

*Are You Ready  
to Launch a*  
DIVORCE *Care*<sup>®</sup>  
GROUP?



*10 Inspirational Stories  
of People Who Did*

DAVID N. BASS

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# 10 Locations. 10 Stories of Transformation.

More than 14,000 churches worldwide have been equipped with the DivorceCare program. Passionate lay people facilitate each local DivorceCare group. We'd like to introduce you to ten of them.



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| <p><b>1 Kay Jatón</b><br/>Omaha, Nebraska</p>                            | <p><b>7 Gary &amp; Diana Bly</b><br/>Palm Beach Gardens, Florida</p>      |
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# *About DivorceCare*

DivorceCare enables your church to offer ongoing weekly support groups for people who are separated or divorced. We help you equip a lay-led team for effective ministry to people in your church and throughout your community. Through DivorceCare, you can provide biblical, Christ-centered hope that will help hurting people rebuild their lives.



# Introduction



The purpose of DivorceCare is to transform lives impacted by the pain of divorce or separation. But DivorceCare has another ancillary benefit—changing and improving the lives of those who facilitate the curriculum.

The stories of transformation of these leaders are many. In this short book, we present 10 compelling stories from leaders scattered across the country. It is our hope that these stories will inspire you as you consider launching a DivorceCare group at your own church.

To begin a DivorceCare group, flip to [page 37](#) or visit [www.divorcecare.org/start](http://www.divorcecare.org/start). Begin this exciting journey there.

— Steve Grissom, *DivorceCare* founder

# *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to all DivorceCare leaders—the thousands of men and women who have used the curriculum to bring God’s healing touch to so many during the past 20 years. In a small way, the 10 stories contained in this book reflect the countless stories of renewal and redemption that DivorceCare leaders around the world share in common. Our thanks goes out to them.

# *How Can You Use This Book?*

## *If you're a pastor*

Share the book with members of your congregation who might be interested in becoming DivorceCare lay leaders.

## *If you're a current DivorceCare leader*

Use this book as part of your efforts to recruit new leaders to your team. Or send the book to someone who has been divorced and shows aptitude for becoming a DivorceCare leader.

## *If you're thinking about launching a DivorceCare group*

Read this book and share it with your church leaders, potential ministry team members, and others to cast a vision for the potential of a DivorceCare group.



# Kay Jatton

## Shares 18 Years of DivorceCare Wisdom



DivorceCare is blessed to have a group of committed facilitators who give their time and energy to so many others. Some of these facilitators have been volunteering almost as long as DivorceCare has been around—since 1994. Kay Jatton is one of them.

Kay Jatton describes her decision to become a DivorceCare facilitator as a calling placed on her life by God. As a resident of Omaha, Nebraska, Kay has led a DivorceCare group since 1997.

When she experienced her own divorce in 1981 after 21 years of marriage, Kay noticed that there weren't any divorce recovery meetings or groups tailored to single adults in churches. It was support she needed but didn't get. So when she heard about DivorceCare 16 years later, she couldn't have been more thrilled.

Kay's pastor learned of the DivorceCare program and asked her to head a group at their church. She did so first as a volunteer, then as a part-time employee at the church, and eventually as singles and recovery ministry director.

"At the time, I had been divorced for many years," Kay said. "There were five women in the first group, and we were very successful."

Amazingly, Kay found that her experience in DivorceCare offered her healing, in addition to healing more recent divorcees.

“It was quite an experience for me to go through the program for the first time,” Kay said. “I learned about all the anger and the depression and the forgiveness. I was a shy person and didn’t talk about my own story much, but as I worked with this program and with different people, I saw the healing still happening in my case.”

*“My own mental and spiritual growth has improved through DivorceCare.”*

— **KAY**

Every Wednesday evening at 6:30 for 10 years, Kay facilitated the DivorceCare group. “You could have brought 10 friends because you knew we’d be there,” she said. “We were very consistent. That was one of the important aspects of it.”

In addition, Kay indirectly served as an important catalyst for expanding DivorceCare leader-training efforts across the country. Along with other leaders in the Omaha area, Kay created a grassroots local-leader fellowship that provided vital training to other facilitators.

During her time facilitating DivorceCare groups, Kay has many heart-warming stories to share. One of the most compelling involved a married couple who had lost a son to suicide. As a result of the emotional strain, they decided to separate.

