

Drama Files: Shattered Ministry

In polishing their ministry, their businesses, their school, their community, this successful couple missed a spot.

Alvin and Ava co-pastored a vibrant and highly successful church ministry. Family and friends loved and respected them. Their commitment resulted in 27 years of marriage and four children.

The family had several other business, such as schools, building and construction companies, and their church. Yet, with their avid attention to the details of creating these successful ventures, they shortchanged each other.



Hard to Reach

When Ava could not reach Alvin on his cell phone one afternoon, she contacted her children. They had not heard from their father all that day. Later that evening Alvin came home and told Ava his phone was not working. He needed to get that checked, she said, this problem had occurred several other times

over the past few months.

A few months later as they grocery shopped together, Ava and Alvin ran into a female church member. Ava spoke to the woman, but her husband never acknowledged her and the woman never spoke to her Pastor. "Strange," Ava thought. Why would a church member not even acknowledge her pastor? When they finished shopping they went to their car and Ava confronted her husband.

"Something was not right about the two of you not greeting one another. Did you have an affair with that woman?"

"I would never would do that" Alvin replied.

"Why did you not speak to her?" asked Ava.

"You both were talking and I was getting the bags," her husband explained.

Courage to Confront

Ava had no peace, and during the next few months their marriage became strained because she was convinced that something was going on behind her back. Ava broke down and finally called the woman who then admitted the whole thing.

"He felt so ashamed and ended the affair soon after," the woman told her. "I told him that I would never speak on the matter because I knew he loved his family and his work for the Lord."

"You're a coward," Ava went in on her husband that night. And, yes, Alvin who confirmed the sad fact, was indeed now very fearful for his family.

Shortly thereafter, the couple started marital counseling to discuss the direction for their marriage. Ava's anger, and embarrassment just would not subside. Every time she attended church, she felt as if everyone knew but her. By our fifth session she said she wanted a divorce.

"What about our family and the church?" Alvin pleaded.

Ava turned to him "Did you think about all you had to lose when you committed adultery?"

You Better Think

Alvin acknowledged his weakness. He had allowed himself to begin an emotional affair because Ava was always so busy. He felt neglected. Ava, too, remembered feeling neglected due to his schedule. Likewise, she remembered her own opportunities to fall into temptation. But, she insisted, she would never have considered it. Her God and family were more important than a brief sexual fling.

Of course, the fatal consequence of adultery is broken trust and loss of closeness. Many affairs begin with an emotional interest or contact. On the other hand, too many times individuals are lured into affairs for the opposite reason. They see the opportunity to be disconnected and free from their spouses. It's important to identify and recognize the missing components in the relationship, before it's too late and may cost you everything.

New Path

As their marriage therapist I spent hours trying to help Ava and Alvin recognize their individual concerns and the turmoil within the marriage. It was just too late. So, within a few months, a tremendous marriage, family, and ministry had been shattered by one selfish act.

Alvin shared with Ava on their last session together that it was never his intention to destroy his family and hurt her. He asked once again for her forgiveness.

"I forgave you in the supermarket, even when you lied and denied it several

times to me," Ava said bravely. "God has given me peace, and I hope you can someday find peace in your life."
Ava hugged him, walked out, and left Alvin in my office where he cried.

I prayed with him, but, I reminded Alvin it will be a long hard journey ahead for both of them and their children. His focus would now center on his ability to forgive himself and recommitment to his relationship with God and his children.

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*The names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Drama Files: Holiday Hues of Blue

Seems like the holiday season was just here, Bryon thought to himself. He was divorced, and was not looking forward to another holiday season alone. Though successful in his work, and traveling extensively, this young man realized all of that failed to fill the emptiness in his life. Bryon decided to find a therapist to help him adjust to the "Holiday Blues." He was feeling loneliness, confusion, hurt, and disappointment during this time.*



Blue Christmas Without You

Byron also felt pain from the memories of his past because his wife would decorate the home so beautifully. They would do the family shopping together.

Bryon always looked forward to his parents and siblings joining him every year for the holidays and experiencing the love of the festivities. He grew up with his parents and many siblings engaging with the gift sharing, singing and visiting his grandparents was so enjoyable.

