

IGNITE

THE FIRST RESPONDER'S LIFE GUIDE
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FROM TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH:
TRUE TRANSFORMATION FOR
CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

MISSION COMPLETE

ORDER OF OPERATIONS: A
HOW-TO GUIDE FOR
HEALTHY CONFLICT
RESOLUTION

DON'T CONFUSE GOD'S
ROLL CALL WITH A 'ROLE
CALL'

UNITING FIRST RESPONDER FAMILIES

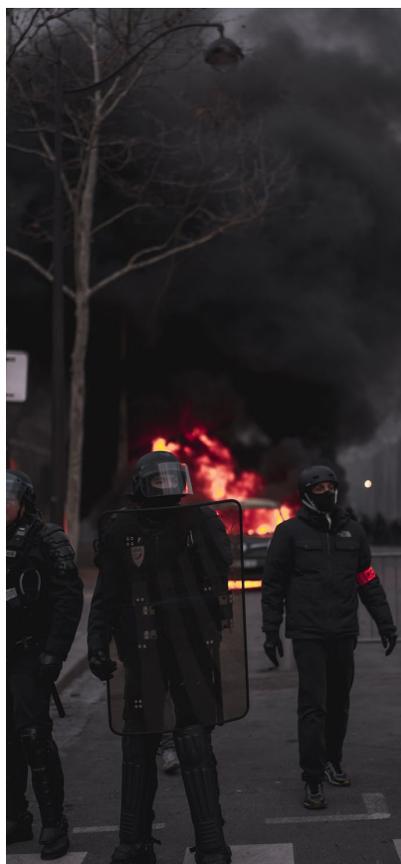
YOU MATTER!

IGNITE MAGAZINE

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**"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."
— Hebrews 10:23-25**



Renee Vidor

Renee Vidor is passionately empowering leaders to discover and be who God created them to be, then to do what they're designed to do! She facilitates The Winner's Circle Community—a safe space for those desiring to win at life, personally, professionally, and spiritually. She is also the author of the book *Measuring Up: How to WIN in a World of Comparison*. Find her on most social media platforms and through her website www.ReneeVidor.com



Kelley Oswin

Kelley Oswin is the daughter of a retired firefighter and the wife of an active firefighter. Surrounded by the world of first responders and helpers, Kelley found her own path in supporting others in their mental health journey. Kelley completed her degree in Social Work in 1997 and worked for 19 years in the social service sector, providing counselling support. In 2020, Kelley was excited to partner with Avalon Empowerment to introduce trauma awareness to coaching certifications for those who want to coach others. www.avalonempowerment.com/apply



Anita McLaurin

Anita M. McLaurin is an author, speaker, and coach who inspires women, young adults, and children to dispel negative voices, discover their dreams, and design a plan, so they can live their intended purpose. Through her work with hundreds of clients, she has developed the My Father Said I Could™ Workshops for children, from her award-winning book. She believes that each person has a gift to give the world, and everyone should pursue their purpose.



Dr. Monica Kleeberger

Dr. Monica Kleeberger is the C.E.O. of Abiding Peace Coaching, LLC. As a Kingdom Peace Coach, she coaches clients on how to restore peace in their marriages, abide in the peace of Christ, and grow in emotional stability. She has a Doctorate Degree in Clinical Psychology and 13 years' experience as a mental health therapist, working with clients worldwide. She is also a published Christian children's book author and mother of two young children.

How are you choosing to grow?

Editor's Inspirational

So many things in life impact and influence us. It's your choice how these people or situations will affect you.

There are different levels of influence. For example, daily influences from the people with whom you surround yourself.

Friend or family, these become your go-to for decision-making and planning. But what happens when trauma threatens your life trajectory or even your daily function?

You are not alone in this. More and more, year after year, we see trauma seep its way into our lives. Sometimes trauma can be so subtle we miss it; other times it is a massive explosion that leaves us breathless and confused. We need to remind ourselves to get help. We need to admit we cannot fight this wave of confusion and chaos alone.

In my experience, when we try to hide pain and tell ourselves we are protecting those we care about, things start to fall apart. In protecting them, we push them away and unknowingly start to shut them out. When we try to face our internal conflicts alone, the enemy will strike and find us the most vulnerable.

We are stronger in numbers. Be open and honest about your emotions, so they do not control you. Take back the control, and admit when you need to talk or pray with someone.

“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”
— Ecclesiastes 4:12

DON'T CONFUSE GOD'S ROLL CALL WITH A 'ROLE CALL'

BY: Renee Vidor

I remember it like it was yesterday; it was an early Monday morning after pulling an all-nighter of very hard work and labor. As a recent college graduate who hustled and always worked at least one job, I wasn't new to the idea of pulling all-nighters. But this particular one was different. This one marked the birth of a new role that I was to take on: The role of 'Mother.'