The wife went through DivorceCare once, and then decided to take it a second time. The husband ended up coming to the session on forgiveness and reconciliation, and he shared his pain and received healing.

“It was like a miracle occurred,” Kay said. “They got back together and have been going strong for 10 years now.”

Due to her almost two decades as a DivorceCare facilitator, Kay has become a stronger Christian.

**ARE YOU READY TO LAUNCH A DIVORCECARE GROUP?**  
10 INSPIRATIONAL STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO DID.

“My own mental and spiritual growth has improved through DivorceCare,” Kay said in summing up her nearly two decades as a facilitator. “And to watch other people go through all of those transitions as well, and to know that God has used my experience to help others, is a big thing.”

# *Ken & Pati Baker*

## **Find a Ministry for Their Marriage—DivorceCare**



Ken and Pati discovered DivorceCare at Church by the Glades in Coral Springs, Florida, separately. After receiving healing from their own past divorces, God brought them together as a married couple. Today, He uses the Bakers to reach hurting people through the DivorceCare ministry.

Pati found herself in a difficult place in 2009. Although many years had passed since her two divorces, she continued to struggle with unresolved anger and resentment stemming from the ending of her marriages. She approached her pastor at Church by the Glades for help, and he raised the topic of DivorceCare—and Pati’s need for it.

“Soon, DivorceCare became my refuge,” Pati said. “I realized that I should have been in the sessions long before 2009. I had issues to resolve from my second marriage and also from my first marriage of 15 years.”

DivorceCare was helpful for Pati personally because she struggled with blaming her former spouses for the end of the marriages. “I realized that I needed to assume some responsibility for the implosion of my marriages and to seek forgiveness,” she said. “Assuming that responsibility and pursuing forgiveness—it was a freeing moment. A weight had been lifted.”

After attending two cycles of DivorceCare, Pati took the next step by agreeing to become a facilitator. Not long afterward, Pati took an even more significant leap of faith by assuming responsibility for overseeing the entire DivorceCare group. She had no idea that God was orchestrating events so that she would soon meet the man who, one day, would become her husband.

Ken, who serves as pastor of care ministries at Church by the Glades, was not looking for a relationship at the time. He was busy co-facilitating the church's singles ministry when he was asked by church leadership to help facilitate DivorceCare as well.

"I agreed to help lead DivorceCare reluctantly, because I didn't want to delve back into those issues again," Ken admitted. He had been through divorce before and didn't want to go back.

"To my surprise, as I did the homework and watched the videos, I discovered that I had unresolved issues from my own divorce," he said. "I was harboring resentment. It was a healing experience for me."

Ken saw firsthand how God turned his "mess" into a powerful message of healing for others. "Despite who I am, despite my past, God still uses me," he said.

*"Seeing a number of marriages reconcile  
has been a blessing."*

— **PATI**

Meanwhile, Pati was perfectly content in her singleness. "I was fine following the Apostle Paul's lifestyle of singleness," she said. "As it turned out, God had other plans."

Another DivorceCare leader encouraged Pati to attend the church's single groups. She met Ken there.

"Our paths kept crossing," Pati said. "We did volunteer work together at the church. Eventually, we ended up together. That's the best way I can describe it."

As a newly married couple in 2011, Ken and Pati took over the church's DivorceCare ministry as a married team. For the Bakers, the best part of the past four years of ministry has been to see how divorce recovery has transformed people's lives.

"Seeing a number of marriages reconcile has been a blessing," Pati said.

**ARE YOU READY TO LAUNCH A DIVORCECARE GROUP?**  
10 INSPIRATIONAL STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO DID.

For Ken, facilitating DivorceCare has reinforced the power of listening rather than immediately seeking a solution to a problem.

“As guys, our first reaction can be to fix a problem rather than listen. We want to just fix it and move on,” Ken said. “I learned that I need to listen rather than fix. It also helped my marriage with Pati.”

“God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason,” Pati said. “We’ve got to listen more and talk less.”

Ken and Pati see DivorceCare as critical to reaching a hurting world. “When do people most often come to church? It’s when there has been pain in their life—maybe some sort of tragedy,” Pati said. “If the church doesn’t have a program—like DivorceCare, Single & Parenting, DC4K, or GriefShare—people are at a loss as to where to go for help.”