Impending Season of Joy

As the time approached year after year Byron would remain busy and focused on his work. When November approached his depression began to overwhelm him. Prior to his divorce, Julie, his ex-wife had moved out to an apartment 22 miles away. She never called, and never came back.

Thanksgiving would usually be the start of the blues, a time when it seems everyone cherished a thankful and forgiving spirit. Byron figured that if there was ever a time when Julie would reconsider and return home, it would be at the beginning of the holiday season. He thought that she would call, but she never did.



Emotionally it took Bryon a while to get past his pain. He could not wait for the holiday season to pass. He would find himself staying away from the stores or office holiday gatherings. Often, he hid his pain as more of his coworkers and friends learned that he was divorced.

As a very kind man and private person, Byron reluctantly told his family that Julie left and filed for divorce. His parents wondered what happened to Julie was on several occasions, so he finally told them the truth. He told them that Julie left because she no longer loved him the way a wife should. She really just grabbed for straws, looking for a way to leave.

Some Folks Like to Get Away

In many cases people experience the holiday blues due to the lack of finances, the loss of family members or friends, divorce, relocation, loss of employment, or just hardship. They watch while so many other people enjoy the luxury of shopping, eating out at nice restaurants, traveling, and leaving their cares behind. Holiday blues are a real stressors.

Reimagine and recast your holidays using these ideas:

1. Acknowledge your feelings about your pain.
2. Reach out to positive family and friends.
3. Be realistic about your station in life.
4. Set aside differences with those who have hurt you by forgiving them.
5. Forgive yourself and pray
6. Develop a budget and don't deviate from it.
7. Don't run into any ones arms because you are lonely.
8. Know your limitations
9. The holidays are not a license to indulge in substance abuse.
10. Schedule a pre-holiday or holiday season counseling session.

As Bryon continued his therapy we discussed how important it is to recognize things could be so much worse, so he decided to do his best to remain thankful. He also committed to remaining busy and seeking the company of positive and encouraging family and friends.

Find The Right Mix of People And Activities

During the therapeutic process it is vital to identify with people who have gone through similar experiences to help you mature by attending a support group. Despite what you are going through try to be a blessing to someone else by serving and visiting someone in the hospital, a homeless shelter or serve at soup kitchen.

Accept, believe, and embrace Roman's 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called to his purpose." By grasping this concept when you are experiencing the holiday blues, you remember that God knows your pain and offers you comfort through your situation.

With another holiday approaching Bryon is learning to remain focused on others. He is thankful, and allowing God's will to be done while defining his new purpose in life by giving back to others. He is beginning a new chapter in his life not just getting through the holiday blues, but adjusting and accepting to a new life. Bryon now ends each session with these words: "God can make my latter days better than my former days."

*The names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Drama Files: Sex And The Saved Single Sex. Sexy. Sexiest. Man Alive, Am I The Only One Not Doing It?

Monique was a bright, outgoing, young lady, and her teachers and classmates loved her. She was popular, attractive, a great dance student, and very kindhearted all through high school. After graduating from high school with honors it was now time to enter into college. Monique carried her pleasant personality with her.

After returning home with a degree in business, and accepting a new position

within a major utility company, Monique met a very nice young man at a company function. They exchanged email addresses and soon thereafter, Monique and Jason were a couple. As they grew closer, after a year they began a sexual relationship. Neither one was a Christians, nor, did either attend church services.



One weekend Monique's coworker invited her to church to hear her speak and Monique asked Jason to join them, but he had a meeting to attend. The Holy Spirit convicted Monique's heart, and she really enjoyed the service. She gave her life to Christ right there and then. Her excitement bubbled over, and she could not wait to tell Jason of her new found relationship with the Lord.

Jesus at The Center of It All

"I'm not interested in serving God or attending church," Jason stated flatly in response to Monique's "Good News." He told her their relationship worked because they were not Christians. She tried to explain it to him, and continued to pray and invite him to church. But, after one month of refraining from sex and other things that contradicted her new beliefs, the couple decided to break up. Monique had decided not to have sex outside of marriage, and Jason was not going to accept that.

Monique moved out and continued to work at the utility company while attending church every week. She never had any further interaction with Jason, but found peace in her new found faith and obedience to God. However, as time went on she met several nice, single young men at the church fellowships who were attracted to her. Each of them, at one point, tried to persuade her to have sex with them after a date.

