



Dear prayer friends in Europe,

Genesis 2: 24 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." and *Malachi 2:16 "[God] hates divorce"* are two of the best-known verses about marriage. God's plan with marriage from the beginning was to build strong families that would be cornerstones in society. That's why God made a covenant with husband and wife. He should be the centre of every relationship.

February is the month of Valentine's Day and of International Marriage Week. It's a good thing to focus on biblical relationships. Marriage, the family and the wellbeing of husband and wife, and of the children, are so important that we ought to have biblical relationships as a monthly, even daily prayer subject. Pray for biblical relationships! Having worked in Family Ministries for about twenty years now, we have seen it all; wonderful couples, great weddings, anniversaries and happy families. But we have also seen the other side: struggling couples, abuse, adultery, selfishness. We have seen Christians struggle with the promises they gave to their spouse and to God on their wedding day, but now being humiliated or abandoned by that same spouse. We have seen the divorce rate among Christians come close to that of non-believers.

I was raised with black and white thinking about divorce: whatever happens, divorce is out of the question and the two involved will experience the anger of the Lord! I followed that thinking until years ago I unexpectedly sat at the side of my son's bed, who was screaming out to God because his wife had left him and wiped out their family of 4. Divorce Care classes in his church helped him to go through the phases of his divorce and to stay close to Christ.

Since that time, we've added divorce care to our ministry. We believe 100% in marriage as God's creation of a lifelong relationship. And we 100% believe that divorce is a violation of God's plan with relationships. The Bible is very clear about that. For that reason, many churches and Christians have rejected divorced brothers and sisters. Some are refused communion, many feel treated like second class Christians. Many choose another place to worship or leave the church completely because of the way they are treated. And not many of us realise the pain, the feeling of hopelessness, the sadness, the anger, the shame, the guilt, the grief, the fear for the future and the feeling of failure of divorced brothers and sisters. Valentine's Day and

marriage week are for them days full of pain and sad memories. Please realise; no one gets married to go through a divorce years later!



Let us pray

- For strong biblical marriages and families. That Christian families may be an example for their neighbourhood.
- For profound premarital counselling for brides and grooms to lay a good foundation for marriage.
- For the broken families, ex husbands and wives and their children
- For ourselves and the church. That we do not only disallow divorce (Law) but at the same time will embrace the victims in their pain and sorrow (Grace).

(Bram de Blouw wrote a self-help book for divorced Christians 'Broken Yet Whole, a journey of recovery after a divorce' (2012). It is as a free eBook available in English, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish and Dutch. Mail to info@heartworkcoaching.nl for your free copy.)

Voices from Ukraine:-

According to Hanna Hopko, former chair of Ukrainian Parliamentary Committee on European and Foreign affairs and Yuriy Kulakevych, Ukraine Pentecostal Church Foreign Liaison, the church plays a very important role in their country. The people trust only three systems: the army, the church and the volunteers, who are mostly Christians. It's quite normal for churches to have three prayer meetings a week and they have faith, that only with the help of God can the situation in Ukraine change. A growing number of people prefer a more democratic political system with Christian values to the Russian totalitarian system. And they believe that the way the church has taken her place in society since the Orange Revolution and the Revolution for Dignity in 2014 can be a good example for the church in the rest of Europe.

Additional Prayer Points:-

- May there be a wake up call for the churches in Europe to stand in the gap for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.
- High inflation affects people who already have to make ends meet on a lower income. Let us pray for righteous governments in our European countries, so that part of the population does not fall further below the poverty line.

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