“God will bring the people where they need to be,” Ken added.

# *Robert & Brenda Campbell*

## **Spend Two Decades as DivorceCare Leaders**



From the time that DivorceCare was first released in 1994, Robert and Brenda Campbell have faithfully served as facilitators—experiencing new strength for their own marriage and seeing hundreds of other individuals healed along the way.

Do you remember a time when VHS tapes were the norm and the acronym “DVD” hadn’t even been created? It wasn’t that long ago.

When DivorceCare first became available to churches in 1994, the sessions were recorded and released on VHS. It’s something that Robert and Brenda Campbell remember well. They were among the earliest DivorceCare leaders.

The couple first encountered the teaching materials in the summer of 1994. In the fall of the same year, they signed on as facilitators of their first 13-week session at Dunwoody Baptist Church, located just outside Atlanta, Georgia.

“After watching the first video, we were both hooked,” Robert said. “The content really spoke to both of us.”

That first session drew a huge crowd—around 40 people. Nothing like it had been offered in the community until that point.

Even though the Campbells were facilitators, DivorceCare was helpful to their own marriage. At the time, Robert and Brenda were recent newlyweds. Both had experienced

divorce in their lives before—Brenda in the mid-1980s and Robert in 1990—so the videos helped them in their young second marriage.

“That first year of going through the VHS tapes helped us grow in our marriage. We saw the tremendous healing that took place with others as well,” Robert said.

By 1996, Robert and Brenda had switched to another church—Peachtree Corners Baptist Church—closer to their home, and they began facilitating DivorceCare there. The Campbells have continued ministering at Peachtree Corners ever since, and they’ve facilitated DivorceCare year-round, with no breaks until the summer of 2014.

*“It’s nothing that we do: it’s God speaking to  
[group members] through us.”*

— **BRENDA**

Even around holidays, or if the church had closed for some reason, they would conduct DivorceCare at their house. While working his tech job, Robert was always careful to protect Wednesday nights so that he could faithfully be there for the DivorceCare meetings. Even now, as a retired couple, the Campbells schedule their travel around Wednesday nights for the same reason.

“Throughout the years, our philosophy has been that we run it as an open group,” Brenda said. “People can join at any time. When we end a 13-week session, we shortly start up another. People can start at any time and stay in it as long as they want to.”

Robert and Brenda have found their 20-year commitment to DivorceCare to be a uniquely rewarding experience. “You get to see people blossom,” Brenda said. “You remember the times when they came in and were in so much pain, and then you see the healing process. To me, that’s the joy of it. It’s nothing that we do: it’s God speaking to them through us.”



**ARE YOU READY TO LAUNCH A DIVORCECARE GROUP?**  
10 INSPIRATIONAL STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO DID.

“I have watched every session for about 20 years,” Robert said. “They never get old. There has never been a Wednesday night that either of us has ever gotten to the point where it was a chore or we dreaded going. That is strictly a miracle from God. God has given us a passion to do this, and it’s been a joy to see how God has changed lives over the years.”

# Jim Tillerson

## Brings the Hope of DivorceCare to the Hurting



Jim Tillerson has faced a troubled road over the past few years—losing his job, experiencing a divorce, and continuing to battle multiple sclerosis. But God has used Jim’s struggles for a greater purpose by inspiring him to facilitate a DivorceCare group in New Mexico. God has helped Jim overcome.

In addition to Dallas Cowboys and Boston Red Sox’s sports paraphernalia, the first thing you’ll see upon entering Jim Tillerson’s room is an eight-foot banner bearing the words from Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (ESV).

Jim calls the passage his life verse. “It has become my theme,” he said. “In the middle of a hard situation, to stop and remember that God still loves you and has a plan for you and wants to help you and use you for His glory—it’s amazing.”

Jim has faced a more daunting road than many others—he suffers from multiple sclerosis and uses a wheelchair. Because of his ailment, Jim has struggled with depression, particularly after his own divorce several years ago.

But Jim found hope through DivorceCare. Going through the sessions particularly impacted him because he could see other women who were broken by the pain of their own divorces, and Jim felt that his own ex wife wasn’t broken at all.

“DivorceCare did so much to help me process my own divorce and begin healing,” Jim said. “God hates divorce, but He loves divorced people. The first time you realize that, it’s very powerful.”