She sought support through Christian counseling regarding her choice to remain celibate.

Nice Church Girls and Boys

"I can understand men in the world wanting sex before marriage," she told me during one session. "But being in the church, knowing that this is a

violation against God's Word," well, that was very disheartening and confusing. These men hurt Monique by their actions and hypocrisy. One even told her "It's alright to have sex. We all have needs. We are in the church, and God will forgive us".

At that moment Monique shook her head, turned to him and replied: "Same dance, but different partner."

As single Christians face many different temptations in their lives, it is important to remain focused on Christ, and His Holy Word. That is where we find the profile of a holy life. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Sex for Saved Singles?

Through my 36 years as a therapist and counselor, 85% of my single clients had sex before marriage by the age of 40. They concluded that almost all Americans have had sex before marriage. Abstaining from sexual intercourse is not the norm in our culture. Being sexual and sensual before marriage is the norm.

We are overwhelmed with "Bigger, Better, More," in the headlines. And seemingly every product and program gets moved on the often successful philosophy that sex sells. Sexy images, videos, songs, hot topics on reality tv, and news about celebrities and their sexy lifestyles pervade the media and our minds. If you want to be part of the 15% you will have to know your redeemer Jesus for yourself and have an honest and open relationship with Him.

If you realize that you are in the 85%, it is not too late to turn to Christ. The Lord can and will restore you. He will help you remain single, and celibate.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Drama Files: Mother-in-Law Blues

Gage and Terri have been married for a short time. Terri is a loving wife to her husband and Gage is very compassionate towards Terri.

From the very first day of her marriage to Gage, his mother Kelly constantly would say unpleasant things to Terri to upset her. Terri would constantly mention this to Gage, but he totally ignored her by saying "Mom means no harm."



This made Kelly very uncomfortable over time. Her mother in law would bring Gage his favorite dishes over to their home, and stay for hours talking to her son while Terri ate alone. She would buy him gifts and offered nothing to Terri. The coldness and meanness was taking its toll on Terri. Terri started experiencing anxiety and depression and contacted my office to discuss the possibility of family intervention.

Seek to Understand

As Terri's therapist I shared with her the purpose of family intervention is to provide counseling in an objective manner to help guide the family to a resolution. I also shared with her I felt it would be a positive way to address her concerns about her mother-in-law and help Gage to understand the seriousness of the situation.

Terri asked Gage to please ask his mother to come, and she agreed. Terri led the session with my guidance and shared her feelings and concerns. Kelly said she didn't see the harm in still caring for her son.

"That is my responsibility to care for him, and for us to love each other and care for our home," countered Terri. You have to stay in your lane as a mother, she told her.

Terri began to lay down some ground rules. Kelly would always be welcomed, but, she needed to please call first out of respect. Kelly apologized to Terri and Gage for her negative behavior. Over the next few months Kelly would call and greet Terri with a sincere warm greeting.

Mom's Issues

One afternoon Kelly told Terri that "I feel I need to see Dr. Logan to help me with my fear of being alone and separation anxiety." Terri told her that she would go with her to counseling if she would like. Kelly said "Thank you and I would appreciate that."

Throughout the counseling process Terri and Kelly worked closely together and was able to learn coping skills to manage their concerns. Kelly had been suffering a long time since the passing of her husband and she began to lean on Gage for everything, even companionship.

Kelly developed realistic goals to engage in a healthier manner with Terri, also, intervention for her own healing and her only child getting married. She humbly apologized to Terri and made a commitment to follow-through with her counseling.

Now, That's Progress

Terri and Gage are planning a vacation and asked Kelly to join them in Europe. Kelly has always wanted to go and she cried during the session when they told her. "I promise to stay in my lane," Kelly said.

Tips from Dr. Kim

When the day comes to meet your future mother-in-law it will mean making adjustments in the relationship. Be open minded to suggestions. Be willing to share quality time together, and be careful not to isolate yourselves. Remember your future spouse has a family who still wants to engage and be a part of both your lives. Treat your mother-in-law with respect and kindness. Involve your spouse, especially if there's conflict. Get comfortable with compromising and being firm when necessary. Don't be afraid to be transparent and honest with one another. It may be painful going in but the end result will be worth it to eliminate the mother-in-law blues
A soft answer turns away wrath. Proverbs 15:1.

