



## Holiday Hopes for Reconciliation

*My greatest Christmas wish was for the reconciliation of my marriage. —Jennifer*

Some people view the holiday season as a time of wishes and gifts and dreams coming true. With those warm feelings in the air, you might have fantasies of getting back together with your former spouse over the holidays.

We asked our DivorceCare: Surviving the Holidays video experts to share their insights about visions of reconciliation over the holidays.

### **Q: What advice would you give to the person who is hoping, fantasizing, about reconciling with a former spouse during the holiday season?**

**Elsa Kok Colopy:** “One of the greatest temptations over the holiday season is to think, ‘Maybe this is the holiday, maybe this is the day, that I’ll get to reconnect with my spouse. We’ll exchange gifts. There will be this moment, we’ll capture each other’s eye, and all that is past is going to melt away and we are going to reconnect.’”

“I want to encourage you that it is a rare thing that reconciliation would come over the holidays, and if it does, it’s often a result of those emotions that are related to the holidays, and there’s no framework for the relationship to be rebuilt. One of the things you can say to God is, ‘Lord, if You have reconciliation for us, then I’m not going to look for it over the holidays. But will You work in both of our hearts to draw us to You so that we can go through counseling, so that we can deal with our individual issues and ultimately reconcile?’ Don’t put an unhealthy pressure on that holiday to be the moment to draw you together because more than likely neither one of you has really walked through the issues that led you to the divorce in the first place. So with those unhealthy expectations, you could even end up together for a short period of time, but it’s going to be an unhealthy thing, and your heart is going to be damaged even more.”

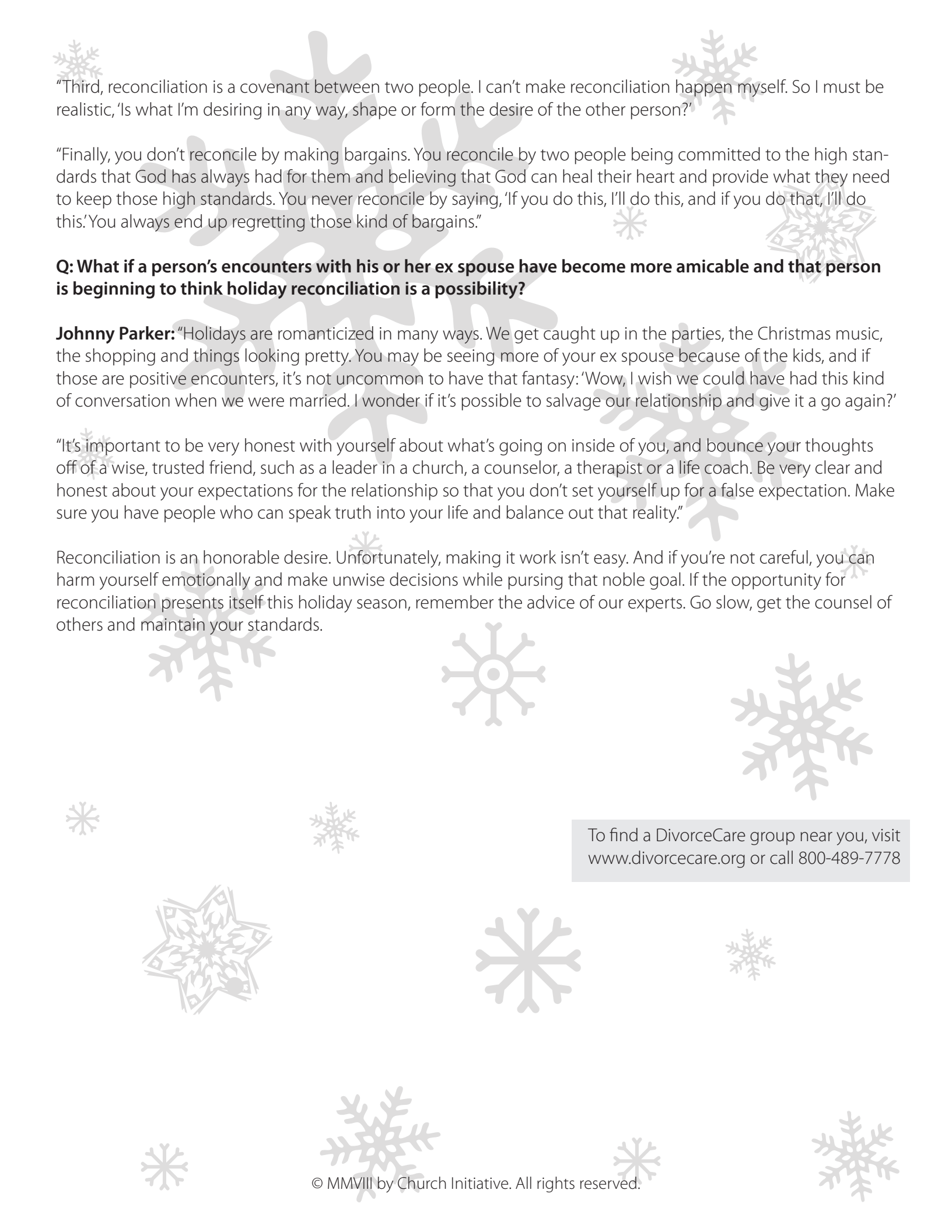
**Sue Lutz:** “If you’re someone who is hoping your spouse will come back to you, you have a lot of company. But you certainly want a spouse who comes back to you for more than just the sentimental things that tend to overwhelm us at the holidays. You want somebody who still wants to be with you on January 2nd when all the sentimental things are over and you have to go back to everyday life, back to all the issues that were part of your life before you separated or divorced.”

