



Episode 9: Camille's Story: The Pursuit of the Truth

Craig: So, if you've listened to our podcasts for a while, you know we like to tell the stories of our clients and those who have worked with us through the process of divorce and those who worked towards the process of reconciliation. We also have talked to different times of professionals; we have had counselors on the show and today we are privileged to have someone who is both. Camille Eiland is a former client and she is also a therapist at Lifeworks Counseling that has offices around Mississippi and so, Camille, thank you so much for being with us today!

Camille: Thank y'all for having me! I am happy to be here.

Matt: Camille, we came to meet you in a different way than when we normally meet most counselors. We met you through the actual divorce process. Can you tell our listeners a little bit about what happened?

Camille: Sure, so I guess I first met Craig in 2012. I was about 2 years into my marriage and had found out my husband was addicted to pornography. He just came out one day and confessed that to me and it pretty much shattered my world as a very young wife. We did not have any children at the time, but I really wanted to save our marriage and wanted us to work. We went through a season where I thought maybe it could, but it did not. He moved out and I went through the process of filing and we were separated a good long time. We wound up coming back around after 6 months of separation and decided to work things out. At that point we began a lot of counseling and did a few years of that, couples counseling and individual counseling. I say maybe about 3 years of that. I thought our marriage was in a pretty good place and pretty restored and then I had, you may say, a second discovery and this time it was affairs.

Craig: So, Camille, what I heard you say was, you guys were newly married. There was a discovery and during that discovery you decided you were going to start walking through the process of divorce, but before the process really got off the ground, you started to do some work. You started to do therapy. Let me ask you this because I don't think I know the answer to this question, when you first got married was it your plan to be a counselor or it the interaction of the therapy process as it related to your marriage that led you to do what you do now?

Camille: It actually was my plan probably since 15 or 16. It was always what I wanted to do. I loved relationships, family dynamics, and so I had always wanted planned on it. I got my undergrad in communications and psychology and then planned to go to grad school.

Craig: So, you said there was a second discovery, what happened?

Camille: So, the second discovery was, I discovered dating apps through iCloud. It kind of popped up on my computer. I had my phone plugged in. It was trying to put some apps on my phone and when I confronted my husband about that he said they were his. From there I began to do my own digging and he told me there were no physical affairs that had come from that but when I started going through cell phone records, I found that was otherwise.

Matt: I just want to be clear, you guys originally filled for divorce, you hadn't been married for a while, and you dismissed that case?

Camille: Right.

Matt: You guys reconciled and were working through things and then several years later filed again after the second discovery?

Camille: Right. 5 years.

Craig: Camille, talk a little bit about, if you didn't say this word you alluded to it, you had a little bit of an intuition. I live with three girls. I love them dearly and that is one of my growth areas. I am learning to trust intuition of the women in my life. But, my clients often times don't always trust their intuition. Speak about the intuition you had in that moment that led you to that second discovery.

Camille: Right well we weren't in a great place in our marriage by this time we had had a child. My daughter was 8 months old when I discovered the apps and began following the affairs. Things weren't great between us. He would sleep on the couch a lot and he would tell me he just was not attracted to me and that he didn't think he loved me anymore, but he did not seem to want to pursue divorce. But I didn't think sexual acting out was on the table. I knew something was off. I thought it was more depression and anxiety than a reopening of all of that.

Craig: We talk to our clients all the time when they come to see us in an initial consultation, and you have kind of talked about it a little bit. When a person come to see us, we try to arm them with information. Camille, you talked about restorative process that you and your ex-husband went through during that season between the first discovery and what you talked about being the second discovery, what was that restorative process?

Camille: Yeah so, when we were separated even when I thought things were not going to work out, I was going to weekly counseling. That was very vital to me to keep my sanity. I had discovered I think one month graduating college, so I had my first 40-hour a week job and was reeling with all of that going on in my life. So, I was a part of weekly counseling and then I got plugged into a community with women who have experience sexual betrayal which also met weekly and those were my two lifelines. Being with people that really understood because my family didn't and couldn't always comfort me in the best ways or give me the best advice. It was kind of overwhelming, but this community and this group really understood. I was doing it on my own but when we did get back together, we engaged in that together. We did individual counseling and a lot of marital counseling and then he too was going to a men's group of sexual brokenness.