Soon after participating in DivorceCare as a group member, Jim's facilitator approached him about joining the ranks of leadership at Sagebrush Community Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. "When presented with the opportunity to lead, I definitely wanted to be part of it," Jim said. "I wanted to give the gift of DivorceCare to other people who are struggling as well."

Jim particularly senses God's call to minister to others who are weathering the journey of depression. Jim's background—losing a job, facing a divorce, and enduring MS—uniquely positions him to encourage other sufferers.

*"I like to share my story so that people know there is a way to get through depression."*

— JIM

"I like to share my story so that people know there is a way to get through depression," he said.

His defining realization in the battle against depression was that grieving his losses—his marriage and his job—was critical. "I realized that I had never really done that," he said. "I just put my head down and moved forward. But then I realized that to move forward, you have to grieve, and that helps with the depression."

While serving as a facilitator, Jim has also learned to appreciate the unique struggles that others face. Having no children himself, he has been moved by the stories of men and women who persist through divorce with children in the picture.

"I can't imagine going through divorce while trying to help your children survive as well," he said.

Jim always seeks to keep discussions in his group positive. "DivorceCare should not be a place to simply bash former spouses," he said. "Try to be positive, move forward, and don't wallow in anger or frustration."

# *Dennis & Jacci Schumaker*

## **Find Healing and Love Again Through DivorceCare**



Dennis and Jacci Schumaker met through DivorceCare. During their three years of dating and 10 years of marriage, the Schumaker's have faithfully served as DivorceCare facilitators. They've experienced a God-ordained journey of healing and renewal.

Can a horseshoe-shaped booth at a restaurant be a pathway to romance? In the case of Dennis and Jacci Schumaker, the answer is yes. Their relationship was built through shared service in the DivorceCare ministry—and a providential meeting at a local restaurant.

In Dennis's case, he encountered DivorceCare while seeking a path of healing from his own divorce, which occurred in the late 1990s. He attended two sessions of DivorceCare at Grace Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Along the way, Dennis's leader noticed that he had a lot of wisdom to share and suggested that Dennis join the leadership team—an opportunity that Dennis accepted without hesitation.

For Jacci's part, she encountered DivorceCare seven years after her own divorce. By that time, she had already experienced some level of healing, but none of the resources she had encountered had been biblically based like DivorceCare.

In God's providence, Jacci attended the DivorceCare class led by Dennis at Grace Church. The Christ-centered healing she experienced was a breath of fresh air. About seven weeks into the class, she felt the Holy Spirit prompt her to join the ranks of leadership and bring the curriculum to her own church.

“That’s how the Holy Spirit works—He nudges our hearts to get involved in something that we would not have attempted on our own,” Jacci said.

Jacci returned to her home church to lead DivorceCare, but that wasn’t the end of her story with Dennis. As an effective follow-up to the DivorceCare curriculum, Grace Church began offering an eight-week class centered on “Boundaries” by Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend. Since Jacci was already a leader, Dennis invited her to join them on their inaugural class of “Boundaries.”

*“Leadership makes you accountable because you want to walk into each session authentic.”*

**— DENNIS**

Jacci and Dennis’s romance blossomed at the conclusion of the “Boundaries” class. All of the leaders in Dennis’s church decided to go out to dinner to wrap up the semester. Jacci and Dennis were the first to arrive—they initially sat on opposite ends of a horseshoe-shaped booth in the restaurant. This changed as leaders and participants—who initially said they couldn’t make it—kept coming and filling in the seats, pushing Jacci and Dennis together.

“When our dinner came, I took Jacci’s hand and I said grace. It was the first time we ever held hands,” said Dennis. “That’s kind of how it started. The truth is that neither of us was looking to meet anybody, but God really put us together.”

“I had been praying at the time that if God wanted me to be in a relationship, that person would be an active Christian and would be willing to grow,” Jacci remembers.

“I had taken an interest in Jacci, but I didn’t want to move ahead of God and was waiting for His direction,” said Dennis.

The couple dated for three years before making the decision to get married. “I could see after a year there was more of a solid Christian foundation in Dennis than anyone I had

dated before,” Jacci said. “He had this strong trustworthy character, and I could tell that God was pivotal in his life.”