Our first child was born. Though I had always imagined being a mom and role-played as a child with my playmates and baby dolls, nothing could have fully prepared me for how this new role would impact my life in so many ways.



Key points:

1. The birth or loss of a role does not alter your identity.
2. The enemy wants you to feel confused and insignificant.
3. God created you with an amazing identity. It's time to claim it and live it out!



Not only did I gain a new role, but I voluntarily gave up a role as well.

Let me explain. From the age of 14, I was working a job and making money. Being a high school student who was able to buy my own clothes, purchase my own car, and even sponsor a child gave me a sense of pride.

As a college student, I paid for much of my college tuition and all of my living expenses by working as a restaurant server.

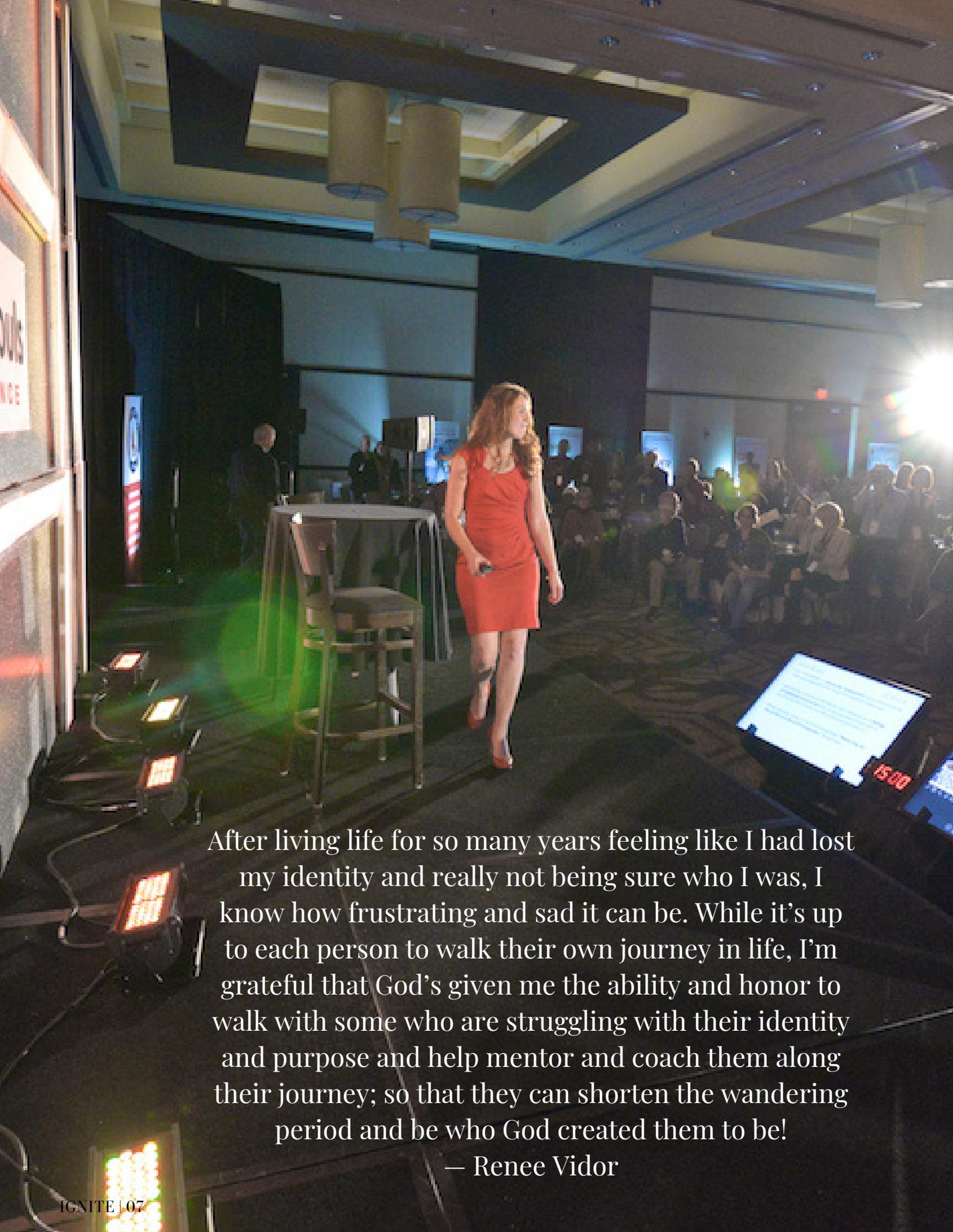
Now, I worked as an Independent Provider in family homes, providing therapy to children who had significant challenges such as low-functioning autism. Each family I worked for wanted me to continue working after my son was born. I was to bring him along for the sessions. My husband was in favor of me staying home and no longer working; however, I couldn't imagine giving up my working role. After all, what would I do without a job? My plan was to go back to work as soon as I could. I had a plan.

