

Surviving My Divorce - Part 1

A practical and spiritual guide for navigating the complexities of divorce



Coach Ricky

2025

SURVIVING MY DIVORCE – PART 1

A Spiritual and Practical Guide Navigating the Complexities of Divorce

by

Coach Ricky

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Disclaimer

This book is based on the author's personal experiences and opinions.

It is intended for informational and inspirational purposes only and should not be taken as legal, psychological, or financial advice. Readers are encouraged to seek appropriate professional guidance for their own situations. The names and identifying details of certain individuals have been changed to protect their privacy.

Introduction

I firmly believe that your discovery of this book is no mere coincidence. The title may have caught your attention because you, too, are navigating the complexities of divorce—or perhaps you find yourself wrestling with the thoughts and emotions that accompany this life-altering experience.

I chose to write this book seven years after my own divorce, having come to recognize the immense challenges I faced in surviving it. By sharing my experiences, my goal is not only to support you, the reader, but also to deepen my own understanding of the journey I've walked. Reflecting on the past has offered me valuable insights—into what led to the end of my marriage and what I've learned in the years that followed.

Throughout this book, I'll place particular emphasis on perception—how we understand and interpret our own truth and reality. Seven years post-divorce, I'm able to look back on those events with greater objectivity and less emotional influence. That's not to say my perception was distorted at the time, but I acknowledge now just how powerfully emotions can shape what we believe to be true.

This book is not about blame. It is not an attempt to seek retribution against my former spouse for her decision to end our marriage. Rather, it is a deeply personal reflection—an honest, vulnerable effort to explore and understand my own experience, in the hope that it may encourage you to reflect on and make sense of yours.

I will elaborate more on the reasons why I decided to write this book in the sequel, *Surviving My Divorce – Part 2*. But for now, I'll simply say this: for a long time, I never had the space to share my perspective—to speak openly about how I was affected by the events that led up to my divorce, as well as some of the events that followed. That silence weighed heavily on me. Writing this book became both a way to process what had happened and a way to express just how deeply a divorce can impact a person.

Sometimes, the truth gets lost—and people continue with their lives choosing to forget what really happened. This book is part of my effort to remember exactly how my marriage ended and how, by God's grace, I was able to endure it and survive. Although I touch on a few painful moments, this is not a story of defeat. It is a story of healing, rediscovery, learning, and finding purpose through pain.

My hope is that, through my story, you'll find reassurance—that even in the midst of great loss, restoration is possible. Miracles are possible. And with time, personal growth is absolutely possible.

Throughout this book, I will share my most difficult emotions and experiences—not to dwell on the past, but to show you that I understand firsthand how painful and disorienting divorce can be. My aim is to help you face and navigate the emotions that may surface during your own journey.

Because of the emotional weight of the experiences I share—and out of respect for my former spouse, my children, and the other family members involved—I’ve chosen to remain anonymous and to use fictitious names and dates throughout this book. That said, I assure you that the content is truthful and accurate to the best of my memory, and based on diary entries, emails, bank statements, old photos, and text messages.

Perhaps one day, when my children are old enough to understand the full context of these events, I’ll feel ready to share my identity. But for now, my intention is simply to tell this story with honesty and purpose.

Before we begin, I want to clarify my professional background. I’m a qualified divorce coach, having earned my qualification through IAP Career College, and I hold a four-year degree in Human Resource Management from the University of Pretoria in South Africa, with a strong academic foundation in human behaviour, communication, and emotional intelligence.

With that said, I’m not a registered psychologist, legal practitioner, or financial advisor. This book is therefore not intended to offer psychological, legal, or financial advice—though we will touch on those areas, as they are vital to the divorce process.

The purpose of this book is to offer emotional support, guidance, and perspective based on the real emotions and experiences I’ve lived through. It is meant to complement—not replace—the role of qualified professionals.

If you find yourself stuck in a dark place or experiencing suicidal thoughts, I urge you to seek professional help. I say this from experience. After my divorce, friends and family encouraged me to do the same. My family doctor even prescribed antidepressants. But I made a conscious decision not to take them. I chose to face my emotions with a clear mind, believing that fully experiencing each one would serve a greater purpose in my healing journey.

I sincerely hope the insights shared in this book offer you meaningful guidance and bring about a sense of comfort and clarity. If even one part of my story resonates with you or helps ease your burden, I will consider the purpose of this book fulfilled.

And before I close this introduction, let me leave you with one important reminder: No situation is permanent. You need to hear that again—no situation is permanent.

Before I take you deeper into my story, I want to offer you a glimpse of hope. Today—seven years after my divorce—I’m happily remarried to a wonderful, supportive wife, and I’m the proud father of four beautiful children. While our life may not be perfect, I can honestly say that, given the circumstances of divorce, our family is as emotionally healthy and connected as it can possibly be. We’ve worked hard to create a home built on honesty, understanding, and love—and that, in itself, is something I’m deeply grateful for.

But it wasn’t always like this. Seven years ago, I was overwhelmed by a flood of emotions—anger, bitterness, loneliness, sadness, rejection—just to name a few. I genuinely didn’t know if things would ever feel normal again. And yet, through time, reflection, faith, and intentional healing, those emotions began to fade.

Today, I can say with confidence that I've grown through this experience. I've learned more about myself, others, and even about the spiritual truths I once thought I understood. And for that growth, I'm genuinely grateful.

My hope for you is the same: that through your own journey, you'll find meaning in the pain, peace in the process, and one day—hope in the future.

Yours Faithfully

Coach Ricky

20 October 2025

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Chapter 1

My side of the story: From my engagement to my divorce

I'd like to give you a brief history of my first marriage and the events that led up to my divorce. The reason I'm doing this is to paint a clearer picture of the circumstances and emotions I experienced during that period of my life. In the chapters that follow, I will often refer back to this part of my story to help explain certain concepts and ideas.

My engagement



In the classic fashion of many love stories, ours began with two people ready to start the next chapter of their lives. The date was June 20, 2008—a chilly winter morning that set the scene for a memorable trip to the mountains. Our destination was the picturesque Golden Gate Highlands in the Free State province of South Africa.

It was there, surrounded by the grandeur of nature, that I decided to climb to the summit of the Golden Gate with my soon-to-be wife. At the top, with breathtaking views all around us, I asked her to marry me. It was a deeply special moment that filled us with excitement and marked the beginning of a new and promising season in our lives.

Eager to share our joy, we quickly informed both our families, who celebrated the news with us. Over the next seven months, we began building our dream home. My soon-to-be father-in-law owned a large property where my wife's mother, two sisters,

and brother also lived. Seeing that there was enough space, he suggested we build our home on the property.

It made sense—it was more cost-effective than starting from scratch elsewhere, and it allowed both families to work together. So that's exactly what we did. Both sides contributed, and the shared effort helped bring our dream to life. What we built wasn't just a house—it was a symbol of the life we were hoping to create together, a home that would soon witness all the highs and lows of our shared journey.



My wedding

On January 11, 2009, the completion of our home marked a momentous occasion—the day we chose to begin our journey as husband and wife. Our religious wedding was a breathtaking affair, adorned with roses, candles, and the soft backdrop of music. Even a gentle rain shower graced the day, adding a calm, almost ethereal touch to the atmosphere. The day brought together everyone dear to us, creating a beautiful tapestry of love, support, and shared joy.

The months leading up to the wedding were a whirlwind of activity. Between planning the ceremony and overseeing the construction of our home, life had been full and fast-paced. But all of that effort led to a celebration that would stay with us forever.

The last guests left around 2:00 a.m., marking the end of a magical day filled with laughter, emotion, and connection. Amidst all the preparations and excitement, we had finally stood side by side, united in marriage. As we set off on our honeymoon,

we carried with us the hope and excitement of a new beginning—a fresh chapter in our shared story.



The birth of our first son

In August 2009, the joyful news of my wife's pregnancy filled us with excitement and a desire to share our happiness with those around us. As we eagerly anticipated the arrival of our first child, I made a significant life decision—I left my position as a personnel manager at an international company to join my in-laws in the family business. Both my wife and I transitioned into this new work environment, stepping into a fresh chapter of our professional lives together.

I vividly remember the flood of emotions that overwhelmed us at the hospital as we waited for his arrival. It was a beautiful day, etched in my memory as one of the most joyful and meaningful moments of our lives.

After his birth, we settled into a new rhythm. My wife and I adapted to juggling the responsibilities of work and parenting. Our son, Damien, the first grandchild on both sides of the family, became a beacon of joy—bringing smiles, laughter, and warmth to everyone around him. This season marked the beginning of a transformative journey as we embraced the challenges and blessings of parenthood.



Our first miscarriage

Almost a year later, my wife shared the news that she was pregnant again. The thought of expanding our family filled me with excitement. I imagined a different childhood for my son than the one I had experienced as an only child. I longed for a fuller home and a larger family.

But at the 12-week sonar appointment, that joyful anticipation was replaced with a heavy silence as the doctor gently said the words that would never leave me: “This little one is not breathing anymore.” We had lost the baby.

A deep sense of helplessness settled in. I found myself searching for hope, clinging to the idea that somehow there might still be a way to change the outcome—but there wasn’t. The contrast between the overwhelming joy of my first son's birth and the sorrow of this moment was heartbreaking.

This loss took a toll on our relationship. My wife, already struggling with body image and now facing the emotional aftermath of the miscarriage process, processed her grief in her own way. The strain between us became more visible as we each coped with the pain in different, sometimes distant, ways.



Our second miscarriage

After a few months, life slowly began to feel normal again. But about a year later, we were met with another bittersweet moment—my wife was pregnant once more. Unfortunately, this pregnancy came with complications and ended in the painful decision to terminate at just six weeks.

While the emotional impact wasn't as intense as the first loss, the sadness still hung over us. It lingered quietly—in the background of our days, in the spaces between words, and in the subtle shifts of our relationship.

The birth of our second son

After enduring two heartbreaking miscarriages and a three-and-a-half-year gap since the birth of our first son, we finally welcomed our second son, Ronald, into the world on September 8, 2013.

However, the joy of his arrival was quickly overshadowed by an unexpected crisis. Just two weeks after giving birth, my wife woke me in the middle of the night, distressed by a sharp pain in her leg. Alarmed by the swelling we could both see, we sensed something was seriously wrong. We rushed to the hospital, where doctors diagnosed a blood clot in her leg. Immediate concern set in, especially with the risk that the clot could travel to her lungs.

She was hospitalized for two weeks—an emotionally difficult time that coincided with the early days of adjusting to life with a newborn. Our three-year-old Damien was

unaware of what was going on, while Ronald's constant cries and the uncertainty around the hospital made things especially challenging for us.

Eventually, my wife was discharged, but the recovery process was far from over. For nearly three months, she had to give herself nightly injections of blood-thinning medication. It was a difficult season, filled with tension, fatigue, and the heavy weight of responsibility.



The financial pressure

Over the next three years, our family business faced mounting financial challenges. As the pressure grew, it placed even more strain on our relationship. To ease the burden, I secured a loan from my dad, which offered some temporary relief. But it wasn't enough. The business began struggling again, and by October 2016, I made a pivotal decision.

I chose to sell a property that belonged to my mom, generating around R420 000.00 (approximately \$30 000.00 at the time). Most of these funds were carefully allocated—used to clear outstanding customer accounts in the business and to settle the final debt on our home.

Around the same time, my father-in-law introduced a new business idea: breeding exotic game. Motivated by the potential, I invested R80 000.00 (approximately \$5,700.00) in purchasing a golden blue wildebeest bull, with plans to breed it with a few females already on the family farm. The demand for golden variants was high, and I believed this venture might finally be the breakthrough we needed.



With our debts settled and new business plans underway, I felt a renewed sense of hope. We were in a difficult place, but I truly believed that change was coming—and that better days were just around the corner.

The phone call

What happened next was something no one can ever truly prepare for—an unforeseen moment that would change the course of my life. It was Monday, the 27th

of February, 2017. At 7:30 in the morning, while on my way to work and reflecting on the previous day's church sermon, my phone rang.

I remember the date and time vividly, made even more memorable by the pastor's message about how God's blessings rest on a well-ordered home. Over the previous three months, I had felt a growing distance between my wife and me.



That morning, as I tried to wake her up, she responded with an unusual coldness. We ended up arguing just before leaving for church.

During the service, while my boys and I sang, she sat quietly, distracted by an ongoing conversation on her phone. Her preoccupation was hard to ignore and fed into a growing sense that something wasn't right. Though she insisted it was due to work stress and looming deadlines, her constant need to be on the phone—even during church—raised unsettling doubts.

Back to that Monday morning: I answered the call. On the other end was a woman whose words would shatter the foundation of my reality. "You better tell your wife to keep her hands off my husband," she said.

At first, I thought it was a prank. I told her she had the wrong number, but she persisted, identifying herself as Clare. I told her I didn't know who she was. She laughed and insisted that we'd spoken before. Unconvinced, I asked for proof.

When I arrived at work, I passed by my wife and her sister. My wife looked radiant. In spite of our struggles, she had been working with a personal trainer for the past six months and was looking healthy and fit again. Her long, shiny hair stood in stark contrast to the period when she'd lost so much of it due to the blood thinner medication.

For a brief moment, I clung to the hope that Clare had made a mistake—that it was all a misunderstanding. But just five minutes later, that hope would vanish.

The affair

My phone began to buzz repeatedly—message after message, notification after notification. As I opened them, I was met with a stream of screenshots: conversations between Clare and me... and more disturbingly, between my wife and Clare's husband.

Then it hit me—Clare's husband was my wife's long-time "good friend" from her childhood. I had only met him once before we got married. I remembered that my wife had confided in him and shared deep conversations before our engagement. She had always assured me that they were just friends—nothing more.

But as I read the messages and spoke with Clare, it became painfully clear that their connection had turned into something far deeper, far more personal.

I was overwhelmed by a storm of emotions: confusion, shock, anger, betrayal, and disbelief. It took me nearly an hour to process what I had just seen and heard. The reality before me was so far removed from what I thought I knew.

I got into my car and began to drive, trying to collect my thoughts. My phone rang over and over—calls from my wife, from friends—but I didn't answer. I didn't trust my thoughts or my emotions. I needed silence. I needed space.

An hour later, I pulled into a roadside garage and tried to steady myself before calling my wife. When she answered, she insisted that Clare was trying to destroy her life and that the recorded conversations were being twisted. She claimed she had occasionally used my phone and pretended to be me, in an effort to deceive Clare and "protect" our family.

But none of it made sense to me. Why would a stranger have access to such intimate conversations—both between my wife and Clare's husband, and supposedly between me and Clare, a woman I had never even met?

Her explanations grew more tangled. She denied everything, calling it all a conspiracy. But the messages I had seen were clear. The words, the tone, the emotional intimacy between her and Clare's husband couldn't be denied.

My world was crumbling. I didn't know who to believe anymore. I didn't know where to turn. Not wanting to alarm anyone, I informed my mother-in-law that I was taking a two-day break from work and assured her that I was safe.

Leaving the garage, I kept driving, ignoring the constant ringing of my phone. During my conversations with Clare, I had asked for her husband Bob's number and tried calling him several times, but he didn't answer. He later responded with a text, saying he was busy at work.

After nearly seven hours on the road, I reached the coast—Durban, a city along South Africa's northern shoreline. Exhausted and uncertain of what to do next, I sat in my car for a while, contemplating where I should sleep for the night.

Thankfully, my cousin lived in Durban—someone who didn't know my wife or her family. I reached out, and he kindly offered me a place to stay. There, in the safety of unfamiliar company, I began to share my story. It was the beginning of facing the truth, and the first step toward finding a way through the pain.



The vision

We spent the entire night talking, accompanied by a few drinks, trying to make sense of everything that had happened. When I finally went to bed, I experienced something unlike anything before—an extraordinary vision. It went beyond a typical dream. It was vivid, almost tangible, more real than anything I had ever encountered in sleep.

In this vision, I found myself in an immense hall, completely white. The curtains, chairs, and carpets—all radiated a sense of purity. I sat before a piano, playing the most enchanting music I had ever heard. The notes seemed to flow effortlessly, filling the space with beauty.

Beside me stood a presence. It appeared as a woman, but later I understood it to be the embodiment of love itself. Over and over, I heard the comforting words: "You are going to be okay." The feeling was overwhelming—peaceful, warm, and reassuring. I didn't want the moment to end. It felt like I was being held in the hands of something far greater than myself.

Looking back, I truly believe this was a message sent to me from the spiritual realm—reassuring me that, whatever happened next, I was going to be okay. I needed to experience this divine vision, or dream—whatever it was—to give me a sense of hope for what was about to unfold over the next ten months, which I still remember to this day as the hardest ten months of my life.



Facing a new reality

The next morning, as I woke up, the weight of everything ahead hit me hard. I knew I had to face it all—but the thought was overwhelming. Needing to clear my mind, I walked down to the beach, watching the sun rise. I sent Bob a text message, expressing exactly what I thought of him. I told him how much my wife and I had been through over the past few years and asked that he focus on his own family moving forward.

A deep sense of anxiety rose in me as I realized that returning home meant stepping into a new reality. I would have to face my wife, my two boys, and her family—with no clear idea of what had been said, who knew what, or who I could trust.

I arrived home that Tuesday afternoon. My wife greeted me politely, but I could tell she was upset. She expressed her frustration, accusing me of being irresponsible for suddenly leaving her and the boys. I acknowledged her feelings and explained the state of confusion I had been in after receiving the messages. I pressed her for clarity, but her answers were vague. She insisted things weren't as serious as I believed, and said we should handle everything privately—that it was no one else's business.

The next day at work, I came face to face with her father. The air between us was thick with unspoken tension. I was still confused and shaken, and I approached him with a kind of frantic energy. I apologized for my sudden disappearance and tried to explain my uncertainty about what was going on.

At the time, we were in the middle of a business deal aimed at resolving some serious cash flow issues. It required me to purchase a property from my father-in-law for R1 000 000 (approximately \$74,000). I intended to secure a loan from the bank and use that money to pay him. But before I could move forward, I told him I needed to understand my wife's connection to Clare's husband. This wasn't just about emotions—it was about a new reality potentially impacting every aspect of our lives

I also intended to show him all the money I had spent trying to settle outstanding supplier accounts after selling my mother's property. I had a spreadsheet in my hand with all the transactions, ready to show him how deeply invested I was—not only in the business, but in his family. I wanted him to understand what was at stake for me if my wife was, in fact, in love with another man.

