

Q&A with Dr. Carol Erb, author of *Enveloped*

1) Talk about that moment when you realized your husband was committing adultery. What were your first thoughts?

My first thought was I no longer knew the man I married followed by the shocking truth that my husband no longer loved me. I had difficulty facing the truth that he had decided to get out of the marriage and would bring this pain and suffering to me and our sons. I had the classic signs of shock and denial. I was convinced that with the right kind of help he would come to his senses and realize he was making a big mistake. Having been a child of divorce, I knew what this would do to us and to our family. I thought I could reason with him and help him understand that the consequences of his choices were going to be too painful, and together, we could turn this around.

2) What steps did you take to try to salvage your marriage?

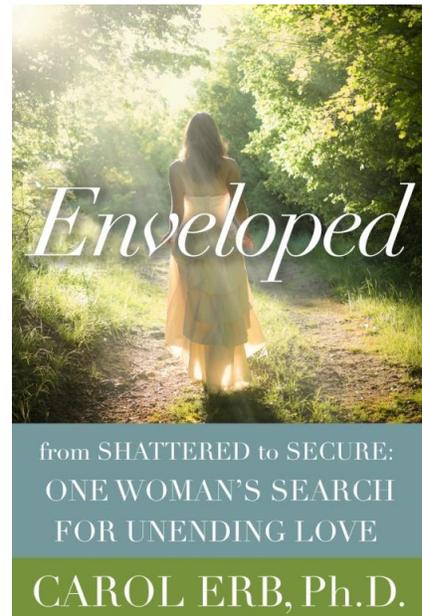
My first cry for help was heard by family and friends, but they had little influence on my husband. Next, I went to our pastor for help, but he said he did not do marriage counseling. Then I went to a Christian counselor, who was highly recommended to me, but she gave me no advice about what action to take to begin recovering from my husband's affair, work through my grief, or emotionally heal from the trauma – let alone if there was anything I could do to stop it. After our initial session, she didn't offer us any kind of plan to work on the marriage. I realized it was going to be up to me to and I had no idea what to do. I was completely on my own. Essentially, I came to the gut-wrenching reality that, try as I might, I was powerless over my husband's choices.

3) What was the most difficult thing to deal with during the divorce?

Grieving all the losses was the most difficult. There is the personal loss of a spouse, the marriage, watching the children suffer, financial loss, and loss of relationships of family members and friends, as they were also hurt and negatively impacted. Lastly, there was an unforeseen loss I encountered within some Christian circles, as divorced disqualified me from certain areas of service. Divorce is a firestorm and the ripple effect goes on for years.

4) Why did you decide to share your personal story in book form?

When I work with clients in individual or couple sessions, they have repeatedly told me that what made our work together so meaningful was when I shared parts of my story. They knew that I understood their gut-wrenching pain. I have worked with hundreds of clients, but my goal is to reach many others outside the privacy of a counseling room. When a woman (or man) is in pain due to a crumbling marriage, a loss, or betrayal, they are faced with confusion and struggle. When they reach out to family, friends, their pastor and the Christian community at large, they are often met with advice that sometimes causes more pain than it alleviates. They feel trapped, alone and afraid...much the same way I once did. While *Enveloped* is a heart-wrenching story, it is also filled with promise and a hope for the future that can only come when you're



completely surrendered to the love God has for you. *Enveloped* was written to show the possibilities of what a woman can accomplish when she allows God to enfold her in His loving arms. My book is not so much about me as it is the story behind it. The hero is God.

5) How did your relationship with God change during and after your divorce?

When I realized I was facing a divorce, I knew that this time was going to be a severe trial of my faith. In studying the Bible, speaking to women's groups about God's faithfulness, and teaching women in Bible studies, I believed God was permitting me to be tested at a deep level and my response would be crucial. I chose to completely surrender my circumstances to Him and to *really* trust Him. I had given God my life to do whatever He wished fifteen years earlier, and despite navigating the challenges of divorce, I knew that His plan for me would not be thwarted. My relationship deepened greatly as I was totally dependent upon Him regarding every aspect of my life. I talked to Him about everything- just as a wife would with her husband. During that time I derived all my security, significance and love from the Lord.