Until that Monday morning, that is.

Laying in that hospital bed looking down into my baby boy's eyes, something changed. God ministered to my heart, and I surrendered—I gave up my role of 'worker' that day. It wasn't difficult at that moment, but years later when I was doing some major internal work with a counselor, I realized that handing this over impacted me in a deep way.

We don't always realize how we allow our roles to become our identity.

It wasn't long into parenthood that I began to understand that it's actually a job within itself. The role of 'stay-at-home-parent' doesn't get the accolades that it ought to, and for someone like myself who was used to making progress (and income), my life felt rather lonely and without purpose. Seriously, changing a diaper only to do so again in an hour, putting on a new outfit for it to be thrown up or pooped on, then washing clothes and doing dishes over and over again didn't feel like



After living life for so many years feeling like I had lost my identity and really not being sure who I was, I know how frustrating and sad it can be. While it's up to each person to walk their own journey in life, I'm grateful that God's given me the ability and honor to walk with some who are struggling with their identity and purpose and help mentor and coach them along their journey; so that they can shorten the wandering period and be who God created them to be!

— Renee Vidor

“I HAVE CALLED YOU
BY NAME;
YOU ARE MINE!”
– ISAIAH 43:1B (NLT)



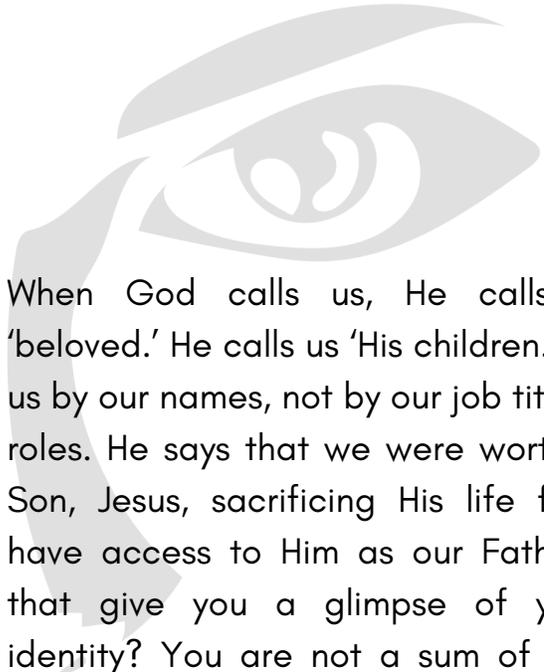
any progress was being made. However, there was much more progress being made than I was aware.

After our second child, I still struggled to feel like I fit in anywhere, especially with my God-given entrepreneurial desires to make a difference in this world. I felt like I had lost my identity.

And that's what the enemy wanted me to think.

The enemy wants us to confuse our identity with our roles, job titles, achievements, and therefore, downplay who God created each of us to be. If he can confuse our identity, then we question God.

Friend, have you been there? Society may see your identity as a 'supportive spouse,' a 'first responder,' a 'teacher,' or a 'parent,' but these aren't your identity. These are just roles God has given you to live out your identity in Him! Roles are not God's roll call for you.



When God calls us, He calls us His 'beloved.' He calls us 'His children.' He calls us by our names, not by our job titles or our roles. He says that we were worthy of His Son, Jesus, sacrificing His life for us to have access to Him as our Father. Does that give you a glimpse of your true identity? You are not a sum of the roles you do here on Earth. Your identity is rooted in who He created you to be: His.

In Ephesians 2:10 (NLV), Paul says, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago."

Notice our identity is stated as God's masterpiece. Then, after reminding us of our identity, Paul shares that God planned for us to be action-takers and do good things that He planned for us to do.

Before we focus on doing what God designed for us to do, we must discover and authentically become who He created us to be.

Our kids are now teenagers. My top roles are still wife and mother, yet God has also provided more for me to do. I've written a book (author), I speak on stages and podcasts (speaker), and have the opportunity to speak into others' lives (coach and mentor). But my identity can never be in any of these roles because, no matter the occupation or what difference I'm making in the world—or even if one day I'm unable to do anything that the world sees as 'valuable'—God still sees me and loves me the same! On His final roll call, I want to look back knowing I have lived out who He created me to be: All His.



Our world gets confused about identity because we are trained to say 'I am a ____' (fill in the blank with your roles and titles) as if those roles are who we are. How can you know if what you fill the blank with is your identity or simply a role? One way to determine whether you're confusing a role for your identity is to ask yourself this: can what I put in that blank be taken from me?