“You want somebody who is strong enough to own his or her responsibility in the issues that separated you and is committed enough—without all the tinsel and the lights and the presents—to work on the things that drove you apart. Otherwise, if you don’t have that kind of commitment from your spouse, your heart is going to be broken again and so will your children’s hearts, if you have children. So in a lot of ways I’d be much more eager for my ex to come back to me on January 5th and say, ‘I’m ready to make a new beginning.’”

**Dr. Paul Tripp:** “First of all, what a beautiful hope reconciliation is. God is a God of restoration and I should want peace, I should want reconciliation. Those are good things to desire. They’re not good things to demand. And that’s an important distinction.”

“Second, be careful of your emotions. I find that big decisions that newly divorced people make are often decisions they live to regret. ‘I’m so lonely I may do anything to get you back and that anything I can live to regret.’ Keep your standards high. Don’t be willing to lower your standards in order to create reconciliation. What you’re doing then is you’re building a house on a bad foundation, and it’s going to come down.”





"Third, reconciliation is a covenant between two people. I can't make reconciliation happen myself. So I must be realistic, 'Is what I'm desiring in any way, shape or form the desire of the other person?'"

"Finally, you don't reconcile by making bargains. You reconcile by two people being committed to the high standards that God has always had for them and believing that God can heal their heart and provide what they need to keep those high standards. You never reconcile by saying, 'If you do this, I'll do this, and if you do that, I'll do this.' You always end up regretting those kind of bargains."

**Q: What if a person's encounters with his or her ex spouse have become more amicable and that person is beginning to think holiday reconciliation is a possibility?**

**Johnny Parker:** "Holidays are romanticized in many ways. We get caught up in the parties, the Christmas music, the shopping and things looking pretty. You may be seeing more of your ex spouse because of the kids, and if those are positive encounters, it's not uncommon to have that fantasy: 'Wow, I wish we could have had this kind of conversation when we were married. I wonder if it's possible to salvage our relationship and give it a go again?'"

"It's important to be very honest with yourself about what's going on inside of you, and bounce your thoughts off of a wise, trusted friend, such as a leader in a church, a counselor, a therapist or a life coach. Be very clear and honest about your expectations for the relationship so that you don't set yourself up for a false expectation. Make sure you have people who can speak truth into your life and balance out that reality."

Reconciliation is an honorable desire. Unfortunately, making it work isn't easy. And if you're not careful, you can harm yourself emotionally and make unwise decisions while pursuing that noble goal. If the opportunity for reconciliation presents itself this holiday season, remember the advice of our experts. Go slow, get the counsel of others and maintain your standards.

To find a DivorceCare group near you, visit [www.divorcecare.org](http://www.divorcecare.org) or call 800-489-7778