



Clive

Marriage goes through many stages, **Romance, Disillusionment, Misery and Re-Awakening.**

We have experienced them all several times in our 45 years of marriage!

Good afternoon!

We are honoured to have 15 minutes to share hope for painful and struggling marriages with you all.

We are Clive & Kathy Jones and we live in Co. Cork, in Ireland. We have 4 grown up children and 11 grandchildren T.G.

Our marriage is long, 45 years and has mostly been quite happy, but I noticed things began to change when we were married about 30 years. Slowly our marriage slid into a very miserable time and Kathy & I will share with you what we each experienced and what helped me and us recover the enjoyment and vitality in our marriage once more.

Kathy

In the lead up to our time of misery there was very serious illness in our family, then Clive became ill. I worried about him constantly and I thought he closed off from me, and our family, and seemed to want to be on his own more and more. Then came retirement, our grown up children married and left home, we moved from the UK to Ireland. We became grandparents. Our adult children live in the UK. I found it very painful and upsetting to live so far from them and our grandchildren. I was struggling to adjust and resenting living where we were. This showed in poor listening, lots of blaming, silences and arguments. I had very negative thoughts about Clive and our relationship. I felt very sad and lonely a lot of the time in our home. I lost my enjoyment in Clives company.

Clive

Then we had a very painful rejection from the community we served in which seemed like the final straw. I felt hurt, angry and unable to comfort listen to or support Kathy. I lived in my own miserable world and Kathy lived in hers.

We put on a brave front when we were with other people but our hearts were cold and sad, like we lived in two separate worlds.

Kathy

I, Kathy, resented living so far from our family and I escaped to see them as much as possible. I also started working in Ireland which helped *me* cope but did nothing for *us*. I wasn't willing or inclined to look

at my behaviour or see that we were drifting farther and farther apart. I blamed Clive for all of it, he wanted to live in Ireland, he didn't want to go anywhere, he always wanted his way and so on it went.

Clive

I also felt very resentful, as Kathy said she blamed me for bringing her over to live in Ireland - and it seemed to me that visiting our children and grandchildren were her main priorities - this gave me the impression that they were more important than me - that I didn't matter - she was happy it seemed when visiting our family - but very miserable and cold when alone with me.

We lived in the same house, shared the same bed, but had very little to say to each other. Then Kathy started working with her friend – and spent a lot of time out working - or hours on the computer, preparing work. We drifted apart more and more, I buried myself in my books, spent hours watching TV . Sometimes in quiet moments I would find myself wondering what had gone wrong - I felt lonely and isolated - and usually in those moments I blamed Kathy for the distance that was growing between us.

Kathy

Some friends invited us to be involved in the Retrouvaille Ministry to help. It was for troubled marriages but pride wouldn't let me acknowledge that we were in trouble!

Eventually, we agreed to help which meant we had to experience the Retrouvaille programme first!

That was a turning point, very slowly I and we began the long journey back towards each other. The Retrouvaille tools of effective communication and listening cleared the way to forgive and trust, to decide to love even when I didn't feel loving, to listen without blaming, to actually *want* to listen again!

I, began to own my part in our misery, e.g. I'm opinionated and often assume I'm right and that my way of doing things is best! I expect Clive to agree and get annoyed when he doesn't. I use angry behaviour to get my own way, taking advantage of Clive's unease with all kinds of conflict. I expect him to romance me, to initiate lovemaking to make me feel special. I don't easily own my own needs or take responsibility for changing behaviour of mine that hurts our marriage. I'm very independent, don't like being accountable and this can mean I'm more focussed on me and what I want than on what's good for us.

So you can see I badly needed Retrouvaille and I thank God for it every day.

It has opened my eyes to want to live differently, to live in love and to grow up even at this late stage in my life!

For me Retrouvaille is a gift from God, a gift of hope and freedom from suffering, a gift that came with the tools I and we needed to transform our

marriage. There are still difficult days but I know how to manage them better. It has been a slow steady re-awakening to the joy of loving and being loved, which continues today thanks be to God.