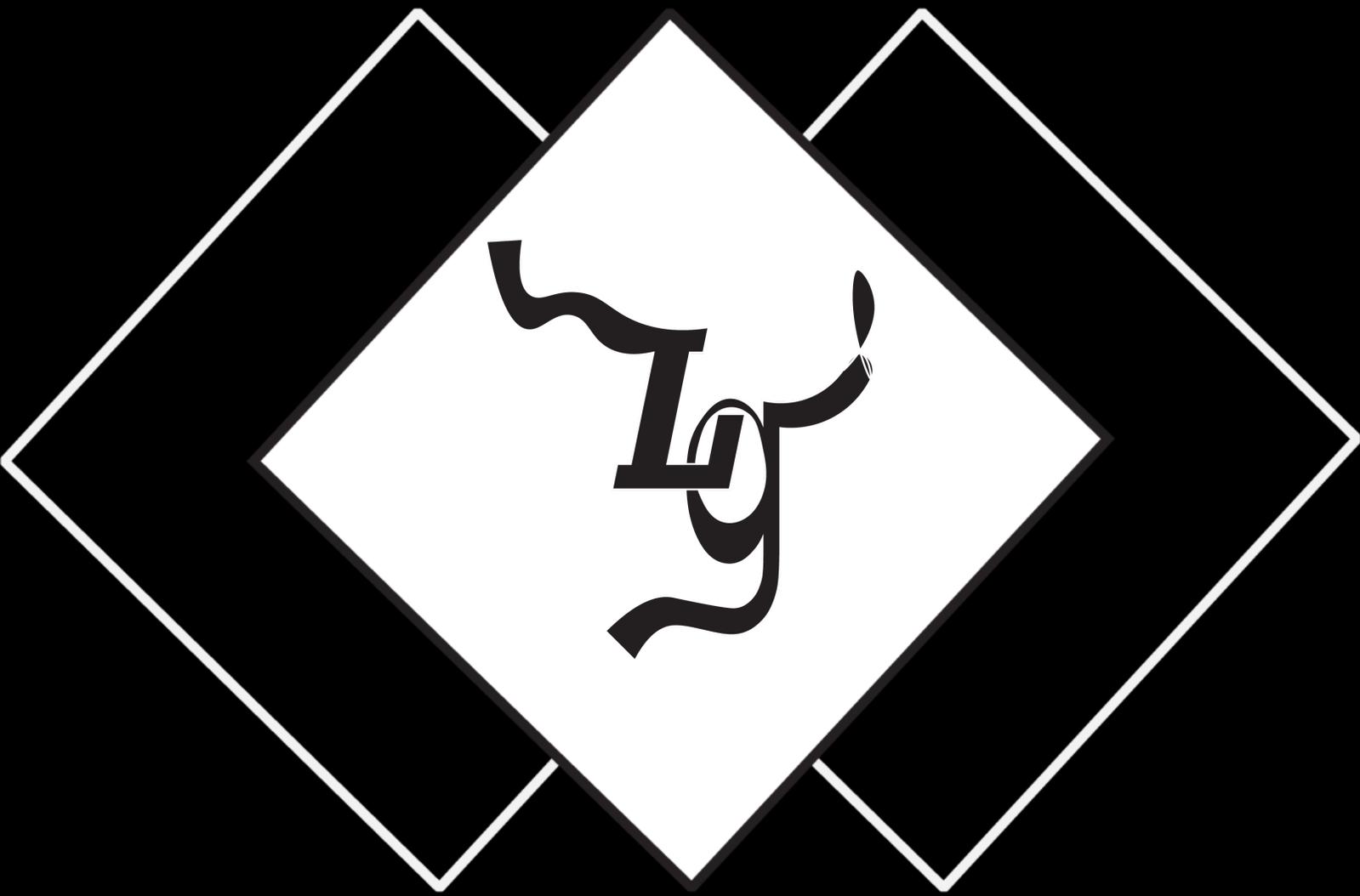
Our true God-given identity can never be stolen.

In other words, a marathon runner could lose their legs in an accident and no longer be a 'runner.' As the CEO of a company, if the company goes out of business, they are no longer a CEO. And, Heaven forbid, it is possible for a spouse to pass away or for a divorce to take place, which means the blank following the 'I am' question would change from 'husband' or 'wife' to 'widower,' 'widow,' or 'single person.' Though they may be roles or adjectives that describe us, none of these are our identity.

What then can never be taken away by worldly circumstances? Any of the traits that God has given us through His image or as gifts from Him (whether or not we choose to live them out). For instance, I am a: Servant, Beloved Daughter of the King, Redeemed Sinner, Beautiful Child, Connector, Worthy, and so many more. This is just beginning. Draw close to Him and ask Him to help you discover who He created you to be!



Article by: Renee Vidor



Become the change you want to be!

**Have you struggled with anxiety, depression,
debilitating trauma? You are not alone. Need
someone to talk to, one who understands
the hidden battle?**

I can help!

