

Divorce and the Church: Ministers, Pastors and Leadership Who Abuse the Divorced.

Introduction and closing by: Stephen Gola

Letter by: Renate Vinje

Many of those in leadership in the local church are unwittingly abusing, traumatizing and betraying God's kids who come for help. We know that in general the leadership in God's church knows little to nothing about divorce and remarriage as God sees it. We also know that these truths have been lost through time; nevertheless, the abuse continues and God's kids suffer.

We at DivorceHope will offer to help anyone who is in a leadership or counseling position to truly understand God's heart on divorce, remarriage, relationship love and marriage covenants. (You can visit us at www.DivorceHope.com.)

Therefore by permission, I present an actual letter of a real situation that has occurred as an example of the common abuse that is rampant in the church. (The names in the letter have been removed.) I wish I could say that this is an isolated case. However, we at DivorceHope see this tragic scenario played-out over and over again in Christian's lives. Only their names and faces are different.

Renate Vinje wrote this letter to the church leadership in defense of her friend whom they abused and shamed for being divorced. We know that many of you who were abused will find healing in this letter; and, we are trusting God that many of you in leadership who have unwittingly abused God's kids will find the truth.

Here's Renate:

I just recently joined your organization for Bible study. After I visited with my friend last week, I learned that it was her church and your "fellowship" that added more pain to her already broken spirit when she was divorced many years ago. Although she has forgiven you and her church, she is still suffering from her past, unable to heal, as she was shamed and deeply wounded, and churches reinforce her shame over and over again.

She was married to a monster who terribly abused her and her daughter for 9 years, fearing for her life. She finally had the courage to leave him. Rather than have the church stand with her, struggling to survive with her daughter, helping her to overcome and heal, they did nothing to support her and actually added more pain by telling her she could no longer sing in the choir. Besides her personhood being destroyed, feeling like garbage, feeling rejected by her church, she could not use her wonderful gift of music anymore.

In addition she was told by your organization that she could not be a women's leader, causing more shame and belittlement, as they are to set the example. I ask myself what example they were by treating her this way, and what sin she committed besides being a victim? But she was still good enough to care for children, to disappear in the back room, even pressured to do so. Amazing, how they would allow a person not good enough to set standards to lead women, yet good enough to lead easily influenced children. Hmm?

At least she had enough sense to leave. How terrible though to be abused by her spouse, and then spiritually abused by her church and your group as well. Thank God she had family. If that would have happened to me I would have been all alone as I am from Europe and have no other family. God knows what I would have done.

Therefore, I contacted my group leader to inquire if the organization still had the same policy towards or more correctly against divorced leaders, no matter the reason for divorce. Since they have not changed, I told her I would no longer be able to attend. Although she tried to persuade me to stay, it would be hypocritical for me not to stand with my friend who was abused and terrorized by her husband, and then spiritually abused by her church and your fellowship.

God hates divorce, but Himself divorced and remarried.

It seems that even God is not good enough to sing at her church and lead in your organization, as even He who hates divorce, went ahead and divorced Israel because of her evil ways, and married another, the gentiles. Even God has enough sense to reject evil. Not until God raptures His church, and Israel repents at our Lord's second coming will God take her back, and marry her again, and then only those who repent. Jeremiah 3; Zechariah 12-14. My friend forgave this evil man for years, pouring out her Spirit of Grace, and was ready to forgive again and again, but he would not repent. I guess you expected her to have more power than God and do more than God could or would do.

Christ says "Depart from me you evil doer!"

While Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and He woos us to Him by His grace, it does not benefit us until we repent to enter into Covenant with God. Marital love is Covenant love, requiring both parties to submit to one another. Unconditional love implies that no matter how your spouse treats you, abuses you, or corrupts you and your family, whether by legal or illegal means, you are to "love" them. Essentially, we have been taught that "unconditional" love is a love without moral boundaries. While Jesus loved us and allowed himself to be abused and terrorized for our sin, He did so before we married Him, but only those who repent, and respond in deep regret, love and gratitude to Him are accepted and benefit in a marriage relationship with Him forever. Others who claim to know Him are warned and told He never knew them. To know Him means intimate love, marital love, and for the evil doer to depart from Him. Jesus is indeed our bridegroom and we are His bride. But even Jesus will divorce many forever and send them to hell, because they never committed to Him in the first place. --Sorry Jesus, according to my friend's church and your organization, "You" are not qualified to lead your church either. Matthew 7. How sad that the church has not learned that divorce in and of itself is not sin, and under certain circumstances is a righteous act, as God did so Himself, and Christ Himself will do so when He separates the goat from the sheep.

