



Episode 16 - Ginger's Story: When the Music Stops

Matt: Welcome to season two of the Robertson and Eastern link podcast. I'm Matt Easterling

Craig: and I'm Craig Robertson, Matt and I are board certified family law attorneys with decades of combined experience serving Mississippians all across our fine state.

Matt: In 2019, we began wondering if the struggles our firm deals with on a daily basis could be used to help the general public from their Robertson Easterling podcast was born.

Craig: During season one, we had open and honest discussions with everyday people about their individual relationship journeys, some ending in heartbreak and others in redemption, but all with powerful stories to tell.

Matt: and season two, you will hear more of the same real life stories from other marriage and divorce survivors, which are sure to touch your heart.

Craig: So now relax and enjoy today's episode. What you're about to hear is going to help.

Craig: well guys, welcome back to another episode of our podcast. No, I was joking with Tucker, our producer as to whether or not this is a show and you know, we've recorded a lot of it now. So maybe it's a show, but anyway, thanks for being here with us today. And I'm excited. Matt was unfortunately unable to join us because he's somebody who's got to do legal work while we're doing the fun stuff of a podcast. But Dr. Kristin Jones of cornerstone counseling has joined us again. If you're not familiar with cornerstone counseling, please get online and check them out. But Kristin, thanks for being here with us today.

Kristen: Well, thanks for having me back. I'm excited to be here

Craig: Today. I'm really honored that my good friend and former client ginger has decided to join us today. So ginger really honestly, thank you for being here.

Ginger: I appreciate the opportunity. Thanks for having me.

Craig: Yeah. Ginger, let's just jump right in. I just said former client and everybody listening to my voice knows that means there probably was some family disruption. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Ginger: I sure can. You know, I know a lot of people face divorce and that same reality was one that I had to face about five years ago. I was in a marriage for a couple of years. Initially, you know, I was at

the age for a female in Mississippi. I thought I need to get married. I've got to find my connection. My partner and I met someone that I felt like at the time was likeminded and we were equally yoked and we were both focused on our career and had drive and ambition. So it seemed like the right fit we dated for a short period of time, around six months. And then we were engaged for about the same amount of time after marriage. We, we really never intertwined our lives and mesh the two together. We just continued to live independent, separate lives almost. That included our friends, our work life. We slept in the same bed when we came home at night, but otherwise lived separately. And really what that did, Craig was it just created an opportunity for sin to creep in to our relationship. And that was the beginning of the end for us.

Craig: Ginger, you said something that really resonated with me and Kristin, maybe you'll comment on this. I had a client say to me just last week that you know, this Mississippi girl, she was at school and the guy she was standing next to is who was there when the music stopped as the, our life is this game of musical chairs. And it was really one of the saddest things. I think I've heard in a long time where it wasn't really this amazing connection. It was the guy that she was with when college was over. And it seemed like the time to get married.

Kristen: How much of it was social pressure or were there any other feelings involved for you in your decision?

Ginger: Yeah. To, to marry him. Yes. It was a very thoughtful decision on my part, but unfortunately, um, and society, there are pressures placed on women, especially, um, that there's this, you know, there's a time clock, that's ticking and there's a period of time that you have to get married. And if you're not going to get married during that period of time, well, you're going to be old and alone and you're not going to be able to have children. And so, for me, that, wasn't what I wanted my reality to be. And I met this man who, like I said, previously at the time we seem to be likeminded, we had a similar upbringing. And so, we both came from homes where our parents remained together and they still do to this day, both had Christian upbringings and we both finished college and had a career. So there were so many things that aligned for me when I'm checking the boxes of who I wanted my spouse to be. He checked those boxes and so much changes when, when you get behind closed doors and when you're thrown into daily life. And so, yeah, I think Kristin, for me, it was the combination of the two, of course there were feelings involved and I loved him and I wanted to be married to this man that I hand selected as my husband. But then there were also the social pressures placed on us from society that, that makes you feel like that's the next step in your life. You have to find someone and get married and settle down. That's where I found myself.