Contact me today!

lorie@authorloriegurnett.com



MISSION COMPLETE

Kelley Oswin

My father is a retired firefighter. As a child I didn't give much thought to where my Dad was going for 5 days/nights at a time. I knew he slept over at work and had a fun pole to slide down (yes, they still had them in those days). Then he would come home, not always in the best mood. I just thought that's who he was. My mother had three young children at home, and I suspect being the full-time parent while my father was at the hall was wearing at times. Possibly she thought it was nice that he was able to get away from the responsibilities at home, especially when hearing the stories of "downtime" at the hall. We never considered the horrors that he and other first responders would have witnessed daily, given the responsibility, not only of what they were always doing, but what they might have to do at any given moment.

While the public is running away from danger and trouble, first responders are running toward it. Get in, get out, mission complete...until it's not.

We are a family of helpers and I, myself, wear several hats. I am a mother, a Social Worker of 25 years, a business owner and partner at Avalon Empowerment, a trainer of Evolved Neurolinguistic Programming and Trauma Awareness, and a wife of a firefighter. Growing up, I learned to ignore and block out what being a first responder meant and then that reality entered my own home again as an adult, this time with the lens of someone who has provided mental health support to first responders, as someone who keeps an eye on her husband to ensure that he has support, and as someone with an inside perspective of trauma.

Dr. Gabor Mate said it well when he said, "Trauma is not what happens to you, it is what happens inside you as a result of what happens to you." Running toward danger is not a natural response. The human body is designed to protect itself. When the human mind interprets danger (real or imagined) the sympathetic nervous system acts as a "gas pedal" for the body. It bathes the body in adrenaline, and cortisol is released to keep the body on high alert. This results in the Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn (Appease) responses in the body and brain. First responders are trained to



override these natural responses, activate their training, and utilize the chemicals firing in their bodies to complete their mission. Over and over again. The accumulation of this can lead to post-traumatic stress and a mission that is never complete.

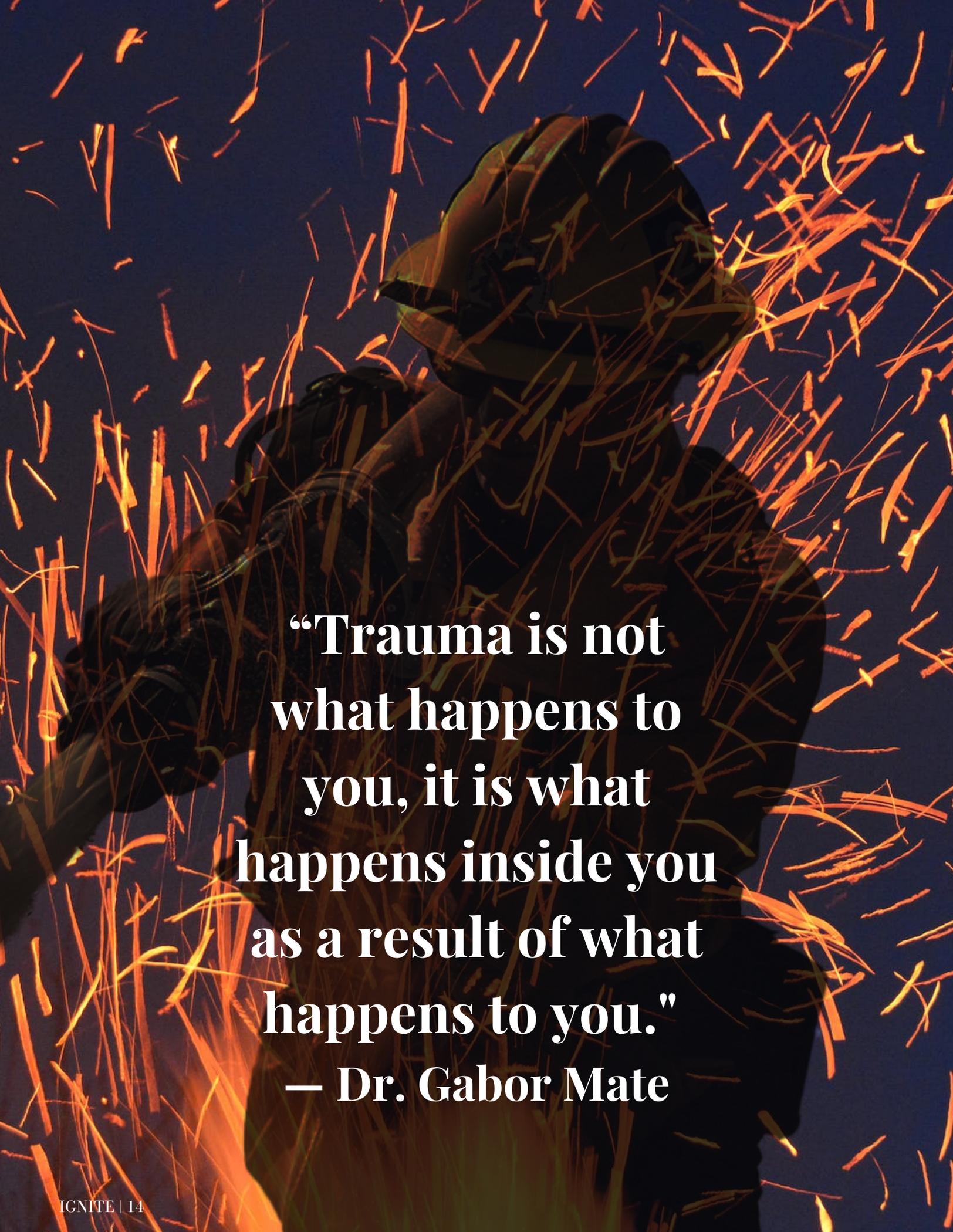
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is defined as a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event, either experiencing it or witnessing it. It can present itself as intrusive thoughts, nightmares,