Looking back, I believe my timing was wrong, and my frantic approach didn't help the conversation. My father-in-law listened quietly but didn't offer a single word in response.



The confrontation

Later that evening, my wife called me in a state of hysteria, demanding to know what I had said and done. I told her I had spoken to her father and explained that I couldn't move forward with the business transaction because of the messages from Clare. I shared that I was deeply unsettled by the nature of her relationship with Clare's husband and needed clarity.

Her anger erupted. She warned me that I would regret everything, that some things, once broken, couldn't be fixed. She told me I was destroying everything. I tried to reason with her, saying that all I wanted was the truth. Without honesty, how could we move forward?

The next day, my father-in-law approached me—no longer silent, but furious. He lashed out, calling my reaction immature and criticizing me for talking about the sacrifices we had all made for the business. He even brought up proof of the money that had been spent building our house—a statement that left me completely stunned. I hadn't questioned anyone's sacrifices or financial input, or so I thought. My goal had simply been to explain how deeply, emotionally and financially, I was invested in my marriage and what was at stake if my wife was in love with another man.

But the conversation twisted out of shape. Suddenly, I was being accused of questioning the family's generosity—of disrespecting everything they had done for us. In that moment, everything changed. The relationship I had shared with my father-in-law for nine years—once filled with love, respect, and trust—was now fractured.

The next day, he sent back the Christmas gift I had bought for him. I felt vulnerable, helpless, and had no idea what to do next.

The arguments

Over the next month, my wife and I found ourselves locked in frequent arguments. A weird, undeniable shift had taken place in our relationship. She began placing blame on me for various issues, claiming there was no longer an emotional connection between us. I was stunned by how differently we saw things. She insisted that I was unhappy and pointed to our photos, saying there was no joy in my face.

I reminded her of the financial pressures we had endured in recent years and admitted that, yes, things had been difficult—but I believed we could work through it. Her response was final: she told me we could no longer share a room. I moved to the downstairs bedroom. Explaining this new arrangement to the children only added to the tension in our home.

Desperate to mend the rift, I reminded her how much I loved her. I spoke of our shared history, of the life we had built together, and of the forgiveness we both needed. I tried to rekindle what we once had—buying her new clothes, bringing her

coffee in the mornings, surprising her with flowers that reminded us of happier times. I kept our conversations light, hoping not to provoke more conflict. I even asked both sides of the family to treat her kindly and not make things more difficult. But despite all my efforts, the struggle continued.

In my search for strength and guidance, I decided to attend a church camp, pray for our marriage and genuinely commit to working on myself.



The final word

I still remember standing in the garage one night just before attending the church camp. Out of nowhere, she said the words I had dreaded: “I want a divorce.”

I reached out to her, almost like a little boy clinging to his mother, and pleaded with her not to go through with it. I reminded her that we were a team—that we had children together, and we had faced so many trials side by side. But no matter how much I begged, it appeared that her mind was made up.

Later, she told me that the life coach she had been seeing suggested I move out for six weeks so she could assess whether she missed me. She also recommended that I begin searching for a new job. Desperate to save our marriage, I agreed. I packed up my things, moved out, and started looking for work.

For the next three weeks, we had very little contact. When I visited my own home, I felt like a stranger. I tried to keep things light and cheerful around the boys, but the pain would sometimes leak through in the form of tears. My wife, however, warned me not to show emotion in front of them, saying it upset them.

Then four weeks into this six-week arrangement, on a Friday, I received the call that shattered what little hope I had left. She told me to come and collect my belongings the following day. We hadn't even completed the full six weeks—yet she had already begun the divorce process. I think it was during this same conversation that she informed me I would also need to leave the family business.

I tried to speak to her father, asking if I could stay involved in the business for the sake of the children. But he simply said it was his daughter's decision, and he stood by her.

When I arrived the next morning, some of my clothes and shoes were already lying in front of the garage. I loaded them into my car and asked her why she couldn't wait the full six weeks as we'd agreed. Her response was vague. She simply said, "It's over."

A few days later, the rest of my things were delivered to my parents' house by our business driver.



The gym Instructor

One day, during the six weeks my wife and I were living apart, while my boys were visiting me, they mentioned that a man had been coming to see their mother in the evenings. They said Mommy introduced him as Bob, her gym instructor.

This confused me. My wife had once told me that her gym instructor was 22 years old when she began training with him. At the time, she was 34. It didn't make sense that her instructor would be visiting her at home in the evenings.

I gently asked the boys if she was training with him or what exactly they were doing. They simply said, “He’s visiting Mommy.”

I decided to confront her about it, but she responded defensively, saying that it was none of my business who visited her.

It wasn’t until later that I found out the man was Clare’s husband. He was introduced to my boys as her gym instructor.

To this day, I still don’t know whether there was ever a gym instructor at all—or if Bob had been “the instructor” from the very beginning.



The final goodbyes

On May 17, 2017, I said my final goodbyes to everyone at the family business, loading the last suitcase into my car. It felt like the closing of an entire chapter—everything I had invested in our marriage, our home, the family business, and her family came to an abrupt end.

In a final gesture of gratitude, I bought flowers for my mother-in-law and wrote a heartfelt card for her and my two sisters-in-law. I thanked them for the nine years in which they had welcomed me into their family. I acknowledged the strength of our teamwork and told them how deeply they would be missed.



As I stood there in front of my in-laws, I felt like a little boy who had just been expelled from school—waiting for the principal to realize a mistake had been made and to tell me I could stay. But no such words came. For a few, I suppose, it was a sad goodbye, but that was it. No real comfort, no reassurance—just the quiet end of an entire chapter of my life.

With those parting words, my wife walked me to the car. She firmly instructed me not to contact her family in any way that might upset them further. I was stunned by how cold and unsympathetic she had become. It felt as though she could not wait to be rid of me. I climbed into my car and drove away—leaving behind everything I had once called my life.

The emotional aftermath was overwhelming. I was engulfed by loneliness, sadness, depression, rejection, and emptiness. The absence of my children made the pain even harder to bear, as I knew they, too, were hurting. This was the most difficult experience of my life.

Over the next eight months, I struggled deeply—battling nightmares, sleepless nights, panic attacks, body spasms, depression, and anxiety. The weight of it all was almost unbearable.

The breakup letter

I thought it appropriate to include the email my wife sent to my mom, my dad, and me during this time. I believe this letter provides insight into where her mind was at, and how she interpreted the events that had unfolded in our marriage up to that point.

Her words reflect her perspective, emotions, and rationale for the choices she made. While I don't believe she was being completely sincere in everything she said—especially in not mentioning her relationship with Bob at the time—I do believe that she revealed some truths. It's important to understand both sides of the story as honestly and transparently as possible.

Hello Dad, Mom and Ricky,

I don't have Dad's email, but I trust you'll show him this because it's meant for all three of you. I hope you're all doing well.

With me, things are up and down — I'm taking it one day at a time. It's an incredibly difficult time. Financially it's also not easy to suddenly handle everything on my own, but I know and believe that things will get better again.

I realize I'm probably nobody's favourite person at the moment, and that's why I'd rather send an email than come knock at your door. I'm sorry for the way things ended between all of us. It's hard because I doubt that showing up at your doorstep would make things any better.

I also realize everyone thinks I lost my marbles somewhere along the way. But the truth is something entirely different. I realize the events of the past few months have been a massive shock for everyone — and believe me, for everyone on my side too.

I already told Ricky — I don't think I've ever in my whole life been responsible for so much hurt and anger from so many people all at once. From my point of view, I did something that very few people have the guts to do. I'm in my early 30s, and my kids are still small — so excuse my blunt language, but it takes balls...

For the first time I'm being completely honest with myself and with everyone around me, and unfortunately, my truth and choices are not things most — if any — of the people closest to me can deal with.

Where things started going wrong and whose fault it is no longer matters. Maybe we were a bit young, maybe we never really got to know each other properly, maybe I come from a chaotic home and you're more polished. Who knows?

Maybe all the storms that hit our path were simply one too many for two young people to handle.

I just got to a point in my life where I knew — I don't want to go on like this forever. And I'm being honest about it. I know it hurts people around me, and most of all it hurts you, Ricky, but I can't do a lifetime of not being myself.

I've already told you everything I feel about me and you, so I won't go into that again here. I think you and I have been through deeper waters than what most marriages could survive. I remember so many times when we looked at each other and said, "Flip, we're tough — look at what we handle."

I think we worked and stressed way too much and gave way too little attention to each other. Always thinking we were fine. I think, without realizing it, we each started walking our own path, and when I finally realized it, we were already so far apart I couldn't even see you anymore.

I worked myself to death for so long — and that suited you because we know you like doing your own thing. But eventually, I realized I want to live — I want to go see and do things, have fun, travel, that kind of stuff.

I started mentioning it and aiming for it — and that's when I realized that you and I are like day and night in what we want and how we see life.

I think for so long we looked after everyone around us and never really got to know each other or grew in the same direction. Actually, never had the time, right?

Only when I stopped working all the time did I see how far we had drifted apart — neither of us noticed it happening. And by then, it was too late for me.

I look at the life ahead of me, and I'm being honest with myself and others — and that's not always, or ever, what people want to hear. People want to hear that you'll make it work until the very end, whether you want to or not. That you'll continue a life you know you don't fit into, whether you want to or not — that's what people want to hear.

And I just can't. I can't promise that to someone and later lie. I can't pretend for the rest of my life to be someone I'm not.

Everyone says divorce is wrong — and they're right. But in my mind, I'd rather make this one "mistake" now than spend the rest of my life looking people in the eyes knowing I'm hiding who and what I really am. You deserve someone who doesn't hold back and doesn't doubt.

I'm not angry at you, Ricky. I'm not angry at any of you. I love you all and I'm just thankful for everything you've meant to me. I'm thankful for everything you've always done for me, Ricky. And it's because I love you that I know you deserve someone who sees life the way you do — and I'm not that person.

I will forever share the kids with you — and even though I know there are people who can't wait to throw their future emotional wounds in my face, I'm taking this chance. Because I know how much love my kids will receive — from both my side and yours. I know that even though we're splitting, we're not splitting the kids. I know we will always put their feelings and hearts first.

You will always be their dad, who they will only have love and admiration for. And I'll always be their mom. And maybe we were meant to be together just so that we could create two little humans who carry the best of both of our unique traits.

I don't want to be like my grandmother who, at 78, said her life is only starting now. Not that I'm comparing our marriage to theirs — but it's the idea of living a life that was never truly yours.

I'm never going to be that woman who clings to you — because I never was. I'm never going to be able to focus on just one place. I want more, because I am more.

And you deserve that too — exactly what you're looking for, just like I do.

I'm so thankful for our years together and everything we did together. I know how much this disrupts your life — and yes, I get to keep the house. If it were anywhere else, I would've sold it and paid you out immediately.

But please know — I don't want to cheat you, and I will pay you as you and I arrange.

I hope that one day we can all sit together and watch athletics at school — and that you won't want to throw oranges at me when you see me at the inter-house sports day.

In my eyes, Ricky, we can be friends again one day. Maybe not now, but someday. Because I'm not angry, and I don't blame. I'm just very honest with everyone. And I understand everyone's anger and sadness toward me, but when the dust settles and emotions calm, I'll still be here. We share the kids, and I believe we can make this work.

Love from my heart — and sorry for everyone's heartbreak.

Brenda

Note:

Just to elaborate on the sentence in her letter: "I've already told you everything I feel about me and you, so I won't go into that again here."

She was referring to her belief that I wasn't strong enough for her. She often expressed doubts that my plans would ever work out. She told me she needed someone with a stronger character—someone more like her dad. She also mentioned that we didn't share an emotional connection, and that she had always felt more attracted to Bob.

She dreamed of traveling the world and living an exciting, adventurous life. In contrast, she saw me as someone content with staying home, and she realized that we didn't share the same vision for the future.

Starting from scratch

After 16 years of independence, and nearly 9 years as a devoted husband and father, I found myself moving back in with my parents. Thankfully, they welcomed me with open arms and gave me the support I desperately needed. I can't begin to express how grateful I am for their understanding and love during such a broken time in my life.

Financially and emotionally, I was starting from zero. A close friend offered me a job opportunity as a financial advisor—something I accepted out of necessity, especially

since I hadn't heard anything back from a pharmaceutical company where I'd recently interviewed.

With the uncertainty hanging over me, I committed to the financial advisor role and began a two-week training course. After the training, I stepped into the world of selling life and medical insurance. I worked hard to learn the ropes, attending lectures and trying to absorb everything about financial products.

The energy in the training room was vibrant—many of the attendees were young, single, and full of optimism. It was hard not to feel out of place. While they spoke excitedly about starting a new career, I sat quietly, still emotionally wounded from everything I had lost.



My thoughts often drifted during the lectures. I was trying to stay present, but my heart and mind were heavy. On top of everything, my wife continued pushing to finalize the divorce. She urged me to calculate the money I had invested in our house and the business, hoping to speed up the process. This added yet another layer of stress to an already overwhelming time.

Coping was incredibly difficult.

Throughout this period, I clung to prayer. Each day, I turned to the Lord, desperately seeking comfort, strength, and answers. I asked, Why? Why did I have to endure this? I prayed simply to make it through the day.

Some nights, I was too broken to even form the words. I would lie in bed, tears silently falling, unable to pray—just hoping that God could still hear me in my silence.

I felt utterly broken.

The value of a good friend

The following morning, on my way to training, I met Cloe, who was also attending the course. She was a lawyer seeking a career change, and as the senior participant, she naturally stood out. We struck up a conversation, and I shared the events of the last four months with her. She listened with genuine interest to every detail, and in that moment, we formed a strong and immediate connection.

Cloe was a married woman and a devoted Christian. She introduced me to her husband on one occasion and quickly picked up on the emotional struggles I was facing. Throughout the training week, she became a pillar of support—listening without judgment, praying with me, and even shedding tears alongside me when words weren't enough.

Her compassion and willingness to walk with me through my pain made a world of difference during one of the most difficult periods of my life.



The first miracle

On the last day of training, Cloe and I took a walk through the park. I opened up to her, admitting that I didn't feel prepared for the role of a financial advisor. Despite my initial enthusiasm, the two weeks of training made me realize that this path wasn't right for me. We stopped to pray together, and I asked God for clarity and direction.

That afternoon, I decided to call Mr. Peterson, the Managing Director of the pharmaceutical company where I had interviewed a month earlier. When he answered, I was surprised by the excitement in his voice.

I explained my situation—how I had completed the financial advisor training but didn't feel at peace with the direction I was heading. I asked whether the position I had interviewed for was still available.

Without hesitation, he said I could start whenever I was ready.

And so, on July 16, 2017—coincidentally, my wife's birthday—I began my new job.

I was incredibly grateful. I thanked Cloe for her kindness and prayers. Though we crossed paths on three more occasions, life eventually took us in different directions. I also went to see my friend who had helped me get the financial advisor position. He was upset, but I assured him that I appreciated the opportunity and never meant to cause any inconvenience. Sadly, after I left, we gradually lost contact.

Looking back, I remain thankful for the experience. While that job wasn't the right fit, it introduced me to people like Cloe—people who reminded me that God still places the right people in our lives, even during our lowest moments.



The final coffee

Toward the end of July 2017, I reached out to my wife and asked if we could meet. I was excited about my new job and the progress I had made. I wanted to show her that I had taken the steps she had asked of me. I had found a new job, built new connections, and was beginning to stand on my own two feet.

She agreed to meet for coffee. She was polite, and she listened as I spoke. But when I gently brought up the idea of reconciliation, her response was clear—it was over.

To my surprise, she said the divorce papers had already been drafted and were simply waiting to be finalized. She reiterated that I was no longer the person for her.



I asked about Bob. Her answer was vague. She said he needed to work things out with his wife, but she didn't elaborate. Instead, she asked me to give her a timeline—when would I be ready to sign the divorce papers

It was another painful conversation. I left with a heavy heart. I missed my wife, my children and my house. I missed the sense of family that had once defined my life.

That winter—the first winter in eight years spent without my family—was one of the coldest I've ever known.

The visitations

The visitation schedule became a challenging new reality. I was now permitted to see my boys only on Wednesdays and every second weekend. For seven years, there had never been any restrictions on my interactions with them. I had seen them every single day since they were born.

As their father, I had always been actively involved—raising them, playing with them, teaching them manners, taking them to school, and attending their various activities. Suddenly, I was faced with a legal structure that dictated when I could and couldn't be with my own children. It was a difficult adjustment to accept.

What made it even more disheartening was trying to understand how she—and eventually a court—could decide that I should only be allowed to spend time with my children once a week and every second weekend. It felt profoundly unfair.

In the immediate aftermath of leaving the house, I'll never forget the moment my four-year-old wrapped his arms around my leg, pleading with me to come home. Unless you've experienced it yourself, it's hard to describe the depth of that pain—a gut-wrenching, helpless kind of ache. I tried to explain the situation to him many times, but at that age, he simply couldn't understand. Watching him cry during drop-offs was brutal. Every Wednesday and second Sunday, I found myself crying on the way back.

My eldest son refused to sleep over at my parents' house during the week. So I would fetch him after work, spend about three hours with him, and then drop him off again. Only my youngest would stay with me on Wednesday nights, and I would take him back early Thursday morning before work.

This arrangement remained in place for the next two years—until March 2019. Over time, I suppose I grew used to it. But it never felt normal. The drop-offs hurt every single time.



Pre-divorce arrangements

On October 18, 2017, I came face to face with the crushing reality of how cold, unempathetic, and cruel a situation can become—especially when you're at your most vulnerable.

After carefully calculating every cent I had poured into our home—financially and physically—my wife handed me the divorce settlement agreement to sign. It was a generic document outlining parental responsibilities, cold and impersonal, as though the last nine years of my life could be wrapped up in a few legal clauses.

But the true blow came with the division of assets.

Our home was valued at R2 800 000 (approximately \$200 000) at the time, yet I was told I was entitled to just R450 000 (approximately \$32 000)—the exact amount my father and I had contributed to building it and the amount I'd spent on improving and changing some interior features. There was to be no consideration for its appreciation in value. No recognition of the years I had lived there, built a life there, raised our children there. She made it clear: that figure was final.

To make matters worse, the house couldn't even be sold. It was built on my father-in-law's land, which meant I had no legal claim to the property itself. I was being cut out entirely, left with nothing more than the option to "trade" my R450 000 (approximately \$32 000) investment by waiving my right to child support—an amount estimated to cover roughly five years. They called it a clean exit. But to me, it felt more like being erased.