6) What do you think churches get wrong when dealing with people who are going through divorce? What can they do to improve?

Most church members and pastors do not want to confront the sinning spouse the moment they hear about the infidelity and, in doing so, they lose all influence over them. Typically, the spouse that has been traumatized by adultery is given the impression that her husband's infidelity is partially her fault, implying she should have been more loving and wasn't trying hard enough. They are then told to obey the scripture, pray, have faith and things will change. Other hurtful advice is if you are too hard on the sinning spouse you risk scaring them off and causing them to eventually leave the marriage (ironically they are already gone), therefore you need to stop nagging and forgive and forget.

Pastors can improve in this area by educating and teaching their church members that divorce is a painful reality inside the church today. The church leadership needs to either have a program in place to help couples who want to save their marriage and avoid a divorce, or have referral sources available when a traumatized spouse calls for help. Church leadership needs to come to grips that the traumatized spouse cannot manipulate or persuade their sinning spouse to love her (or him) without the sinning spouse becoming genuinely broken. The sinning spouse must be willing to change and do the work it takes to regain 100 % of their spouse's trust and respect. Therefore, if the sinning spouse has no interest in salvaging the marriage, then the traumatized spouse needs a plan and support in place to get through the grief process of the separation and possible divorce which involves 3 parts: the emotional-side; business-side and rebuilding life without their spouse.

7) What is your understanding of scripture as it pertains to divorce?

All divorces in one way or another are caused by sin, but not all divorces are sinful. Jesus made it plain that one ground in which a believer might divorce is due to unrepentant sexual sin. Another ground is when a spouse leaves the marriage, abandoning their spouse and breaking the bond of marriage by divorce.



8) Now that you are coaching people going through difficulties in marriage, what specific things do you see as the most problematic things to overcome?

The most difficult issues facing marriages are infidelity, pornography addiction, and independent behaviors. When a marriage is plagued with any of these behaviors, it requires a specific, deliberately executed plan to build a brand new marriage. The couple has to be willing to admit mistakes, learn to communicate with openness and honesty, and gain skills to resolve conflict. They purposefully need to take action to rebuild trust, look at past pain and recognize how it transfers into the marriage, grant and accept forgiveness, and learn each other's emotional needs. Then, they can begin the work of meeting those needs in order to bring back

romantic love.

9) Why do you believe so many Christian marriages are failing?

The root problem for the failure of Christian marriages is selfishness. Couples enter into marriage from a lifestyle of independence to the stark realization they are no longer independent, but now they must consider their interests with their spouse's interests simultaneously. If a couple does take into consideration each other's needs and do not make this shift, they are headed toward marital disaster.

Additionally, many couples are inadequately prepared for marriage as one or the other has misinformed their potential spouse to avoid conflict. They have not been completely open and honest regarding their personal history, preferences, habits, failures and future dreams. If new information comes out later, it can be upsetting and potentially very damaging to the marriage.

10) Are there 3 practical things that couples can do to improve their marriages today?

1. Put the marriage first over children and career. Begin by having a daily devotional where you begin to reconnect as a couple emotionally, relationally and spiritually. Next, implement a weekly playful date to keep the romance alive.
2. Learn the steps for healthy communication for resolving conflict so you are able to reach an agreement where both are mutually satisfied with the outcome.
3. Lay a foundation of total honesty in order to nurture compatibility and love in the marriage. Reward honesty and do not punish with anger when your spouse reveals their thoughts and feelings.

11) Do you believe society as a whole still believes marriage is a covenant? Why or why not?

I think the American society today has lost the understanding of marriage as a covenant and is more inclined to view marriage as a contract. A contract marriage is "until you do something that I don't agree with." A covenant marriage is "until death us do part." Most states have no fault divorce, and often couples start their marriage with a pre-nuptial agreement, which leans more to a conditional contract marriage rather than a covenant marriage, which is an unconditional solemn binding agreement made before God.