Craig: Now Camille, I know you are a woman of faith. How did your faith impact the problems that you were facing in your marriage?

Camille: It was very confusing for me because I was trying to everything I possibly could and always trying to do the right thing and move forward with integrity and life had dealt me a very heavy blow. I think I felt a lot of shame over well who I had picked and red flags that I had ignored while dating and thought that things would kind of just work themselves out and we would grow up together and things would be okay and they weren't. So, I really struggled with my faith. I would love to say that that made my faith much stronger, but the truth is that in that season I struggled a lot of where God was in my life and why he was allowing me to go through it.

Matt: So, you've had your second discovery and you made the difficult decision to file for divorce again, I know that in your case, generally speaking we hope that people are able to move through a divorce quickly. If a divorce has to happen, we hope that it can get started and everyone can come to the table and reach a resolution, unfortunately that was not able to happen in your case. How long did the divorce process take from when you filed through ultimately a full-scale trial?

Camille: So, I filed in the summer of 2017 and my final trial was August of 2019 and then my final hearing was the following month. So, October of 2019 it was final.

Matt: Wow

Craig: Yeah that's on the longer end, as we have talked about obviously through the process, sometimes we tell people that the fastest timeline for divorce would be around 60 days but sometimes it can stretch out as long as a year and sometimes it can stretch out even longer like it did in your case.

Camille: Yeah, 2 ½

Craig: So, talk about, you were a very proactive client. You did a lot of things to help yourself. What did you do and what advice would you give to a woman who might be in the same situation that you were in?

Camille: Yeah, I definitely helped myself in those ways. A – because it saved me money to do my own research and a lot of my own digging, but it was just good for me to bring me into clarity and reality of what I was dealing with. It helped me kind of face the truth to go through phone records and bank records and uncover what was really going on. It helped keep me in reality for lack of a better word, but I always did that with people around me because it was very sad and traumatic and just so much trauma of it all so I'd often have a friend with me to go through records or record my conversations with different people on the phone. Having that support was so key for me that I wasn't sitting at home alone in a dark room sliding into more and more grief.

Craig: A lot of our guests use the word trauma. How do you describe trauma?

Camille: Well I define trauma as a level of stress, whether that's brought on by an incident or event, that is beyond your ability to cope well and handle well. It's kind of overtakes your body and your emotions.

Matt: There are people out there that are listening right now that are either going through the process that you just finished or are getting ready to embark on that process. What advice would you give to people and the best way to handle that divorce process?

Camille: Well divorce is awful no matter how short or how long it is. It is a ripping apart from a family you never intended to separate. So, I would say to get informed. To really arm yourself with information

even if that scares you, even if that's stuff you don't want to know, to try to face your fear in that sense and to not go at it alone. I would really encourage someone who was talking to me about it to not do it alone, to lean on your friends and to lean on your community, to get counseling, most of us need it in a season like that.

Craig: Camille, you brought up a good point and you talked about being very proactive in information gathering. Often times we see clients or potential clients who are in denial. They stick their head in the sand for lack of a better word. What advice would you give to people who are in that place.

Camille: They are likely in a place of survival and not wanting what they think could be happening could possibly be true. I would advise them that they need to face that. Whatever that is, to come into the light and it is often times easier to do that with someone. So whatever that case is, in my case it was infidelity, if that's calling that phone number or if you saw that app or that pop up or whatever it is, pursuing that and confronting that instead of sweeping it under the rug, you are really only prolonging your hurt by not facing it.

Craig: You're talking about pursuing the truth. I've heard the analogy of, if you could imagine yourself in the basement and in the basement there is all of this junk and clutter, but the lights are off and all you have is a flashlight so you see what is right in front of you but sometimes what happens to a person right before they come to see us, the lights get turned on and at that point they see the broken bottles and skeletons and the wreckage of what their life is where they were just trying to navigate with a little flashlight. Camille, you were one of the unfortunate clients who actually has to have a full-blown trial for there to be closure and resolution in your case. What did you do to prepare yourself emotionally leading up to the trial?