“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive.”
– Maya Angelou

flashbacks, and severe anxiety. I, personally, am not a fan of the word disorder when it comes to the experience of first responders. I prefer post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI), and I see it as a workplace injury with the biggest impact happening on an unconscious level.

Let me explain. We all have a conscious mind (about 10% of who we are) and an unconscious mind (the other 90%). The unconscious mind has a lot of directives that work with us. One is to preserve the body, so it will seek resolution of unresolved trauma in a variety of ways in an attempt to heal. The unconscious mind cannot decipher between what is real and what is



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— Dr. Gabor Mate

imagined. When first responders have post-traumatic stress injuries and they are experiencing flashbacks or intrusive memories of traumatic events, like most human beings, they are watching that scene play out repeatedly in the movie in their heads. The problem is, as they watch in their mind's eye, they are looking through their own eyes. So, what does this tell the body and the conscious mind? That it is happening again; the body and mind is reliving, re-experiencing, and responding as though it is happening again! Remember, the unconscious mind cannot decipher if it is real or imagined, and the mission is never complete. They bring this home, they carry it in their cellular memory, and they don't have to. Healing is possible.



If my father knew then what I know now about healing and the unconscious mind and learned to calm his nervous system, our home would have been different. This is not to blame because I wouldn't be where I am without all those experiences! I am grateful that it led me here, learning all I could about trauma to heal and support my first-responder husband and others. First responders deserve peace through the horrors, healing through the challenges, and post-traumatic growth through the process, ultimately to know when their missions are complete.

Article by: Kelley Oswin

I do what I do because I believe we all deserve to heal and resolve old traumas. I believe that first responders are always there for us and that, as a society, we need supports woven into the system to help them. I've watched too many great people suffer because of their chosen profession when that was never their intent when they signed on to help others. I am inspired to help those who have made it their life's work to help others.

- 1) Families don't always know what their first responders' family member is experiencing (I didn't).
- 2) For first responders, PTSD needs to be looked at as a PTSI caused in the workplace.
- 3) The unconscious mind is powerful and, when working with it, healing can happen.

FROM TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH: TRUE TRANSFORMATION FOR CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

BY: ANITA MCLAURIN

My dad and mom are in the driveway of my quaint, well-manicured childhood home. As I walk toward them, I see my three brothers standing with my dad. My mom turns toward me and flatly says, "Your brothers are going with your father. Where are you going?"

It feels like a stand-off. They are literally asking me to make a life-altering decision that, as a 16-year-old, I am not prepared to make.

Many people experience trauma sooner or later in life. It





"So many children wander in life because they're missing a parent—most especially their fathers—due to divorce. My goal is to let them know that, whether they have a father in the home or not, there's a heavenly Father who cares for them."

— Anita McLaurin



can be the trauma of life-threatening situations first responders face at work or life-changing events, such as divorce, that happen in the home.

For many adults, the traumatic impact of divorce is visible such as loss of economic status, change in housing options, perhaps challenges in health and well-being, and of course, social implications. Oftentimes for children, the effects are hidden within and they are without a voice. This may leave them feeling insecure, lost, and alone. So, it's important for them to know where to go for lasting wholeness and healing.

Because children believe they are without power, it's crucial that parents who are experiencing divorce teach them they aren't. While you may be in pain, it's necessary to give your children the tools they need to be empowered to seek solutions in the Word of God.

Looking back, I learned three things that moved me from trauma to triumph.

1. Engage the power of choice
2. Seek the Lord
3. Stand on the Word



CHILDREN CAN CHOOSE LIFE TOO

"... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that you and your descendants may live."

Deuteronomy 30:19b NKJV

Almost everyone with breath, even children, can choose. That day, standing in the driveway, I didn't choose either parent. Having only three months before starting college, I wandered from friend to family member and back.



**"Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."
— Matthew 11:28**

Deciding to live with one parent over the other seemed like betrayal. Although I didn't choose between my parents, I still made choices.

