EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

"Please, Please, Please at Least Get Healed First"

Jimmy Evans and Dr. John Andersen talk with Paul Salfen about Who Will Love Me Now? God's Embrace After Divorce, the 21-chapter workbook built from decades of counseling and their own hardest seasons, why divorce has no ritual, and the hope of being loved when everyone else walks away.

Interview by Paul Salfen · AMFM Magazine

Few subjects are as hard to talk about as divorce, and few leave people feeling as alone. Jimmy Evans, founder of XO Marriage, and Dr. John Andersen, a former hospice chaplain, pastor, and grief counselor, have written a workbook for exactly that season. *Who Will Love Me Now? God's Embrace After Divorce* arrives November 10, 2026, from XO Publishing. It is a 21-chapter, 8.5 by 11 inch paperback with more than 160 interactive elements, including guided journaling, self-assessments, biblical prayers, and a leader's guide for small groups.

Paul Salfen sat down with both authors over Zoom ahead of the release. The conversation moved from grief and fault to difficult ex-spouses, from a marriage that almost ended after three years to a pastor who admits he once thought divorce could never happen to him. It closed, at Salfen's request, in prayer.

A BOOK FOR THE WHOLE RANGE

Salfen opened by acknowledging the obvious. "I know divorce is never fun to talk about, but you got to talk about it, right?"

The answer started with the weight of it. "Well, divorce is devastating," came the reply. Fault, it was noted, is rarely tidy: "there's no one that's 100% innocent or 100% guilty."

Whatever the circumstances, the workbook is designed to walk a reader through all of it. "This is something that helps a person grieve through and work through the issues of forgiveness, grief, all those kinds of things," the authors explained. "And if a person goes through all 21 chapters, it helps them to process the full range of emotions, damage and issues that they need to."

THE MISTAKES BEHIND THE ANSWERS

For Andersen, the book is personal. "I was married for 27 years and this December will be 15 years since I divorced and 10 years since I remarried," he said. The first stretch after the divorce was difficult. "For five years, it was pretty rough. I'm not saying that every thing I did was healthy. I'm telling you it was not."

That honesty shaped the pages. "A lot of what's poured in this book are answers to mistakes that I made myself," he said. His advice to people just after a divorce is blunt: "everything you think you need to do is probably the thing you don't."

He also pointed to a chapter he believes sets the book apart. "I think this is the only divorce book I've ever run into that has a chapter on what if you are at fault," Andersen said. Most divorce books, in his view, treat the reader as the victim. This one makes room for something harder: it "helps you to address the pain that you brought upon yourself through this divorce."

NO CASSEROLES, NO FUNERAL

When Salfen asked why the project mattered so much, the answer came from 45 years of counseling. "I've been a marriage counselor for 45 years and I've seen a lot of divorced people," the speaker said. "It's devastating. It's not just painful. It's devastating."

Then came one of the conversation's most striking observations. "There's no ritual for divorce," he said. When someone dies, people "bring casseroles and you show up at the funeral home and send flowers." Divorce offers none of that. "A lot of times that divorce person becomes very isolated. They lose relationships. They may not feel comfortable at church any longer."

The motivation, he said, grows out of XO Marriage's commitment to marriage itself. "We believe in marriage. We fight for marriage." But many marriages do not survive, and he warned that people who skip the healing process tend to carry it forward. "They carry more baggage into every marriage. This gets rid of the baggage."

The goal is stated plainly to readers. "We don't know how many times you've been married, three, four, five. We just want this to be your last one."

HEALING BEFORE DATING

Salfen asked what the authors would say to someone who has "touched the stove" and would rather have a root canal than marry again. The book, they said, deliberately does not start there. "We're not going to tell you how to date," came the answer. "This is about getting healing first. That's book number two, if we ever decide to write it."

Instead, *Who Will Love Me Now?* deals with the aftermath, including a chapter on an ex-spouse who is difficult. Court orders, late child support, and ongoing conflict are all part of that reality.

The plea underneath it was emphatic. "Please, please, please at least get healed first," the author said. The reason is the person who comes next: "If you bring somebody in that relationship, you're not healed. You're going to victimize. They're going to become a victim of your divorce as well."