Camille: Well kind of, to speak to what I have I stay in counseling even now so that kind of keeps my head clear and keeps me in check...

Craig: So, you mean counselors need counselors too?

Camille: Yes! I am a huge believer. You need to know what it's like on the other side of the chair.

Craig: Certainly, the person you want to work with, you want them to have done their own work too.

Camille: A popular slogan in counseling is "You can't take a client further than you've been yourself" so what you haven't worked out in your own life, what blind spots you have, you are not going to be able to take your client there. So, to the degree I know myself is the degree I can help others know themselves. So, staying in my own therapy is important to me. Staying connected to that same group of women, and just the nature of my job is to sit with other people and their stories and inadvertently that helps give perspective to mine and kind of promotes my own healing in my own kind of ways.

Matt: What was the scariest thing for you going into the trial?

Camille: That I may not get the outcome I wanted. That was the scariest.

Matt: Do you have any advice to give to people on how to deal with those natural fears? Because trial is a scary thing for anybody.

Camille: Trial is very intimidating. For me, maybe because it was so long, I felt very ready. I had all the information a person could need. I felt like I had all my ducks in a row. To me the more knowledge you

have the more prepared you are and the less fear I had. I had a lot of adrenaline going into trial and I guess my fear was the ultimate decision was completely out of my hands and was up to a man that I did not know and had never met, knew nothing about my life until the day I walked into the room and just releasing the outcome of the most precious person in the world to me to a stranger was just very scary so that is why I wanted to be armed with every possible information that I could be.

Matt: Well I know that you were about as involved in your own case as just about any other client that we've ever had. That was great. I think that that probably litigated some of the fears that you would have had because you were so plugged into your own case and to all of the different facets about it that you really were ready and often times I worry that other clients don't feel that way.

Camille: Yeah, I tried to use my nervousness and anxiety and lack of control and funnel that towards information gathering and preparation instead of fear and shrinking back. For me it was very counterphobic if you will.

Matt: I'm certain that there were times through the case that you were hearing advice through our office that maybe you didn't want to hear; how did you deal with stuff like that?

Camille: The hardest I think for me was my case continuing to drag due to factors with the military and it got postponed for over a year at one point when we had a final hearing date set in early 2018 and it got pushed a year and a half back to 2019. That was extremely discouraging to me. I definitely went through a few months of just crying very often and a hopeless feeling of this is never going to end. This grief is going to swallow me up. I didn't. I came out of it, thank God, time passes as it does but that was an extremely hard time where I didn't see an end in sight and neither of us were giving in on our side.

Craig: A lot of situations can be resolved but when two people have very different ideas about what is best for their child, what is healthy for their child, it is common that we end up in a court room setting. I tell people all the time that a real custody dispute doesn't settle. And unfortunately, in your case, you had a real custody dispute because what you believed was best for your child was very different from what your now ex-spouse believed.

Camille: That made it very hard because I mean we both had our heels stuck in. We tried settling several times, but it didn't happen.

Matt: So, dealing with the setbacks and delays and natural bumps in the road that happens with prolonged litigation, how important was it to really trust the people that were giving you advice?

Camille: Vital. It helped give me sanity in an otherwise very crazy making process. Divorce is very traumatic. In my case it was so to have people that I very much trusted that were clear and sound with me, very direct with me was very helpful for me to kind of sink my teeth into and keep me in reality of this may not go how you want but here is what is in your control right now which often wasn't much.

Craig: I tell people there are certain things we can control. We can control how effectively we communicate with our client. We can control how transparent, how aggressive we are, how much hustle we put in a case, but there are certain things we can never control. We can't control your ex-spouse or your soon to be ex-spouse, or the judge or the judge's calendar, or counsel opposite or counsel opposites calendar and so we control the controllable and we trust the process as best we can. Was that your experience?