Craig: And, you know, that's really insightful because I think that a lot of Mississippi women feel that way, that all right, there is this window of time between the ages of 22 and 30, where I've got to find a husband. And if I want a family, that's that eight year, window of time. And obviously lots of women are going to graduate school and pursuing doctorate degrees like our cohost did. And you know, that kind of extends the time clock for that education. And then that window gets even shorter. So you said that, you know, sin crept into your marriage and the specifics aren't really that important because they're all different in every household. But once that became your reality, what was your path forward?

Ginger: Oh my goodness. I was scared to death. I didn't know which direction to turn. Like many others, I wanted to fix my marriage. You know, I had always been a really, um, self-sufficient independent take control type personality, and this is another situation that I wanted to repair and to fix. And so I made attempts at that through counseling, through seeking advice from family members and friends and ministers. I was really fearful of what my future would look like, because at that point I did have a child, we had a child together and the fear was not only for me and what my future would look like, but also how it would impact her longterm.

Kristen: Can you talk through some of your fears and for your child? What were some of your fears?

Ginger: Well, at the time I was in Iran with a circle of friends that were all what seemed to be happily married. And so I would be the end of one out of that group whose marriage resulted in divorce. And for my child, I didn't want the stigma placed on her, of being a child from a broken home. And, you know, I always described myself as feeling like I had the Scarlet letter placed on me post divorce, and that people just saw that Scarlet letter and immediately had these preconceived ideas of what did she do wrong? Why did their marriage fail? And I was fearful that that same stigma and Scarlet letter would be placed on my child. I did not want her to feel singled out or feel different than any other child in her Sunday school class or her preschool class at the time, or even now as we fast forward in her fourth grade class. So that was really what was top of mind for me all the time throughout this entire process.

Craig: Ginger, do you think that that fear delayed your decision to move forward with the divorce?

Ginger: I think it partly did. Yes. That, and then coupled that with the, of not knowing what the next step should be for me, what I should do next, it was very clear to my ex husband and myself that we had a very broken marriage that had reached the point of no return, unfortunately, and there was so much hurt there. We couldn't recover from it. And so, we both knew that that was our reality and that divorce was eminent. I just didn't know how to approach the process

Craig: And Ginger, you're a successful woman. And I find that with other career driven professional women, they're very successful. They're good at a lot of things I try and they're, you know, if there's a test, they study for it. If there's a job interview, they prepare for it. If there's an assignment at work, they fulfill it and you fall into that category, but you found yourself in a relational dynamic that was beyond repair.

Ginger: course. Yeah. And, and again, you know, I was fearful of what society would think and the social optics of the situation. I didn't want to be a disappointment to my family. I didn't want to disappoint my friends. I mean, there were a whole series of thoughts that go into play and gosh, what would all these people think that attended my wedding? You know, what are they going to think now, two and a half years later. I'm getting divorced and there were so many things that played into that decision. But yes, you're right. I mean, I wanted to go into the decision with my eyes wide open. I wanted to be fully informed the way I did that was through research. I mean, Google was my friend at the time. So, I read a lot online about divorce in Mississippi. Cause I know sometimes the laws are different based on the state that you live in. I also have a lot of friends who are in the legal world and so I sought their counsel and their advice as well, which is how I found you.

Craig: And I'm so glad that you did. I do want to comment on something that you said, because what I heard you say was, these are my words, not yours, he's the guy who was next to when the music stopped. And so there was social pressure to marry, but then you're only married two or three years in, it's not working, it's broken, but then there's social pressure to stay.

Ginger: That's true. Yeah. The way you just articulated, it makes so much sense. Now after the fact, it, I understand what was happening. In the moment, there was so much anxiety and sadness, overwhelming sadness in the moment and having to make that decision.

Kristen: How did you get to a place where the stigma of being divorced or maybe having your child labeled, how did you get to a place where leaving this marriage is going to be a better place for me and my child?

Ginger: Great question, Kristin, you know, at one point I remember just thinking to myself, you have to have the courage and you have to be brave and you can do this, look at all the things that you've done over the course of your life. And I had a final conversation with my ex husband. And I remember all the specifics and in that conversation, he and I talked about what the next steps would be and how this would impact not only us, but how it would also impact our child. And, and we agreed that night during that conversation, that I would be the one to take the next step and I just found this inner strength. Maybe it was because, I was a mama too. And I knew that long term, this broken relationship and this turmoil was not what I wanted my child to experience. And so I had to make a very difficult decision for all three, three of us.