She did, however, agree that I could keep the full value of the retirement annuity I had been contributing to at the time. She said she wouldn't claim her right to half of it, which was worth around R55 000 (approximately \$3 900) at the time. At that point, I wasn't sure if it was a gesture of fairness or just another piece of the puzzle being moved to get the process over and done with.

When I asked her about the money I had invested in the family business, she assured me that it would be addressed separately. I then handed her the spreadsheet of calculations I had originally intended for her father. Out of the R904 494.61 (approximately \$64 600) that my father and I had contributed to supporting their family business, an amount of R180 711.44 (approximately \$12 850) was still owed to me. This balance formed part of a personal loan I had taken from the bank to help them settle outstanding customer accounts.

She signed a copy of this document, and I, in turn, signed the divorce settlement agreement. There was one final document I still needed to draft and sign—an arrangement specifying how my R450 000 investment (approximately \$32 000) would be offset against maintenance. I based it on the financial responsibilities toward the children as outlined in the divorce settlement agreement at that time, without considering that future changes in custody arrangements might alter those obligations. With this last document handed to her, all that remained was for her to take the final step—formalizing the divorce in court.

What followed was not just financial loss—it was the unravelling of nearly everything I had built and believed in. I had spent eight years helping to construct our dream home, reviving a struggling family business, and salvaging R930 000 (approximately \$66 000) through long hours of bookkeeping and administrative recovery. I had stood by her family—countless barbeques together, laughing together, even serving as the master of ceremonies at her sister’s wedding.

I gave nine years of my life—fully, freely, and without hesitation. I poured myself into my marriage, my family, and the business we built together. And in return, I was left with nothing. No house to return to. No daily access to my children—only the limited hours assigned by the court. No share in the business I had helped sustain through years of effort and sacrifice. My voice was silenced, my worth diminished. All that remained was a profound sense of loss.

And then came one more request.

Early in December 2017, my wife asked if I would consider gifting the golden wildebeest—my last remaining investment—to her father. She said he had “been through a lot,” and that this would be her way of repaying him.

I stood there, stunned. After everything I had lost—after everything I had been denied—she now wanted me to give away the only asset I had left. Not to resolve a debt. Not as part of a business arrangement, but as a gift.

I explained that the wildebeest was all I had left. To me, it wasn’t just about the money—it was about holding on to the only piece of stability I still possessed. The question of how, or even if, we would continue the breeding venture after the divorce was something that still needed to be discussed.

I’ve realized now that I had forgotten to mention another part of my story. Back in 2011, I invested R17 500 (approximately \$1 100) on the family farm by buying sheep. Two years later, in 2013, my father-in-law sold all the sheep. He assured me that the proceeds would be used to buy game, which would then form part of my investment. That original investment was never meant for me—it was for my eldest son at the time. I had taken the money from an account I had been contributing to since his birth, believing that buying sheep would be a wiser, longer-term investment for his future.

Note:

*The reason I mention the exact amounts of money, along with the three documents we signed, is because they will become important in my next book, *Surviving My Divorce – Part 2*. In that book, I will expand on the unexpected legal challenges I faced years later and refer back to these agreements to show how they resurfaced in ways I never could have anticipated. I also want to help you, the reader, understand how difficult my situation truly was—not only emotionally, but financially as well.*

The accident

It was around 10 p.m. on December 18, 2017, when I received a phone call from my wife. Her voice was panicked, distressed, and trembling with emotion. I'll never forget her exact words: "My father just passed away."

At first, I wasn't sure I had heard her correctly. I asked her to repeat what she said, and through hysterical sobs, she confirmed that he had been electrocuted on the farm. She asked me to go to her sister's house immediately, as she and her brother-in-law were already on their way to the scene.

When I arrived at her sister's home, I began to piece together what had happened. A power outage had occurred at the connection point that supplied electricity to the farmhouse. In an effort to restore power, my father-in-law had attempted to fix the issue himself—but something went horribly wrong. He was electrocuted in the process.

What made the tragedy even more heartbreaking was that our two sons had witnessed it. My eldest was just seven years old at the time; the youngest, only four. They had been outside with their grandfather and saw it all unfold. Afterward, they waited nearly three hours for the ambulance to arrive—alone with their grandmother, processing something no child should ever have to witness.



The following day, as we tried to come to terms with what had happened, my eldest son walked up to me at our home. With tears pouring down his face, he hugged me tightly and whispered, "Grandpa passed away."

Their bond had been incredibly close. My father-in-law adored my son—he was his first grandchild, and they had spent nearly every day together.

The grief was overwhelming—not just for the children, but for my mother-in-law, my brother-in-law, and especially my wife. They were shattered. And in that moment, all I could do was be present. I had no words that could take away their pain, and no actions that could make it right.

So I prayed.

It was the only thing I could do. During the emotional chaos, as my wife and I continued to live apart, prayer became my anchor. It carried me through those first few days and helped me navigate the deep sorrow that touched every corner of our already fragile situation.

The funeral

A few days after the accident, I attended the funeral service, and what a confusing and emotional day it was. It felt confusing because I hadn't been informed about any of the arrangements, so I wasn't sure where I was supposed to sit or if I was allowed to sit in the front with the family—especially not knowing if Bob would attend. Since no one said anything to me, I decided to sit with my wife and two boys.

I recall my two brothers-in-law delivering their final tribute speeches, and I remember the sombre, sad atmosphere. My father-in-law, a healthy and strong man, suddenly passed away at the age of 56, catching everyone by surprise. He had such a promising life ahead of him, having invested countless hours in the family farm and planning to move there with my mother-in-law in the next two years.

The entire day was emotionally draining and confusing. Although I was supposed to be part of this family, I knew that was no longer the case. After the sermon, everyone engaged in conversation. Some extended family members were unaware of my impending divorce and chatted with me as if everything was normal. Others who knew about the divorce avoided the topic, while some simply glared at me for reasons unknown.

It's fascinating how every person perceives the same event differently. My parents also attended the funeral and shared the same emotions I was going through. Amidst the turmoil, I felt the love and support of my parents, which was a beautiful experience.

I remember placing my hand on my father-in-law's coffin and whispering, "I'm sorry how things ended between me and you, and I'm sorry that we weren't able to have a final conversation. Maybe we'll meet again someday. Until then, may you rest in peace."

And with that, I left—not crossing paths with most of the guests or extended family members who attended the funeral to this day. Sometimes, I reflect on this as a final farewell to the life I was part of for nine years.



The changing of relationships

With divorce comes the reality of relationships changing, and people making judgments regarding your situation. I remember how surprised I was by how certain close friends and family members started behaving toward me when I told them about my wife's intention to leave me. I understand that every story has two sides, and that people are free to judge for themselves and have the right to choose sides.

I remember hearing that a close friend and family member had expressed how deeply disappointed he was in what my former spouse and I had done, and the pain we had caused the rest of the family. Since that day, we haven't really spoken again. I don't think he had the slightest understanding of what I was going through at the time—and I certainly didn't need his judgment on top of everything else I was already carrying.

I was there when his world fell apart after his fiancée left him. I supported him through that season, and eventually, the two of them reconciled and got married. It

was a reminder that some people simply lack the ability to put themselves in your shoes, to offer the same grace they were once given, or to understand the true meaning of loyalty. And sometimes, those people were never meant to stay in your life forever.

People are dealing with their own day-to-day challenges, and your problems may not be as important to them as you thought they would be.

On the other hand, I also began to see people's true compassion. My brother-in-law, his wife, and my mother-in-law—despite dealing with their own heartache—consistently reached out to me during this time, checking in to see if I was okay. I also met many new people at my new workplace and at the church where I was serving as a worship leader. These interactions led to meaningful friendships—some of which have remained strong to this day.

In the end, I realized that people and situations change, and that life will go on—with or without you.



The end of 2017 – the worst year of my life

After the funeral, I decided to take a trip to the mountains—the same place where my wife and I had gotten engaged. Spending a week there felt like embarking on a journey of self-discovery, a search for meaning in the chaos that had defined 2017. It had been a year marked by emotional turmoil, heartbreak, and confusion.

One particular day stands out in my memory. I climbed the highest mountain in the area and sat there for hours, reluctant to leave. The silence and serenity wrapped around me, giving me space to reflect. Alone with my thoughts, I prayed and poured out my heart, trying to make sense of everything.

Though I knew deep down that God had not abandoned me, I couldn't help but ask why I had to endure such pain. At times, it felt like punishment, and I wrestled with the reasons—voicing my doubts and questions to God in that quiet, sacred space.

As the week drew to a close, the reality of my impending divorce hung heavily over me. I had done everything in my power to save my marriage, and I laid that truth before the Lord.



Despite the sorrow, the anxiety, and the deep loneliness I felt, I made a decision then and there: I would no longer allow self-pity to define me. I would do the work to become a better man.

From that moment on, I began to shift my focus toward the positives still present in my life. I thanked God for my new job, my health, my talents, my parents, my children, and the ability to appreciate the beauty of nature—especially during that mountain climb. I thanked Him for the support of good friends, both old and new, and for the quiet hope of a new beginning.

In the final days of my mountain retreat, my cousin from Durban joined me, bringing with him a much-needed sense of camaraderie and understanding. We spent time reflecting on the past few months, sharing our experiences and deepening our bond. His own journey through divorce and personal hardships mirrored mine in many ways, creating a powerful connection between us.

We welcomed the new year together in Clarens, a quaint town nestled in the mountains. For a few precious hours, I was able to set aside the heaviness of 2017 and simply enjoy the moment—grateful for the company, the calm, and the quiet hope that perhaps brighter days were still ahead.

The last day of our marriage

On January 11, 2018, around 8:00 p.m., I received a call from my wife requesting our original marriage certificate. Our divorce was scheduled to be heard in court the following morning at 11:00 a.m. I told her I didn't have the original certificate and that I had searched everywhere for it. She explained that the divorce couldn't proceed without it. I promised to go to the Home Affairs office first thing the next morning to see if a reprint could be issued.

The next morning, I arrived at Home Affairs and was met with a queue of about 40 people ahead of me. I quickly realized I wouldn't get the certificate in time and began to feel anxious. At around 11:30 a.m., my wife called to check on my progress. She needed proof that I was in the process of obtaining the certificate, as she was next in line to appear before the judge. With around ten people still ahead of me, I sent her a photo of the completed application form, uncertain whether it would reach her in time.

In that moment, I couldn't help but wonder if the delay was a sign—perhaps the divorce should be postponed, allowing for more time to reflect. After waiting for another hour, I finally received the certificate. I immediately phoned my wife to let her know and said I was on my way to deliver it. The court was approximately 20 minutes from the Home Affairs office. But her reply stopped me in my tracks: "It's over."

The judge had granted the divorce without the original certificate, on condition that I deliver it to her lawyer's office before 2:00 p.m.

I broke down in tears. I couldn't fully express what I was feeling. All I managed to say was, "I tried my best—for you and the boys. That's all I ever did. Thank you for everything." A strange sense of relief swept over me—relief that the process was

done. I cried deeply and took a few long breaths as a wave of memories flooded my mind, bringing with it a new emotion I had never felt before.

I never saw the judge. I never saw my wife on what became the last day of our marriage.

I delivered the marriage certificate to her lawyer's office, completing my part in the process. I asked if there was anything else required of me, and the assistant assured me that there wasn't. The final court document would be emailed to me. And just like that, it was done.

A week later, I received the official court document finalizing the dissolution of our marriage.

It had taken 10 months and 13 days—from the moment I thought everything between us was still fine to the final, legal end of our marriage.

Never had I imagined that a relationship I believed was strong, despite its challenges, could end so suddenly. But that was it—there was nothing more to do but carry on with life.

Conclusion

This concludes the first chapter of my book and the personal journey that led up to my divorce.

My aim was to give you, the reader, an honest and heartfelt background—my point of view of the events that brought my marriage to an end. In the next chapter, I'll begin to share the lessons I've learned through this experience, along with practical coaching tools designed to support you emotionally as you face your own divorce and the challenges that come with it.

If you've found value in my journey so far and would like to know what happened next, I invite you to read the sequel: *Surviving My Divorce – Part 2*. In that book, I'll continue to share the significant and memorable events that followed after my divorce, while continuing to offer guidance and support as you navigate your own emotional healing.

Chapter 2

Coping with divorce in the early stages

2.1 Coaching, reflecting, journaling

You may feel—perhaps even with absolute certainty—that you were mistreated or unfairly betrayed during or after your divorce. And that feeling may be entirely valid. However, for true healing to begin—for you to genuinely move forward and grow from this experience—it is important to also consider the possibility that you may have contributed, in some way, to the breakdown of the relationship. This contribution may have been intentional, partially intentional, or even completely unintentional.

It might be something as simple as this: perhaps, deep down, you sensed from the very beginning that your former spouse was never fully invested. Maybe you overlooked the differences in your religious beliefs or core values. Or perhaps you were both simply desperate to find love and chose to ignore the warning signs. Whatever the case may be, acknowledging your own role—no matter how big or small—is a powerful step toward healing and personal growth.

As a qualified divorce coach who has gone through a divorce myself, I understand that every situation is unique. Your experience may differ significantly from mine. I can only share what I went through—from my perspective as a 42-year-old father whose wife's heart was always with another man—and how I managed to work through the overwhelming emotions that followed.

If you are the one initiating the divorce, your journey might feel entirely different. Still, regardless of which side of the situation you're on, divorce comes with a host of painful emotions that must be faced.

I've spent a lot of time reflecting on how best to structure this book so that anyone dealing with the emotional weight of divorce—whether they chose it or not—can benefit from my experience.

From this point forward, each chapter in this book will follow a consistent structure designed to guide you, support you, and help you grow through your divorce experience. The aim is not only to share insights but also to help you reflect deeply on your own story, and ultimately find healing and personal growth.

Each chapter (or section within a chapter) will be made up of three parts:

Coaching and Personal Insights

This is where I'll share the core ideas, principles, and lessons I've learned—both from my training as a divorce coach and from my personal journey. I'll include real examples from my life to help you connect with the material in a practical, meaningful way.

Reflection

After the teaching, you'll be encouraged to pause and reflect. This section invites you to consider how the topic relates to your own situation. I'll pose a few thoughtful questions that will help you see more clearly where you stand emotionally, mentally, and even spiritually.

Journaling

Finally, you'll be invited to write. This part is for you alone. No one will read it. It's a safe space to be honest with yourself about your pain, your progress, your fears, and your hopes. Writing is a powerful tool for healing, and through this process, you may discover clarity and strength you didn't know you had.

This framework is meant to walk alongside you—not as a rigid formula, but as a companion. Whether you are currently going through a divorce, still reeling from the aftermath, or even considering separation, I encourage you to engage with each section as fully and honestly as you can. Let's begin...

2.2 Making sense of what happened

Divorce can leave you feeling like you've failed—not just in your marriage, but in life. That's a heavy burden to carry, especially when you're already overwhelmed by grief, confusion, or anger. One of the first steps toward healing—or making the right decision—is learning to view your situation through a clearer lens—one that includes honesty and grace, not just guilt or blame.

This is not the time to focus on who was at fault. That question, while tempting, rarely leads to growth. What matters now is: What are you going to do from this point forward? Where do you go from here? How do you start to heal, make sense of what's happened, and begin to rebuild—either on your own or possibly with your spouse?

Whether you're in the middle of a divorce, already divorced, or still contemplating whether to take that step, this chapter is for you. My aim is not to convince you to leave or stay, but to help you understand what has really happened—or is happening—in your relationship. Clarity is essential. Without it, decisions are often made in moments of emotional exhaustion or pain rather than with wisdom and foresight.

You may feel alone, but you're not. Divorce is a global phenomenon, and statistically speaking, it is increasingly common. In the United States, nearly 45–50% of marriages end in divorce. In some European countries, the rate reaches 60%. Even in more traditional or conservative cultures, divorce is becoming more prevalent. While this doesn't take away the personal pain, it does remind us that many others have walked this road and come through it. You are not a failure. Life is complex. People change. Circumstances shift. Sometimes, despite the best intentions, relationships don't endure.

If you're a person of faith, divorce can feel especially heavy. There's often an added layer of shame or spiritual confusion—especially when trying to understand what the Bible really says. Many people carry guilt believing that divorce itself is a sin, but Scripture actually places the focus of sin on adultery, not divorce. The Seventh Commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery”—not “You shall not get divorced.”

Adultery is a clear betrayal of trust, a breaking of the marital covenant through unfaithfulness. Divorce, on the other hand, is often the sorrowful outcome of deep wounds, unresolved disconnection, or a partner's betrayal. The Bible does say that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), but it's important to understand why. God hates what divorce represents—the brokenness, the pain, the damage it causes to hearts and homes—not the people who go through it.

God doesn't turn away from you in this season. He grieves with you. He knows the heaviness you carry, and He does not see you as a failure. In fact, He draws near to the broken-hearted (Psalm 34:18), offering grace, healing, and the chance to rebuild your life in truth and love.

Let me share a few truths I've come to learn:

Rule No. 1: If both parties are not willing to work on the marriage, there is not much you can do.

Rule No. 2: If you were not entirely the cause of your divorce, stop blaming yourself for someone else's choices.

For me, it took more than a year to fully accept the reality of what had happened in my own marriage. I made sincere efforts to work on myself and to restore what I believed was still worth saving. But my ex-wife had reached a different conclusion. She no longer wished to continue the marriage. That was a difficult truth to face, especially when I was still willing to try.

When I asked her, as calmly and respectfully as I could, why she had chosen to leave, her answer was clear. She said that I was not a bad husband, but I wasn't her first choice. She shared that she had always felt a deeper connection with someone from her past—someone who had become emotionally significant to her again. At the time we married, circumstances seemed right: her family approved of me, and the other person was not in a place to pursue a relationship. So, she made a decision that she later came to question.

When I asked why she didn't speak up earlier, or why we went ahead with building a life and family together, her response was that, at the time, she believed she was making the right decision. But continuing in the marriage, she explained, would eventually have meant pretending—a life she no longer felt she could lead.

According to her, our nine years together were meaningful. We had shared many good moments, built a home, raised two wonderful boys, and overcome several difficult seasons. In her words, that was the purpose our marriage fulfilled.