Today, Dennis and Jacci have been married for almost 10 years. During that time, they’ve continued to faithfully serve as DivorceCare facilitators. Leadership is a rewarding journey as well as a healthy pathway of strength for their marriage.

“We hear the many reasons marriages fail and we actively make changes to avoid the missteps others have made,” Dennis said. “We also lead a Boundaries class once a year that helps us deepen our interdependence and love for each other.”

If they have marital conflict, the Schumakers are committed to resolving it. This often happens just before weekly DivorceCare meetings.

“We are not going to go into class emotionally separated,” Jacci said. “So occasionally we have 10 minutes or less to resolve an issue or misunderstanding so that our disagreement won’t negatively influence the discussion time.”

“Leadership makes you accountable because you want to walk into each session authentic,” Dennis said. “The more genuine you are with those attending the more credible your words will sound to them. Our participants often tell us that the happiness and warmth they see between us gives them a sense of optimism, especially after they hear some of the details of our own divorces.”

# *Daniel & Becky Lehmann*

## **Help Others Navigate the Wilderness of Divorce**



Daniel and Becky Lehmann began serving as a couple in DivorceCare ministry shortly after their marriage in 2013. Their care for those suffering through family breakup, however, hasn't stopped there. They have transformed their home in Monteagle, Tennessee, into a mountain retreat where separated or divorced individuals stay to experience God's healing.

What's the best analogy to describe the journey of separation or divorce? To Daniel and Becky Lehmann, the answer is simple: being lost in the wilderness.

“People who experience divorce are temporarily lost and displaced, and we want to point them in the right direction,” Daniel said. “We're helping them to navigate, but we aren't the Guide—Christ is the guide. They will have to find their way out through Him, but we have unique methods and tools to help them do that.”

To accomplish that goal, Daniel and Becky lead a local DivorceCare group in Nashville. However, they've taken the ministry one step beyond by converting their home—which is situated on a bluff overlooking 2,000 pristine acres of the Appalachian Mountains—into a retreat for those experiencing family breakup.

Located in Monteagle, Tennessee, the Lehmann's home becomes a weekend retreat for people attending their DivorceCare group. It's like a bed and breakfast, though designed specifically to serve as a healing mechanism. While spending a weekend at the house—which the Lehmanns have named Eagle's Rest—individuals also go through outdoor, hands-on lessons that Daniel has developed.

“We felt the need for there to be something available when DivorceCare sessions aren’t running—something short-term that complements DivorceCare,” Becky said.

In creating the mountain retreat, the Lehmanns’ goal is rest and restoration, which captures the spirit of Isaiah 40:31: “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (ESV).

*“To lose a family and an identity at the same time was a very difficult thing for me.”*

— DANIEL

Even before their marriage, Daniel and Becky both individually had a heart to minister to people going through divorce recovery. The beginning of this desire for Daniel, who had served as a pastor, began a couple of years after his divorce in 2001.

“To lose a family and an identity at the same time was a very difficult thing for me,” he said.

Three years after his divorce, Daniel attended DivorceCare and received significant healing. Afterward, he felt called to become a facilitator because he could so well relate to the struggles of others experiencing the pain of divorce, especially those in ministry.

Several years later, Daniel owned a residential alarm company. In 2009, he was put in contact with Becky as a client through a mutual friend. She was going through her own divorce after 29 years of marriage. She had served for years in women’s ministry and felt overwhelmed and displaced. He strongly encouraged her to attend a local DivorceCare group, and she did.

They had occasional contact over the next several years and always had good conversations about the Lord and the healing process of divorce. During that time, Becky tried to set



Daniel up with other Christian women because she thought he was a fantastic guy. Little did she know that *she* would become the right woman.

The turning point came in 2012 when Daniel decided that the alarm he had installed for Becky's new home wouldn't be sufficient. "This time she was going to need more protection and security than just a home alarm. She needed me," Daniel joked. "So we started dating shortly after that."

After a year-long courtship, they married in March 2013. At that point, they decided as a couple to facilitate DivorceCare. They both have a desire to use the "mess" of divorce as a "message" of God's grace and redemption. They have been leading ever since and have also gotten involved with heading up the Nashville area Local Network Fellowship meetings.

The Lehmanns are quick to testify to the power of DivorceCare in renewing lives. "When people arrive on week one, they often are embarrassed, scared, angry, and can barely say their name in the group discussions," Becky said. "Then, 13 weeks later, they walk out the door empowered and hopeful. It's a wonder to watch and be part of that process."

