

This is a letter written by a client who was willing to share her story. We have blacked out the dates she refers to in order to increase confidentiality. Our heart goes out to you all who are struggling with this same season of winter in your relationship...

Dear Deserted Spouse,

My heart goes out to you. My feelings on my journey of being the deserted spouse were so much more than I could bear. No one can explain to you the roller coaster of emotions, the anger, hurt, sadness, discouragement, helplessness, defeat, and disgust. Your marriage and you are worth the fight.

I am thankful for the wisdom of counselors and pastors during that time – 13 months, that’s how long it took for my husband to come back to me. Even now, I get twinges of sickness as I think about it. But they turn into thankfulness as I know that the man, who on [REDACTED], told me he was thinking of leaving me, loves me. The pain was worth it all just to have him back in my arms and stronger than I ever thought possible. Don’t give up. I know you will want to – I wanted to, all the time. But, I cannot tell you how the thought of that terrifies me now. Stay strong and keep on trying until the court hands you the final papers. Even if your spouse files for divorce, keep on going. What I have now is better than I could have ever imagined possible.

On [REDACTED], I read through Facebook. Scrolling through pages, my father-in-law’s words to my husband struck fear in me. “Son, I want you to pray about the letter you wrote to your wife.” Panic set in, knowing that several months of coldness from my husband could only mean one thing. I texted for answers and had to call to hear from his voice the gut wrenching confirmation that he was thinking about leaving. I was sick to my stomach, asking, “Why???” We have three kids! I thought things were better now than they had been. Our marriage had always been tough but my assumption was that nothing could break us.

Fear was the strongest feeling in the beginning of this journey. The unknown of what I would do if he did leave me. I sought counsel only with those who had strong lasting marriages. I was fortunate to have the wisest among my in-laws and a marriage counselor, Dr. Brown. I had to save my marriage. I was told to demonstrate love at all costs. I thought I could do that, so I did. I told my husband often, I love you. I told him reasons I loved him. He was gone as much as he could be during that time, while I was hunting for every opportunity to love him, stepping around on tip toes so I wouldn’t upset him, or trying to get him to have sex, anything! All of that action was mixed with begging and pleading to God for help, yelling and crying to Him. So what did that do for me? Nothing it seemed.

He found ways to avoid me. I’d beg and plead with him to stay around me so we could work on it. I mean, after all, if you are gone all of the time, we can’t get to know how to handle and improve things. When he was there, I’d start demonstrating love only to be ignored. I would put my arms around him and he would just sit there. He wouldn’t respond to any texting that was loving. I even tried the whole seduction thing, only to be met with rejection. Each time I would well up in anger, “How can you do this to me!?! We have three kids! Why did you marry me if you aren’t going to try!?!” The rejection was more than I could take. He ignored my love texts, worked more to avoid me. My helplessness and hopelessness rose. How can it be fixed if he won’t try!?!

The rejection was far too great for me to handle. It was only a month into this process, nothing was getting better. ***I didn’t ask for this!!!*** Boy was I getting mad at God! I knew He designed the marriage covenant so, ***how could this happen?!***

The last week of [REDACTED] was a “road to recovery” moment for me. I attended a youth conference as a chaperone. The theme was “Pursuit” – God’s pursuit of His children. It was a week of tears as God tried to show me that His love was enough. I looked at it as a sign. I left hopeful knowing that regardless, I would be fine. But, I needed to demonstrate that unselfish, relentless love to my husband. I was hopeful!!!

As soon as I got home, I went to him. I was going to apologize for my selfish behavior and seek ways to meet his needs. [REDACTED] as I spilled my feelings to my husband, he responded, “I can’t do this.”

Shock is all I felt. He sent me home to read the letter he wrote me. It confessed that he “should have listened to people. We never should have gotten married.” He didn’t love me. I was too much like his mother. I was frustrated!!! ***WHY WON’T HE TRY!?! I’m the only one doing anything!!!*** Obviously he felt something or he wouldn’t have married me. He knew me for two years before we said, “I do,” didn’t he figure things out then!?! That was it, he was learning.