That conversation brought clarity, but also grief. I found myself processing not just the end of our relationship, but the new reality it created for our children, our extended families, and our future as co-parents. The emotional toll was profound. There were nights filled with anxiety and mornings where the weight of loss felt almost unbearable. But over time, I began to see that facing the truth—however painful—is what ultimately allows healing to begin.

Seven years later, I can say with honesty and gratitude that healing is possible. Though I didn't choose divorce, I've come to see that this painful journey led to growth, maturity, and eventually, peace.

Reflection

For now, I invite you to reflect on your own story. Not to dwell in guilt or bitterness, but to begin seeing things more clearly—so you can move forward with strength and dignity.

This kind of reflection might be easier said than done. You will likely need help to gain true perspective. If your spouse is still open to conversation, ask them—gently and without defensiveness—for their honest perception of where things went wrong. If you're already divorced, consider asking them to share their view of why the relationship broke down. You may not agree with everything they say, but listen anyway. Understanding their perspective can be key to your growth.

You should also reach out to close friends or family members you trust—people who saw your relationship from the outside. Ask them to be honest with you about how they perceived your marriage or the reasons for the separation. This is not the time to defend yourself, justify your actions, or try to prove a point. This is the time to take full responsibility—for who you were in the marriage, both as a partner and as a person. Whether your role was intentional or unintentional, acknowledging it is a vital part of your healing.

Taking responsibility does not mean taking all the blame. It means owning your truth with humility and allowing it to shape a better future—for yourself and for those you love.

Journaling

Now that you've had a moment to reflect, I invite you to begin journaling your thoughts. Don't overthink it—this isn't about writing a polished piece. It's about giving yourself the freedom to process what's happening inside. Start by writing what you now realize about your relationship. Was there a moment you sensed something was wrong? Were there signs you ignored? How did you feel in those final weeks or months before the divorce or separation? If you could speak to your former partner in a calm and honest way, what would you want to say?

Try to go a little deeper. What part of the breakdown do you take responsibility for, even if it was unintentional? What part do you still struggle to understand? Let your thoughts take shape, even if they're messy or emotional. Remember, this is not about assigning blame—it's about clarity. And clarity brings healing. You're not writing to relive the pain. You're writing to begin releasing it.

2.3 Perception and reality

One of the greatest challenges in any relationship is assuming that two people see the world the same way. The truth is, they rarely do. Every person enters a marriage with their own unique background—shaped by family dynamics, culture, faith, personal values, emotional history, and life experiences. These differences are often subtle at first, and in the early stages of love, they may even feel like exciting contrasts. But over time, they begin to shape how each partner sees and responds to the world around them—including how they interpret love, responsibility, conflict, parenting, money, and even faithfulness.

This is why seemingly small disagreements can grow into major disconnections. When two people operate with different definitions of right and wrong, loyalty and commitment, or freedom and security, they are essentially trying to build a shared life on two different foundations.

Pause for a moment and ask yourself: How do I define right and wrong? What does money mean to me—security, freedom, control, generosity? What do I believe about marriage and loyalty? Did I grow up in a home that was emotionally nurturing, or one that lacked stability or safety? Do I trust easily, or do I tend to protect myself from being hurt? Am I more traditional or liberal in how I raise children? And how deeply do my religious or moral values influence the way I make daily decisions?

Even identical twins—raised in the same household—won't share an identical worldview. So expecting a spouse, who may come from a completely different background, to naturally understand your way of thinking is unrealistic. And when we fail to acknowledge those differences, we risk building assumptions that can quietly erode the connection.

In my own marriage, I genuinely believed we were moving forward together—building a shared life through our challenges and achievements. But as it turned out, our perceptions of what that life meant were not as closely aligned as I had imagined. I believed we shared the same values, the same sense of spiritual commitment, and the same goals. But in the end, it became clear that our definitions of marriage, loyalty, and emotional fulfillment were not fully in sync.

Looking back, I can now see that we never really sat down to unpack our individual expectations or talk about the deeper beliefs guiding our decisions. Perhaps our spiritual convictions weren't rooted in the same place. Perhaps her perception of what was acceptable in a relationship differed from mine—not out of malice, but simply because her worldview had been shaped by a different set of influences.

This chapter isn't about blame. It's about understanding that perception is everything. It becomes the lens through which we interpret our experiences, justify our actions, and define our boundaries. That's why two people can walk away from the same relationship with entirely different versions of what happened.

If you're currently in a relationship, consider whether you've ever explored these deeper questions together—not just how much you love each other, but how you define love. What kind of future are you both striving for? Are you still moving in the same direction, or have you begun walking two separate paths without realizing it?

And if you're already divorced, this reflection still matters. Revisiting these questions won't change the past—but it can help you make peace with it. When you begin to understand what shaped your perception—and what may have shaped your partner's—you no longer have to carry the same weight of confusion or resentment. Instead, you begin to grow in understanding. And with understanding comes freedom.

Reflection

As you process this chapter, take some time to consider the unique lens through which you've viewed your marriage. Were there unspoken expectations you assumed your partner understood? Did you ever feel misunderstood or unseen—not because of a lack of love, but because your values and interpretations were different? What beliefs or patterns from your upbringing may have shaped how you approached the relationship? And are there areas where your partner's background or worldview might have influenced their behaviour in ways you didn't fully recognize at the time?

Also ask yourself: Are you still carrying unresolved assumptions into your current relationships—romantic, parental, or social? And how might your perception be influencing your present decisions?

Journaling

Take this opportunity to explore your own perception in writing. Begin by describing what you believed about marriage, loyalty, and love when you first entered the relationship. Where did those beliefs come from? What did you expect your partner to understand or agree with—perhaps without ever speaking it aloud? Then, shift the lens. Consider your former partner's background. What might they have brought into the relationship that shaped their view of the world, their actions, or their decisions?

You don't have to justify or excuse anything—you're simply writing to understand. Write with curiosity, not judgment. Let this process offer you new clarity, and perhaps a little more peace.

2.4 The emotional storm: grief and trauma

No matter how emotionally resilient or spiritually grounded you are, divorce will shake your foundation. Whether you initiated the separation, were blindsided by it, or are still somewhere in between, the emotional aftermath is rarely simple. It unfolds like a storm—sometimes sudden and violent, other times lingering and heavy. At the heart of this storm are two powerful emotional experiences: grief and trauma.

Understanding grief

Grief is the natural emotional response to loss. And with divorce, you lose more than a spouse. You may lose a home, a family structure, a daily routine, mutual friends, financial stability, dreams for the future, and the identity you held as a husband or wife. Each of these losses carries its own weight. Psychologists often describe grief as moving through five stages—denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and acceptance. These stages don't always happen in order, and they don't come with a timeline. You may revisit some more than once.

Denial

Denial often appears first. It's your mind's way of buffering the blow, giving your heart a chance to catch up. You might convince yourself that things aren't as bad as they seem. That your partner will come around. That it was all a misunderstanding. I remember reading the messages that shattered my sense of security, and still trying to believe there had to be an explanation. That somehow, I could fix it.

Anger

Anger follows close behind. It may come quickly or build slowly. It can be directed at your ex, yourself, outside influences, or even God. I was angry at the injustice of it all—the years I poured into our marriage and family business, the absence from my sons' daily lives, and the silence I received in return. But anger isn't something to be ashamed of. It's part of grief. What matters is how we process it. Used constructively, anger can set healthy boundaries. Used destructively, it can leave more damage behind.

Bargaining

Bargaining is the desperate grasp at control. "If I change, maybe they'll come back." In my case, I tried everything to win her back—through kindness, gestures, spiritual growth, and practical support. But bargaining rarely works when one party has already stepped emotionally out of the relationship. Growth is good—but it must be for yourself, not to negotiate love.

Sadness (depression)

Sadness often runs deepest. For me, it settled in during quiet moments—especially after seeing my boys, only to hand them back again. I cried often, struggled to sleep, and wrestled with the silence that echoed through my life. Sadness isn't weakness—it's evidence of how deeply we've loved, how much we've hoped, and what we've lost.

Acceptance

Acceptance does not mean forgetting, condoning, or agreeing with what happened. It means acknowledging the reality of what is. For me, that acceptance began in the mountains, on the same summit where I had once proposed. Alone with God, I wept for what was lost—and opened my heart to what could still be. Acceptance is not the end of the process—it's the beginning of a new one: healing.

Understanding trauma

While grief is a normal and expected part of loss, trauma is something different. It happens when the loss is sudden, overwhelming, or violates your sense of safety and trust. Discovering an affair, being abruptly abandoned, or enduring intense conflict can all result in trauma. It's not just emotional—it's physiological.

In my case, learning of the affair felt like my reality had been ripped apart. I had panic attacks. I couldn't sleep. I second-guessed everything. I no longer trusted what I had once known to be true. That's trauma. And it can linger long after the divorce is finalized.

Common symptoms of trauma include:

- Hyper vigilance
- Emotional shutdown
- Sleep disturbances
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- A sense of numbness or emotional detachment

If you're experiencing any of these, please know: you're not broken. You're wounded. And wounds need time, care, and often, the guidance of a trained professional to fully heal.

The unexpected gifts in the storm

Amid all the pain, there are still glimpses of grace. Sometimes they come in the form of people—some expected, others completely unexpected. I had family members whose loyalty never wavered. But I also met people I barely knew who became key parts of my healing. One such person was Cloe.

During one of the lowest points in my life, Cloe became a light in a very dark season. She wasn't a therapist or a long-time friend—just someone with a kind heart and an open spirit. She listened without judgment, never tired of hearing my story, even when I repeated it with raw emotion and tears in my eyes. There was something calming in her presence—an unshakable stillness, as if she was grounded in something deeper. And she was.

Cloe was a devoted Christian, deeply rooted in her faith. Her prayers weren't empty words—they carried weight. They reminded me that God still saw me, even when I

felt invisible. She never tried to fix me or give advice I didn't ask for. She just walked beside me, offered prayer when I couldn't pray for myself, and helped carry the emotional burden I couldn't carry alone. She was the first person to gently introduce me to the concept of perception—that what we experience in life is filtered through our unique lens of beliefs, upbringing, and personal truth. That insight helped me begin to understand my own story from a new angle.

To this day, I believe Cloe was sent from above—a quiet reminder that God places the right people in our path when we need them most. Her compassion, faith, and willingness to sit with my pain without running from it taught me more about healing than any book or counsellor at that stage could. She showed me that sometimes, just having one real, compassionate friend—someone who sees you without judgment and prays for you even when you've lost the words—is enough to help you survive the storm.

Reflection

Take a moment now to check in with yourself. What stage of grief do you find yourself in most often—denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, or are you beginning to sense the quiet rise of acceptance? How is your body responding to the emotional weight you carry? Are you sleeping well, or waking up anxious? Are you still trying to fix something that has already changed, or have you begun releasing what you cannot control?

Now think about the people around you. Who has shown up when you least expected it? Who has quietly faded from your life? And how have those changes affected your journey?

Journaling

In your journal, write about where you are right now in the emotional storm of divorce. Try to describe your current emotional state as honestly as possible. Are there moments you've felt stuck in denial, overwhelmed by anger, desperate to bargain, lost in sadness—or maybe, just maybe, beginning to feel peace?

Reflect on who has supported you during this season. Write about the loyal people who stood by you, and the ones who surprised you by their absence. Then, if someone unexpected entered your life and became a source of comfort—even briefly—write about them too. What did they offer you in your time of need? What did you learn from them?

My own personal reflection:

At this point in the book, I want to insert one of my personal diary entries—written during one of the saddest, most confusing days of my life. I include it not only to remind myself how raw and real the pain was, but also to show you, that your

emotions are valid. If you're going through something similar, you're not alone. This entry also serves as a reflection point, and sets the tone for the next section.

14 Mei 2017. (Moedersdag)
 Ja dit was anders vandag
 Koud en reënig apart van mekaar
 hartseer. Ek en my pa het vandag saar
 gehul. Ek dink dit was die eerste
 keer ooit. Emosies is oralsoor
 die plek. Dit hang in die lug
 oralsoor my. Ek wil positief bly
 en ek vertrou op U Here
 ek voel net hartseer so. Dis
 anders as aan die begin. Hierdie
 hartseer is diep, baie diep.
 Ek sal hieruit moet kom! Ek
 dink nie ek maak myself
 negatief nie ek voel net soos
 ek voel. Here ek voel soos ek
 voel ek vertrou op 'n maar my
 hart bly seer. My tranes hou
 aan loop. My hart bly ora
 hoekom maar tog is ek
 dankbaar vir die lesse!

The translation reads as follows:

14 May 2017 (Mother's Day)

Yes, it was different today. Cold and rainy—apart from one another. Sadness lingered in the air. Today, my father and I cried together for the first time ever. Emotions were everywhere, heavy and unsettled, hanging in the atmosphere around me. I want to stay positive. I want to trust in You, Lord. But I just feel sad. It's not like it was in the beginning. This sadness feels different—deeper, heavier. I know I'll need to get out of this, and I don't believe I'm being negative—I'm just feeling what I feel. Lord, I just feel the way I feel. I still trust in You... but my heart remains sore. The tears keep coming. My heart keeps asking, "Why?" And yet, even in the middle of all this pain, I remain grateful for the lessons.

2.5 The ripple effect on children, family, and friends

Divorce is never a clean break. It may begin with two people, but its consequences echo far beyond them. Whether your marriage ended due to betrayal, disconnection, emotional exhaustion, or simply growing apart—one truth remains: divorce is not just your story. It becomes a part of everyone's story who was connected to that relationship. As someone going through a divorce, you may feel like the victim. And in many cases, you may very well be. But it's essential to acknowledge that your actions—intentional or not—carry weight. The pain of divorce doesn't just stay with the couple. It ripples outward into the lives of your children, your parents, your in-laws, your friends, and even your community. You have a responsibility—one that shouldn't be taken lightly.

The weight of responsibility

Even if you didn't initiate the divorce, your choices during and after it matter. Every word you say to your children, every fight you have in front of others, every decision to isolate or lash out—those things have consequences. If you were the one who left, whether for another person or because you could no longer stay, it's important to understand that you chose to break a structure others relied on. That structure may have included elderly parents who now worry about their children and grandchildren, children who once felt safe in a shared home, or friends who now feel torn between loyalties. This is not said to place guilt—it's said to promote awareness and maturity. Divorce creates heartache for many, and healing begins when you take ownership of that fact.

Children are always watching

Children, no matter their age, are deeply vulnerable in the face of divorce. They don't just lose the image of a "whole" family—they lose a sense of stability, of home. And no matter how gently you try to soften the blow, they feel it. They grieve it.

As a parent, your responsibility extends beyond protection. You are also their example—their model for how to handle pain, loss, and change. If your children see you blaming others, avoiding responsibility, or acting out of unresolved pain, that becomes part of their story too. But if they see you owning your role, speaking with respect, and actively seeking healing, they'll learn how to face life's challenges with strength and grace. You don't need to be perfect—you just need to be present and honest.

Over the past seven years, although we've had our personal differences, I can genuinely say that my former spouse and I—with the support of extended family—have managed to raise two boys in separate, loving homes. Today, they are thriving. Both continue to excel well above average in school and sports. That, to me, is a powerful testimony to the resilience of children—and to what can be achieved when parents choose maturity, cooperation, and a shared commitment to their children's

well-being. Remember, children are stronger than we think—and they are protected, in part, by their innocence. In time, the reality of living between two homes becomes their new normal. And through your divorce, they will also meet new people—mentors, friends, and extended family—who never would have entered their lives if things had remained the same. So stay present, stay grounded, because how you show up now will shape their future more than you know.

Elderly parents and extended family

Often overlooked in divorce are the parents of the divorcing couple. Many are elderly, already navigating the complexities of aging, and now suddenly thrown into emotional turmoil watching their children suffer. Some may feel helpless, others conflicted about where to stand. They too experience grief—not only for you but for the grandchildren, the shared family moments that will never happen the same way again.

The same goes for siblings, cousins, and in-laws who may now feel they must “choose sides.” The pain of losing family ties is real. And it’s on you—not to repair every broken bond, but to honour their feelings and approach them with empathy. Speak truth, but speak it gently. Explain your side when necessary but never demand allegiance. Let them process the situation in their own way, and keep your dignity intact through it all.

The need to take ownership

Divorce is a complex web of emotions, decisions, and consequences. And while you can't control how everyone else feels or responds, you can take responsibility for the part you played—and the pain others may be carrying because of it.

This is not about self-blame. It’s about self-awareness.

Have the hard conversations. Apologize when needed. Don’t assume people “get over it” just because time passes. Own what needs to be owned. Ask for forgiveness where you’ve hurt others. Offer understanding even when it’s not offered back. That is how maturity looks in the wake of brokenness.

The unexpected good

Not everything that comes from divorce is bad. For many, it becomes the most profound season of growth, clarity, and personal transformation. It can wake you up to parts of yourself that were asleep. It can teach your children resilience and show your friends the depth of your character.

Sometimes, the fallout of your divorce may lead others to examine their own lives more deeply. Perhaps a friend reconsiders their own relationship. Perhaps a family

member finally seeks counselling for something they've long buried. In this way, your pain—when handled with humility—can become a powerful teacher.

But let it never be said that you caused hurt and walked away untouched by the responsibility of it. Your divorce, as painful as it is, carries with it the need to honour others—just as much as you seek to heal yourself.

Reflection

Take a moment to reflect deeply on the ripple effect of your divorce. Who, beyond you and your former partner, has been affected by this split? Have your children, parents, in-laws, or friends shown signs of grief, confusion, or distance? Have you acknowledged their pain, or have you been too focused on your own to see it?

Now might be the time to reach out. A simple message. A quiet apology. A moment of listening instead of explaining. These gestures won't fix everything—but they might begin to heal something broken. And that is part of your responsibility.

True healing begins when you can say: Yes, this hurt me. But I understand that it hurt others too. And I'm willing to face that—not with guilt, but with grace.

Journaling

Take a few quiet minutes to reflect on the ripple effect of your divorce—or the one you're considering. Who else might be carrying unseen weight because of the choices being made? Think about your children, your parents, in-laws, friends, and even your ex-partner. Consider how they may be processing the loss, the shift in dynamics, and the emotional tension. Write about what you've noticed—or maybe what you've been too overwhelmed to notice until now. Is there someone you need to have a difficult but healing conversation with? Someone you want to thank for their support or someone you now understand better than before? Let this be a space where empathy leads the way—toward healing, toward clarity, and perhaps even toward reconciliation, where possible.