"We try to encourage people to think of divorce as a wilderness," Daniel said. "It is an unfamiliar and difficult place where men and women can choose to be bitter and wallow in for years—like the Israelites did—or purposely navigate through and emerge like Christ, refined and strengthened through the time spent there. They can use it as an opportunity to improve their lives rather than think of it as an evil. Divorce is not a good thing, but God can absolutely redeem it. I often use the phrase, 'Divorce is the greatest experience I never wanted to have.'"

Becky's favorite verse, which she often shares with groups, is Isaiah 45:3: "I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name" (ESV). She encourages those hurting to search for the riches of God's peace, mercy, comfort and daily presence during this journey that they will treasure long after the pain subsides.

The Lehmanns are continuing to develop Eagles Rest. Soon, they hope to open up the mountain retreat to DivorceCare groups throughout the Southeast.

# Gary & Diana Bly

## Meet and Fall in Love Through DivorceCare



Everyone enjoys an inspiring story of reconciliation. Gary and Diana Bly walked a path of divorce and then remarriage—and DivorceCare played an important role in bringing about the renewal of their lives as a couple.

Gary and Diana Bly got divorced in April 2000, on the verge of their 28th wedding anniversary. Little did they know that just over a decade later, the Lord would bring them to reconciliation and remarriage—partly through the renewal they both experienced by attending, and later facilitating, DivorceCare.

“Ultimately, DivorceCare set the stage for our remarriage by helping us to heal,” Diana said.

Their 11-year journey back to the marriage altar began shortly after their separation, when Diana started attending Christ Fellowship in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, and became involved with the singles ministry. Several fellow believers encouraged her to attend DivorceCare. The 13-week course greatly aided her recovery process.

Around a year later, Diana was reading the Bible one morning when she felt the Lord nudge her to volunteer as a DivorceCare facilitator. Soon, she began to serve in that capacity. Meanwhile, God was working in Gary’s life in a similar way. After their divorce, Gary moved from Palm Beach to Ft. Lauderdale.

“I was a backslider. I was dealing with a lot of problems,” he said. “I took DivorceCare at Calvary Chapel, and I realized that I was still struggling after the divorce, even though I was the issue and the cause of the divorce.”

Eventually, Gary had a chance to move back to Palm Beach. In the providence of God, he ended up attending Christ Fellowship, where Diana was still fellowshipping.

“We hung around with some of the same people, but in groups, and we weren’t really looking to get back together,” Gary said.

*“When you’re going through divorce and you’re hurting, one of the ways that you can heal is to reach out and help other people.”*

— **GARY**

The big change happened one day when Diana had a gap in her DivorceCare leadership schedule that needed to be filled. She knew that Gary had prior experience with DivorceCare, so she called him up and asked if he would be willing to volunteer.

“Things led on from there, and the next thing you know, we got remarried,” Gary said.

“We became friends again,” Diana added.

The Blys credit leading DivorceCare as one of the reasons for their remarriage. “When you’re going through divorce and you’re hurting, one of the ways that you can heal is to reach out and help other people,” Gary said.

Since their remarriage in 2011, the Blys have continued serving as DivorceCare facilitators, though they handle their remarriage carefully with participants.

“We want to encourage people that there is a chance they might get back together, but a lot of people never do,” Diana said. “We don’t want to give false hope to people who are hurting so badly.”

# Karl Kay

## Creates a Legacy DivorceCare Group



What will your DivorceCare group's legacy be? Even the most committed facilitator one day has to step aside into retirement. Karl Kay made that transition successfully.

In 2014, Karl Kay faced a dilemma.

Three years ago, he had launched a successful DivorceCare group at his home congregation, the Compass Church, in Naperville, Illinois. God's hand was on the group—it averaged 20 to 25 men and women per session. Lives were being restored.

But now, Karl encountered a problem. Recently, God had placed a call on his life to move to the northern suburbs of Chicago and take a teaching position with a Christian college. Without his leadership at the Compass Church, what would happen to the DivorceCare group? Would it flounder? Would it end?

Thankfully, Karl had taken steps to prepare for this scenario by identifying and training a replacement leader.

Karl took a proactive, forward-thinking approach to leadership development.

