the potential fallout that it could have not only to his family, but also to the kingdom of God.”

Mossholder told Charisma that unfaithfulness was not an issue, and he was seeking a divorce on the grounds of irreconcilable differences. He had developed a “close friendship” with a woman through his ministry, but had not left his marriage for her. “The problem was not another woman. The problem was a marriage that ultimately I could not live in.”

Now that he has decided to end his marriage, he and the other woman plan to marry after she gets a divorce.

The Mossholders have three grown children and eight grandchildren. They also took in and raised several other children. Mossholder has moved to California and left his wife to close down MPM.

Arlyne Mossholder said her husband's departure was "heartwrenching, not only personally for our family but for the ministry." She added: "It is absolutely horrendous to see the unraveling of a man, a marriage and a ministry."

The Mossholders' eldest son, Tim, dean of students at a Christian college, said his father had suffered a number of ministry setbacks in the last 18 months. "The final chapter has not been written," he said. "We are believing that God will intervene in his hurt and pain and frustration."

Announcing the shutting down of his ministry with "deepest of pain and sorrow" in his letter, Mossholder said that his decision "is am finished with both our marriage and ministry."

A former high school teacher and TV reporter, Mossholder said that he might return to broadcasting. After leaving the media he had worked with Youth for Christ and Youth With a Mission, and traveled as a healing evangelist before launching his marriage ministry.

More recently the Mossholders had traveled with their "Together in Love" seminar, a shortened version of the "Marriage Plus" seminar. More than 100,000 decisions for Christ were recorded from unbelieving husbands and wives at MPM events through the years. In the last newsletter posted at the ministry's Web site, Mossholder had written about "33 reasons to say no to divorce," which he said was not an option for Christians.

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