

But what about the children?

A testimony from a sister

Life after marriage breakdown is a lonely, difficult journey – whether it is newly begun or has been going on for a long time. To lose someone in life, is somehow more painful, than to lose them through death. You experience so many feelings, hurt and rejection, failure, shame, loneliness, and it just doesn't go away, year after year it goes on! The world tells you to pick yourself up and move on! But where to and how? As a brother or sister – what can we do? How can we move on? Where can we turn to for help? To God, of course, to ask for strength to endure and to find comfort, and hopefully, to our brethren and sisters within our ecclesia, our family, our friends.

My own experience, from when I was ill with severe depression, that led my husband and brother to lose his love for me and to move forward into a new relationship, was that the ecclesia did little to support us as a family. We should have asked directly for help, but my husband was against this. He wanted to show The Meeting that all was well! By the time we separated, it was too late to work towards a reconciliation. My husband has now resigned, has divorced me on 5 years separation and is intending to remarry.

BUT – What about our children?

This is what I want us to look at today!

Brethren and sisters need to look after the children of parents going through marital problems and breakdown. As an adult, I chose my husband, but my children did not choose to be born. How can we help them to cope? At the very least it is embarrassing, if their social life is tied up in the ecclesia.

At it's worst it is devastating, for their spiritual life, emotional well being and physical and mental health.

Both my children took the decision to be baptised in recently at the ages of 19 and 16. God has, without a doubt, sought to protect them and they have come through experiencing my serious illness, the sadness of our broken marriage and their father's loss of faith. Without their faith to strengthen them, I wonder where they would be?

Obviously, they have had their ups and downs emotionally. My daughter had a potentially serious eating disorder for 2 years. There have been tears, anger, and resentment, that have interspersed our family life for years, and still go on!!! But we HAVE gone on!!! And we are stronger for it!!! Without these experiences, would I, or my children, be the people we are today? Probably not.

My hope is, that both my children have learnt through their pain, to be able to show compassionate care, to others, now, and in their future lives.

I have tried hard to understand why we were left so alone. After our marital breakdown, that as my son rightly says, was actually, a family breakdown, I have come to some conclusions and learnt some lessons.

Initially, there was very little support or compassion shown by word or deed. I think people firstly didn't know what was happening and then embarrassment set in.

Brethren and sisters hadn't experienced similar problems and just did not know what to say or do! So--- for several years my children and I tried to cope. I must mention though, two sisters that did try hard to help me in different ways.

Eventually, I wrote a long letter to all the past and present AB's detailing our experiences and pain and disillusionment with our lack of support from the ecclesia. I followed it up by speaking to several AB's wives querying why no support had been offered to my children. My son had said to me on one occasion, no one had asked if he was OK. That made me so sad. Why not? He needed a brother to speak to! Anyway, because I expressed my feelings strongly and **directly** asked for help, it has come!

Certain brethren and sisters are now in real, regular contact with us. At The Meeting I am given words of encouragement and during the week quite often phone calls or "how are you texts?" Also, my children are now receiving positive, ongoing support.

A wife of an AB asked if any lessons could be learnt by the ecclesia from our experiences. So---- I listed some positive ideas that would help us and others like us, who maybe going through similar difficulties. These were raised at the next AB's meeting and yes, things have definitely started to improve. In subtle ways, through carefully chosen words in prayers, and in other ways too, like more open and compassionate contact.

MY ADVICE-

- 1) Ask God **directly** for help, through prayer, and trust in Him to strengthen you and keep you going!
- 2) Ask **directly** for help from brethren and sisters.

This can **be** very difficult to do. You feel that you should be able to cope, **BUT-----we all** need help, support, encouragement, love and lots of hugs, for many different reasons.

It is not just us, who may feel alone through marital separation or divorce, but widows and widowers, carers of loved ones who have long term illnesses. Many brethren, sisters and **our young people**, as emphasised today, require help, and as a family, we need to be alert to their needs, and be ready to comfort and support them emotionally and practically.

Embarrassment is **NO** excuse!! We need to ask ourselves – **what would Jesus do?**

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