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Dr. Carol Erb

Author of *Enveloped: From Shattered to Secure, One Woman's Search for Unending Love*



It was a matchbook that changed Dr. Carol Erb's life. A matchbook started her down a path of despair and agony for which she thought she might never escape. It was a matchbook that ultimately led her to finding the love of her life – God.

In her new book, *Enveloped: From Shattered to Secure, One Woman's Search for Unending Love*, Carol describes her picture perfect existence-- married to a highly-regarded man in the community, a proud mother of three young sons. But the day her middle son came through the door with the matchbook –adorned with voluptuous women promoting a topless bar which he found in his father's car-- that was the day the picture began to seem completely out of focus.

But the matchbook was only the beginning. It started to become clear, as the weeks and months went by, that her husband had been unfaithful for a long time and was intent on leaving his family. Carol began to realize she wasn't even sure anymore who she had married.

"I had the classic signs of shock and denial," says Carol. "I was convinced that with the right kind of help he would come to his senses and realize he was making a big mistake. Having been a child of divorce, I knew what this would do to us and to our family. I thought I could reason with him and help him understand that the consequences of his choices were going to be too painful, and together, we could turn this around."

After trying to get family and friends to reason with her husband, Carol approached her pastor who told her he did not do marriage counseling. She then tried a Christian counselor who offered her no plan to try to heal the marriage or work through her own grief. Carol felt utterly alone.

"Grieving all the losses was the most difficult," says Carol. "There is the personal loss of a spouse, the marriage, watching the children suffer, financial loss, and loss of relationships of family members and friends, as they were also hurt and negatively impacted. Lastly, there was an unforeseen loss I encountered within some Christian circles, as divorce disqualified me from certain areas of service. Divorce is a firestorm and the ripple effect goes on for years."

Enveloped describes Carol's journey in detail, holding nothing back from the raw emotions she felt during those tumultuous years. But it was during these years of heartache, she found herself in the most intimate relationship of her life.

"I chose to completely surrender my circumstances to God and to *really* trust Him," Carol explains. "I had given God my life to do whatever He wished early in my life, and despite navigating the challenges of divorce, I knew that His plan for me would not be thwarted. My relationship deepened greatly as I was totally dependent upon Him regarding every aspect of my life. I talked to Him about everything- just as a wife would with her husband. During that time, I derived all my security, significance and love from the Lord."

The matchbook that changed Carol's life led her to pursue and obtain her Ph.D in Clinical Christian Counseling where today her practice helps couples overcome marital betrayal by dealing with the anger and heartbreak, and learning to regain trust and communication. Carol has made it her life's work to help couples rebuild brand-new marriages through individual and couples coaching as well as Christian Couples Retreats. The woman who didn't have anyone to help her at her moment of crisis has become the support that so many desperate couples reach out to as things are unraveling in their marriages. The matchbook brought her full circle.

"While Enveloped is a heart-wrenching story," says Carol, "it is also filled with promise and a hope for the future that can only come when you're completely surrendered to the love God has for you. I wrote this book to show the possibilities of what a woman can accomplish when she allows God to enfold her in His loving arms. My book is not so much about me as it is the story behind it. The hero is God."

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Dr. Carol Erb **Coaching, Counseling and Mediation Credentials**

B.S. Degree in Recreation Therapy; East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
M.A. in Christian Counseling; Southeastern Seminary, Wake Forest, NC
Ph.D in Clinical Christian Counseling; Cornerstone University, Lake Charles, LA

Board Certified-Advanced Christian Life Coach; Professional Life Coaching Program; Light University, Forest, VA

Certified Divorce Coach; College for Divorce Coaching, Tampa, FL; Emerge Victorious Training Program, Charlotte, NC

Certified Family Mediator; Mediation Training Group, Boca Raton, FL

Advanced Certified in Marriage and Family Therapy; National Association of Christian Counselors, Sarasota, FL

Board Certified Christian Counselor; American Association of Christian Counselors, Forest, VA

Certified Temperament Counselor; National Association of Christian Counselors, Sarasota, FL

