

# **Order for Recognition of the End of a Marriage**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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This order is intended for those occasions when a man and a woman who have experienced a divorce wish to acknowledge responsibility for their separation, affirm the good that continues from the previous relationship, and promise in the presence of God, family, and supportive friends to begin a new relationship. Great sensitivity to the particular circumstances of the couple will be needed on the part of those who assist them in planning the service. Considerable advance preparation may be necessary. The promises indicated within the order should be developed by the woman and man themselves, with whatever counsel they request.

The service is penitential in nature and cannot be construed to be an encouragement of divorce or a deprecation of marriage. It does not celebrate the failure of a relationship, but acknowledges that a divorce has occurred and that two human beings are seeking in earnest to reorder their lives in a wholesome, redemptive way. The service is a reminder that nothing can separate people from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Elements of the service may be used during pastoral counseling when a public service seems inappropriate.

Hope and joy are appropriate in this service as a man and woman pledge goodwill to each other and responsibly arrange for continuing obligations they may share.

If there are children of mature age in the family of the divorced woman and man, they may wish to share in this service in a supportive way. With great care, the one presiding may include them.

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OUTLINE

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**Greeting**

**Introduction**

**Prayers**

**Reading of Scripture**

**Statements of Commitment**

**Affirmation**

**Benediction**

*A divorced woman and man may invite the pastor or another representative of the church to lead the service in a supportive informal gathering of members and friends.*

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GREETING

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*All may stand for one or more of the following or for other words of scripture.*

Ⓐ

LEADER

**Let us remember these words from Jesus:  
Where two or three are gathered in my name,**

PEOPLE

There am I in the midst of them.<sup>51</sup>

Ⓑ

LEADER

**God is our shelter and strength,  
always ready to help in times of trouble.**

PEOPLE

So we will not be afraid,  
even if the earth is shaken  
and mountains fall into the ocean depths;

LEADER

**Even if the seas roar and rage,  
and the hills are shaken by the violence.<sup>52</sup>**

PEOPLE

God is our shelter and strength.

Ⓒ

LEADER

**God be with you.**

PEOPLE

And also with you.

LEADER

**Let us with confidence draw near to the throne of grace;**

PEOPLE

That we may receive mercy  
and find grace to help in time of need.<sup>53</sup>

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 INTRODUCTION
 

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*In these or similar words, a leader may explain the nature and purpose of the service. There are optional words for use if the man and woman are parents.*

LEADER

**We are here****to witness an end and a beginning  
and to share the making of new commitments.**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have decided,

woman

man

**after much effort, pain, and anger,  
that they will no longer be wife and husband,  
but they wish to respect and be concerned for each other.***for parents*

LEADER

**They are now, and will continue to be,  
parents to their child(ren),  
and they wish to be responsible for** *him/her/each of them.*

LEADER

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are grateful to you,

man

woman

**who are family and friends,  
for your love and support, your efforts of healing,  
and your presence here.***Those gathered may say in unison or repeat after the leader the following or other words of support.*

PEOPLE

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,

woman

man

**in this difficult time,  
we join with you as your friends.  
We have been with you  
in your joys, in your struggles, and in your tears.  
We have not always known how to be helpful.  
Although we may not fully understand,  
we accept your decision.  
We care, and we give you our love.**

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PRAYERS

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*One or both of the following prayers or other prayers may be offered. The second prayer is a prayer of confession and is followed by words of assurance concerning God's mercy and grace.*

Ⓐ

LEADER

**Let us pray.**

**O God, make us aware of your presence.  
You have blessed us in all our moments:  
of joining, of relating, of intending, and of beginning.  
Be with us in our times of separating and of ending,  
releasing us from those vows we can no longer keep;  
we ask in Christ's name.**

PEOPLE

Amen.

Ⓑ

LEADER

**Let us ask God for the forgiveness we need.**

ALL

**God of all mercy,  
we know that you love us even when we are not sure  
that we love ourselves.  
Embrace us when frustration and failure  
leave us hollow and empty.  
Forgive our sins,  
and grant us forgiving hearts toward others.  
In the confession of our lips,  
show us now the promise of a new day,  
the springtime of the forgiven;  
through Jesus Christ,  
who is able to make all things new.  
Amen.**

LEADER

**God's love for us is shown in this:  
While we were yet sinners,  
Christ died for us.<sup>54</sup>**

READING OF SCRIPTURE

One or more lessons may be read. The man and woman, other family members, or friends may assist with the scripture reading.

PSALMS

Psalms 13; 31:1-2, 9-10, 14, 16; 91:1-6, 9-12; 130:1-7

NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 4:35-41

Mark 9:33-37, if children are involved

Romans 8:35, 37-39

1 John 4:1-12, 19-21

STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT

In these or similar words, the leader may invite the woman and man to speak words leading to hope about the future.

LEADER

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,  
man woman

some of us/your family and friends **were present when you made your commitment to marriage. Before God, and all of us, we invite you to share the new commitments you are prepared to make.**

Here may follow personal words spoken by the woman and man. The words may express some of the agreements they have made with each other after much work, anguish, and counseling. Areas that may be included are:

- regret, apology, and confession related to unfulfilled intentions;
- mutual care and respect;
- support and care for their children;
- the need for supportive friends;
- affirmation of good continuing from their life together.

The leader may invite words of support and love from those present or from a representative among them.

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AFFIRMATION

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*The leader or the entire gathering may say these or similar words of affirmation. There are optional words that recognize the presence of children from the relationship.*

LEADER/ALL

**We affirm you in the new commitments you have made:  
commitments which find you separated  
but still concerned about each other  
and wishing each other goodwill,**

**commitments which enable you  
to support and to love your child(ren),**

**and commitments which help  
to heal the pain you may feel.  
Count on God's presence;  
trust our support;  
begin anew.**

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BENEDICTION

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Ⓐ

LEADER

**Go in peace.**

PEOPLE

Amen.

Ⓑ

LEADER

**Go forth into the world**

**in peace;**

**be of good courage;**

**hold fast to that**

**which is good;**

**render to no one evil for evil;**

**strengthen the fainthearted;**

**support the weak;**

**help the afflicted;**

**honor all people;**

**love and serve God,**

**rejoicing in the power  
of the Holy Spirit.**

PEOPLE

Amen.<sup>55</sup>