Kristen: In that decision, did you and your husband talk about what we're going to say to our child or how we're gonna approach this with her?

Ginger: For us and our situation, our child was younger. And so she was around three years old when we went through a divorce and for her now as a nine year old, she doesn't even remember her life pre divorce of her parents. So the only life she's known is coming from a home where her parents lived separately. Sure we had that conversation. Her dad and I had that conversation. His main concern was that I would keep his child from him. And that maybe, I would taint her perception of her dad, which I knew and he, and he knew ultimately that that's not who I am at my core and that I would never want that I know how important it is for my child to have a healthy relationship with her dad. And I think just through reassuring him, as strange as that might sound, he became comfortable with that.

Kristen: What was that like for you emotionally to walk through all this hurt with your now ex husband, and then also have to encourage this relationship for your child's best interest with him?

Ginger: Extremely difficult. And, and it was a challenge because again, we had failed miserably at our marriage, but one thing I knew we had to do was ultimately check our egos at the door and put our child's best interests at heart and make that the focus of every decision we made moving forward. And I was scared and lonely and confused and anxious. I mean, every adjective you can come up with to describe a scared feeling and the process of going through divorce, I felt it. And, I recall even one moment, I just tried to be really strong for my family and my friends and my ex husband and my child and myself all the while maintaining like my life, which included a career and, and finding that balance, that was extremely difficult. And I recall Craig, if I can share this at one point, cause I don't imagine this is unlike a lot of your other clients, but at one point I was short of breath. I mean, I was having the

system at response physically to the divorce and all the anxiety associated with it had shortness of breath and chest pain and I couldn't eat and I couldn't sleep. And I work in an industry where I interface with physicians every day. And I had one that I remember calling and saying, I need to come see you. And he said, what's going on? And I said, don't panic. When I share my symptoms with you, because you're going to want to send me to the emergency room. I'm not having a heart attack, I'm having a panic attack. And ultimately I went and saw him. And it was just that. But, you know, I think I was just a found the strength and a lot of it was because of my faith and my spiritual life and the support of my, my family and my very close friends that I was able to, um, navigate through the whole process.

Craig: I'm interested in something you said, because it sounds like notwithstanding the difficulty of the process that although you had not done marriage very well, you were hoping to do divorce well,

Ginger: Right. It's almost an oxymoron. Yes. I, you know, I think it's a survivor mode, Craig, almost where you find yourself on the other side of divorce and if you're doing it correctly, at least, you know, for me, my focus was on my child and how we can make this, the healthiest divorce and healthiest post divorce situation for my child ultimately, but also for myself and my ex husband.

Craig: It's interesting. You talked about relying on your religion and you know, I've heard religion talked about as a reconnection where we reconnect to that thing that is bigger than us because we each live this little small story, but there's this bigger cosmic story that is ever unfolding. And we're just one tiny little piece of that. And it sounds like that this moment that you, you are seeking that higher power to borrow a term from addiction recovery.

Ginger: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, as I mentioned before, my childhood, I was raised by Christian parents and in a Christian family and I did have that strong foundation. And so I found myself at this time in my life, really leaning on that and finding peace within that. And you know, at one point, Craig, I wanted to use my story as hurtful as it had been for me, I really hoped to use my story as a testimony to help either people, pour themselves into their marriage and try to create a new marriage, a new relationship with one another or help encourage them and, and just give them courage to take the next step. If that was the right decision for them towards divorce.

Craig: And you did ultimately take the next step toward divorce. Let's talk through that. Just the process in general for you.

Ginger: Sure. Well, again, it was very scary. I mean, I don't know anyone who could face this and not feel intimidated by the process and anxious about the steps. So I knew it would be more complicated for us because we had a child and that made me extremely nervous. I mentioned it before that I have a lot of friends in the legal business in the area. And so they gave your name to me as a recommendation for a divorce attorney. Again, I read online, I ask a lot of questions of other people, and then I remember making that first phone call to schedule my initial appointment with you. I was scared to death, but it was a good feeling knowing that I was at least taking the next step. And then if you fast forward to my first meeting with the live meeting, you, I remember sitting across the table from you. I was alone and literally trembling having to share my story. And some of the details with you and you were so professional and you helped guide me the whole time and allowed me to be open and share things, but

it was a very scary moment for me and you welcomed me and I remember all say, I think this is really important. The lady that was at the front desk when I walked through the door, welcomed me with a smile and was very warm and embraced me. And that also gave me comfort in a situation where I was very uncomfortable.

