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7th July

Dear Larry and Pam,

I am terribly sorry to be writing this - partly because I am a terrible letter writer but mainly because I'd much prefer to be saying it to you both face to face. But for what it's worth, here goes! But, first, forgive me for what is not only an intrusion but a very inadequate one. There's nothing worse in Christian circles than moralists and busybodies and in the very nature of the case I'm bound to appear a combination of both!

But I only dare say anything because my heart genuinely goes out to you both and I firmly believe you can be reconciled and go on to enjoy a love you have not even dreamed of, as yet.

I fully appreciate that no one else can understand the pain, disappointment and frustration that you must each feel but, equally, there is a temptation in the situation you are in to make that hurt into an absolute from which everything else, including the Lord and his commands or his redeeming love, is seen and judged.

Several things gave me hope as I listened to you both - first, that you both want to follow and serve Christ above all; second, that you originally loved and chose each other genuinely; third, that you both expressed a willingness to be reconciled if it were of the Lord and if the problems were genuinely faced and resolved; fourth, that the thing threatening to tear you apart irrevocably - is Pam, your deepening relationship with Joey and his proposal to you - is the thing which is on the most dubious grounds, biblically speaking. If this is so, then it's only the lesser things

(the wrongs you have done each other - which can be forgiven; the hurt which you have caused each other - which can be healed; and the surrounding culture which is no friend of Christian marriage anyway - which is to be resisted) which are keeping you apart, while the greater things (God's power and will above all, but also your own obedience and commitment to such practices as forgiveness etc.) are all waiting to work to bring you together.

One of you mentioned that "irreconcilable differences" was the official grounds of the divorce. As I was praying for you both the full force of the wrongness of this struck me. For one thing, this can never be a Christian reason, however common in pagan circles. Can we genuinely claim that the Cross which reconciles Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and barbarians etc is unable to reconcile Christian husbands and Christian wives? If so, you might as well both give up your ministries. For another thing, in your case it really isn't the truth anyway. You were both very candid about the final break coming through Pam's adultery (whatever the hurts which were undoubtedly behind this).

Adultery, of course, is a biblical ground for divorce - the only one that clearly is - but I was struck that while Law, has the clear biblical grounds for divorce, it was you, Pam, who was proceeding towards making the divorce final by pursuing another relationship. I've thought over your question about remarrying, Pam, and, having worked through Christ's teaching on divorce, I can only conclude i, that divorce is not part of God's intention ii, that adultery is the only clear grounds Christ gives us iii (and the implications of this are heavy) that marrying someone else involves them in what is adultery, before God.

Pam, can you honestly read the New Testament any other way? Of course, you could always say the

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Gospels are wrong (which undermines faith even if it gives you freedom) or you can say that it is definitely wrong but God always forgives (which is equally dangerous as it verges on cheapening grace). Perhaps the greatest danger of all is that in the California Christian culture the plain teaching of Christ is ignored in practice, pushed aside by a swirling fog of super spirituality which somehow misses the point of plain, old obedience.

This is perhaps what concerned me most, Pam. I could see the hurt, I could feel what you were hungry for, I could appreciate what you were finding in a new friendship. But I was staggered at the lack of tough love and truthfulness in the whole way you were looking at it all. You are in danger of your spirituality becoming a web of rationalisation that covers ~~some~~ simple and stark truths. As I said to you, in the long run you hurt yourself most of all (far more than Larry or the 'image' of the church or whatever). To the degree that you are soft on Christ's truth now, to that degree you are building weakness into your character for the future.

Forgive me, Pam, for writing plainly on this point - it's only because it seems to be the one ^{thing} which could make your divorce final, and it's also the place where your case is the weakest. I fully realise that emphasizing this one point is very unbalanced, if not unfair; no doubt, as in every marriage the balance sheet of hurts and wrongs is much more even. I'm sure that would be so if we had all talked together.

I realise too that I sound totally negative

so far - not surprisingly since I'm trying to raise a big "No!" across the path towards divorce and break up.

Being more constructive is even more difficult by letter, as deep things like this need to be wrestled through face to face but here are some suggestions I would share ...

1, Think and pray over whether the way you are breaking up is right and proper for two Christian disciples (however understandable from an emotional or cultural point of view).

2, If you both long for something better (doing Christ's will, being reconciled at the foot of the Cross, recapturing your early love, or whatever) search out at least 2 other Christian couples who will help you work at a fresh start. They should be people a, whom you both love and trust b, who are committed to you totally, and therefore can confront you in love as well as support you in love

c, who are geographically close enough to make a difference.

This '^{core} ~~core~~ group' is vital. Californian culture is so mobile, free, loose and strung-out that a nuclear family provides no supporting structure today, especially when a marriage is in difficulties. Lanny, you need close Christian brothers and sisters who will both help and challenge you to love and cherish Pam as she needs and as Christ calls you to do.

Pam, you need close Christian brothers and sisters to whom you are accountable for your faithfulness to Lanny in every situation, whether he knows about it or not. In other words, the weight of working it out must not be put on the two of you alone.

If you follow my advice at all and proceed in some direction like this, then there are some simple things I think you will find necessary and helpful.

i, when you are ready and it is not forced, have a time of full and frank confession, when each of you can confess the wrongs



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You have each done to the other.

ii, Then before the Lord you should each freely and fully forgive the other for the wrongs done (read Matthew 18:21-35 and remember that the secret of Christian forgiveness is the understanding that nothing anyone does to us equals what we have done to God, so we are not primarily responsible for the evil an other person does to us - he or she is; we are responsible only to forgive as we have been forgiven - graciously, ~~3~~, is with no strings attached).

iii, Then before the Lord and others you should have an occasion of re-commitment, and re-dedication to your original vows. (California has initiated that gross travesty, a divorce celebration; could there not be a meaningful statement of Christian reconciliation and re-dedication?).

iv, For 18 months or two years (or so) you will need to hold yourselves accountable to the small group of friends I suggested earlier, preferably 2 other close Christian couples.

If the first half of the letter sounds terribly negative the second no doubt sounds too much like arduous work and strenuous effort! But the hard work and honest reflection is only the framework within which, first, forgiveness can begin, and then love can grow again.

You are both attractive people in many and obvious ways but I am not in any way saying: "You are both beautiful people - you can love each other beautifully again." (That's more Hollywood than the New Testament!) In fact, it's more likely that it may even be that some of the

most attractive things about each of you are the things which may keep you apart, if only because you rely on them more than ever how that the pain of separation and failure is hurting. My confidence is that you are both deeply committed to the Lord. Trust him, obey him, do what is right and I know that not only deep reconciliation but new, fresh love, enjoyment and security can be yours.

Don't feel obliged to write back. This needs no response to me, but I will be praying for your response to the Lord and each other. Let us know if there is anything we can do. We will be in the Bay Area (at Stanford) in October.

I write because we care. This comes with our prayers and love to you both,

Os and Jenny.

P.S. The Kissinger interview came through and went off well! Thank you for your prayers.