Drama Files: Never Leave a Man Behind It May Have Been Too Late to Say Goodbye, But Not Too Late to Address His Addiction.

Carson had been a substance abuser since entering the military. He returned four years later, upon an honorable discharge from the army. He was one of 13 children and always a loving and devoted son to his parents.



Carson was reared in a very spiritual and loving family. He was very supportive, caring, and helpful towards his parents all while struggling with his personal drug and alcohol addiction. One afternoon after a day helping his mother and enjoying the afternoon with his parents, he walked out and told his father "I'll be back."

Passing of Time

Later that week Carson's father, James, went into the hospital for a breathing treatment. His physician decided to extend his stay because the effects of a longstanding smoking habit were now exacting its toll. James' lungs had been deteriorating for at least 10 years. After a week, James was no longer breathing on his own. His body was getting weaker and weaker and his lungs were no longer functioning properly.

Carson's mother and siblings visited James several times throughout the week, until the doctor called and told them nothing else could be done for him. James and seven sons all served in the military. "You never leave a wounded soldier alone," they believed, and the family gathered around James one last time as the life support was removed. He passed away early the next morning.

A week later when James was buried, Carson was absent. He missed his father's illness and passing. Carson's ex-wife, a police officer, went looking for him for the family. When she found him and told him that his father had passed away, Carson was in total disbelief. He remembered seeing a huge funeral procession going down the street and was so surprised by how long it was, not knowing that it was his own father's funeral.

Life, Well-Lived

Immediately, Carson went home to find his mother and a single obituary in the china cabinet. Carson realized he had to live with this for the rest of his life.

Ever since that day Carson has lived with his mother and finally found healing in drug recovery. Carson has begun counseling for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and also grief counseling.

All Suffer

Alcoholism and drug addiction have obvious and well-documented effects on chronic substance abusers. Prolonged abuse of drugs and alcohol deteriorate a person's physical health, impair mental functioning, and damage the spirit. These adverse effects also impact the immediate family's finances, physical health and psychological wellbeing.

Family roles naturally shift to adjust to the behaviors associated with drug or alcohol use, and to continue maintaining order and balance. Including the addict, there have been six roles identified to understand how the family functions around the substance abuser. They are:

- **The Enabler**-Carson's parents enabled his behavior by allowing him to come and go from their home knowing he was an addict.
- **The Mascot**-The Mascot was his sister Ann. This child feels powerless in the dynamics which are going on in the family and tries to interrupt tension, anger, conflict, violence or other unpleasant situations within the family by acting as the "court jester." The Mascot seeks to be the

center of attention in the family, often entertaining the family and making everyone feel better through his or her comedy. She may also use humor to communicate and to confront the family dysfunction, rather than address it directly.

- **The Hero**-The Hero in this family was Carson's mother. This family member devotes his/her time and attention to making the family look "normal" and without problems. The Hero can mask or make up for the dysfunctional home life. Over-responsible and self-sufficient they are often perfectionistic, over-achievers and look very good – on the outside.
- **The Scapegoat**-The Scapegoat was Darry, the troubled child. The Scapegoat is the "problem child" or the "trouble maker." This family member always seems defiant, hostile and angry. The Scapegoat is the truth teller of the family and will often verbalize or act out the "problem" which the family is attempting to cover up or deny. This individual's behavior warrants negative attention and is a great distraction for everyone from the real issues at hand. The Scapegoat usually has trouble.
- **The Lost Child**-The lost child was Carson's brother Earl. This child avoids interactions with other family members and basically disappears. They become loners, or are sometimes very shy.
- **The Addict**-The Addict was Carson who spent many years fighting this demon inside of him. He felt trapped and worthless in his life. He wanted to stop the drug addiction but didn't have the desire or motivation to do so.

No matter how old a parent's child is, discovering that a child has an addiction can be an unpleasant, rude awakening. It may cause mothers and fathers to question their parental abilities or the decisions they made. Parents of addicts, much like children of addicts, often blame themselves for the development of the substance use disorder.

God is a forgiving God. We must be willing to forgive ourselves and grow from our mistakes. God can turn even the tragic addiction, and the grief-filled experience of losing his father into complete recovery and restoration.

