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DALEY REPORT

They Got an Annulment for Their Divorce



“We know what God can do in a marriage,” Jill Averitt says, “even when one has gone as far as to divorce.

Growing up as a pastor’s kid, she never imagined how she would learn that lesson. She and Alex had so much in common when they married in 1996. High school sweethearts, they came from strong Christian homes and each had a heritage of lasting marriages. They knew that God hates divorce. Yet in the first years of their marriage, something went terribly wrong. And then something went right.

The Averitts’ story can be told through the two FamilyLife marriage getaways they’ve attended. The first was a last-ditch effort. The second was a celebration of the fact that nothing is impossible for God.

By the time Jill and Alex went to their first Weekend to Remember® in 2005 there was little hope for their relationship. Jill was filing for divorce. Alex, on the other hand, was praying for a miracle. He and Jill were just 19 years old when they married. Both Christians, everyone had assumed they'd figure marriage out. But marriage was a lot harder than either of them had expected.

Promoted quickly by his company, Alex’s typical workweek was 90 hours or more. He and Jill had little time for intimacy. “He was always working,” Jill recalls. “It was a very lonely time.” By year four of their marriage, Jill was miserable. She couldn’t remember ever loving Alex. And when her friends told her that she deserved to be happy, she quickly agreed. Finally she told Alex that she didn’t want to be married anymore. Surprisingly, he was shocked. “I didn’t understand where this was coming from,” he says. “That’s how ignorant I was of our relationship.” So Alex cut back his hours at work and tried to buy Jill’s love with flowers, a new car, and even a new house.

They were attending their first Weekend to Remember as a last-ditch effort to save their marriage. The only reason Jill agreed to go was because her parents begged her to give it a try. Alex prayed that somehow God would use the getaway to fix their broken marriage. As he and Jill worked through the getaway projects, he had hope. But that was shattered when he asked Jill what she was thinking. “Alex,” she said, “I believe all of these things. I want all of these things. I just don’t want them with you.” Despite her rejecting words, Alex refused to give up.

At the last session of the weekend, the speaker invited the couples to verbally renew their marriage vows. And he said they could each have a FamilyLife “marriage covenant,” a special document to sign as a visual reminder of the promises they made that day. Alex picked up a covenant, and then he signed and dated it. He folded the document in quarters and slipped it into his back pocket. He believed that one day Jill would sign it, too.

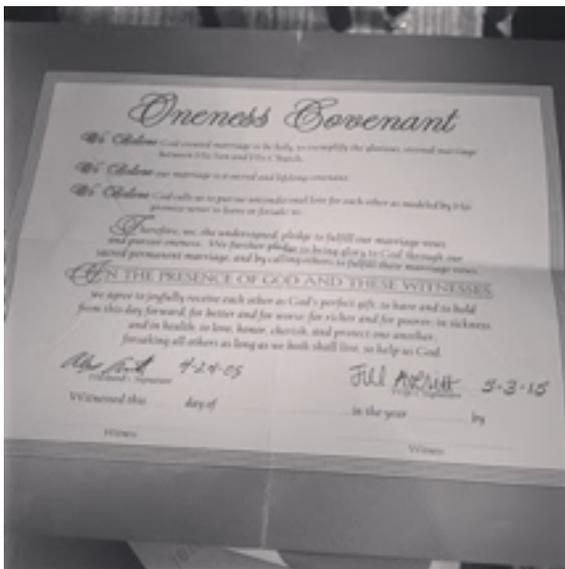
Six months later, on October 12, 2005, the Averitts’ divorce was finalized.

After their divorce, Jill tried to date other men. Strangely, she always compared them to her ex-husband. Finally one day she texted Alex, “Do you think we could have made it?” He answered, “I know we could have made it!” Soon afterward, they started talking on the phone. Then they sought counseling together. Eventually they decided to give marriage another try. Nine months after their divorce was finalized, the Averitts had it annulled, and Jill moved back home with Alex.

When the Averitts went to their second Weekend to Remember in 2015, they were both listening. Early in the getaway a speaker jokingly said, “Look at who’s beside you and say, ‘You need this more than we do,’” Jill turned to the young couple sitting next to her. She already knew they were engaged and in their early 20s. They have no idea what they are in for, she thought, but I’m so proud of them for being here.

On the last day of the conference, the speaker invited the couples to renew their marriage vows. This time Jill stood by Alex. He pulled the folded marriage covenant out of his back pocket. “And there was his signature from 10 years ago,” she says, “just waiting for mine.” Tears streamed down the Averitts’ cheeks. Holding hands and facing one another, they looked deeply into each other’s eyes and embraced. Then Jill signed her name next to Alex’s.

By the grace of God, their marriage had somehow survived.



CATCHING UP WITH THE DALEYS

Well, Fall again! It is amazing how quickly time flies. And once again we are in the middle of a team re-organization. In an effort to streamline the way we care for the digital needs of all our field staff, volunteers and ministry partners, the Global Digital Strategies Office and the Global Technology Office will Merge with our US Digital Strategies Office over the next month. What this means for us is that our scope has increased significantly. We will now focus not only on US ministry but on ministry around the world.

We'd love to have your prayers for the merger that everyone feels comfortable in the changes being made and that the actual restructuring would be sound.

Tim and I are hanging in with only a few minor physical concerns. Life is busy and very full! What a blessing to be allowed to serve our Lord in ministry!