Craig: And there's a lot of shame, you know, especially people from a religious background, you know, well, if you just have enough faith, then everything's going to be okay, you've just got to trust God enough and everything's going to be okay. But sometimes you have to have enough faith and enough trust to take that step forward into something scary and something new.

Ginger: Right. It was very scary and I did have to be brave. And hopefully Kristen, I was practicing those breathing techniques that you mentioned in your podcast, but once I arrived and once I was able to engage with you and have the conversation and walk through what the process might look like, uh, became more comfortable with, um, the entire situation. And I knew that you were the attorney that I wanted to represent me because I did have that level of comfort with you.

Craig: So you all through the process of divorce and just give an overview of what that was like from start to finish.

Ginger: Yeah. So my situation may be a little bit different because you and I met and, and you described to me what, you know, you sort of held my hand if you will, through each step of the process. And, you know, there was a lot of gathering of information regarding financials and regarding our careers on both sides and purchases that we had made together. I mean, it was very, it could be very overwhelming for someone. And I remember having to have those conversations with my ex husband and presenting information to him and then asking for him to supply details around financials, more so than anything else, but he didn't get an attorney. And so for me, you and I took the time to really map out what my divorce would look like. And some of the specific language that I wanted included and incorporated into my divorce. And then we served those to him and he had some time to review, make some requests or modifications which were very few. And, mostly, you know, our focus again was on the custody portion of our divorce,

Craig: Right. And that becomes really challenging, especially when you're dealing with really young children. So ginger, it sounds like that while you did have to spend a lot of time and energy collecting information about your financial background, your real heart as a mom was putting together something that was going to work for your daughter.

Kristen: I loved what you said earlier about how you went into this decision to get divorced with the perspective of my child's best interest. And, I love the line that you said, we just checked our egos at the door and she was first. It sounds like, I think that's so brave and courageous to go through all of the hurt and all of the fear that you're trying to shoulder on your own, but then still be able to check that at the door to make the best interest of your child was priority.

Ginger: That's true, Kristen and I, for me, I knew there was going to be financial suffering on both sides, but I also knew when it came to the custody agreement and arrangement that we were going to have, she needed exposure and time with her dad, even though if you recall what I said at the beginning, his

involvement with her was so limited when we were married and when we were a family unit. So I did have, I had to find a balance. I had the concern of is he able to and capable of being the dad that she needs for a three year old little girl? I had to balance that with the realization that he loves her very much, and she loves her dad and she needs that healthy relationship with him. So Craig and I were tasked with, and through his advice, we crafted our custody arrangement to really support that whole belief that he was able to have time with her and that ultimately would result in a very strong, healthy father daughter relationship for the two of them.

Craig: So ginger let's walk through the phase of life. The divorce is final. The documents have been signed by the judge. You receive the phone call or text message that said, okay, it's done. What was going on in your mind when you received that information?

Ginger: Yeah, for, well, for me, I would have imagined it feeling like a weight had been lifted. You know, I wanted to like throw this party and have this big relief, but it was a very sad moment for me too. You know, I mean, here was my marriage that was now officially over legally over. And, I was faced with having my new life, you know, and what was that new life going to look like and how was I going to manage my work life and my personal life? So there were all of these, it was a flood of emotions. And, there were all of these considerations for me and I knew that I needed a lot of structure and it would require a whole lot of organization on my part to be able to manage all of it. So, it was sort of twofold, Craig, to be honest with you, I was scared, but I was also excited for what the future would look like. And I was able to sort of recreate my life and re adjust to what my life was going to look like with my child now, post divorce.

Kristen: I've always heard the saying children are as resilient as their parents are healthy. And it sounds like as much as you were afraid and scared of what this next step forward was gonna look like for you is, is almost like your focus was I have to be healthy. I have to be strong and capable for my child.