Drama Files: Storm-Tested God

Anthony and Tina were expecting their first child and had been married for seven years. They made all the preparations for their daughter's soon



arrival. One evening Anthony had to work late during a terrible storm. He was employed with a local electrical wiring company. Tina was home alone and was not due to delivery for six more weeks. The couple felt comfortable and Anthony remained at work.

While Tina was preparing dinner the storm knocked out the lighting for their entire home. Three trees had fallen near the house and one in the driveway blocking her car. Eventually, the temperature chilled to 35 degrees, and she realized she had forgotten to charge the landline phone. And, of course, she could not get a signal on her cell phone.

Tina began to get nervous and was becoming very cold. She knew that stress could cause the baby to arrive sooner than expected. Therefore, she tried to remain calm and prayerful. As she was lighting candles throughout the house, God reminded her of her favorite scripture Daniel 6:16. "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Tina knew without a doubt that God would protect her through this storm.

All Went Wrong

When Anthony could not reach Tina, he knew his home had been impacted by the storm. He left his job and requested that an electrical crew be sent to his home immediately. However, it would take several hours for the team to arrive.

Tina still did not know what was going on outside of her home and continued to trust God. Before Anthony could arrive the roof caved in and some of the roof fell on Tina causing a terrible impact on her and the baby. Tina could not move and she felt an excruciating pain all over her body.

Tina tried to move her body to remove some of the lumber off her abdomen. However, the more she moved the worse she felt. She felt herself losing all her physical abilities due to the cold and the debris that confined her to the floor. She soon felt herself having contractions and was screaming for

help. She called on the name of Jesus and recited scripture to help put her mind at ease, but subsequently lost all consciousness.



Power in the Name of Jesus

Shortly, after Anthony and the electrical team arrived, they began to assist with saving Tina and the baby. Anthony knew that they didn't have enough time to get Tina to the hospital and he remembered that their neighbor was an OB/GYN. He ran next door and knocked on the door and providentially, Dr. Winston was home. He told Anthony that although was scheduled to be on duty at the hospital that night, he was unable to get there due to the storm. The same trees were blocking his driveway.

Anthony told Winston the situation and they ran to assist Tina. They worked to revive her, and were happy when she rallied because she was in labor and needed to assist in the birthing process.

Winston directed them to call an ambulance because Tina would need to be transported to the hospital right after she delivered the baby. Inviting the electrical team to join hands, Anthony prayed with Dr. Winston, and for God's healing power and deliverance in this situation.

Trust That Speaks Volumes

Winston coached Tina while Anthony stood by her side encouraging her. She soon gave birth to a beautiful and healthy baby girl. By the time Tina delivered the ambulance had arrived and transported them to the hospital. The electrical team had removed all the trees so that Winston could also get to the hospital. Within thirty minutes followed up with Tina and her doctor. Anthony, Tina, and baby Danielle were all doing well. Several days later Tina and Danielle were able to leave the hospital and during this situation they have become good friends with the Winston family and have been witnessing to them about Christ. Winston was so moved by Tina and Anthony's trust in God and the circle of prayer that he wanted to know more about their God. And, what was behind the name, Danielle? he wanted to know. They wanted to name the baby after Daniel in the Bible, the couple explained. Just as he did for Daniel, Tina stated, "I knew my God would rescue me."

Tina's Faith Strengthened

Over the next couple of weeks Tina realized she was experiencing anxiety and contacted me for Christian counseling. She shared two points in her counseling session with me because of her experience and the affects of the

storm. First, God has a plan already in place as He did with Dr. Winston's inability to get to the hospital that night. God had him available to assist. Second, she noted, nothing catches God by surprise. While we are worrying we must learn to trust and lean on God totally. Tina thanked God for showing her a new path of trust and faith. She and her family are all well and truly thank God for her life and the life of Danielle. Tina wants to remain in counseling to help overcome her concerns and learn new skills and tools to develop her walk and faith in God. She now clings to a new scripture of hope in Psalms 91:15: "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him."