2.6 Understanding personality traits that may complicate divorce

One of the most painful realizations in the aftermath of a divorce is how differently two people can view the same relationship. You may look back and see shared memories, commitment, and effort. Your former spouse may look back and see unfulfilled dreams, mismatched expectations, or a version of life they no longer wanted to live. That contrast can be disorienting—especially if you never had the chance to truly share your side of the story.

Like I've mentioned in the introduction of this book I'm not a psychologist, and this book is not meant to offer clinical diagnoses. But from my personal experience and the stories of others I've encountered, I believe it's important to be aware that some

people exhibit narcissistic or even destructive tendencies and it's possible that you were in a relationship with someone who showed such traits. These tendencies don't always show up clearly at the start. They often reveal themselves slowly—through emotional manipulation, a lack of empathy, or the rewriting of events to suit one person's narrative.

When I reflect on the breakup letter I received from my former spouse, I couldn't help but notice how much of it centred around her own emotions and journey. There was no real apology—only the declaration that she was now choosing her truth and that she hoped we could accept that. She mentioned she wasn't upset with me or my parents—but at that point, what was there to be upset about? The letter framed her decision as brave and necessary, and while I respect anyone's right to seek an authentic life, I couldn't ignore the deep absence of shared responsibility—not to mention how her decisions also affected Clare and her family at the time.

She also claimed she was doing this because she loved me. That never made sense to me. I've always believed that when someone truly loves you, they fight to stay in your life—not cast you as the villain and leave you to gather your belongings, scattered outside their house.

At a time when I was battling anxiety and depression—when I had lost my home, my job, and daily contact with my children—she was ending our nine-year marriage with an email, concerned about being thrown with oranges. To me, it was yet another clear indication of just how differently we experienced the gravity of our divorce, and how profoundly misaligned our reality and values truly were.

Like I mentioned earlier, I do believe there were some truths revealed in her letter—but based on what was said, I don't believe they were severe enough to justify a divorce. I still don't believe she was completely honest about the plans she had with Bob or the feelings she had toward him at the time she wrote it. Nevertheless, her letter left me deeply confused.

This is where it becomes important to understand emotional self-preservation. Some people cannot—or will not—take ownership of how their actions impact others. Some people rewrite the story in their favour, not out of malice necessarily, but because they are unwilling to sit with the discomfort of being wrong, selfish, or hurtful. And in some cases, that unwillingness is deeply rooted in personality traits that make true empathy and mutual accountability very difficult, if not impossible.

If any of this resonates with you, it's time to be radically honest with yourself. You may have been married to someone who was emotionally or even physically abusive—someone who lacked the capacity to love or connect with you in the way you needed and deserved. If that is the case, your goal is no longer to change them, justify their behaviour, or seek closure from them. Your responsibility now is to protect yourself, prioritize your healing, and move forward with clarity and strength. You don't need to diagnose your former spouse to recognize the effect they've had on you. What you do need is clarity. Clarity allows you to stop second-guessing your own reality. It helps you see manipulation for what it is. It gives you the strength to say,

“That’s not acceptable,” and to walk away from conversations that twist the truth or rob you of your voice.

Some people will never be able to admit they hurt you. They will never acknowledge the damage they’ve caused—not because you imagined it, but because their world revolves around their own needs. This isn’t about blaming them—it’s about freeing yourself from trying to get closure that may never come.

The most powerful thing you can do from this point on is to begin noticing the patterns. Learn what gaslighting sounds like. Recognize emotional manipulation for what it is. Start setting boundaries that protect your peace. And most of all, stop trying to explain your worth to someone who never truly saw it.

Reflection

Have you felt like your truth was dismissed or rewritten by your former partner? Did you try to explain your feelings only to be made to feel guilty, dramatic, or irrational? Reflect on moments when your emotions were not met with empathy, or when reality seemed to be twisted in ways that left you confused. How did you respond at the time? How are you responding now? Do you still carry a sense of responsibility for things that weren’t yours to carry? It may be time to start seeing the patterns more clearly—so you can protect yourself better moving forward.

Journaling

Write about any moments in your relationship where you felt emotionally manipulated, silenced, or dismissed. Were there signs you ignored? Boundaries you wish you had enforced sooner. Now, reflect on what you’ve learned from that experience. What warning signs would you look out for in future relationships? How will you protect your emotional and spiritual well-being going forward?

You don’t need to fix the past—but you can learn from it. That’s where your power lies.

2.7 Setting boundaries

In the wake of divorce or relationship breakdown, one of the most important emotional skills you will need to develop is the ability to set healthy boundaries. Boundaries are not about being cold, harsh, or distant—they are about protecting your emotional wellbeing, re-establishing your identity, and creating space for healing and clarity. After a season of emotional upheaval, boundaries act as the framework that helps you move forward with stability and self-respect.

Many people entering or exiting divorce have struggled with blurred boundaries in the past. Perhaps you tried too hard to keep the peace, gave in to emotional manipulation, or avoided conflict by staying silent when something didn’t feel right.

Without clear emotional, physical, and relational boundaries, it's easy to lose your sense of self—and in some cases, to become vulnerable to ongoing hurt.

Setting boundaries begins with understanding what you are no longer willing to accept. That could mean limiting unnecessary or emotionally charged conversations with your former spouse, protecting your time and energy, or deciding what kind of behaviour you will no longer tolerate from others, including extended family or friends who may have taken sides. It may also include clarifying co-parenting responsibilities or ensuring that discussions about children are kept respectful and constructive.

It is equally important to manage your expectations around communication. Some people continue to seek emotional validation or closure long after a relationship ends, which often leads to more confusion and heartache. Boundaries help you recognize when it's time to stop explaining, stop defending, and stop trying to be understood by someone who may not be capable—or willing—to meet you in that space anymore.

You may also find that some individuals in your life will attempt to rewrite the story in a way that protects their image or shifts blame. Like previously explained, it is important to understand that not everyone will see events the same way you do, and not everyone will take responsibility for their actions. In some cases, people may even downplay their role in the breakup or use emotional language that subtly deflects attention from the impact of their choices. Recognizing these patterns is vital in setting strong internal boundaries to guard your peace of mind.

While it's not your role to diagnose others, it is helpful to become aware of certain behavioural patterns that may indicate personality traits such as narcissism, chronic deflection, or emotional manipulation. Whether intentional or not, these tendencies can be damaging—and part of healing is learning how to respond appropriately. If you've found yourself constantly second-guessing your reality, absorbing all the blame, or feeling emotionally drained after interactions, it's time to take a step back and reassess the boundaries you have—or haven't—set.

Boundaries are not about control or punishment. They are about clarity. They help define what is healthy, what is acceptable, and what is no longer part of your life. They empower you to move from reactive to proactive living. And perhaps most importantly, they help you rebuild trust in yourself—because every time you honor your boundaries, you reaffirm your worth.

Reflection

Consider where in your life boundaries may be needed right now. Are there conversations that consistently leave you feeling depleted or confused? Are there patterns in your communication with others that cause you emotional distress? Have you given too much power to someone who no longer has a place in your future?

Reflect on what you need to reclaim your peace and protect your energy. Think about how you can communicate those needs respectfully but firmly, and what shifts you may need to make in your daily life to honour them.

Journaling

Take a few minutes to write about what boundaries mean to you. Have you been consistent in enforcing them, or have you allowed certain lines to be crossed too often? Describe one or two boundaries you know you need to put in place—whether emotional, relational, or practical. How might these boundaries help you move forward with greater clarity, peace, and self-respect? Remember, boundaries are not walls—they are bridges to healthier, more balanced relationships, beginning with the one you have with yourself.

2.8 A time to heal: rebuilding yourself through what you love

After the emotional turmoil, the grief, and the shock of a divorce, there eventually comes a moment when you realize—this can't be the end. Something inside you still wants to breathe, to move, to come alive again. Healing doesn't happen all at once, and it doesn't come without effort. But it is possible. And often, it begins when you start paying attention to the small things that still bring you joy, purpose, and clarity.

Before we step into the legal and financial terrain in Chapter 3, and before considering forming new romantic relationships—discussed in Chapter 4—I want you to pause and consider something important: you cannot make wise, long-term decisions with a burned-out heart and an exhausted mind. Emotional healing is not optional—it's essential. The choices you're about to make will shape the future of your life, and if you have children, the future of theirs as well. The more emotionally grounded you are, the better equipped you'll be to make choices that are thoughtful, responsible, and fair.

Movement heals

For me, one of the greatest tools for healing came through something as simple—and powerful—as running. I started running regularly during some of the darkest days of my life. What began as a way to clear my head slowly turned into a consistent rhythm of healing. I ran early in the mornings, often before the world had woken up. And with every step, something inside of me began to loosen—grief, anger, confusion. I had run before in my life, but this time it was different. This time, I didn't run to get fit—I ran to survive the emotional turmoil.

Eventually, I invited a few of my new colleagues from work to join me. We started training together. Those morning and afternoon runs became more than just exercise—they became therapy. We shared stories, we laughed, we encouraged one another. And in 2020, I crossed the finish line of a full marathon. That moment

wasn't just about physical endurance—it was a victory over emotional pain. I had moved through something hard and come out stronger on the other side.



If running isn't your thing, that's okay. Walk. Hike. Cycle. Go for long swims. Move your body in a way that allows your mind to breathe. Even cold showers can offer unexpected benefits—reducing anxiety, boosting circulation, and providing a mental reset. Just the act of doing something difficult and finishing it gives your brain and your spirit something to hold onto.

What you'll also find is that physical movement naturally influences other areas of your well-being. You may start sleeping better. You might crave healthier foods. Exercise has a way of jumpstarting your body's natural healing processes—not just physically, but emotionally and mentally. And when your sleep improves and your body is nourished well, your mind becomes more stable, and your heart finds space to breathe again.

Music and meaning

Another source of deep healing for me was my music. After the divorce, I joined a new church and took on the role of worship leader. Some Sundays, I played at multiple services—each one requiring preparation, focus, and presence. The more I committed to it, the more it helped me re-centre. I wasn't just keeping busy—I was serving others, worshiping, and reconnecting with something greater than myself. That sense of purpose anchored me during a time when I felt lost.

If you're a creative person, lean into that creativity. Write. Paint. Cook. Design. Build. Whatever allows you to express and process your emotions—give it room to grow. You don't need to be great at it. You just need to show up for yourself.

Find what makes you come alive

Your path may look different than mine. Maybe it's gardening, photography, volunteering, or fixing up old cars. The important thing is to find the thing that brings you back to life. You may feel like a shadow of yourself right now—but your core identity is still there. It just needs some time and attention to shine again.

Also consider sleep therapy or practices that support proper rest. Insomnia is common during emotional distress, and a rested mind is a wiser mind. This may be the time to speak with a professional, try guided meditation, or even explore natural supplements under guidance. Emotional recovery is deeply connected to physical restoration.

You are more than your divorce. You still have dreams to chase, talents to share, and a life that matters. Focus on what you're good at, what you can offer to others, and most importantly—what brings light back into your life. Because the real work of healing isn't just about surviving. It's about rediscovering who you are and what you were created to be.

Reflection

As you read this, take a moment to consider what brings you joy. Have you allowed yourself space to pursue what you love—or have you been so consumed with emotional survival that you’ve forgotten how to live? Healing comes in many forms, but almost always, it requires movement—of the body, of the spirit, of the heart.

What does healing look like for you right now? Are you resting well? Are you taking care of your body with food and movement? Are there activities or passions you’ve neglected that could help reawaken something good inside of you?

Think back to times in your life when you felt most alive. What were you doing? Who were you with? How did you feel? That version of you still exists—and it’s time to start welcoming them back.

Journaling

Write about one physical activity, creative pursuit, or meaningful hobby that you’d like to return to—or try for the first time. Why does it appeal to you? How might it support your healing?

Reflect on your current self-care. Are you sleeping well? Are you eating in a way that supports your health? Are you moving your body regularly, or has stress left you stagnant?

Next, write about what you think your life could look like six months from now if you committed to just one positive habit—whether that’s daily walks, journaling, prayer, painting, or reconnecting with community. Give yourself permission to dream again. This isn’t about fixing everything—it’s about finding hope in motion.

Chapter 3

Reconstructing the practical aspects of your life

3.1 Legal implications

Divorce is not just an emotional process—it's also a legal one. And while your heart may still be raw and your mind clouded with grief, anger, or confusion, this is one area where clarity is essential. The decisions made during this phase will affect the rest of your life—and if you have children, theirs as well.

This chapter isn't about legal advice—because I'm not a lawyer. My goal is to guide you emotionally, to help prepare your mindset so you can approach the legal process with as much confidence and calm as possible. Each country, each region, and each legal system has its own procedures when it comes to divorce. That's why it's so important to find a competent, reputable divorce attorney in your area—someone with a good track record and solid reviews. Don't settle. Don't just pick someone because they're convenient or cheap. Choose someone who knows the terrain and who can advocate for you well.

But here's a critical reminder: a lawyer is not a psychologist. Their role is not to help you process your emotions or guide you toward healing—they are there to represent your legal interests and navigate the process professionally. That's why clear thinking, honesty, and mature cooperation on your part are essential.

Your lawyer can only work with the information you provide, so it's important to be transparent and realistic. They become your voice in legal proceedings, and the accuracy of that voice depends entirely on your openness. A competent lawyer—one who is truly committed to providing professional service—will help you understand what a realistic outcome looks like based on your unique situation.

Don't expect an unrealistic, one-sided outcome that only benefits you. Instead, consider all factors and aim for a resolution that is fair and sustainable for everyone involved. In doing so, you not only reduce unnecessary conflict but also set the stage for a healthier future—for yourself, and for those affected by the divorce.

Not every divorce looks the same

Some divorces are relatively straightforward. Two people acknowledge that the relationship has ended, and they work together—amicably and respectfully—to divide assets, arrange custody, and move on with their lives. These cases are often less painful legally, emotionally, and financially.

Other divorces, however, are much more complex. The presence of children, large financial assets, or unresolved emotional conflict can quickly turn the process into a prolonged, challenging ordeal. The more entangled your lives were, the harder it can be to unwind them. This is why it's vital that you step into this phase with as much calm, maturity, and honesty as you can muster.

My experience: a warning and a lesson

I wasn't ready for legal proceedings when they came. I was still in the bargaining phase of grief—thinking things might turn around, hoping we could reconcile. When my ex-wife began drawing up divorce papers, I wasn't paying full attention. Emotionally, I was still trying to fix things. I also didn't want to create more conflict with her father, so I stayed quiet. I avoided confrontation. I hoped things would change. They didn't.

Looking back, I'm not sure whether standing up for myself more firmly would've changed the outcome. Perhaps not. But what I do know is this: I wasn't emotionally prepared for the process, and that cost me—not only financially, but emotionally, too. In my next book I will focus on the legal challenges that I had to face seven years after my divorce when I least expected it.

The cost of fighting

A good friend of mine, John, went through his divorce two years after mine. He had been married for 19 years and had known his former spouse for eight years before they got married. Like me, his wife was also involved with another man. Having witnessed what I had endured, John chose to take a more aggressive legal approach. He hired a strong legal team and decided to fight hard for what he believed was fair. Yet despite his efforts, he still lost a great deal—both financially and emotionally. Later, he confided in me that the prolonged legal battle had caused significant emotional harm, not only to himself but also to his children and extended family.

At one point, things escalated so badly that his ex-wife and her new boyfriend hired men with ties to law enforcement who physically assaulted him and had him locked up for two days. I was in constant contact with him during that time and saw first-hand the emotional toll it took. The stress, fear, and sense of helplessness were overwhelming.

My advice to you

Be honest—with yourself, with your lawyer, and with your spouse (if communication is still possible). Ask yourself: What would a fair outcome look like for everyone involved? Not perfect. Not punitive. Fair. If your spouse is open to discussion, try to reach a mature agreement before things escalate. This approach not only reduces emotional stress—it can also significantly lower your legal costs.

Yes, there are times when you need to fight for what's right. But there's a difference between standing for justice and fuelling a war that hurts everyone. Divorce already brings enough pain. Don't let your legal strategy add more if it can be avoided.

Reflection

Think about where you are in your emotional journey. Are you clear-headed enough to make important legal decisions right now? Are you being honest with yourself about what is fair—not just for you, but for your children and everyone involved?

Do you have a competent lawyer who understands your situation and is prepared to represent you with integrity? If not, what steps can you take to find someone better suited?

Also consider your current emotional posture: Are you seeking revenge, or resolution? Are you trying to punish your ex, or build a new life for yourself? One mindset will drain you; the other will empower you.

Journaling

Take a few moments to write about what a “fair” outcome would look like to you. Not what you want out of anger or fear—but what would genuinely be a fair arrangement for your future, your ex-partner (even if it’s hard to think that way), and your children, if you have them.

Also ask yourself: What lessons have I learned from the legal or emotional missteps I’ve already taken? What would I do differently if I had to do it again—and what can I still do better moving forward?

Write openly. Be honest. You’re not just settling a legal matter—you’re laying the groundwork for your next chapter.

3.2 Financial implications

Divorce doesn’t only dissolve a marriage—it often disrupts the financial foundation on which that life was built. For many, it’s one of the most painful and overwhelming aspects of the process. Suddenly, what you’ve worked years to build—assets, savings, investments—gets split, sold, or lost entirely. It’s easy to feel like your entire future is slipping away.

Let me say this clearly: financial assets can be rebuilt. The home you’ve lost, the savings you’ve split, the lifestyle that’s changed—all of these can shift again. Like I mentioned in the introduction of this book, no situation is permanent. That includes your current financial position. Yes, you may feel down and out. Yes, you may be starting over from scratch. But this is not where your story ends.

Still, that doesn’t mean you should allow yourself to be walked over. There’s a difference between choosing peace and being passive. One of the regrets I carry from my own divorce is not speaking up when it mattered. I never had that final conversation with my father-in-law about how we would continue our game breeding venture. I never fully expressed how unfair I thought it was not to receive an

escalation value on our home—despite the fact that my father and I had invested significantly in its construction.

At the time, I was still in the bargaining stage of my emotional journey. I wasn't ready to accept that the marriage was truly ending, and I didn't want to fuel further conflict or cause more drama—especially for the sake of the children and the extended family. I held back, hoping things might still change.

In hindsight, I realize that financial conversations—especially during divorce—require clarity and courage. You must speak up if you believe something is unfair. Do so calmly, respectfully, and through the proper legal channels—but don't assume silence will protect you. Often, it only adds to your sense of regret later.