What "God" has joined together let no man separate. Mark 10: 6-9

Although I have never been divorced nor abused by my husband and have no personal stake for my views, outside of the fact that I understand abuse due to my childhood and have a heart for God and people, I believe that not all marriages performed by our legal system nor churches are necessarily marriages approved or joined by "God", as we can see by legalizing homosexual marriages. Furthermore God detested marriages between Israel and ungodly pagan nations in the Old Testament, which typifies the believer joined with the unbeliever.

In the case of my friend, deceived to marry a controlling and abusive spouse who never committed to the marriage "under God", was never joined by God. I dare say it was detested and hated by God, as marriage is a covenant, a "conditional" covenant. Therefore God does not approve of all marriages, therefore not all divorce is sin, - that is unless, - you want to call God and Jesus Christ a sinner.

This man was evil, deceptive, and merely used her for sex as he would a live-in whore and convenience as he would a maid. Secondly one can hardly call such a man a Christian, as one cannot ignore the Holy Spirit and His constant knocking to repent of sin, in this case of spousal destruction and satanic mind control. It is evil to pressure a woman into staying with an abusive unrepentant mate, and making the victim feel responsible, shaming and degrading her even more. We must consider him an unbeliever and let him leave, as he never meant to stay in the first place. 1Corinthians 7. While restoration is always God's desire and first priority, it is impossible without repentance. By the way, Titus taught the husband of one wife. This does in no way speak of one spouse in your lifetime, or never divorced and remarried, but rather of marriage to one wife at a time, rather than many wives. If that were the case a widower could not remarry either.

Thirdly an abused spouse is in bondage and cannot make Jesus Lord over her life as the abuser lords over her heart and mind, leaving the person unable to think correctly, living in constant fear rather than loving submission to God and each other. It is a known fact that spousal abuse causes damage to mind, soul, and spirit that is often irreversible. Never mind what it does to children. It is a miracle that my friend is who she is, not because of your help, but by the grace of God and her unswerving faith.

Amazingly she still desires to go to church. I hope and pray she has not learned to go back for more abuse.

Who is good enough?

Since you seem to be so concerned to only use "proper" people who have never divorced, to set the example, I wonder how you feel about using ex murderers, homosexuals, or adulterers, liars, and thieves? If you ask me I would rather be taught and trust a person who is divorced, that is if I did not believe in the power of a changed life through Christ. I also wonder why you are not concerned about using "proper" material. Why is it that you don't rip up the biggest part of the New Testament written by Paul, a multi-murderer, the apostle to the gentiles, founder of many churches and great leader? We certainly would not want to follow anything he would have to say, would we? How about the Psalms written in large by King David, an adulterer and murderer, a "man after God's own heart?" I could go on and on but I am sure you get the point.

Love rather than fear and shame:

When in doubt try love. The wounded person must be embraced, loved, and helped to seek godly counsel. Anyone knows that abuse causes people to have little or no worth, and a wounded soul and spirit in turn most often chooses unwisely, and almost always less than they think they are worth. Therefore, my friend remarried a person with many issues because she has never learned her worth, and how could she, when she has been taught over and over again by churches and Christian organizations that she is "not good enough." They have been married 20 years now. When I asked her "why", she said "At least he does not beat me." Therefore she has stuck it out because he is kind, and thank God he is now finally seeking help, and we pray for his ability to trust the Lord for healing, strength and renewal. However in all those years no help ever came from her new church. Although she attends faithfully, and is active, not one man nor the pastor ever called and said to her new husband "Come and join me for a cup of coffee", etc. etc. I dare say that if she would have divorced again, the church would have been there quickly to judge, maybe even condemn her.

It is with sadness and utter disgust that I find once again that the church of Jesus Christ preaches forgiveness, righteousness and restoration in Christ but does not practice it. (Galatians 6:1.) May God forgive you for adding pain and shame to the hurting, abandoning the wounded and lonely, in the name of looking proper. If I recall correctly Jesus called such white washed tombs.

Although my friend has forgiven her church and your organization years ago, forgiveness does not equate healing. It would benefit my friend much in her healing, if you indeed would apologize to her for the pain you caused, but that would mean you would have to reexamine and oppose your policy, and consider the possibility that it is wrong. Although much of the Bible study material is good and deserves to be recognized, the policies pertaining to church leadership are in my firm belief in great error, spiritually abusive, and do not reflect a healthy balance of scripture, never mind the heart of God and Jesus Christ.

In His service

Renate Vinje

Sadly, this letter is a typical scenario of the abuse the leadership of local churches is unwittingly inflicting upon Christians regarding divorce and remarriage. Nevertheless, there must be forgiveness to God's leadership for simply not knowing. God's kids MUST be aware that a title, position or office such as minister, pastor, prophet, reverend, etc. does not automatically grant them full understanding of the truth on any Biblical subject. No, they must learn like everyone else and/or get it from those who have it. Again, we at DivorceHope will offer to help anyone in a leadership or counseling position to truly understand God's heart on divorce, remarriage, relationship love and marriage covenants. Stephen Gola

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