- I chose where to live among the options presented to me.
- I chose to replay continually in my head the fact that it was "all my fault."
- I eventually chose to remember the joy rather than the pain.

IF YOU SEEK YOU WILL FIND

"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

Jeremiah 29:13 NIV

The pain of not knowing which way to go was so intense that I decided to stay at college and work over the summer. I walked into the empty first-floor dorm room that was assigned to me. Looking in the mirror, I grasped my head with both hands. My inner monologue went something like this:

“Lord, I don’t like who I’ve become. It’s difficult even to remember who I was, and I don’t know how to get back there. I’m not leaving this place until you change me.”

That became my prayer for the entire summer. God is faithful, and the healing began through the Word of God.

FIND YOURSELF IN THE WORD & MEDITATE

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

Psalm 27:10 KJV

Rather than finding myself in the truth of the Word, initially I found myself in the lie of the trauma—it’s all my fault. I needed to find a place of truth that would heal my heart.

For months, Psalm 27:10, became my internal meditation. Over time, the pain of the situation lessened until I no longer needed the salve of that particular scripture.

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ORDER OF OPERATIONS: A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR HEALTHY CONFLICT RESOLUTION

DR. MONICA KLEEBERGER

Do you ever feel overwhelmed and lost when it comes to working through conflict with your spouse? As first responders, you're constantly surrounded by stressful situations. The last thing you want is to have a stressful home life. Home is your refuge! The Order of Operations below is your procedures manual to equip you in bringing peace into your marriage and to help you navigate conflict in a healthy way. Grab your spouse and let's dive in together!

Step 1: Go to God First. The biggest mistake couples make when addressing conflict is going to their spouses first, instead of God. Jesus needs to calm you down! Your emotions and spirit need to be cared for before the marriage relationship. Let Jesus know how you feel and tell Him what happened. He wants to comfort you and take your anger, bitterness, anxiety, and hurt away (Matthew 11:28-29). Jesus' love and power is strong enough to soften your heart toward your spouse. He wants to see you both reconciled! He wants to give you His peace and comfort. Jesus doesn't want you to go through this alone. He wants to do this with you! Reach out to Him through prayer, reading His Word, and even in worship. He'll be right there to hold your hand and help you through the conflict.

Step 2: Self-Evaluation. Now that your emotions are calmer and your heart is softened, ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Where is your level of responsibility in this conflict? Were you overly sensitive, over-reacting, defensive, or mean? Have you taken up an offense against your spouse? If you answer "yes" to any of these, repent and extend forgiveness to your spouse.

If you discover that you are walking justly before God in this particular situation, ask the Lord to give you patience, kindness, and love that covers all wrong doings (1 Peter 4:8) and compassion for your spouse. Jesus is the one who has all the answers on how to restore peace between you and your spouse, so ask Him for wisdom (James 1:5; Hebrews 13:20-21). Prayer and Bible reading are great ways to receive His divine wisdom.



Step 3: Reconciliation! With a calmer and a prepared heart, you're now ready to have that reconciling conversation. But first, the ground rules: Remember, you're talking to a friend. Do take turns sharing. Do speak from your heart. Don't interrupt. Do truly listen to what your spouse is saying, even if it's imperfect and hurtful. Don't think about your response while your spouse is talking. Finally, when your spouse is done talking and it's your turn to respond, do make sure you fully understand him/her instead of assuming. Say things like, "This is what I heard you say... is this accurate?" Give your spouse the opportunity to clarify, if necessary.



Reconciliation procedure: Open up in prayer. Prayer helps you and your spouse get into the right state of mind. Invite the Holy Spirit into the conversation and ask Him to help you both speak with kindness and respect.

After the prayer, affirm your spouse! Remind him/her of your love, devotion, and desire to work this out as a team. Tell him/her you want to understand and listen with an open heart. Communicate that it's your desire to restore unity. These affirmations go a long way.

