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June 8, 2016

Dear Friends:

It isn't unusual for someone to verbally thank us after a counseling session, or even send an email or a note. It is extremely rare for someone to send a letter. So with that said, I wanted to pass this letter on to you in the hopes that it will bless you as much as it did me and Vic.

Margaret was referred to us by the Children's Pastor of one of our partnering churches. After many years in a troubled marriage, her husband succumbed to drugs and alcohol, left her in bankruptcy, and left her to raise two small boys. She went from being a stay-at-home mom in a nice neighborhood to being homeless. Trying to keep her boys in their school and church, she was barely surviving on minimum wage and living in a far less than desirable rental house. When that became unsustainable, she resigned to move back home to her parents during which she was diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer. She now has three of her five surgeries behind her and hopes to be able to return to work this fall. It has been mine and Vic's privilege to minister to this dear lady throughout this time.

The support we receive from our partnering churches, and individual supporters, is what makes it possible for us to minister to Margaret and to countless hurting people like her. Because of your support, many times Vic is able to help people not only through counseling, but with monetary support where food is needed or even gas money to get to their session, work or church. One day Margaret, along with the other hurting people, will be able to thank you personally. Your reward will be great in Heaven for the lives you have touched through Abiding Word Ministries. Until then, Margaret thanks you and we thank you more than words can say. May His every blessing be yours!

In His Service,

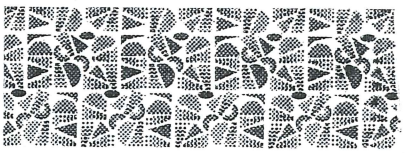
Carmen

Carmen Smith

Distinctively Biblical Counseling

May 24, 2016

Vic and Carmen Smith
c/o Abiding Word Ministries
P.O. Box 1563
Marietta, GA 30061



Dear Mr. Vic:

I just wanted to take a few minutes to say THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart for all the prayers, direction and encouragement you continue to provide me through your ministry.

Looking back, I can't believe I have been depending on your support since June of 2014. At the time, (as you know) I was going through a devastating divorce, after 18 years of marriage, discovering my husband was not only unfaithful but had relapsed as a recovering alcoholic and drug addict. We then lost our home to foreclosure and I was struggling to put food on the table. I was a total wreck! Going to an 8-6 job for the first time, moving into a rental house, burning the candle at both ends and all the while, trying to be a good mother; I reached out to [redacted] (at church one day),
Director of Children's ministries at [redacted] Church, inquiring about counseling and/or help for my boys, He gave me your number and suggested I get the biblical and emotional support I needed, which in turn, would help my boys. I was a bit skeptical because as a mama bear, I knew my cubs were hurting and it was my job to put them first.

Just as you continue to remind me of the flight attendant (perfect analogy bc I was a flight attendant) who tells parents in the safety demo, to put a mask on yourself FIRST and then assist your children, I found myself being comforted, strengthened and closer to Christ through your counseling, thus being an example of strength and support to my boys, I could of NEVER done without your ministry.

Time seemed to get away from me, my stressful job no longer allowing me to take long lunches and continue my appointments with you, and I found myself, 6 months later, struggling even MORE. My ex-husband had relapsed, yet again, during his custodial weekend. I modified my custody agreement, obtained full physical and legal custody and moved back to my hometown 60 miles away. My boys and I were yet again in crisis mode.

As if that weren't enough, the day before the movers arrived, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I found myself divorced with two children, living with my parents, no job, and fighting cancer. Boy, did God know how much I needed your support! I went on your website one day, as I'd planned to reach out to you and see if you could refer me to a biblically based ministry on this side of Atlanta. Upon pulling up the website, YOUR HOME CHURCH WAS 20 MIN AWAY!! I sat at my computer, watched every single video and testimony with tears rolling down my cheeks, knowing I was where God wanted me.

It took a few weeks before an appointment opened up, but through Mrs. Carmen's emails and reassurances that ya'll were praying for me, I still felt loved and ministered to, until I was able to see you in your office.

As you know, I am now cancer free 4 months cancer free, undergoing reconstruction and studying to gain back my teaching certification, in hopes of gaining employment and a home to rent soon. Although I am still struggling physically and emotionally, I am without a doubt eager to see where God leads me to serve his kingdom. My boys are finally thriving and happy and we all owe you and your ministry indescribable gratitude! For as you are so brilliant and amazing about bringing the bible to me through stories and references I can relate to, not only which I gain insight from, but also unexplainable peace..... The story of Joshua you shared comes to mind. When given first choice at the land for which to pick for his future, he did not pick the plush green pastures, obvious to thrive, but the rocky dusty mountains where the enemies fled. When everyone thought him crazy he reminded them that it would be here where he will see God work. I indeed have seen God work in indescribable ways through my situation.

Thank you Mr. Vic, Mrs. Carmen, and all those that make your ministry possible. Thank you, thank you for making me feel like a diamond in the rough, when all I felt like was a heartbroken shell. Thank you for encouraging me through your amazing knowledge of the bible, the graciousness of your time, the scriptures I cling so tightly too, my thirst for God's word and for helping me continue on my journey as a child of God, eager to see where He will lead me and my boys. This simple thank you can't begin to explain my gratitude for continuing to encourage me on this journey, but I hope and pray that it will benefit your ministry so that others can be empowered as well and through my pain and joy, you can be enabled to continue this beautiful ministry God has given you.

In His Name and Forever Grateful-

Margaret