What people are saying about *Enveloped*

"*Enveloped* is a book of encouragement. We all have times when we feel alone and rejected. Carol's journey through pain and suffering and ultimately her growth in the Lord give us all hope to continue on through our journeys. This book encourages us to know that our true source of love, hope, and peace comes from our Heavenly Father. He will never leave or forsake us. He gives us His peace in the midst of our storms – He truly gives us beauty for ashes." – **Dr. Phyllis Arno, author, speaker, and co-founder of the National Christian Counselors Association**

"I was hooked from the opening sentence of *Enveloped* – and it just got better from there. This one woman's story is a story for all of us. God can heal all wounds, and Carol reminds us of this as we see her personally move from shock to heartbreak to wholeness and happiness. Please read this book. It is simply lovely." – **Casey Truffo, marriage and family therapist, author, and private practice coach**

"In *Enveloped*, Dr. Carol Erb provides a powerful combination of personal experience and professional wisdom. Carol lived it, so she gets it. She will help you get through your crisis and live the life God has planned for you." – **Dr. David Clarke, Christian psychologist, speaker, and author of *I Don't Love You Anymore***

"What can be worse than discovering your spouse has been unfaithful? It leaves you feeling alone, helpless, and hopeless. Proverbs 13:12 says, 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick.' That is a terrible place to be. Carol Erb's book, *Enveloped*, brings hope to those who are heartsick because of the pain of betrayal. This book is warm, heart wrenching, and enlightening. She tells how the betrayal of 'marital love' brought her to her 'True Love,' Jesus Christ. I highly recommend it to anyone who has gone through the despair of divorce." – **Tempe Brown, author, speaker, and Stonecroft Ministries-SC regional speaker/trainer**

"Carol Erb's *Enveloped* is a truly inspiring story that displays the strength that each of us has inside ourselves. I love that even through all the heartache and betrayal, Carol shows us it's possible to trust again and move forward to find love, joy, and fulfillment. She reminds us that there is a true love out there waiting for everyone, a never-ending love." – **Chelsea Berler, author and speaker**

"Dr. Carol Erb shares her journey from betrayed spouse to Christian counselor and marriage coach. *Enveloped* is a beautiful memoir sharing how God took one woman's experience of loss, death, and betrayal and created help, hope, and goodness. If you or your clients have experienced betrayal and are trying to find God's way through the pain, I'd highly recommend this book." – **Miranda Palmer, marriage and family therapist and private practice coach**

"*Enveloped* is the compelling story of a young wife and mother whose serene life was rocked by betrayal and abandonment. While the book is a must-read for women facing marital trauma or divorce, it is also a valuable read for men. I believe if some men who abandoned their wives and kids had read this riveting account of Carol's life before deciding to leave their families, they may have made different choices." – **Baxter Ennis, CEO, Ennis Media Group, (Lt. Colonel, United States Army-Retired)**

“How do you deal with rejection, tragedy, and deception, then venture into uncharted waters and come out a far better person at the end? Carol walks us through the hurdles then reveals the secret to having a peace and joy that transcends all understanding. Bravo, Girl, for bearing your heart and soul so that someone else needn’t travel that road alone.” – **Don Honeywell, President, Face to Faith Ministry**

“In *Enveloped*, Dr. Carol Erb draws from a deep well of personal heartache, experience, understanding, and insight. She shows all of us who have had our lives shattered and our hearts broken by disappointment and difficulties the way to find our path to a new normal and a hopeful future.” – **Sandra Dopf Lee, co-author of the series *The Next Steps after Divorce: Rebuilding Your Life after Divorce*.**

“*Enveloped* is a true story of our friend whom we watched walk through many disappointments, obstacles, and insurmountable challenges. Carol had every ‘right’ to bury herself in self-pity and bitterness, but instead she pursued God’s direction and will for her life. Her story inspires us to walk with a confident faith in our personal and sovereign God who ‘will never leave us nor forsake us.’” – **Winston and Jayne Hodges, Marriage Mentoring Ministry, Capital Community Church**

“Dr. Carol Erb has written a book from the heart that is sure to resonate with women who know the pain of their husbands’ infidelity. If you’re wondering what to do next in your journey of confusion, I recommend that you read *Enveloped*. You’re sure to be blessed. – **Rob Jackson, licensed professional counselor, writer, and national speaker**

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