

You Just Went Through a Divorce. Now What?

Being single again often seems harder. As difficult as navigating singleness as a never-married young (or not-so-young) person can be, finding yourself “alone” again after the end of a marriage through either death or divorce adds special challenges. Here are some things I’ve learned from being single—again.

Whether short or long, painful or nourishing, your previous marriage changed you. You are different because of your marriage to your spouse. You’ve experienced the good, the bad and perhaps the ugly of marriage. You’ve known some or most of these things:

- The thrill and hope of saying “I do!”
- Building a life with someone you loved.
- Parenting together.
- Disappointment when your spouse let you down.
- Navigating communication and intimacy differences.
- Having sex knowing it was sanctioned by God.
- Perhaps betrayal and rejection.
- Perhaps grief over the loss of someone you loved.
- The end of a dream as your marriage ended.

What do you do now? As much as you might wish things to be different, you cannot go back in time. You cannot be “single, never married” ever again.

I’m single again right now. Learning to live single again since my husband died has not been easy, though perhaps I’ve had it easier than some. I had learned to live single before being married. My marriage had been a very loving one. And I have a relatively clear sense of what God is asking of me in this next season of my life.

Regardless of why you are single again, I hope these things that I've learned over the past few years will be helpful to you.

Embrace the Person You Have Become

Your marriage changed you. That's not an indictment; it's a reality. And in many ways those changes may be truly wonderful. Even if your marriage was painful, there are ways you have grown and things you have learned as a result of your relationship.

It's important to grieve the loss of your marriage regardless of whether it came through death or divorce. But it's perhaps even more important to look at how that relationship is now a part of who you are and who you have become.

What did you learn about love? About intimacy? About sex? About your own heart—good and bad? About forgiveness? About suffering? About God's grace? About commitment? About communication? About giving and receiving? About how a relationship changes over time? About the impact *you* have on another human being? About how another human being impacts you?

Who have you become as a result of your marriage? What understandings do you have now that you would not have had without this relationship? What memories are now a part of you—good and bad? And what life experience are you able to take with you into this next season of your life?

You are different as a result of your marriage. Who are you now?

Connect With Others

Some people respond to the pain of death or divorce by curling up into a ball and isolating physically and/or emotionally. Other people respond to that same pain by frantically grasping at new relationships, trying to either heal the wound or

recreate the good things you had. Neither is a healthy way to go forward.

Other people cannot do your healing or grieving for you. A new marriage will not fix you. But it is vitally important you not walk this journey completely alone. Learning to relate to people as a single-again adult will feel different and probably very awkward. Do it anyway.

Invest in connecting with people—not for the purpose of getting something for yourself, but for the purpose of both giving and receiving. Yes, you will get insight, friendship, encouragement and more from healthy relationships. But the point is to learn what it means to give those things freely to others as well.

You may be learning for the first time what healthy relationships look like in such areas as trust, communication or unselfishness. Connecting with others in intentional ways can help you here.

Choose to Love Again

This does *not* mean necessarily getting married again! A new marriage, even if wonderful, will *not* replace your previous marriage, heal those wounds, meet all your needs, cure your loneliness or fix you.

Instead, choosing to love again means *the world is not all about you*. It means God has given you something to do, and you are choosing to invest of yourself in doing that. You have something others need, and you are giving of yourself to them.

For people who have been wounded in love, this is a big step. It's also a big step after a very loving relationship has ended. Love someone, anyone, even an animal, and you make yourself vulnerable. Love means you can be hurt.

Remember, God is love. He considered loving to be worth it,

even though it cost the death of His Son. You may need to spend some time healing and grieving, but lifting your eyes from yourself and loving people again will be worth it for you too, and a sign you are moving forward.

Give God a Chance

God sees you as you. Most people who are married define themselves largely in relationship to their marriage. Jesus died for you not as a married person, not as a single or single-again person, but as *you*. He walks with you now, you as the lonely, hurting, grieving, anxious or desperate *you*. He sees you, understands you and is right beside you, closer than any spouse was or ever could be.

Give Him the chance to be with you. Spend time with God, seeking His presence. In the miraculous way only He can, God can take the end of your marriage and all the complicated angst involved and turn it into something of meaning and growth and even beauty.

Give Him that chance.

Your Turn: *As a single-again adult, what has been the hardest part for you? What has helped you take steps forward into this next season of your life? Leave a comment below.* {eoa}

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