That said, money is not the most important thing. Your health, your emotional stability, and your relationship with your children are worth far more than any settlement. I may not have walked away with everything I believed was fair from a monetary standpoint, but I protected my physical and mental health. And, more importantly, I preserved my role as a father without allowing bitterness to shape my interactions with my children.

The financial decisions you make now will impact your future—but they don't define your worth or your potential. Be honest with your lawyer. Make your voice heard. But don't let your financial losses rob you of peace or derail your ability to rebuild. In time, you can recover.

Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on the financial aspects of your divorce. Are you carrying resentment or regret about what was lost or how the process was handled? Have you voiced your concerns clearly and respectfully? If you're still in the process, are there conversations you've avoided because they're uncomfortable? And if it's already behind you—can you begin to release the bitterness and focus on what you still have, not just what you've lost?

Journaling

Write about your financial journey in this process. What did you lose, and how did it make you feel? Are you blaming yourself—or someone else—for the outcome? Now shift your focus to what you can rebuild. What would financial stability look like for you going forward? What lessons have you learned that can help you make wiser choices in the future?

3.3 Relocation and change

Divorce often brings with it the unavoidable task of relocation. Whether it's selling the family home or one spouse choosing—or being forced—to move out, the physical

separation of lives also means the separation of space. For some, the process is more straightforward. One partner may remain in the home, while the other finds a new place nearby. For others, especially when financial strain is involved, the change can be much more drastic.

In my case, without receiving any monetary compensation from the house I helped build and being R180 711.44 in debt (approximately \$12 850) at the time I had no real choice but to move back in with my parents. At first, it sounded like a major setback. After all, I was in my thirties, a father of two, and had been independent for years. Moving back into my parents' home felt like a regression. But, in hindsight, it wasn't a step backward—it was a stepping stone toward healing.

I stayed with my parents for two years. And those years, surprisingly, became a time of great comfort and growth. I was welcomed without judgment. I had the chance to reconnect with my parents—not just as their son, but as a man going through one of the toughest transitions of his life. We shared meals together. We had meaningful conversations. My mother's home-cooked food and my father's quiet strength became sources of stability during a very unstable time.

Living in a new (yet old) environment also helped me expand my social circle. I met new neighbours who later introduced me to a local church—one that eventually invited me to become involved as a worship leader. Preparing for the Sunday services gave me a sense of responsibility and belonging again. In a time when everything else felt uncertain, I had something meaningful to focus on.

Though I knew the arrangement was temporary, I embraced it as my new reality. I explored new running routes in the area, continued training with friends, and even shared this season with my children during their visits. Their time with me also became time with their grandparents—something I know they'll remember. I wasn't just surviving—I was learning to make the best out of the situation I had been given.

Relocation isn't easy. It brings emotional, financial, and logistical stress. But it also brings opportunity—a chance to start fresh, explore new routines, and create new memories. Whether you're moving into an apartment, staying with family, or finding a completely new city to call home, try to view it not just as an ending, but as a beginning.

You don't have to have it all figured out. You just need to be willing to take the next step, even if it feels unfamiliar. Because with the right mindset and a little grace, your new space can become a place of restoration and growth.

Reflection

Where are you in this process? Are you facing the possibility of relocation, or have you already made the move? What feelings does this stir up in you—loss, fear, uncertainty, maybe even relief? Have you allowed yourself to find comfort in the new space, even if it's temporary? Are there small opportunities for connection, healing, or growth where you are right now?

Journaling

Write about your current living situation. How did you get there, and what has the experience been like so far? Are there aspects of it that feel unexpectedly positive or peaceful? What small routines, relationships, or places have helped you settle into this chapter of your life? If you're about to move, what fears are you carrying—and what hopes are beginning to form?

3.4 Getting used to the new normal

Once the legal battles begin to calm and the financial arrangements are more or less settled—whether fairly or not—you may find yourself stepping into a new kind of quiet. The dust starts to settle, but the silence can be just as loud. And what no one tells you is that this stage of the journey can feel even more confusing than the chaos that came before it.

Because now... it's just you.

You might be alone in a room, sitting in a place that doesn't quite feel like home yet. Maybe it's cold outside. Maybe it's just quiet. Maybe you're missing your old life more than you care to admit. This was true for me.

Even though I was running regularly, investing my energy into church, preparing for worship sets, and surrounding myself with good people—I still found myself struggling with deep thoughts of failure, rejection, and self-doubt. Am I good enough? Did I make the right decisions? Is this really how it all ends?

One evening, I went out with some friends. I had too much to drink, and all the anger and confusion I had buried for weeks suddenly bubbled up and spilled over. It surprised even me. It reminded me of something important: just because you're no longer experiencing constant sadness or negative emotions doesn't mean you're healed. Healing is not always about what you feel—sometimes, it's about what still shows up when you least expect it.

Think of it like a broken bone. The average recovery time might be six weeks. By week four, you don't feel much pain anymore. You might think you're fine. But if you move too fast or lift too much, you realize the injury isn't fully healed yet. Emotional wounds I believe are the same. Just because you're functioning again doesn't mean you're whole again.

That's why I strongly encourage you to be cautious—especially with things like alcohol. It may seem harmless. It may even feel like a temporary relief. But numbing your pain isn't the same as healing it. The risk is that you might say or do something that sets you back or hurts someone else unintentionally. And that's the last thing you need during this fragile phase.

This new reality will take time to settle into. Some days you'll feel strong. Other days you'll feel like you're starting all over again. Both are normal. Both are part of the process. Be gentle with yourself. Don't rush your healing. But do stay aware of your patterns and choices, because how you handle this season will affect what your next one looks like.

You may not feel fully at peace yet—but you are where you need to be, on the road to recovery.

Reflection

Have you noticed certain thoughts or emotions returning, even after feeling like you were starting to move on? Are you being honest with yourself about where you still feel vulnerable? What are your current coping mechanisms—and are they truly helping, or just masking the pain? What new habits or boundaries could support you in staying emotionally grounded as you adjust to this new chapter?

Journaling

Write about what this “new normal” has looked like for you. Where do you feel progress? Where do you still feel stuck? Are there situations—social outings, work stress, or even moments alone—where your emotions surprise you? If so, what do those moments reveal? Reflect also on how you're treating your body and mind in this season. Are you giving yourself what you need to heal, or are you rushing the process?

3.5 Be kind to yourself — you've been through a lot

If I could leave you with one final message before closing this chapter, it would be this: Be kind to yourself. You've been through more than most people realize. Emotionally, spiritually, and mentally—you've been stretched, broken, and reshaped. And while others may see you functioning again, what they don't see is how much effort it takes just to hold yourself together on certain days.

After my divorce, I desperately wanted my life back. For nine years, I had built something—brick by brick, memory by memory. I wanted to restore that life, to return to what once was. But I had to face the truth: rebuilding what took nearly a decade can't happen overnight. And trying to do so can be emotionally and spiritually damaging.

This is your new reality now. It might not be what you planned for, but it's where you are. And instead of fighting against it, maybe it's time to lean into it with open hands and ask: “Lord, what's next for me? This can't be the end. These lessons—this pain—it has to mean something.”

That question became a turning point for me. I started praying not only for strength to get through the day, but for clarity—"What are you trying to teach me in this silence, Lord? What is it that I haven't seen before?"

When everything was stripped away—my house, my money, my access to my children, my familiar surroundings—I had to confront a deeper question: Who am I really, without all of that?

And the surprising answer? I wasn't lost. Not entirely. Underneath all the layers of pain and confusion, there was still something very real inside me. And that part of me began to grow again.

This time became a season of re-discovery. I began to see new parts of myself emerge. I took my music to another level. I found purpose in preparing for worship services at my new church. My pastor even commented that the level of worship during that season was the most sincere and powerful he had ever experienced. That affirmation reminded me: growth doesn't only happen when life is good—it is more likely to happen in the valley.

This is a time for pushing. For figuring things out. For becoming. You might not know where you're going yet. That's okay. But don't give up on who you are becoming along the way. Your value isn't based on what you lost. It's revealed in how you grow from it.

So take a breath. Give yourself permission to slow down. You don't have to prove anything to anyone. Focus on rebuilding gently, and let the lessons of this season anchor your soul in something deeper than material things. Let it draw you closer to your purpose. Let it reintroduce you to yourself.

Reflection

Have you been placing unrealistic expectations on yourself to bounce back quickly? Are you allowing yourself space to breathe, to grieve, and to grow—or are you still trying to reclaim a past that no longer exists? What has this experience revealed about your identity, your strengths, or even your calling? Can you see glimpses of growth—even small ones—emerging from your struggle?

Journaling

Write a letter to yourself as if you were your closest friend. Acknowledge what you've endured, and encourage yourself with kindness. Reflect on how your life has changed, not only in loss but in new beginnings. What unexpected strengths have emerged in you during this time? What dreams or passions are being rekindled? What would it mean to accept this new chapter—not as a failure, but as a launching point for something new?

Chapter 4

Moving towards healing

Before we begin exploring new ideas, relationships, and the next steps in life after divorce, it's important to pause and reflect on the ground we've already covered. This book was never meant to simply tell my story—it was meant to walk with you through your own. And as we prepare to move forward, we must look back, even briefly, to acknowledge the work that's already been done.

4.1 A recap before moving forward

Chapter 1

My side of the story: From my engagement to my divorce

In Chapter 1, I shared the raw and honest story of how my marriage unravelled. It was a journey filled with emotional chaos, disbelief, and the painful reality of letting go. This chapter wasn't about assigning blame—it was about reflecting on the truth and finally telling a story I had carried in silence for far too long. I chose to share it not only to unburden myself but to let others know they're not alone in their pain. Sometimes, just hearing someone else's truth helps you face your own.

Chapter 2

Coping with divorce in the early stages

This chapter focused on helping you step out of survival mode and begin processing what really happened. We started by encouraging personal reflection—not to place blame, but to find clarity and truth. We looked at how perception shapes reality, exploring how two people in the same relationship can walk away with completely different experiences based on their unique beliefs, personalities, and backgrounds.

From there, we explored the emotional storm of divorce, particularly through the lens of grief and trauma. We broke down the five stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and acceptance—and discussed how unresolved emotions can sometimes evolve into deeper psychological wounds. We emphasized the importance of seeking support and allowing yourself space to grieve properly.

We then looked outward to understand the ripple effect that divorce has on others—especially children, extended family, and close friends. This section reminded us of the importance of compassion and communication during a time when emotions run high.

One of the more challenging topics we addressed was understanding personality disorders. This wasn't to label anyone, but to bring awareness to manipulative or emotionally damaging behaviours that may have played a role in the breakdown of

your relationship. It was a call to protect your heart and be honest about what you've experienced.

That naturally led into the importance of setting boundaries—establishing emotional safety for yourself as you begin to rebuild. We then closed the chapter by focusing on the healing process through the things you love. Whether through creativity, movement, rest, or faith, healing is essential—not a luxury, but the very foundation on which your new life will be built.

Chapter 3

The practical side of divorce

Chapter 3 shifted the focus to the logistical realities of divorce, starting with the legal implications. We looked at why a good lawyer matters, the emotional toll legal proceedings can take, and the importance of setting fair and realistic expectations.

Financial issues were also addressed, not to overwhelm you, but to help you understand that while your finances may take a hit, they do not define your worth or your future. Peace of mind and strong relationships are far more valuable in the long run.

We also talked about the inevitable changes that come with relocation. Whether you're moving in with family, downsizing, or starting over in a completely new place, it can feel like a setback—but it's also an opportunity to rebuild. Your environment may change, but your value remains.

This led us into a conversation about adjusting to your new reality. Even with progress, sadness and doubt can return unexpectedly. Healing isn't always visible, and this section was a reminder that you're allowed to have tough days along the way.

We ended with a simple but powerful message: be kind to yourself. You've been through a lot. Your value is not tied to your mistakes or your possessions. There is still purpose ahead—and it's worth moving toward with grace and self-compassion.

Before you turn the page, I want to remind you—this book is not meant to be a 'quick fix'. The chapters and sections we've walked through were never meant to be ticked off like a checklist. They're meant to be lived through, reflected on, and revisited when necessary. Healing is not linear. It's layered, and at times, slow. Some of what you've read may take weeks, months, or even longer to fully process and integrate into your life. And that's okay. Even though the chapters ahead begin to focus on more hopeful, forward-looking ideas, it's important not to skip over the deep emotional work that still needs your attention. Don't rush this process. Give yourself the grace to sit with each part, to reflect honestly, and to grow at your own pace. Because when the foundation is strong, what you build next will stand firmer than before.

4.2 Being open to new ideas

After navigating the emotional storm of divorce and taking time to reflect on the experiences that shaped your journey, something unexpected may begin to happen: new insight begins to emerge. Subtle thoughts, realizations, or even uncomfortable truths start bubbling to the surface. You begin to see certain patterns, choices, or blind spots more clearly. Maybe, through all this reflection, you've started to identify areas in your life that need growth or healing—places where you know you can improve.

Now is the time to open yourself up to change. Think of your life as a blank canvas. The picture you painted before—your marriage, your plans, your expectations—didn't turn out the way you hoped. But that doesn't mean the canvas is ruined. It means you get to start again. What will you draw next? What kind of colours, lines, or expressions will reflect this new season of who you are becoming?

Some people come to this part of the journey thinking, "I'm okay. I like who I am. I don't really want to change." And that may be true to a degree. But from my personal experience, I can say with confidence: I have changed. Not just because I had to—but because I wanted to. Divorce didn't just end a chapter in my life; it exposed areas I had been neglecting and challenged me to become a better version of myself.

Part of this growth involves being open to new ideas—new perspectives that challenge you, inspire you, and stretch your thinking. During this season, I found tremendous value in listening to various church sermons as well as individuals who had walked through their own struggles and emerged with wisdom to share. I also listened to motivational speakers and thinkers such as:

- **Earl Nightingale** – *The Strangest Secret in the World*
- **Napoleon Hill** – *Think and Grow Rich*
- **Bob Proctor** – *The Secret to Think and Grow Rich Revealed*
- **M. Scott Peck** – *The Road Less Travelled*
- **Eddie Pinero** – *Various motivational speeches*

Each of these voices offered something different—whether it was resilience, purpose, discipline, or the courage to reimagine what life could be. I would encourage you to listen to your podcasts or audio recordings more than once. I'll admit, there are recordings I've listened to more than ten times, and each time I hear a new message or catch something I missed before.

You'll also find that you begin to listen and be more interested in to how others processed their pain. You may read books or listen to podcasts that you never would have considered before. And if you're a person of faith like I am, you might even

begin to understand certain biblical truths in a deeper, more personal way. This too is part of the journey—and I'll talk more about it in the final chapter of this book.

But for now, I encourage you to be open. Be curious. Let go of rigid definitions of who you were supposed to be, and allow yourself to become who you were meant to be. Growth is not about perfection. It's about movement. It's about being willing to shift, to listen, and to create space for something new to emerge in your life.

Reflection

What if your greatest growth is waiting just on the other side of your resistance to change? Now that you've weathered the emotional storm and begun to steady your footing, ask yourself: Are you truly open to becoming someone new—not because the old you was broken, but because you now have the opportunity to become wiser, stronger, and more intentional?

Think about the influences you've allowed into your life up to this point—your beliefs, habits, assumptions, and fears. How many of those were consciously chosen? How many were simply inherited or absorbed along the way?

Being open to new ideas doesn't mean letting go of who you are. It means expanding who you are. It's an invitation to grow—not into someone completely different, but into someone more aware, more grounded, and more ready to live with purpose.

Journaling

Begin by writing about one belief or pattern in your life that you've started to question since your divorce. Reflect on how that belief may have shaped your past choices, and whether it still serves you today.

Think about a book, podcast, or conversation that stayed with you—something that stirred your thinking or gave you a glimpse of new possibility. What was it about that message that resonated with you?

Consider the ways you've already started to grow. Write about the changes you've noticed in yourself, whether they are emotional, spiritual, or even practical.

Now, look ahead. Describe an area in your life where you feel ready for growth. What might be holding you back from stepping into that change? What fears or doubts are asking to be acknowledged—and gently released?

Finally, imagine the person you are becoming. Who is he or she? What kind of presence do they carry? What kind of life are they creating? Let yourself write freely. This vision doesn't need to be perfect—it just needs to be honest.

4.3 Eliminating fear – a crucial step moving forward

Now that you are filling yourself with new ideas and becoming more open to understanding both yourself and others, I want to invite you to develop a new skill—one that can truly transform how you live the rest of your life: the ability to eliminate fear. Fear is one of the most powerful emotions that can hold you back. It wears many masks—fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of being alone, fear of judgment. You might find yourself asking, “Who would want to date me now that I’m divorced?” or “Will anyone accept me and my children?” Perhaps you fear falling in love again, only to risk more heartache. These are normal questions—but that doesn’t mean they have to control your life.

Fear often lives in the “what ifs.” What if I fail again? What if no one ever truly loves me? What if I’m destined to be alone? But here’s what I’ve come to understand: those thoughts are rooted in a future that hasn’t happened—and may never happen. Fear thrives in uncertainty, but it loses its grip when we stop feeding it.

One of the most powerful ways to disarm fear is to anchor yourself in the present moment. The past is behind you—you’ve done the work to reflect and begin healing. The future hasn’t arrived yet. All you truly have is now. And in this moment, you are still here. You are breathing. You are learning. You are healing. The present is rarely as frightening as the future we imagine in our minds.

It may sound simple, but it’s powerful: the more present you become, the less power fear holds over you. Come on—how scary can this moment be? You’re reading these words. You’re safe. You’re growing. And if you can stay here—in the now—you can begin to understand just how much strength and clarity you already possess.

During this time in my life, I came across a book that left a lasting impression on me: *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. It’s a deeply spiritual book, and although I don’t agree with every viewpoint from my Christian perspective, it offers incredible insights into the nature of the mind and how fear takes root in imagined futures. I took away so much value from it—especially the reminder that peace lives in the now, not in what might be.

This doesn’t mean fear will disappear entirely. It might still show up now and then. But you no longer have to give it the final say. Start small. Start now. Let presence, not panic, guide your next step. You’ve come too far to be ruled by stories that aren’t even real.

Reflection

Think about the fears that tend to creep into your thoughts—those lingering doubts and “what ifs” that hold you back. Are they based on real experiences, or imagined possibilities? How often do you find yourself living in the future instead of anchoring yourself in the present? What would it look like if you stopped trying to predict the whole path and just focused on taking the next step?