Drama Files: No Charges

*For the nine months I carried you holding you inside me no charge
For the nights I sat up with you, doctored you and prayed for you, no charge
For the time and tears and the costs through the years
There is no charge
When you add it all up the full cost of my love is no charge*



Mother's Day 2018, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel and Linda Carson* were notified that their two sons had been arrested for armed robbery. Linda Carson stated that her sons could not have committed any crime because they just arrived home the day before to celebrate Mother's Day with her.

She called me to pray with her and to ask for my attorney's number. I made myself available and went to meet with the attorney, the police, and the Carson brothers that day.

Tale of Two Sons

Alex and Andre are both third-year medical students and doing very well in school. Linda stated that her sons had been mistaken for two other young men, misidentified when they went to visit some of their old friends from high

school in the old neighborhood.

Two young men had robbed a store, and were identified as two African-Americans wearing white t-shirts and blue jeans. The Carson brothers wore similar clothing, but during the time of the robbery, they were visiting with their pastor and other church members. After leaving the church they stopped to say hello and socialize with old friends and were arrested by police soon after. That is when someone identified them as perpetrators in a yearlong robbery spree.

Police arrested Alex and Andre and allowed them to call their parents. Soon, however, police acknowledged that a mistake in identity had been made. While the Carson brothers were being held in custody, two other young men committed another robbery on the other side of town.



The “Right” Brothers

As the Carson brothers left the precinct, they recognized the other two young men coming in. They had gone to middle school together. What happened to them over the years? It was clear they had chosen a life of crime while the Carsons had chosen God, a crime-free life, and education.

The brothers told me that they prayed together daily, and they called their parents everyday for family worship. They were thankful that they remained close to God, family and church. They recognized early in life from their parents that there are no easy, fast tracks in this life. You must pray, study God’s word, be kind to others, remain connected with positive family and friends, and work hard.

Fortunately, for them, all charges were dropped and the family was reunited.

Mother’s Love Rewarded

Linda Carson stated she was praising God all the way home. The family attended Sunday evening service together and she was thankful for an amazing and eventful Mother’s Day with her family. After church she asked her sons why they had gone to visit their friends in the first place. Their answer was that they had gone to visit, to give them a Bible, and pray with them! Linda smiled, hung her head and wiped a tear from her eyes.

“Continue to use them, Lord” she said, breathing a soft prayer.

Alex and Andre both reached out their hands and said, “Love you, Mom.”

Can We Talk Values?

Samuel Carson prayed, never forgetting that this was truly a test of faith and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to others. He repeated the words of the Psalmist: "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise will continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1).

It is important for parents to teach their children morals and values with spiritual principals because, as they say "a family that prays together stays together." There are at least 10 practical ways to teach your children the right values. I especially want to see our parents instill: respect, kindness, honesty, courage, perseverance, self-discipline, compassion, generosity, and dependability.

Most parents want to instill these kinds of values in their children, too. Doing so will protect them from potentially negative societal influences and lay the foundation for them to become good citizens. We're not fulfilling our responsibilities as parents if we don't try to instill solid morals in our children.

Drama Files: Too Late to Break Up? Too long and too wrong, this wife walked away with nothing.



Belinda and John met at a neighborhood party store. John noticed Belinda and was attracted to her, but Belinda was not attracted to him at all. John walked out of the store but waited patiently for Belinda to come out. When she saw John waiting for her, he approached and offered her his cell phone number. They talked, became friends, dated and later she moved into his home. Three months later Belinda discovered that John was a drug dealer. This frightened her and she wanted no part of his lifestyle.

Belinda wanted out of the relationship but John pleaded with her to stay and

promised Belinda he would leave this illegal profession alone. Six months later, John was still selling drugs and Belinda was now expecting their first child. She did not want to separate the family and had no means to provide for herself and their son. Therefore, she remained in the relationship.

This is Not How I Was Raised

Belinda began to feel guilty because she was not raised to live in sin, but to live as man and wife. When speaking to John about her feelings, he expressed that he had not given any thought to marrying, but if that is what she wanted he would marry her. "But," he said, "I am a man who cannot be faithful." Though she was certain at that point that she should have left, she stayed because of her child. She feared she had no resources of her own, so she married John.

Belinda knew that John had extra marital relationships over the years, but never confronted him because he provided for her and their son. John, finally after many years, left the drug life behind and secured a job working for the post office. One afternoon he left his cell phone at home and Belinda discovered several women that he was having an affair with. When she confronted him, he told her "You knew the type of man that I was then and I had several women in my life."