I called Dr. Brown for counseling. This was not something I could do alone. As family members heard the news, they tried to support me. Some cried for me, the wiser ones prayed for me and told me to stay strong. Those that I expected would support me as I fought for my marriage, didn’t. They wanted him out of my life telling me that I “shouldn’t bother. He’s going to do it again. God has someone better for you.” ***WHAT?!?*** Not only was I angry for the desertion of my husband, but they couldn’t or wouldn’t advise me to fight for my marriage??

I knew I couldn't talk to them about it anymore. I felt so lonely and bitter. There were a total of 4 people I could talk to with sound wisdom and encouragement. I am thankful the voice of reason was Dr. Brown. "You will never regret forgiving and showing love," she said. "Throw roses over the wall. Demonstrate love where you can," she reminded. So I did - for 12 more months.

I actively sought God. I worked on me, asking Him to reveal His love to me. I am so thankful that I did. Had I not sought to become whole myself, I would not have had the strength to show love to the broken man that left me. I would not have had the resolve to continue in the face of rejection after rejection.

I would get to the point of giving up and call Dr. Brown. "Throw roses over his wall. You will never regret it," she would say. My response was often, **"How long do I have to wait??? He's not going to change his mind!"**

He'd come get the kids, take them places. I would think, "What?! Now he has family time?!" But I encouraged them to have a good time.

I'd see him in a picture with his arms around a woman. That would set me off and I would fail. I would yell in fear and pain, "Who's that!? Did you sleep with her!?"

I hugged him one day and he stiffened up. My soul was crushed as I felt another pang of rejection and thought, "he's NOT coming back!"

In the few moments that he was around, if I talked about the kids and work he would brighten up. If I mentioned us, he would shut down. Quite frankly, I questioned Dr. Brown. "My marriage is different than the others she told me about," I thought. "So many have reconciled after the rejected spouse stayed the course, though no guarantees," she said. But my thoughts continued, "It's not going to work!!! He rejects, rejects, and rejects. How long does it take??? It's been almost a year - passed the typical 6 to 9 month time frame she quoted."

Towards the end, it started becoming very challenging. I had watched the 6 months, the 9 months, pass by. Yet, she encouraged me to stay the course. I bargained with God on dates. My spouse gave me excuse after excuse why he hadn't filed for divorce. It should have been a sign that he still cared, but it wasn't. I felt, not only rejected, but strung along, like he didn't want me to be able to be happy and move on either.

I continued to show him love because I did love him. But, I also loved myself. The growth in me was tremendous. Through this process, God gave me the ability to love others in the face of rejection. I am a better person because of this process, and I like who I've become.

As I came to have peace that my spouse might not come back, he seemed friendlier. I started to have the dreaded conversation that I shouldn't have. "I understand you wanted to leave, but I can't be in limbo forever." I was okay with his rejection but not okay with being stagnant. I still demonstrated love but told him I needed answers. He responded in anger... then, finally, in time, back to love only! At this point I found it frustrating and funny. He's been gone a year. He's being nice but doing nothing. I had learned not to do the things that pushed him away. I had learned to love outside my own feelings and finally received peace. It was rewarded!

[REDACTED], 13 months after he told me he was thinking of leaving, my husband stopped by the house. He was on a work delivery and stopped by to see the kids. As he made the rounds hugging and kissing our children, I smiled and raised my arms up and said, "my turn." To my surprise and relief, he gave me a full embrace as a husband would. I half cried and giggled as I asked, "What does this mean?" His response - "I want to make it work!" The joy of that moment was worth every rejection!

It has been over 6 months now and things are better than they have ever been. We still have our struggles but we are together, working through them, and closer than ever! When you don't believe the acts of love work, they do! When you feel the rejection, seek God's fulfillment. When you want to quit, call the one voice who will press you to keep up the fight. God works through you, His promises are real. When He said, "Let no man separate what He was joined together," that includes the spouse that left. ***Your acts of love produce results you can't always see. You won't regret fighting for your marriage!!!***