To kick off each winter session of DivorceCare, he would organize a Surviving the Holidays event in early December. At that event, he designated certain people as table leaders—individuals who had been through divorce before, were already leading in other church ministries, and showed an aptitude for serving as facilitators.

One of his table leaders, Pam Dreyer, stood out in particular. She continued to help lead as the normal DivorceCare schedule began in February.

“This was the first part of the leadership transition—to have someone I know and trusted lead a table,” Karl said.

He soon realized that he wanted to begin co-leading with Pam. It was helpful to have a mixed gender team, so that if a woman in the group needed special attention, Pam could step in.

*“The way that DivorceCare works best is when you make it both fun and effective, loving people into the group, and continually pointing people to Christ.”*

**— KARL**

When the opportunity arose for Karl to move away, he took Pam aside and told her that he wanted to transition leadership responsibilities.

The shift was gradual. “Every week when Pam began a new session, she would be on the phone with me the next day, telling me how it went and asking for guidance,” Karl said. “What a blessing she has ended up being for the DivorceCare group.”

Today, Karl is taking a break from facilitating DivorceCare. He writes a regular email column called Napkin Notes and also has a book coming out soon.

“Because of my weekly devotional, I still get many emails from past class members and often Pam is brought up,” Karl said. “I periodically wander down to Naperville to visit my old church, and Pam is the first person I seek out. I can always find her sitting in the front row following the tradition I started for the DivorceCare class.”

**ARE YOU READY TO LAUNCH A DIVORCECARE GROUP?**  
10 INSPIRATIONAL STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO DID.

Throughout his time facilitating DivorceCare, Karl has had one overarching goal—to make the group about a long-term legacy of ministry, not reliant on people or personalities. His training of Pam has been the catalyst.

“The way that DivorceCare works best is when you make it both fun and effective, loving people into the group, and continually pointing people to Christ,” he said.

# *Gary & Kathy Fallon*

## **Fall in Love While Serving as Facilitators**



Gary and Kathy Fallon celebrated their 10-year anniversary in December 2013. Their road to the marriage altar took them straight through DivorceCare.

Kathy could scarcely have imagined that her faithful service in the DivorceCare ministry would, one day, lead her to remarry.

After enduring a painful divorce in 1988, Kathy went several years without experiencing true healing. That changed in 1995 when her church, Calvary Chapel in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, was one of the first to adopt the new DivorceCare curriculum. Kathy was part of a single-parent group that requested the church purchase DivorceCare.

“Seeing the materials was a great awakening for all of us at our church,” Kathy said. “It helped me realize that I needed more healing, too.”

While working a full-time job at BellSouth and raising two kids as a single mom, Kathy volunteered as a DivorceCare leader every Thursday night. “It was pretty awesome,” she said. “We had upwards of 70 people in each session and had to have a team of 20 to 23 leaders. It just took off.”

Pursuing another relationship was well off Kathy’s radar, but God was working behind the scenes. Around the year 2000, Gary came to Calvary Chapel and expressed interest in leading a DivorceCare group, having already gone through two sessions as a participant at

another local church. He had been married for 18 years with three kids when his wife left him in 1996.

“I went through a healing process to the point where I wanted to give back and eventually be a volunteer leader in a DivorceCare group,” Gary said.

*“Our life’s calling has always been divorce ministry.  
That’s what drew us together as a couple.”*

— **GARY**

In the fall of 2000, Gary joined the Calvary Chapel team as a leader. “It just so happened that Kathy and I were teamed up together,” he said. “I quickly took notice of her. We got to see each other in ministry, which was great.”

Eventually, Gary took the plunge and asked Kathy out on their first date: a singles breakfast organized by their church at a local hotel with 500 singles attending. Kathy said yes.

“Everything went so well that I asked her out to dinner that very night,” Gary said. “We had a great time. That was the beginning of God’s plan for our lives.”

In the following months, Gary and Kathy’s best dates were after their DivorceCare group met on Thursday nights. They would go out for dinner and discuss the group and what God was doing.

“I fell in love with Gary’s heart,” Kathy said.

After three years of dating, Gary and Kathy got married—on December 20, 2003.

The very next month, as a newly married husband and wife team, Kathy and Gary returned to continue leading DivorceCare in their church. During that time, they developed a leader-training seminar for leaders within a 100-mile radius of Calvary Chapel.