Clive .

Experiencing the 'Retrouvaille Programme' helped me to own the fact that my behaviour was far from lifegiving to our relationship - one of the first things I heard was that I should stop blaming Kathy for what was going wrong in our relationship - I should stop trying to change her, and look at changing my own moody, selfish, and distant behaviour - and that when I was perfect maybe then I could change Kathy then.

Also part of the programme called me to look at family of origin - what I experienced as I grew up, and how that has affected me in my adult life. Well the fact is my parents argued and fought a lot - and my Mother would sometimes after a row, walk out and leave us - sometimes for days or weeks on end. This led me to bring into our marriage, to Kathy, the view that arguing was a bad thing for our relationship. So I wouldn't get into that - instead I would walk out - take the dog for a walk - dig the garden - in fact absent myself until Kathy got over whatever was upsetting her. That meant we never properly talked about things that were causing difficulties between us, they continued to fester away inside, little things that could so easily have been sorted out sometimes grew into major problems.

Looking at my family of origin and the effect it had on me, helped me realise that though I was now a big strong man - deep inside there still lived in me the fears of that small child whose mother walked out after a row and I feared Kathy would do the same. Recognising that was a major turning point in my life, and in my behaviour and though I would still rather settle for a peaceful relationship with Kathy, I don't walk away any more when difficult issues need to be dealt with.

So I've been able to sort out many of the difficulties that were lying between us - and our relationship is much warmer and more loving - just like it used to be - I can only thank Retrouvaile for opening my eyes and giving me the tools to work through the misery we were experiencing.

Kathy

As married couples our spirituality is to live in love, forgiveness and unity, giving praise to God by the passion, the enjoyment, the laughter and the tears of our everyday living. Prayer helps Clive and I stay focused. Each day together, we wake to a new adventure, we are blessed indeed.

It's really is wonderful to be married 45 years and to still find enjoyment in loving each other, and to have a ministry in which to share our love, the Retrouvaille Ministry. Retrouvaille transforms the heart of the community—The Family.

We'd like to take a few minutes to share with you all, our experience of a group of couples who experienced the Retrouvaille programme. The Diocese of Westminster's Pastoral Affairs Department has been financially enabling Retrouvaille to become established in the UK where these couples live.

15 Couples experienced the Retrouvaille Programme.

1 year later, **1** couple have separated permanently, God bless them.
5 husbands have moved back into their family homes,
13 couples are now in more secure and stable marriages,
1 couple are still struggling but with more hope and getting support in the monthly meetings that follow the programme.

Those **15** couples are parents to **37** children

Since Retrouvaille commenced in the UK in 2009, **3** babies have been born to first time parents--couples who would not be together but for the Retrouvaille Programme, and another baby has been born to a couple who already have 4 children.

Retrouvaille is a Worldwide Ministry first established in Canada in 1977. The Presenting Teams consist of couples and priests who themselves have benefited from Retrouvaille and who have been trained to present the Programme. All Retrouvaille presenters and workers are volunteers

His Holiness Pope Benedict, said of Retrouvaille

'In fact, when their relationship breaks, couples fall in deep solitude both individually and as a couple. They lose the horizon of their communion with God, with others and with the Church. At this point your programme offers the "hook" so that they may not be totally lost and may gradually climb over the cliff. I love to think of you as custodian of a bigger hope for the couples who have lost it. Crisis, then, is transition to growth.'

Any couple or priest here today, who feels called to serve in this life changing ministry to marriage and family, is urged to offer their services. Children need marriages that flourish, our parishes and world need marriages that bring hope and faithfulness into their midst.

You can log on to the International website www.retrouvaille.org and find your country in the drop down list and send an email to say you are interested in helping.

Like us, you will be offered an opportunity to experience the programme and we hope that like us, you will find it a life changing experience that you will want to take out to others.

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