Camille: Right, definitely because all of those factors are out of our control and again for me, what was in my control was my emotional health, my ability to go to my job and function every day, and be a great mother, and stay present with myself and gather information and just be prepared for when the day came.

Craig: People ask me all the time, “Craig, how do you do what you do?” “Matt, how do you do what you do? How do you work in marital disfunction and not be a crazy person or be in a straight jacket?” and I tell them, it gives me perspective it makes me grateful. I often times learn vicariously through the mistakes of my clients. I have represented people for 20 years now and people have done a lot of stupid things over the course of that 20 years. I didn’t have to do those stupid things to learn the lessons and see the ramifications, so I have the same question for you Camille, you went through traumatic long, drawn out, expensive divorce, and how do you sit with people who are on the same journey?

Camille: Yeah, it has so deepened my empathy for others and can connect with people pain and trauma in ways that you really can’t from reading about it or reading a textbook and you know, knowing how to do something is so different than having lived it yourself and so walking with people, whether that is sexual betrayal or abuse or all the various traumas, transitions of life, my ability to empathize is so great and so heartfelt that I in fact prefer a client who has a more heavy emotional burden than just merely a more, easy few session type fix.

Craig: You can’t talk about divorce without talking about grief and when there is a death, there is finality, but I think with a marriage, there is always the hope of restoration. Always the hope that, not necessarily that things could be restored to the way they were, but that things can be restored to the way you hope they would be. In grief, there are seasons of grief, there is denial, there is anger, there is bargaining, and people in the process of divorce are usually at different places, in other words, my spouse might be really angry, but I am very depressed. These emotions they cycle has time goes on.

Matt: So, did you experience those things that Craig was just talking about? Depression, denial, anger?

Camille: Yes, absolutely. Specifically, to the depression piece. That one was hard for me and it may be because my drug out for so long, but you finally make that decision and for me, divorce was my only option, that there was no hope of us getting back together. It was not a desire of both parties. So, I was at home with this 8-month-old and the months would pass and it was just me and her. Sleep regression was happening or, I mean I was watching her crawl for the first time by myself, learning to walk for the first time by myself, I was experiencing all of that alone and that was such a lonely season in my life and so much sadness. So, one who is going through that and feels so isolated and alone, I would again just speak to, it is so necessary to connect with someone who has gone through that whether that is someone in your church, or small group, or counseling, group therapy, a lot of churches offer grief groups, I could not have done it without support. I can remember many nights of probably when she was around one, I just couldn’t get her to sleep at night. She would cry and we would try so many things. I could only get her to sleep in the car and I mean I would be in my robe and slippers at midnight and riding her around in our neighborhood and bringing her back in and setting her down and crying myself to sleep like why am I going through all of this alone. I wanted this marriage I wanted more than anything for this to work and I’m doing all this alone. It was a very, just that feeling can just come in and swallow you up if you let it.

Craig: What I heard you say was, that was so well said, what I heard you say was though in the beginning of that, you sought community. You sought a vehicle for processing your emotions through your own work and your own therapy and you made a me problem a we solution in the community that you surrounded yourself with.

Camille: Right. I probably have been truly clinically depressed. I had to get up everyday and make a conscious choice to , that's what it took for me to take care of her and be the mother I wanted to be. I had to make myself go to work everyday, connect with someone, let them know where I was at. The anger stage of grief lasted a long time for me too. I would punch my pillow a lot and just practical things like scream in my car when I was alone on y lunch break, ride around crying to music. You have to let yourself feel that and process it. I mean there are so many other demands through a divorce and you become a single parent and in my case I had to get all of that angst and energy in my body out through a healthy means and not just go internal and truly manifest depression and not get out of the bed or go external and rage at everyone and push people away in my life. So, I had to get all of that out.

Craig: Yeah, we heard on of our previous guest talk about that and she's a therapist and she talked about having a box. You put all the emotion and all of the things that you go through during the course of the day or the week or a month or a lifetime and you've got to empty that box to stay healthy and to stay whole.

Camille: Absolutely.