“That kind of training model really took off,” Gary said.

The success of the seminars prompted Church Initiative to request that Kathy and Gary train leaders on a national scale. They developed a training model, created the materials, became the first instructors to roll out the new training model, and traveled the country for the next two years doing the training.

In 2009, Kathy and Gary had the unique opportunity of joining the DivorceCare staff in Wake Forest, North Carolina—Kathy as a full-time consultant and Gary in a dual role as a consultant and director of the consultant team. They worked in those roles on-site for two years, but by 2011 they were missing their grandkids back home in Florida so much that they decided to return home.

Kathy kept her role as a DivorceCare consultant on a remote basis. She continues to serve to this day, while Gary chose to open doors for freelance ministry in his calling in Christian media and continued in his role as an adjunct professor.

“Our life’s calling has always been divorce ministry. That’s what drew us together as a couple. We found each other in ministry and continue in that calling leading DivorceCare in our local church today,” Gary said.

# Janice Copple

## Brings DivorceCare to a Megachurch



Janice Copple has served in the DivorceCare ministry almost since its beginning two decades ago. She was the first facilitator of the program at Saddleback Church, now one of the largest mega churches in the United States.

Still reeling from her second divorce, single mom Janice Copple moved to Rancho Santa Margarita in California in 1996. Little did she know that God was at work—both to heal Janice and to use her as a conduit of healing for others.

Janice’s local network of friends encouraged her to attend Saddleback Church in nearby Lake Forest. She decided to follow their advice. She packed up her kids and attended her first Sunday on Mother’s Day. Immediately, she knew that God wanted her at Saddleback.

After Janice got plugged into the church, leadership realized that her background—in counseling and teaching—was a perfect fit for a new curriculum that had just come out: DivorceCare. Leaders asked Janice to preview the VHS tapes. After viewing them, Janice was instantly captivated by the quality and depth.

“Even if I had taken two years off my teaching job to write this curriculum, I couldn’t have done a better job,” she said. “They even had a teaching manual, so anyone could lead it.”

**ARE YOU READY TO LAUNCH A DIVORCECARE GROUP?**  
10 INSPIRATIONAL STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO DID.

With the help of another co-leader, Janice launched DivorceCare in her home. She averaged 13 in attendance in the beginning weeks, but soon the group grew too large for her house, so they moved the meetings to the church.

“I wanted to share with people that, through Christ’s strength, you can get through the pain of divorce so much more successfully,” she said. “DivorceCare plants that seed.”

*“If you can get people to connect with you through personal stories, they will come back.”*

— **JANICE**

In addition to helping others, DivorceCare had an immense healing impact on Janice herself.

“It was my healing *and* my accountability,” she explained. “All of a sudden, I realized that I was facilitating the program and talking the talk, every single time we met on Friday. So I needed to walk the walk the rest of the week. I would never have walked the walked so well if I weren’t facilitating DivorceCare during the week.”

Obviously, the group at Saddleback has grown significantly over the years. Janice compares it to a rollercoaster ride. They once offered the program two times a year; now they run it continuously throughout the year, every Friday night.

Aside from God’s overarching blessing on the group, one of its success factors has been a personal touch, according to Janice. At the beginning of each group, they designate certain individuals to share testimonies before they start watching that week’s video lesson.

“If you can get people to connect with you through personal stories, they will come back,” Janice said, adding that groups at Saddleback now average up to 30 participants each meeting.

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Janice views her leadership team as the equivalent of a small group for her. These are dependable people who will show up if she needs to take time off. For facilitators, she looks for people who are good listeners, who can direct conversations so that everyone can share, and who connect personally with participants.

Janice is now 70 years old, but she has no plans to slow down. Her ministry is DivorceCare, and she still senses God's calling to continue.

"It's my spiritual gift to help those suffering in this way," she said.

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# *About the Author*



David Bass oversees Church Initiative's marketing and communications infrastructure, including marketing campaigns, brand awareness expansion, social media, and blog editorial content.

A widely published writer, David has authored hundreds of articles and columns that have appeared in dozens of local, state, and national publications. His past roles include managing a communications department for a local nonprofit philanthropic foundation and serving as an associate editor and investigative reporter at a statewide newspaper. He is also a published author.

David has a B.A. in journalism. He lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, with his wife.