FIFTY-THREE YEARS AND A SECOND CHANCE

Evans speaks from a marriage that nearly did not last. "My wife and [I] almost divorced after three years of marriage. We had a terrible marriage. We've been married 53 years," he said. He takes the blame for those early years. "I was a terrible husband and I was 90% of the problem, honestly. And God miraculously saved our marriage."

The couple went on to host a marriage television show for 25 years, Evans said, and his conclusion is simple: "if we can succeed, anyone can succeed."

For people who have grown cynical, his first instruction is the same one that runs through the book. "Number one thing is you've got to get healed," Evans said. He frames the rest as a matter of faith: "Once you're healed and you marry a person who's healed, you have a 100% chance of success in marriage when you do it God's way." The cynicism, as he sees it, "comes from a person just being broken, wounded and disillusioned."

YOU DIDN'T GO THROUGH IT FOR NO REASON

Salfen asked what advice the authors would give people who want to help others in the same way. Andersen answered with his own story. "I would say you didn't go through this for no reason," he said. "God works all things together for good."

He believes testimony is the strongest witness a person can offer. "I never thought I would ever be in a healthy relationship again," Andersen said. He met his wife "at church in the most unexpected way," and they have now been married 10 years. "God can take what is a very broken situation and he can turn it out for good."

You do not need to be a professional to make a difference, he added. "You can tell people, look, this is what I've learned. Not only what I learned from the good things that I did, but from some of the bad things I did as well."

Evans pointed to the leader's guide in the back of the workbook. "You don't have to be an expert to help people," he said. A pastor or small group leader can lead someone through the entire book. Still, he drew a clear line: "people can be healed, but you're not responsible for their healing." The leader's role, he said, is "creating an environment where they feel open, they feel trust."

He offered himself as proof. "Five years after my wife and I almost divorced, I was marriage counselor. And so God can use anybody."

> *"God can take what is a very broken situation and he can turn it out for good." (Dr. John Andersen)*

THE REASON GREATER THAN THE STRESS

Salfen turned to mindset and asked what each man tells himself to stay on the right path. Evans shared a principle he returns to often. "You can only stay successfully married if the reason you're married is greater than the stress that you're under," he said.

In his view, the reasons people marry and divorce are often the same: "sex, money, and children." So he places God at the center. "I'm married for God. I'm not married for pleasure. I'm not married to get rich. I'm not married just to have children. I'm married to honor God and to glorify him," Evans said. "God in the center of our relationship is the glue that can hold any marriage together."

IF ANYBODY'S GOING TO MAKE AN A

The second answer reached back to a mother's advice before every new class. "If anybody's going to make an A in this class, you make one." The same goes for marriage, he said: "If anybody's going to succeed, you be the one to succeed."

That led directly to the book's title. "The only way that you can do that is knowing who will love me now," he said. "God's going to love you when everybody else may abandon you, but he will not do that."

Andersen also spoke about divorced people in ministry, people he believes churches sometimes overlook. "A lot of those people who have been divorced and been through those deep moments, deep, dark moments are the most effective ministers because they've been through."

He was candid about who he was before his own divorce. "I was probably downright cocky about being married and having been married so long and it's never going to happen to me," he said. "And then it did. And I learned from that experience, you know, that pride comes before a fall."

A PRAYER TO CLOSE

As the conversation wrapped, Salfen asked something he said he usually does not: could one of them lead in prayer? The answer was immediate. "Absolutely."

"Lord, we just pray for people who have been through divorce or they're going through a divorce right now and they just feel the grief, the shock, the anger, the disappointment, everything," the prayer began. It closed with a request that God "help them to work through the hard places, the broken places and give them hope, Lord, as only you can give."

For a book that asks *Who Will Love Me Now?*, it was a fitting answer.

FIND *WHO WILL LOVE ME NOW?*

Book: *Who Will Love Me Now? God's Embrace After Divorce: A Workbook for Healing and Recovery*

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Interview conducted by Paul Salfen for AMFM Magazine.

Paul Salfen is Managing Editor of AMFM Magazine and a veteran interviewer of film, television, music, and sports figures. He is the author of Going For It!, a collection of Hail Mary moments from the artists and athletes he has spent two decades putting on the record.