

I have some important news to share with you. Recently I've been offered the position of director of children's ministry at my church in Wheaton, IL. It is a great honor and an awesome responsibility to shape and influence a generation of children and their families. I covet your prayers as I embark on this next phase of ministry.

For the past many years I have been carrying a very hard thing privately. Although my close friends and church leaders have always been very cognizant of this situation, I was counseled by those in spiritual authority over me to not share this publicly. Because full-time vocational ministry in a local church requires "life-on-life" relational discipleship—inviting those you serve into your home and into your life—it therefore by necessity requires full transparency. For that reason, I feel that it is now right and good to share some private areas of my life with both my broader church family and with you.

My husband, who was a strong and godly man when I married him, began to slowly lose his spiritual mooring. He eventually physically and financially abandoned our son and myself. Although many people have encouraged me to divorce him, I have felt called to continue to pray for my husband and honor my marriage covenant. I believe that I made a covenant before God on my wedding day, and that included a commitment to my husband "until death do us part." All these years I have prayed and hoped for a miraculous breakthrough, but sadly that has not yet happened.

All along the way, I have attempted to protect my husband's reputation in order to "do him good and not evil all the days of [my] life" (Prov 31:12). I know that nothing is too hard for God, and I will never give up on praying for a miracle—just as God never gave up on me.

As Ma Ingalls says in the *Little House* books, "Least said, soonest mended." I have obviously given you the broad strokes, but not all the details, in my continued desire to honor my husband and his reputation. There is a sense in which much of this is still not my story to tell, but his. I can say that looking back over this painful journey, I am deeply encouraged as I consider the fruit the Holy Spirit has mercifully born in both mine and my son's life through this suffering, and for that we are profoundly grateful.

To give you an example of how I've sought to navigate over the years the balance of both honoring my husband and avoiding deception, I'd like to share with you some excerpts from a letter that I wrote years ago to the leadership of a homeschool state convention that I was invited to address.

*Thank you for your statement regarding speaker ethics. In light of some of the questions, I feel I need to to share the situation that exists within my family. My husband and I... had a good marriage and were part of a strong Bible-based church in California. Due to a variety of circumstances, after we moved to Illinois, my husband's life began to go into a tailspin that he has not yet come out of.*

*During this time I was forced to hold onto God more than ever before. My prayer life, my Bible study, and my ministry to other hurting women in crisis have deepened. God has truly forced me to grow in him during this time. Our son J.J. has had a similar experience. He has learned what it is like to walk in mercy and forgiveness. He has come into a vibrant, focused walk with the Lord. He is actually forcing me to keep up with him spiritually at times...*

*Though my husband is still not walking with the Lord and is, as he admits, a "Jonah," I feel deeply that this will end in God being glorified... Knowing in my heart I have done everything I*

*can to love and support my husband, I feel I have to release him into the care of the Good Shepherd who goes after the one who strays (Ezek 34:11-12)...*

*I'm certain this is more information than you want, but I wanted to make our situation clear. I would also respectfully ask you to keep this information confidential. Apart from my church family and closest friends, I do not discuss my husband's situation in any public arena. Because I believe so strongly that the call on his life will be fulfilled in the future, I do not want to lay the burden of a negative public reputation upon him. That would add weight to an already heavy load he is trying to deal with. I am certain that when he is strong again he will desire to share his testimony, but that will have to be his prerogative, not mine or another's.*

When I discussed writing the above letter with my pastors, one of them volunteered to write the following letter himself, as an accompaniment to my own. He wrote:

*When Carole Seid told me she was writing a letter of explanation regarding the situation with her husband, I immediately offered to write a note explaining what I have observed. I have known Carole very well for about seven years. I was on the pastoral staff of the church she attends until I left last year to start a church in a neighboring city. In the midst of a bleak time in the life of her husband, Carole's attitude and actions were exemplary. In fact, I have never seen anyone face a situation like she did with such fervency in seeking the Lord, with such determination to maintain her marriage, and with such a Christ-like attitude in believing the best and speaking well of her husband. She has been very transparent through this whole thing, yet she has also been careful not to malign her husband's name. The spiritual life of Carole and her son I think are fruit of handling a hard situation in God's way. Truly I have been amazed at the way they have walked this out, and one day when their testimonies are known, everyone who hears it will be amazed too... and encouraged that no matter what we face, clinging to the Lord and not deviating from the character He wants us to have will bear fruit in any season.*

I hope this is enough information to clarify my position. I meant what I said on my wedding day, and as long as my husband is alive I will remain faithful to him and my marriage.

I know you will be asking where all this leaves my future ministry to the homeschool community. The answer is that, as my new ministry position permits, I will still be offering occasional seminars and will be available for consulting appointments on a limited basis.

I have shared these personal and painful things with you because I feel a deep loyalty and affection for you all, and I wanted you to hear these things from me personally. I am sure that this is hard news for many of you to hear, and I want to reassure you that I'm not going anywhere, and I look forward to walking alongside you for many years to come. I hope and pray that this information does not change your view of me or the homeschool principles that we collectively hold dear.

I encourage you to guard against unhelpful speculation and the temptation to share or entertain gossip. Rather, please use this new knowledge you have gained to pray for our family with greater accuracy and fervor.

Thank you so much for allowing me to share this all with you. I am excited for this new season of ministry, and I am grateful for all the memories we have made together as we have sought to raise our children to the glory of God. I carry you all in my heart (Phil 1:7) and I hope this finds you all well.