Matt: I know one of the worse things about grief whether its with a divorce or with death or anything, most people around you, grief makes them uncomfortable. They just want it to go away and people often think grief ends when the divorce ends. That's not true is it?

Camille: No, not at all. Grief has not ended for me. I certainly don't cry weekly anymore. There is a lingering sadness and the final piece in the grief cycle is acceptance, and that can take years to get to. I feel like in some ways I've come to acceptance but in other ways it's very hard to accept a reality that you never wanted, asked for, and feel you didn't contribute to. It's a long road and you are right, grief makes people very uncomfortable and kind of a plug for why going to your family or people very close to you who want you to cheer up, but its not a "cheer up lets have a girls night, ill feel better". This is my new normal and my new normal, I am really struggling to adjust to and that may take somebody out of the box to really step into and walk with you with. Its not a quick fix it's not a easy emotion shift.

Matt: So, what would you say to somebody who maybe has a close loved one who is going through a divorce What are ways that they can help them?

Camille: Yeah, I would say accept the person you love right where they are at. So, if that is sitting on the couch with them and just not really offering advise and not trying to fix. Not trying to give them a simple shift out of that, but more of just a "what you are going through is awful and I am absolutely here for you every step of the way, whatever that looks like, I am not trying to fix this or change this for you because this is your new normal and it sucks."

Matt: Camille, we've talked about a lot of heavy stuff dealing with grief and the darker side of it all, but I want people to know there is a light at the end of the tunnel there?

Camille: Right. Right. Absolutely. I really love my new normal. My life with my now three and a half year old is now wonderful and great. It's not perfect and it's not a beautiful box with a big bow and sunshine and rainbows but of course I am out of the chaos that I was so used to living in and really adjusted my life to and I am very calm. Still waters run deep and I have my own sense of what I want my life to be. Where it's heading in and I love, there is so much hope in my future that I am heading in. It's not all right before my eyes and perfect, it's heading in a really great direction and I'm very happy with the direction it's heading in.

Matt: So what I am hearing is, there is hope at the end. Things do get better. It's not perfect but you can do this and you can get through it.

Camille: Right, absolutely. Getting out of the hurt and the pain, a huge step of that is getting the divorce off of you, off of your back, just stress and pressure. Getting off of me was a huge pressure lifted and I feel much lighter now and ready for my future instead of just staying in the past and ruminating and marinating on the heaviness. Now it's, okay, what does the future look like. It's a perspective shift for me.

Craig: Camille, you are now on the backside of the divorce process and although you didn't have a perfect outcome, you did have a resolution and you are moving forward now, let's shift our focus a little bit and talk about your practice. Talk about how you help people.

Camille: Okay, yeah I absolutely am so glad all of that is behind me and hopefully have propelled me to being an even better therapist.

Craig: What type of clients do you typically see Camille?

Camille: So, about half of my case load is kids or teens and the other half is young adult women, married couples and I do see a lot of women who have been betrayed in their marriage which is such a prevalent thing now and with LifeWorks and Roan and Eva Hunter being there, being certified sex addiction therapist, that is a branding part of LifeWorks. We have a lot of clients like that which my unique story being that way too, gives a unique perspective to offer people who are going through that.

Craig: Camille, we are out of time for this episode but thank you. Thank you for your vulnerability. Thank you for sharing your journey. Thank you for talking about the emotional journey, the emotional component of what you have been through and how can a person, if they have connected with you and your story and feels like they can use your help, how can they find you?

Camille: Yeah so they can go to our website which is lifeworksms.com or they can call our number which is 601-790-0583 and call to set up an appointment or you can request an appointment online.

Matt: Do you have any information about the women's support groups you worked with?

Camille: Yeah so we actually just started last week. Monday nights at 6:15 at LifeWorks. We have kind of kicked off a new workbook and we've got groups for newcomers of sexual betrayal or if you are a year or two and beyond and just a codependency general group and I also do a lunch group, therapy group every Thursday for just general codependency.

Matt: Thank you so much for being here today and for everything you do for our community. I know that you have a really bright future ahead of you.

Camille: Thank you! I'm glad to be here. Thanks!