

# Introduction

Divorce can be a gift to a family . . . if it's done to save the children from a dysfunctional and dangerous family environment.

This is a shocking thesis to many readers, mainly to those with a Christian faith background, just as it has been a shocking discovery to me. It's not a statement that I had ever imagined I would make. As a committed, life-long Christian, I had prayed for a devoted wife and family since I was a young boy growing up in Switzerland. As Catholics, we were promised the fulfillment of our wishes if we prayed 4,000 Hail Mary's during Advent. That translated into 130 Hail Mary's per day and I dutifully performed the ritual, believing it was part of my preparation for a lifelong, gratified, and blessed marriage to a loving woman that God would bring into my life.

Life rarely turns out as we expect, but even in my most fervent prayers, I could never have imagined that I would one day find myself contemplating divorce. Until the day of our separation, I had hoped that God would intervene and help save the marriage. But help never came, and despite twenty years of loving my wife Sophie, I found myself living amidst circumstances that I could never have imagined. Her behavior had become increasingly erratic over the years, eventually resulting in her being diagnosed by psychiatrists as bipolar.

Such a diagnosis always commands our compassion toward the afflicted, but the words don't begin to convey the hurt and chaos that were inflicted on our family by the disease, and most of all, by her stubborn refusal to undergo any type of treatment.

Gradually, my growing family was subjected to inexplicable behavioral changes, including bouts of physical and verbal abuse, uncontrolled and lavish shopping sprees and even the impulsive start of home renovation projects during her manic phases. For a time, "Sophie, the career woman" was transformed into "Sophie, the Teenage Rock Star," who formed a rock and roll band and stayed out until the wee hours of the morning, ostensibly "practicing" and "rediscovering herself." But the turning point for her and our family finally came after a nervous breakdown, a dive into paranoia and the admission that she had experienced visions and heard "voices" speaking to her.

Her mental condition exposed a young family to uncertainty about how their mother would react. What she would do or say next was one thing, but it was her unyielding belief that I was an evil man with bad intentions, that compelled me to break my twenty-year marriage vow and accept her divorce petition. As a father of five children, I had no other choice than to remove her from the family and offer the children a more predictable home life.

As everything that I had treasured so deeply began falling apart, I reached a point where my convictions and beliefs became meaningless. The Bible, with its many promises and answers, began annoying me to no end. It didn't address mental disorders of a spouse or the problems inherent to a dysfunctional family caused by complex mental illness issues.

In my darkest hours, when I began realizing that the teachings of the Bible no longer made sense to me, I threw the book to the ground. I became empty, utterly disillusioned, and distant from God. Friends, church leaders, and Christian organizations had few answers and were at a loss when addressing “divorce for just cause.” They seemed determined that I should salvage my marriage.

Psalm 91:14-16 reads, “Because he loves me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.” It wasn’t long before I recognized the truth of this promise, and came to better understand the journey on which God has taken me. Divorce always involves suffering and anguish, but there is joy and abundant grace to be found for all those who bow before Him.

This book has been written for those who have searched and are seeking answers that cannot easily be found. I am delighted to share my own search for God with you, finding the path that best served my family in the midst of unusual circumstances, and the healing that came.

Stick with me and share my journey. I pray that my story will bring light and hope to an issue that affects so many families today — something that has been hidden in the dark recesses of the Christian church for far too long.