Journaling

Write down one fear that continues to resurface, even now. Where do you think it comes from? What story is it telling you—and is that story even true? Now write down one small, real-world action you can take today that pushes back against that fear. It doesn't have to be dramatic—it just needs to be real. You don't have to have it all figured out. You just need to start—one grounded, fearless step at a time.

4.4 How do I know I have healed?

This is a question that may surface more than once on your journey: “How do I know I've healed?” I don't believe there is a single moment of clarity or obvious signal to mark it. I don't believe healing is a defined finish line—it is a gradual return to yourself, a quiet shift within, a settling of the dust after a long and painful storm.

For me, that moment came quietly. I woke up one morning and something felt different. It was a beautiful day I was really able to see and experience the beauty of that particular day. I decided to go for a walk in the park. The sun was shining, and I could feel its warmth on my skin. It wasn't just another day—it felt new, fresh. And then I realized I hadn't been journaling in nearly three months. There was no desperate need to pour out my emotions or process another wave of pain. A subtle shift had occurred inside me.

I wasn't feeling anxious anymore. I wasn't consumed by sadness. The routine I had established with my boys felt natural and fulfilling. I had adjusted to my new life and started to embrace the new ideas I'd formed about my future. On that day, I realized I had reached a place of healing—not perfect, not complete—but enough to feel excited about life again. Enough to move forward with hope.

Healing doesn't mean forgetting. It doesn't mean everything is resolved or that all the questions have been answered. It means the pain no longer rules your every thought. It means you've regained your strength, and your heart has begun to open up to life's possibilities again.

- If you're wondering whether you've healed, ask yourself:
- Can I think about the past without being emotionally overwhelmed?
- Do I wake up looking forward to my day more often than not?
- Am I able to enjoy moments of peace and joy without guilt?
- Have I stopped blaming myself—or others—on repeat?
- Do I feel ready to dream again?

If your answers lean toward yes, even partially, it may be a sign that your healing has begun to settle in. Remember, healing doesn't erase the past—it transforms your relationship to it. And with that transformation comes strength, wisdom, and the quiet confidence that you are no longer who you were at the beginning of this journey.

Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on your recent days or weeks. Have you noticed a shift—however small—in how you feel, think, or act? Are there signs that your heart is lighter, your thoughts clearer, your perspective deeper? Think about your energy, your habits, your conversations. What do they tell you about your emotional state?

Journaling

Write about a recent moment where you felt calm, content, or hopeful. What were you doing? Who were you with? How did it feel in your body and mind? Then write down three signs you've noticed that show you're healing—even if you're not fully there yet. Acknowledge them. Celebrate them. And remind yourself that every small sign of progress matters.

4.5 Considering romantic relationships again

Although a new relationship can be really exciting, there are a few important things to consider when pursuing it. First of all—as we've just discussed—you need to be honest with yourself: are you healed enough? Have you worked through the emotions, grief, and changes that came with your divorce? Are you stepping into a new relationship from a place of strength, not desperation?

But your readiness is only half of the equation. You must also ask: Is the person I'm interested in healed enough? Two wounded people trying to soothe each other's pain through romance may create more emotional chaos than connection. If they haven't worked through their own trauma, it may end up spilling over into your relationship. Love can't fix what hasn't been acknowledged.

Next, consider who else will be involved in this relationship—especially if you have children. In my case, it was my two boys. Their emotional well-being became a major factor in when and how I approached dating again. Any new partner would not only have to be a good fit for me, but also someone who could respect and consider my children's journey.

Another vital question: Are you financially stable enough to support a relationship? Or are you hoping that someone else's financial stability might be a solution to your current situation? Likewise, is the person you're interested in financially independent, or will their needs create additional pressure in your life? These may seem like practical concerns, but in reality, they speak volumes about whether this relationship will grow from a place of health—or strain.

This isn't about overanalysing everything or putting off happiness. It's about approaching your future with maturity and wisdom. Before opening your heart again, take the time to reflect on a few key areas: your emotional readiness, your sense of

stability, and the well-being of anyone else involved—especially children. When you do take that step, let it be for the right reasons, with the right person, at the right time. Because this time, you truly want it to work.

You deserve a relationship that builds, not breaks. That nourishes, not drains. That grows from a place of truth, not trauma. And that's only possible when both people walk in with eyes open and hearts healed—or at the very least, healing.

I don't want to reveal too much just yet, but I remember the day clearly when my new wife crossed my path. It was a Sunday afternoon. I was busy washing my car, and it was shortly after I had experienced that feeling of healing, as discussed in the previous section above. I had made peace with many ideas and emotions, and I was ready to face whatever life was going to send my way next. Then, out of nowhere, I received a text on my phone from a woman who had mistaken me for someone else. To this day, I still regard it as one of the greatest miracles I have ever encountered—and clear proof that a higher force is most certainly at work in our lives.

Reflection

Take a moment to reflect: Are you truly ready for a new relationship? What are the reasons behind your desire to find a partner again? Are they rooted in loneliness, financial need, or the pressure to return to “normal”—or are they coming from a healed, hopeful heart? Also reflect on your potential partner. Are they walking in healing or still carrying wounds that may impact you?

Journaling

Write down what you're looking for in a future partner—not just in terms of personality traits, but emotional readiness. What have you learned about love, respect, and commitment from your past relationship? How do you want your next one to feel different? Then write down a few areas that you are not willing to negotiate on that will help you protect your peace and ensure you only open your heart when the time is truly right.

Chapter 5

A personal reflection beyond the process

5.1 An introduction to this chapter

Over the past chapters, I've tried to give you a clear and structured path—something steady to hold onto during one of the most emotionally disorienting times of your life. Each section was written with intention, building on the one before it. Together, they form a framework through which you can evaluate, process, and begin to heal from your divorce.

You've been invited to reflect, to journal, and to ask yourself some of the hardest questions you may have ever faced. But this final chapter is different. This chapter isn't about practical steps, tools, or advice—it's about me. It's about what this journey has taught me on a much deeper level. What I've had to come to terms with. What I've come to understand about love, loss, faith, forgiveness, and the man I've become on the other side of it all.

I offer it not as instruction, but as reflection—a way to conclude this first book. Because, as the title suggests, *Surviving My Divorce* is an on-going process, the journey doesn't end here. I still have so much more to share with you—stories of new beginnings and unexpected challenges. Stories like the miracle of how I met my new wife, what it truly means to love again, and how it feels to be married a second time after everything I had endured. I want to take you into the realities of blending a new family—how my children adapted to my new wife, and how having children together brought new joys and new dynamics, not only within our home but also between all the parties still connected through my divorce. I want to tell you what eventually happened to Bob and Clare, and about the unexpected legal battles I faced when I least anticipated them. These are not simple stories. They are filled with joy, growth, learning—and, at times, moments of deep challenge.

But before we get to all of that in a future volume, let me first pause here—with some of the personal truths I've gathered along the way.

Now, I want to say something especially important: you may not be ready to receive what follows just yet. You might still be in the early stages of your divorce—hurting, processing, and simply trying to survive each day. And that's okay. I don't expect you to be ready. I've walked that road myself, and I know how slow and unpredictable the healing process can be. Just to remind you—this book was written seven years after my own divorce.

In time, though, your divorce will teach you the lessons you need to understand. You don't need to rush it—you just need to remain open. Stay aware. Stay honest. And as those truths begin to reveal themselves in your own life, you'll start to make sense of what felt senseless before.

If you've found this book helpful up to this point—if something in it has resonated with you—I want to assure you that I've written every word from a place of sincerity

and purpose. I'm not offering empty encouragement. I'm sharing what I've lived, and I'm doing it because I want to open your eyes to something worth considering.

My own faith has grown deeper than ever through this process. After the dust settled, it wasn't bitterness that remained—it was devotion. My relationship with God became more grounded, more personal, and more unshakable than it had ever been before. And that is perhaps the greatest gift that this painful journey has given me.

So let's take these final steps together—not as teacher and student, but as fellow travellers. Let me share with you what I've come to understand—not to add weight to your journey, but perhaps to help lighten it.

5.2 A faith tested, a faith transformed

My faith was deeply tested throughout the entire process of my divorce. I come from a family where both my parents and my former spouse's parents were still married on the day I said my vows. Divorce wasn't something I had ever considered—not before marriage, and certainly not during it. I never thought about signing a marital contract or prenuptial agreement. In my worldview, marriage was the next natural step in life. It made sense spiritually, culturally, and practically. It aligned with my beliefs and values, and I entered it with the conviction that it would be for life.

Looking back, I believe this is one of the reasons I struggled so intensely during my divorce. The emotional pain was real, but layered beneath it was a spiritual crisis—a quiet confusion about whether I had failed not just as a husband, but as a man of faith. At the time, I misunderstood God's laws. I thought the seventh commandment referred to divorce. I believed I had broken one of the Ten Commandments simply by being in the middle of a divorce. Later, I came to understand that the commandment says, "You shall not commit adultery," not "You shall not divorce." I carried guilt that I wasn't meant to carry. I thought I had become a sinner simply for going through something I never wanted in the first place.

I began to question God. I had helped lead church services for six years prior to my divorce. I was active in the church, dedicated in my walk. I couldn't understand how this was happening to me. I thought divorce was something that happened to "other people"—those who didn't take faith seriously. I was wrong.

What I began to realize, slowly and painfully, is that people of faith suffer too. Righteous people suffer. Devoted people suffer. Just look at the stories of the great Biblical figures. King David, for example, faced rejection and betrayal on levels I can hardly imagine. His own son, Absalom, tried to kill him. Saul, the first king of Israel, hunted him relentlessly. David spent time hiding in caves just to survive. Can you imagine the heartbreak? The confusion? The loneliness?

If a man after God's own heart had to endure such anguish, could it be that suffering was not a sign of failure—but part of the process of transformation?

During one of my lowest points, I stumbled across a sermon about Romans 8:28:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." I remember thinking: Well, I love God. I've served Him faithfully. Doesn't this promise apply to me too? I clung to that verse. In fact, I made it my personal motto and placed it on my social media profiles, even in the early days of my divorce. It became my anchor.

Looking back at that promise—one I once didn't fully understand—it only started to make real sense to me much later. What good came from my divorce? Today, I can answer that question with certainty. So many things. My new wife. My new children. A new job. A new house. A new boss—someone who would become one of the most important people I had to meet. My fellow colleagues who supported me. A new circle of friends. My level of fitness. And even this book you're reading now. The list goes on. What once felt like the end of everything turned out to be the beginning of so much more than I could have imagined.

Looking back now, I realize how deeply God was working in my life—quietly, purposefully, and patiently. All the major figures in the Bible had to go through some transformative process before they were ready for the purpose God had for them. Most of them made mistakes. Most of them fell short of perfection. Some even broke one or more of the Ten Commandments. And yet, God used them. Moulded them. Redeemed them.

I now see my divorce not as a detour from God's plan, but as part of the refining fire that reshaped my faith. It stripped away my illusions, confronted my spiritual immaturity, and brought me face to face with the grace of a God who does not abandon His children when life falls apart.

5.3 Who is God to you?

This is a deeply personal question—and one that we don't always take the time to answer for ourselves. The word God is used so often these days that its meaning has become diluted. For some, it's just a universal term pointing to a higher force—an energy greater than ourselves. Others use it casually as an expression of amazement: "Oh my God," or even in frustration: "My God, you're so stupid." We say it without even thinking about the weight it once carried. But have you ever stopped to consider what you truly mean when you say the word God?

In spiritual conversations, especially outside of traditional religion, people often refer to the universe, divine consciousness, or source energy. These phrases still carry a sense of reverence, a nod to something bigger than us—but they often feel distant, like abstract ideas rather than a personal connection. It's as if we're all pointing toward something meaningful, but we're not quite sure how to define it.

So let me ask again: who is God to you?

Is God a man in the clouds? A divine spirit? An idol or a statue you once saw in a place of worship? Is God a feeling, an idea, or a mystery you've never fully tried to understand?

Now consider this: what if the real problem all along was that people have been searching for God in ways that made Him feel unreachable? What if—seeing how confused humanity had become—God decided to make Himself known? Not as a concept. Not as a statue or a distant energy. But as a person. Does that idea make sense to you? You might already be nodding, thinking, Yes, I’ve heard this before. And maybe you have. For centuries, Christians have believed that God chose to step into our human world in the form of a man named Jesus Christ. It wasn’t a random decision—it was a divine response to our confusion, our pain, our distance. Through Jesus, God came close.

This idea—the idea that God showed up as a person— isn’t just a theological concept. It’s a personal invitation. Because when God became human, He wasn’t doing it to create more religion—He was doing it so we could stop wondering what God is like. In Jesus, we see the heart of God in action. We see His compassion, His strength, His sorrow, and His willingness to suffer with us and for us. Suddenly, God becomes less of a distant idea and more of a personal relationship. A God that understands rejection, betrayal, grief, and love.

This isn’t about pressuring you to accept the Christian faith. It’s about opening the door to a different kind of understanding—a personal one. In the sections ahead, I’ll share more about what this discovery has meant in my life, especially as I walked through the pain of divorce. But for now, I want to leave you with this simple reflection:

What if God isn’t as far away as you thought?

And if that’s true... Who is God to you?

5.4 Who is God to me?

There was once a Man who stepped into our world and tried to explain to us something most people still struggle to understand: life is unfair. The world doesn’t always reward goodness. Truth isn’t always welcomed. And sometimes, doing what is right will cost you everything. He came not just to tell us this—but to prove it.

That Man was Jesus.

You may be reading this wondering why you had to go through something so painful. Why something meant to be beautiful—like marriage—turned into something filled with heartbreak, betrayal, or loss. You may have believed, like I once did, that love was meant to protect you, not crush you. So why did your story turn out this way?

What if the answer is that divorce—like sickness, loss, and even death—is simply part of the brokenness of this world? A world marred by sin. A world that no longer functions the way it was originally intended to. And I say this with caution—a world influenced by a negative force, the serpent, whose deception began in the garden with Adam and Eve. What if none of us are immune to that brokenness—no matter how hard we try, how purely we love, or how deeply we believe?

Jesus came to show us that even perfection is not spared from suffering. He was pure, sinless, and full of compassion. He healed the sick. He fed the hungry. He embraced the outcasts. And yet, His goodness offended the powerful. His truth disrupted some of the comfortable lies people had built their lives upon. So they turned on Him. They plotted against Him. And in the end, they crucified Him in the most brutal way imaginable.

Why?

Throughout my divorce, I began to see this same reality playing out in modern ways. I came to understand that there are people in this world who haven't yet awakened to truth—who are so consumed by their own desires and comfort that they don't stop to consider the consequences of their actions. They live as though there is no bigger story—no higher truth, no accountability, no spiritual reality beyond their own wants. And maybe, just maybe, it takes something as painful as a divorce, or some other kind of trauma, to start opening your eyes to the deeper reality beneath it all.

And when that awakening begins, even if it comes through tears, confusion, and suffering—it becomes sacred. Because in that place of pain, we begin to see differently. We begin to understand differently.

If you were to ask me today who God is to me, I would say this: Because of Adam and Eve's betrayal, He is the One who has understood this pain from the very beginning. And because He became flesh, He knows what it means to suffer, to be rejected, to feel the weight of loneliness, and to endure unfairness. He knows the sting of betrayal. He knows what it feels like to cry out in anguish and to be misunderstood—even by those closest to Him.

Jesus didn't just speak about life's hardships—He walked through the worst of them. And because He did, He can meet you in yours.

He's not distant. He's not just a name found in old books or a figure locked in stained glass windows. Jesus is real. And through the Holy Spirit, He is present—nearer than you think—and He understands the burden you carry. More than that, He knows how to carry you through it. Through Jesus, I've come to see that even when life is unfair—when it breaks you open—He is not absent. He is there. And in Him in His example, I've found the strength to keep going.

If you are walking through your own valley right now, know this: your pain is not wasted. It might just be the beginning of a greater awakening. And if you are willing and able to believe in this Man Jesus and accept who he really is, then His promises also become available to you—just as Romans 8:28 became a cornerstone of my own healing: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” That was not just a verse to me—it was a lifeline. And now, looking back, I can say with full confidence: it came true.

Is that not something worth considering?

5.5 The final transformation

If you've made it this far through the book—through the pain, the reflection, the rebuilding—I want to remind you of something important: the suffering in this world does not simply vanish. Divorce may have been your greatest heartbreak, but it won't be the last challenge you face. This world will continue to break hearts, test faith, and stretch us in uncomfortable ways.

But here's the shift: once you've tasted deep suffering, something in you changes. You begin to see pain in others more clearly. You begin to listen differently. You begin to speak from a place of compassion, not just knowledge. And maybe—just maybe—you've become someone who can now walk with others through their own valleys. That, in itself, is a sacred transformation.

Let's return to the story we explored in the last section—the story of Jesus. The Man who was misunderstood, rejected, and crucified. But most importantly, the Man who rose again. Jesus performed many miracles. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, even raised the dead. Yet every one of those healings was temporary. Every person He healed eventually faced pain again, eventually died. So, what was the point?

The point was never just the healing. The point was the message behind the miracle—a message that life as we know it is broken, temporary, and filled with suffering. But that's not the end of the story.

Now pause and think: what would be the point of Jesus' death without resurrection? What would be the point of your suffering—your divorce, your heartbreak—if it didn't lead to some form of awakening, some greater truth?

God allowed the crucifixion of His Son not just to show the depth of human's sinful nature, but to demonstrate the greater reality: no earthly suffering—not even death—can separate us from the love and life He originally intended for us. The resurrection wasn't just an ending; it was a declaration, a cosmic announcement that pain, betrayal, and injustice are not the final word.

And your pain, as deep and disorienting as it may have been, is part of that same pattern. Divorce, sickness, loss—they're all symptoms of a fallen world, a world where not everything goes according to plan. But they are not permanent. And if you're willing to see it, your own story of loss can also be a story of rebirth.

I'm not comparing my or your or my suffering to that of Christ's, but I do want you to see the pattern that He revealed: that the pains we endure—whether emotional, relational, or spiritual—have the potential to lead to restoration. That suffering is not the end. It's part of the process, but it is not the destination.