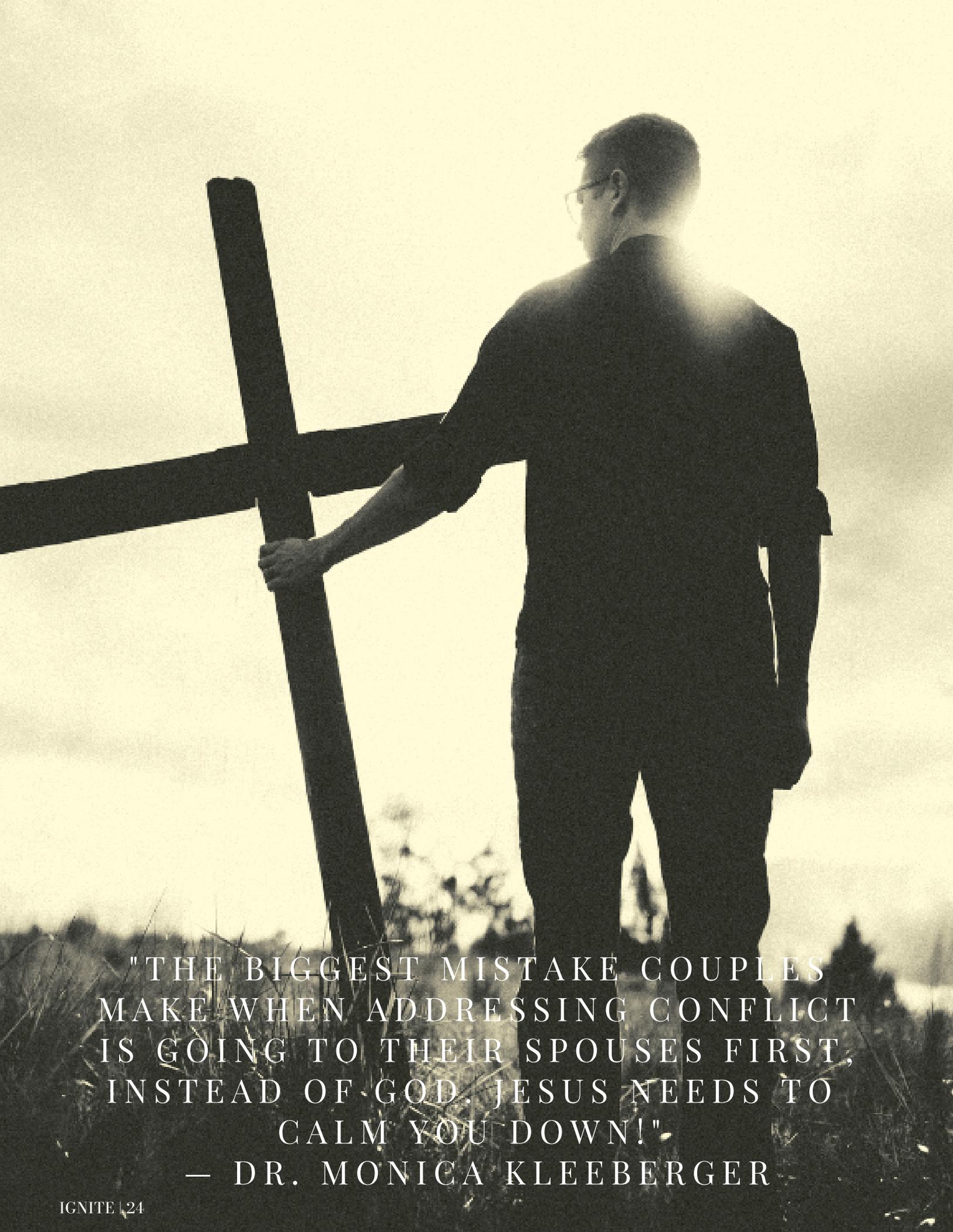
Now that the two of you are talking, be sure to stay away from blaming language.



Blame can ruin a successful outcome. Stick to the facts: “I was hurt, felt sad, angry or bitter (etc.) when you said or did...” “I felt unloved, disrespected, insignificant when you did or said...” Ask, “Did you really mean this when you said or did...?” You want to communicate what upset you but also give your spouse the space to explain and clarify. Try to see his/her heart and understand where he/she is coming from in the situation. Be sure to ask for forgiveness and extend forgiveness, even if it’s not requested.

Step 4: Closure. After you both talk it out, be intentional about what you both need for closure. Is it a hug? Is it sex? Is it saying, “I understand where you’re coming from. I’m sorry I hurt you. I love you.” What will be a meaningful closure so you both can walk forward in unity and friendship? If you’re uncertain, be sure to discuss this at the end of reconciliation.

Please Note: One conversation may not be enough to achieve restoration and peace. You can’t rush or force this process. If emotions start to flare and another fight is brewing,



"THE BIGGEST MISTAKE COUPLES
MAKE WHEN ADDRESSING CONFLICT
IS GOING TO THEIR SPOUSES FIRST,
INSTEAD OF GOD. JESUS NEEDS TO
CALM YOU DOWN!"

— DR. MONICA KLEEBERGER



"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
— Matthew 11:28-29

table the conversation for another time, and go back to Step 1 to prepare for the next reconciling opportunity.

If you have questions or would like to dive deeper into this topic, please contact me at

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Article by:
Dr. Monica Kleeberger



IN HONOR OF OUR FALLEN HEROES



Sub. Cst. John Nash
Sgt. Derek Cameron Burkholder
Cst. Christine Elizabeth Diotte
Cst. Lionide (Leo) Nicholas Johnston
Cst. Christopher John Worden
Cst. Derek William Henry Pineo
Cst. Heidi Jill Stevenson
Cst. Shelby Chance Patton

HEROES

I think that we all do heroic things,
but hero is not a noun, it's a verb."

— Robert Downey, Jr.