"We are man and wife," Belinda countered. "Does that mean anything to you?" "No," John replied.

No Options on the Table

Belinda sat in the room alone and cried. At the moment she bowed down on her knees and prayed to the Lord for help. A few days later Belinda was referred to me for assistance. We met and discussed her options.

Belinda stated her husband refused to seek counseling and would continue to have sex with other women because she no longer satisfies him. John wanted a wife to cater to his every whim and Belinda said she would not do this. She is now preparing to divorce John, at the age of 45. She has to start her life over again, still with no resources. The house, car and her real estate business all belong to him. John told Belinda she will leave the way she came into his home, with nothing.

After her first therapy session Belinda willingly returned to church, and is not afraid to start again. "I never signed up for this type of life and I deserve better".

During the therapy session I shared several scriptures and suggestions to assist Belinda on her new journey.

Scriptures and Suggestions for Guidance

"He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself"
Proverbs 6:32.

"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Corinthians 15:33.

1. Pray first and be connected to God.
2. Don't be totally dependent on the other person.
3. Seek counseling and a safe exit plan.
4. Have yourself checked by a physician for a STD.
5. Don't compromise with your life.

6. Redirect your thoughts and action 180 degrees.

When an individual decides to become involved with another person who is openly living a life of lies and corruption, you must be strong enough to separate yourself and dissolve the relationship, immediately.

Drama Files: Marriage is Not for Profit

Tyrone and Lydia* have been dating for two years. He is a steel worker in a blue collar town and Lydia is a physician. The couple met through mutual friends and their relationship has blossomed. They both are Christians and are very active in their respective churches. The couple contacted me to assist them with premarital counseling. They want to fine tune any concerns regarding their upcoming engagement.



Tyrone and Lydia both feel that money is a concern and that it is factor in the relationship. Tyrone makes under six figures per year and Lydia makes well over seven figures per year. The couple has been arguing about who will pay for the new home, and also provisions for Tyrone's two sons. Lydia thinks that it is not her responsibility to pay for them to have the lifestyle that she is accustomed to having. Tyrone thinks that in marriage the two become one in every aspect, including finances. Tyrone feels that Lydia is looking for a partner and not a husband. Lydia has no children and is very

independent.

Should They Invest in This Relationship?

Lydia admitted she is afraid to trust because of her last relationship and that her last boyfriend was only interested in what she could provide for him. She admitted she is stuck in the past and is holding Tyrone hostage with her insecurities and feelings. Lydia requested counseling to find help with her feelings and her relationship with Tyrone.

Tyrone stated he seeks God's counsel daily and does not want to have another

failed marriage. His first wife was unfaithful and he was scarred deeply by her indiscretion. With Christian counseling for the past three years he is in a better emotional place in his life. He continues to pray and fast for wisdom. He relies heavily on his faith in God and his total desire is to please God. They have both made a commitment not to be sexually active and to remain celibate until marriage. He stated he would rather stop investing his time and heart in Lydia rather than continue to invest in her if their relationship is hopeless.

First, Lydia must decide what she wants from herself and from the relationship. Secondly, she must reconcile whether the finances are the real concern, or whether her fears and insecurities from her previous relationship are. Thirdly, I believe the question of whether she can approach the financial situation as a joint effort, not a separate effort, is a real concern. Tyrone and Lydia realize that they cannot move forward if these issues are not resolved.

Financial Concerns Cause Relationship Stress



Many couples spend hours arguing about what they feel matters, but at the end of the day, it all points back to the lack of trust, respect and open communication. Family finance is one of the major causes of divorce. Disagreement over finances

can tear apart the lining of the relationship when one spouse may not be employed, or not contributing enough. Or one spouse may believe "What's mine is mine, and what's yours is yours," an unrealistic and selfish way of thinking. The Bible states upon marriage, the two become one, Genesis 2:24. Finances are the leading cause of stress in a relationship, according to a survey of people in a relationship or partnership released by SunTrust Bank. Some 35 percent of all respondents experiencing relationship stress said money was the primary cause of friction. (Annoying habits came in second, at 25 percent.) Among respondents with relationship stress aged 44 to 54, 44 percent said money was the primary cause.

