



Consequences
of
DIVORCE

**A marital breakup can wreck havoc
on children. Find out how
this woman endured.**

With God's help.

Barbara White Hege

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Bladensburg, MD

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Chapter 1

“Emily, I saw Adam and Ruth together up at West End.” This was Daddy’s sister, Mattie Mae, talking to my mother. I think I was five or six years old when I heard those words. My brother, Bill, was two or three years old. Little did I know how those words and what they revealed would affect the rest of my life. I remember exactly where we were when Mattie Mae uttered them. I don’t think it could be so, but it seems I understood what those words meant, even at that young age.

Daddy and Mother ran a little country grocery store/service station a few miles from Elkin, North Carolina, which was owned by my paternal grandfather and was located next door to where he and my grandmother lived. This was one of those stores where people didn’t just come in to buy something. They often sat, drank sodas, and visited together. I remember my maternal grandmother telling my Mother to watch Ruth, that she was after my daddy. She stated she had seen her flirting with him. Ruth lived just down the road from the store and was in and out sometimes. My Daddy was not a Christian then and had an eye for the ladies. So started an affair that would go on for eleven years or more.

During those eleven years, Daddy left twice, returning home each time after a few months. He had broken off the affair a couple of times and somehow allowed himself to

be lured back into it. I was told that at least one of those times, Ruth threatened suicide. About five or six years into the affair, she became pregnant, giving birth to a daughter, Vickie, in March 1950. I was in the seventh grade. That year at Christmas, Daddy bought Christmas presents for me, Mother, and Bill. This was the first and only time he ever did this by himself. I received a new gold watch. Bill received a new bicycle. Mother received a new gold wedding band. Looking back on this years later, I believe this came from the guilt he must have been feeling.

The second time he left, he ended up in the hospital with a nervous breakdown and was placed in the psychiatric ward. Vickie was around two years old at the time. I think I was thirteen years old, and Bill was ten. He sent someone to ask if Bill and I would come to visit him. He asked for Mother to visit with us, also. We discovered that he and Ruth were living together in a small town about two hours away. We did honor his request and visited him in the hospital there. After being there for some time, he was released by his doctors and came back home. He left for the third time when I was a senior in high school. He never returned.

Chapter 2

Let's go back for a minute. When I was seven or eight years old, Daddy and Mother bought a large farm. We were living there when Daddy left. Each time he left, he would just disappear. Mother, Bill, and I would be visiting a neighbor or my grandparents, only to return home and discover that Daddy had packed his clothes and left. We had no idea where he was living. I don't know how we made it during those times, because we were always left with no money. However, somehow God made a way. I don't remember our ever wanting for anything. Moreover, after his leaving, Mother rented the farmland, so we eventually had income from that.

As Bill and I were so young when all this started, we grew up under the scandal of this affair. Such sins may be viewed differently today by the world. But not by God, who still declares it sin. Hebrews 13:8 tells us He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. He does not change. His Word does not change. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, oh Lord, thy Word is settled in heaven" (KJV).

It seemed everyone knew about the affair. Mother was so well-liked and respected that it was not as much a reflection on her or us as it was on Daddy and Ruth. In spite of this, Daddy was well-liked also.

Mother was, in my opinion, a saint through all of this. I

always wondered why she stayed with Daddy all those years. Maybe it was because she had nowhere to go with two small kids. Or perhaps she still loved him? It may have been because divorce is a sin and not an option (Malachi 2:16 "For the Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates putting away..."). I remember hearing divorce discussed many times during those years and what the Bible taught about it. However, regardless of why she stayed, it was amazing how she treated my Dad during this time. Sometimes Daddy would rant and rave over some insignificant thing (Looking back, I think he sometimes took all the frustrations of his sin out on her). Mother would just let him vent until he ran out of words. And in spite of everything, she was always good to him. How she did this, with all that was going on, had to be only by the grace of God.

Chapter 3

As for me, I was able to compartmentalize this, to some extent, and go forward with my life—making the best of a difficult situation. I don't mean to minimize the trauma of this. It was painful. But somehow, God gave me the ability to prevent it from dominating my life. Even though there was some shame, God's protection was there even in that. It seemed to be more Daddy and Ruth's shame than mine. I don't remember ever feeling as if I were less because of it, although my brother did experience some personal reactions from it. When he was in high school, a schoolmate would not associate with him because of this. This schoolmate then tried to turn others against Bill and get them to be his friend rather than Bill's. Actually, I think part of this may have been jealousy on the guy's part because Bill was outgoing, tall, dark, and handsome.

I was very active throughout school. I had lead roles in school programs and plays in elementary school. In high school, I served as the class president, vice-president, and reporter; was the chief cheerleader and the school and county spelling champion; and placed second in the state championship. I was the co-editor of our yearbook, had a leading role in the junior year play and a smaller role in the senior play. I was involved in other things too numerous to mention. I graduated at the top of my class, receiving the

honor of valedictorian. And Daddy missed all of this. Even when he was home, he gave no attention to things I was involved in at school. When I made my valedictory speech on class night, and when I graduated the next day, I did not even know where Daddy was. As usual, he had left home without telling us anything. A few years later, he missed my wedding. I still did not know where he was living. I thank God for my involvement in all these activities. Even though I didn't realize it at the time, I believe God used this busy-ness to help carry me through all those years.

I remember the first time I realized some of what I was missing in a father. I had gone home with a friend from school and saw the relationship between her and her daddy. I realized that Daddy and I did not have that kind of relationship, and it made me a little envious and sad. He was my Daddy, and I loved him, but the relationship was definitely lacking.

I learned at an early age not to allow my mind to dwell on things I could do nothing to change and to go on and make the best of it. Although the Bible gives us instructions on this, I was not aware of them at that time. Nonetheless, I believe God was working the principle of Philippians 4:8 in me: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." I still have to do that sometimes. I ask God to help me turn my mind from things that hurt, offend, and cause anger; and to think on those things listed in Philippians, on Him, and the many blessings He has given me. I remember the scripture in Isaiah 26:3, "Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in you."

Chapter 4

Since Bill and I were older when Daddy left home permanently in 1955, I am thankful we never experienced having to spend every other weekend with the 'other parent.' I am positive neither of us would have been happy with this situation, as some today are not. I have a family member who struggles today with a similar arrangement. She has a friend in school who struggles with the same situation. Perhaps it does not bother some children. I do not know. I suppose it depends on the relationship with the 'every other weekend' parent. But sometimes the child is unhappy about having the family life disrupted and having to leave home every other weekend. I can certainly understand that.

There seems to be no good answer for this when divorce happens. But, again, sin has consequences for both the parents and the innocent children involved. Please understand, I did not label it as sin. God did. The Bible says in Matthew 19:6, "what God has therefore joined together, let no man put asunder." And yes, God forgives this sin when there is confession and repentance just as He forgives any other sin, but, like any sin, there are still consequences, and sometimes they are lifelong.

David was said to be a man after God's own heart. Yet, he suffered the consequences of sin in his life. He had taken Bathsheba and lay with her. When he learned she

had conceived, he conspired to have her husband killed in battle. In 2 Samuel 12:10, God sent Nathan with this message to David: "Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah, the Hittite, with the sword and have taken his wife to be thy wife and has slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah, the Hittite to be your wife." If you continue reading 2 Samuel, you will see that David was forgiven, but he still suffered the consequences of his sin. He was told the baby Bathsheba was carrying would die. One of his sons raped his half-sister. And the list goes on.

We are also told in Hebrews 12:6 that God chastises those whom He loves. Sin always has consequences.

End of Sample

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