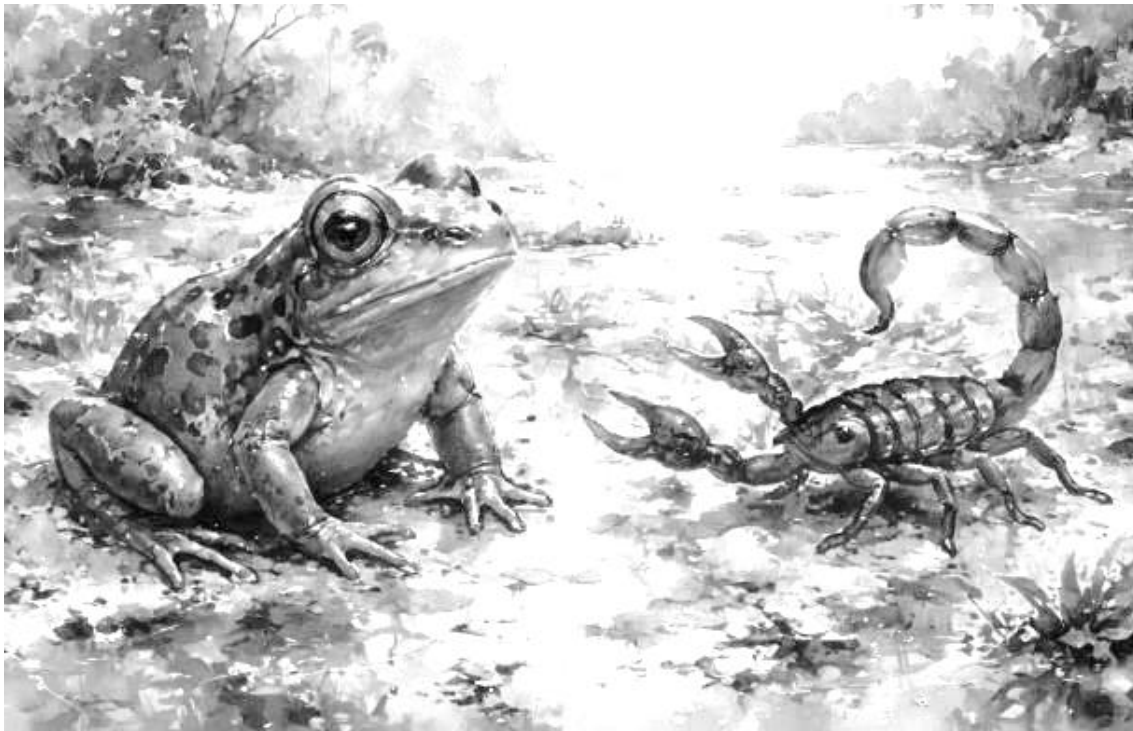
The true destination is one of a final transformation, an eternal life without pain, sorrow, or separation. And this is not just a dream, not a hope, not a comforting religious belief—it is the truth, a truth proven by a historical Man whose life, death, and resurrection was documented and changed everything. A man who is not just a symbol of hope but the embodiment of it—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Through Him, we've been shown that this broken world is not all there is. That love does triumph, that justice does prevail, and that life continues beyond the grave. Jesus didn't just tell us this—He demonstrated it. And in doing so, He revealed the very heart of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—one eternal, divine presence who sees, knows, and walks with us through every chapter of our life

So if you find yourself wondering what it was all for—the heartbreak, the loss, the grief—remember this: the resurrection was not possible without the crucifixion, and the crucifixion was necessary for the final transformation!



5.6 Forgiveness – the final section



A scorpion once asked a frog to carry him across a river. The frog hesitated, fearing the sting, but after many promises, he agreed. The frog swam steadily, carrying the scorpion safely across the rushing water. And true to his word, the scorpion did not sting—at least, not while they were in the river.

But the moment they reached dry land, when the frog stretched himself in relief, the scorpion struck. Shocked, the frog cried, “Why sting me now, after we both made it?” The scorpion simply replied, “Because it is in my nature.”

This story is a painful reminder of betrayal. Many of us carried someone through life, trusted their promises, and gave them space on our back. Only when we thought we had reached safety did they reveal who they truly were. The sting is real. The hurt is real. And yet—so is the lesson. You can forgive the scorpion for being a scorpion, but you will never carry him on your back again.

There’s a reason why I saved this section for the very end. Forgiveness is not something you force—it’s something you arrive at, slowly, often painfully, and usually only after walking a long road of healing. If you’re not there yet, that’s okay. I’m not expecting you to be. It took me a long time to even consider this step, let alone write about it. To forgive someone and to understand what it really means is something personal, something you really need to spend some time on... Just to remind you It took me 7 years to write about this...

Let’s be honest—when you feel you’ve been treated unfairly, or worse, when you know you’ve been treated unfairly, the idea of forgiveness can feel almost offensive. You may believe it makes you look weak. You might feel pressure to forgive because of your faith or religious upbringing, and part of you may resist it simply because

you're not ready. You might believe that to forgive is to excuse the actions of your former spouse or to send the message that what they did was acceptable. You may even be holding onto the idea of revenge—or at least, the hope that one day, they'll understand how much they hurt you.

But what if forgiveness is completely different from what you've always believed it to be?

Forgiveness is not about saying, "What you did was okay." It's not about welcoming someone back into your life, nor is it about freeing them from accountability. Forgiveness, as I've come to understand it, is about you. It's about choosing not to let the pain of the past continue to shape your present or dictate your future.

Maybe one day they will seek forgiveness from you and acknowledge the consequences of their actions—what their choices have cost you emotionally, physically, or even financially. Or maybe they never will. But even then, you should not allow the pain of the past to hold power over you any longer.

After everything I've written in the previous chapters—after walking through reflection, healing, rediscovery, and spiritual awakening—I was left with one simple but life-changing question:

Why would I hold onto something that no longer serves me?

Why would I cling to a wound that has already shaped me, already taught me what I needed to learn? Why would I continue to make space in my mind and heart for pain, when there are far better things I now want to welcome in? The longer I filled my thoughts with resentment, the less space I had for peace. The more I replayed old conversations and imagined different outcomes, the more energy I wasted on what was already over. Eventually, I realized that forgiveness wasn't about them—it was about freeing me.

So, I'll leave you with this final thought: If Jesus had not been crucified, the resurrection would not have taken place. And without the resurrection, the final transformation—for Him and for us—would never have been possible. So what would have been the point of Jesus's suffering without the resurrection? Jesus had to endure the crucifixion so that the final transformation could unfold. It wouldn't make sense for Him to hold on to resentment or bitterness over what was done to Him, because God's true power, Greatness and Divine Being needed to be revealed by transforming a broken, crucified body into a resurrected one. Transforming a temporary life into an everlasting one. It was all part of a final transformation a divine plan for redemption for all humans who accept this truth through Jesus Christ.

What if the trauma in your life—like your divorce—had to happen to initiate a spiritual transformation? And if that transformation has already begun, does it still make sense to hold on to resentment or bitterness?

I regard the next part of this book—which is written in bold—as the most important section of all my writings. This is how I believe both you and I should approach our future decisions—not only those related to forgiveness, but every decision that involves better understanding our fellow human beings. I truly believe that this insight has been revealed to us from above—a divine message meant to bring a higher level of clarity to very complex ideas. My future writings will continue to explore this philosophy—or truth, depending on what you choose to call it—serving as part of the lenses through which I will view my future reality.

You might be wondering what I mean by “a spiritual transformation.” Simply this: among all the awakenings that trauma brought into my life, the one that stood out—the one I came to face and now understand on a much deeper level—was that all humans, no matter who they are, are influenced by a sinful nature.

It’s a spiritual part of us that we do not fully understand and are not always aware of. Because of this lack of awareness and understanding, we often end up defending that sinful nature at all costs—even if it means lying, hurting, betraying, or even assaulting or killing the ‘innocent’ in the process.

But there comes a point when each of us must acknowledge this truth about ourselves and make a conscious choice: to keep walking down the same destructive path, as Cain once did—to shy away from responsibility after murdering his brother and, in arrogance, ask the question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9)—or to confront and acknowledge this fallen nature within.

It is a brokenness that has existed in the spiritual DNA of every human being since the fall of man, when the serpent’s seed first intertwined with human nature. From that moment on, humanity became vulnerable to a constant and deceptive influence—a lifelong struggle between good and evil that each of us must face every single day.

True change begins the moment you recognize this battle within and choose to fight against it. When you seek forgiveness and turn away from the sinful nature that once controlled you, your heart begins to transform—and within that transformation lies the deeper meaning of what it truly means to live the Christian way of life.

I understand this now on a much deeper level, and I see it more clearly in everyday life. I’ve also come to realize that not everyone is willing to acknowledge or accept this truth within themselves, because doing so would mean surrendering to the Word of God—choosing to be baptized and identifying themselves as Christians. For many, that realization makes their sinful nature deeply uncomfortable.

In closing, I truly believe that not everyone on this earth is destined to accept or acknowledge this sinful nature on its deepest level. It requires deep internal reflection and, ultimately, a personal choice—to bring your sinfulness into the light and seek forgiveness as part of a transformative process governed by the grace of God. It is my firm belief that this kind of awakening often comes through trauma or a life-changing event—one such event being a divorce.

The other side of this decision is also true. One can choose to defend, suppress, or ignore this sinful nature, allowing it to continue causing destruction in one's own life and in the lives of others.

Ultimately, the choice to suppress or ignore it—or to acknowledge it and seek forgiveness, allowing transformation to begin within your life—is what I would describe as our God-given free will—something humanity claimed for itself the moment we disobeyed God from the very beginning by allowing sin into our lives. To choose between two masters—good or evil, light or darkness, loyalty or betrayal, love or hate, truth or lies, Christ or the antichrist—with each decision carrying its own consequences. And yes, it can really be complex... or that simple.

So, whether you believe you've been treated unfairly or know it for certain, take time to reflect on how you may be suppressing or confronting your own sinful nature. Only when you face this truth within yourself can you begin to understand how others may be influenced—or even controlled—by theirs. In doing so, you may start to see your entire situation in a new light, and that very awakening can become a vital part of your healing and spiritual growth.

Now, with everything I've mentioned above—after walking through suffering, facing the hard truths about your own sinful nature and that of others, finding healing, and beginning to grow—and when you've come to accept that life doesn't always go as planned, that some of us have not yet awakened to the sinful nature within ourselves, or that you simply chose someone who didn't love you the way you thought they did, or who viewed life, love, loyalty and faith through a completely different lens—It's no longer necessary for you to place that heavy chain of unforgiveness around your heart.

Forgive them. Forgive yourself. Set your boundaries, know your worth, and let it go... it's over. Go and start painting that new canvas!

I believe you can only truly be free once you've come to understand the real meaning of forgiveness—and trust me, it is one of the most liberating feelings you will ever experience.



A final message to the reader

I hope that somewhere within these pages, you've found something—an insight, a truth, a shift in perspective—that has changed your mind about your divorce or where you are in the process. Maybe it helped you feel less alone. Maybe it gave you something to think about. Or maybe it simply reminded you that healing is possible.

This book was written with deep honesty, vulnerability, and a desire to serve those who are walking through one of life's most painful chapters. If it has spoken to you in any way, I invite you to stay connected and explore more of the work I am busy with.

You can visit my website at www.survivingmydivorce.online to find out more—or, if you feel moved to do so, to make a donation in support of this on-going project. Also please remember to leave me a review on the review page of this website! This will help me with my on-going work.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.

Note:

I really thought long and hard about what exactly I wanted to write and what I wanted to say about this chapter of my life. I regard this book to be that honest and transparent record of how I remember the events that led up to my divorce, the lessons I've learned, and the wisdom I have acquired. These words are final; they reflect my truth as I perceived and understood it at the time, and I stand by what I have written.

I also want you to keep in mind that being a religious, creative and more sensitive person in general I may have experienced my divorce in a more sensitive and painful way than what others may do. It is up to you to assess your own situation and to use this book as a tool to guide you as far as you feel necessary.

Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank for their support during one of the most difficult experiences of my life. Without their love, loyalty, and encouragement, I wouldn't have made it through.

To my parents – Thank you for your unwavering love and support. Your presence gave me strength when mine was fading. Thank you for giving me a place to stay, healthy food to eat, and clean clothes to wear while I was going through the most painful time of my life.

To my brother-in-law, his wife, and my mother-in-law – Thank you for your loyalty, compassion, and unwavering support. You stood by me in ways I will never forget, and your kindness meant more to me than words can express. Even during a time that was painful and difficult for you as well, you never chose sides—and for that, I will always be grateful.

To my two friends named Peter, who coincidentally shares the same name—thank you for helping arrange new job opportunities. Your belief in me and your willingness to open doors made all the difference during a time of uncertainty, and I am deeply grateful as I began to rebuild my life.

To my cousin HD – Thank you for standing by me through my darkest moments and for always being like an older brother to me.

To Cloe – Thank you for listening when I needed to speak, for walking beside me when I didn't have the strength to stand alone, and for praying with me when my faith was fragile. Your presence brought light into some of my darkest moments, and I am forever grateful.

To my band mates Wern, Reno and Madelene – Thank you for being there every single day, offering encouragement, creativity, and a safe space to express what words could not.

To my pastors John, Brian and Lisa – Thank you for your time, your guidance, your kindness, your prayers and your friendship. Your words gave me strength when I needed it most.

To Mr. Peterson and my fellow work colleagues – Thank you for eight years of support, stability, and meaningful relationships. Your role in my season of rebuilding was greater than you know.

To my good friend John — You were married for 19 years, and I've known you since before your marriage began. I witnessed your journey throughout the years, and I saw your divorce unfold. I know what you've been through, my friend—you were never alone in all of this. I'm proud of how you've rebuilt your life.

To Clare – One phone call changed the course of my life in ways that words can hardly express. I know you also faced emotional challenges of your own during that time, and I'm grateful for your courage and honesty. May you have found peace and may the lessons from that season continue to serve you as you move forward in life.

To Bob – I may not be physically as strong as you are, but we each have our own strengths and talents. Strangely enough, you inspired something in me that I never expected—this book. Without your role in the events that led to my divorce, and the memorable events that followed, these pages would never have been written. And for that, I thank you. Because of you, my family has grown, and through it all, you proved to me that God's promises are

unshakable. Romans 8:28 — “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose”.

To my former spouse Brenda – I believe you had your own emotional struggles to face. Your choices, which ultimately led to the end of our marriage, marked the beginning of a profound journey of personal growth and spiritual maturity for me. Through this on-going journey, I’ve gained a deeper understanding of myself and my place in the world. You truly forced me to examine my own personal truth—both in how I view the brokenness within myself and others. Seven years later, my perspective on truth and human nature has changed significantly. And for that, I want to thank you. I also genuinely believe that many others will now find comfort, support, and hope through the pages of this book—and, if it is God’s will, through the future books yet to come. I believe that our divorce, and the pain it carried, will not be without purpose. Lastly, I want to thank you for initially choosing me to be the father of our two boys.

To my two boys Damien and Ronald – You walked through the storm with me, and I will forever be grateful for your love, resilience, and strength. Through all the heartache and uncertainty, we grew closer—and I am incredibly proud of the young men you are becoming. This experience, though painful, will one day serve as a foundation of wisdom and strength in your own lives. Perhaps, in time, you will come to better understand why things didn’t work out between your mom and me, and the quiet battles we fought to keep your world as stable and loving as possible. You were—and still are part of my reason to push forward in life! On your feet soldiers!

To my wife – Thank you for entering our lives with gentleness and encouragement. You supported me through the writing of this book and gave me the freedom to finish it in my own time. Thank you for the wonderful person you are—for embracing my two boys as your own, for creating a new home for us, for working such long hours to contribute to our finances, and for blessing me with two more beautiful children.

To that broken version of myself—the man who stood there like a little boy on 17 May 2017, cast out from a family he believed he’d belong to forever. You still sometimes wonder how love could unravel so violently—how a marriage could give way to such an emotional storm. You didn’t understand it then, but you understand it now. You were never meant to stay in a place where you were unknowingly being compared to someone else. You were—and are—enough. Every tear, every sleepless night, every moment of silence and confusion was shaping something deeper within you. You are becoming the man you were always meant to be—a man with an obligation to bring truth to light, because he knows exactly what it feels like to be left in the dark. This memory will serve as a reference point I will always return to—a reminder of how much I have grown, both emotionally and spiritually, since that worst day of my life. It is also a reminder that life’s circumstances, emotions, and reality itself are never permanent. They can shift and change at any moment—whether knowingly, intentionally, expectedly, or unexpectedly. It is one thing to hear this, but an entirely different experience to truly understand it—and I am deeply grateful for the wisdom that has come from it.



And finally, to my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ—thank You for walking beside me through every tear and every unanswered question. My faith has grown, and so have I, reaching a deeper understanding of Biblical truths, spiritual principles, and human nature in general. All glory belongs to You. I will continue to listen to Your voice and seek Your wisdom to capture, understand, and share meaningful, truthful ideas and music!

Your faithful servant,

Coach Ricky

20 October 2025

Final Note:

I wrote this song “After the Rain” on the same day I completed this book. I truly believe it was given to me from above—not only to share with you, but also as a gift of celebration marking the completion of this book and the spiritual growth that took place over the seven years following my divorce. (Spotify link to be added)

Full Author Bio – Coach Ricky

Coach Ricky is a South African author, certified divorce coach, and behavioural science graduate who helps individuals navigate the emotional, spiritual, and practical challenges that follow a divorce. Drawing from his own lived experience, he writes and teaches with empathy, honesty, and faith—guiding others toward healing, self-discovery, and renewed hope.

After enduring an unexpected life-changing divorce, Coach Ricky began a journey of reflection and transformation that led to the writing of his debut book, **Surviving My Divorce – Part 1**. Through this work, he shares the lessons learned from his personal trials, blending real-life storytelling with professional coaching principles to help readers rebuild their lives with clarity and confidence.

Now happily remarried and a proud father of four, Coach Ricky understands the realities of starting over and the importance of creating a faith-centred family life. His experiences have deepened his belief that no situation is ever permanent—and that healing and peace are possible for anyone willing to embrace growth and forgiveness.

He continues to support others through www.survivingmydivorce.online—a growing platform that offers coaching resources, blog reflections, and links to his faith-inspired music. His creative work combines emotional depth and spiritual insight, encouraging others to rediscover purpose and hope through their pain—and to re-evaluate their worldview and overall version of their perceived truth.

Grounded in faith, honesty, and compassion, Coach Ricky’s message is one of endurance and renewal: to help others find meaning in their pain, peace in their process, and purpose in their new beginning.