"Money really touches everything. It impacts people's lives," said Emmet Burns, brand marketing director for SunTrust.

Prenuptial Agreement Covers More Than Money

Lydia feared that if the marriage fails, Tyrone would be legally entitled to portions of her property. "I do not want her money but only her love and

respect," he said to me during their session.

"I may not bring seven figures to the marriage, but I bring something you can't put a price on: friendship, advice, companionship, spiritual leadership and love," Tyrone said. "How ridiculous does it sound for me to hold back on friendship, protection, love, and companionship and when we get married I'll hold back sex? Do we sign a prenup on those concerns because it may not work?"



"I may not bring seven figures to the marriage but I bring something you can't put a price on: friendship, advice, companionship, spiritual leadership and love," Tyrone said.

Tyrone told Lydia that she is only looking at the tangible things and that she is not ready for marriage. She said she never looked at the situation through those lenses and she apologized to Tyrone. She told him she values what he brings to the table, acknowledging that it is priceless.

Work it Out

Lydia and Tyrone both stated that they want to marry one another and they love each other. They will continue counseling to help resolve the concerns and Lydia will receive individual counseling for her fears about sharing her finances in her future marriage.

*All names and locations have been changed to protect privacy.

Drama Files: Acknowledging Brokenness

Eighteen year-old Jenna came from a loving environment. She grew up in a Christian home and attended some of the best schools in her city. Her parents always provided all the advantages that life could afford.



When the time came for Jenna to attend college her parents wanted her to follow them and attend their alma mater where they met. When her parents drove her to school and attended the parent orientation, everything fell in place. It was difficult for Jenna's mother to leave her only child, but they embraced one another and said good bye.

Soon after classes began Jenna settled in with her schedule. She began to meet new people and enjoyed the routine of campus life. One afternoon she was studying in the library when Richard greeted her and started a conversation. She liked him instantly. The pair began to spend a lot of time together and soon became very close.

The Day That Everything Changed

One afternoon two men brutally assaulted Jenna as she walked to her dorm. They almost beat her to death and she was unrecognizable. The campus police found her behind a building on campus. She was rushed to the hospital and then lingered in a coma for almost six months. Richard and her parents would visit her everyday with hopes of her regaining consciousness.

Late one evening, and after much prayer, Jenna awakened and recognized her parents. It all came back to her—Richard, her close friends, and the devastating attack. She had always been an action-oriented person who set the bar high for herself, and this awful situation created in her a vulnerable state of mind, understandably.

Jenna felt helpless and hopeless. Her parents sought Christian counseling because they recognized she needed intervention as soon as possible. She was depressed and very angry that she had been a target of such a terrible crime.

What Ray of Hope?

I hoped to help Jenna focus on the fact that she was alive, though she had to acknowledge her brokenness. She was mentally and physically broken, exhausted. Jenna recognized that she could have died, and, or could have been raped. She blamed herself for trying to defend herself to prevent the

attackers from hurting her more than they did.

Jenna's parents continue to care for her as she made every attempt to return to her school routine. She and Richard are still together and he has been very patient and supportive with her during the whole process. The counseling treatment provided information to help Jenna understand that she is not alone.

Sexual violence on campus is pervasive.



Acknowledging her brokenness and recognizing God's power, Jenna fights back for other victims of violence.

* 11.2% of all students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (among all graduate and undergraduate students).

* Among graduate and professional students, 8.8% of females and 2.2% of males experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation.

* Among undergraduate students, 23.1% of females and 5.4% of males experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation.

* 4.2% of students have experienced stalking since entering college.

–<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence>

After many months of counseling, and the police apprehending the two men as they tried to attack another woman, Jenna is healing from her own brokenness and was able to bring closure to her past.

What Closure Looks Like

Jenna testified against both men and they were sentenced to ten years in prison. She is now an advocate against campus violence. As a volunteer to support other victims, and speak out against the violence, she is thankful that God spared her life.

Jenna is also attending church and Bible class that has allowed her to trust God in everything. And, she believes that God has empowered her to speak out to help save others. She is very thankful for her Christian counseling and being able to acknowledge her brokenness to become whole once again.

As she grows stronger, Jenna shares this scripture everywhere she speaks:

Phil. 3:13-14: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."