Ginger: Those are true statements, Kristin. And I did think of that. And, and for me, one way that I was able to work through work through this hurtful time in my life was to find ways to reengage and to find interest in things that I, you know, had not pursued before and to reconnect with friends and family and with the church. And those were all things that I did. In addition to that, for me, it was very easy to pour myself into my child and finding activities that we could do together and spending quality time together, you know, during the weekends and at nights when I was home from work and, and really it was allowing myself the time for my emotions to settle. And, the way I did that was through connecting with my church, teaching a Sunday school class, singing in the choir again, which was something that I had enjoyed for so many years and to really pour myself and my energy into my child and my career.

Craig: Wherever you are and your life, you know, we as human beings, we basically need two things. We need belonging and we need meaning. And what I heard you say was, okay, my marriage was a failure, but that's okay. And I am seeking new ways to find belonging in new groups and new activities and reconnection. And of course, meaning through I'm a mom, I got to put on my big girl pants and take care of this beautiful human being that God has put in my charge.

Ginger: That's exactly how I felt Craig. And it's easier said than done sometimes because, um, you know, it's, it takes a lot for me to step into a social situation where I'm the only single person. And I felt again, you know, like I was singled out, but you just have to continue to do that and force yourself to do it. I'll

tell you another piece of it that, that I had to be reminded of by my parents frequently was, you know, you do, you said you want to find a sense of belonging and you can find that in friendship, you can find that in a church, but you can also find that in single males that are available and everybody has a cousin or a brother or a, you know, a coworker that they want to introduce you to and it really became overwhelming almost instantly. And I'm so thankful that I had my parents whispering in my ear the entire time don't get in a rush. You're not going to be single forever. You need to allow yourself time to heal because what you think you need and won't right now will likely not be what you need. And won't five years from now.

Kristen: And what I think is so beautiful about your story is that through these broken pieces, you found a sense of yourself, like joining the choir and finding belonging in areas maybe you didn't before and finding that like reconnection with yourself kind of gave you the courage to get back out there.

Ginger: It did, it did give me the courage to get back out there. If I had a piece of advice that I would offer up to anyone who is post of worse, I would just recommend, and I can say this now because I'm five years out. And, and I see what my life was like right after divorce and I was unsettled and I was hurt and I needed some time to heal. It's great to feel this sense of belonging. It's great to feel wanted by someone of the opposite sex and, and to feel like you still have value and have something that someone else wants, that's a great feeling, but at the same time, again, I'm so thankful that I had the guidance of my parents and my very close friends who would caution me and would encourage me to just take my time and allow myself to heal. And you know, now I find myself five plus years later, and I've met this amazing man that are prayed for, and we're able to blend our laws and develop a relationship. He also has been through a divorce and has children, and we're at the point of our lives now where we're working to blend those two together. And I think we both individually learned so much through our first marriages and relationships. Good and bad. What great looks like, what horrible looks like. And we're able to really mesh those two together and create what I hope is a long term, extremely healthy marriage and family for ourselves and for our children.

Craig: Ginger, in our final few moments, you've been so articulate and so vulnerable. And could you just speak a few words of hope over someone who might be listening to your voice?

Ginger: Absolutely. I'm so thankful to have this platform and share my story. I'm hoping that it will reach the ears that need to hear it today. There is a lot of hope. I mean, in the moment, things may seem overwhelming and dark and gloomy and glen, but it's really in your approach. And it's through maintaining your faith and your strong connections to your support system, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and you are worthy of a strong, healthy relationship and that's where I've had to get myself to that place and I'm there. And I'm extremely excited about what my future looks like in my current relationship with a godly man who is an amazing dad and will be an amazing dad figure for my child. I always tell her she is so incredibly blessed because she has so many people in her world and in her life that love her and her heart is big enough to love all these people in return. And so that's, that's what I look forward to having a family, a big family. And there's a lot of hope in the future. And that's really the message that I hope resonates with your audience is that, yes, this is a struggle. You work through the struggle one step at a time. And then, if possible, maintain an open line of communication with your ex, if it involves children, especially, and then allow yourself time to heal. And then ultimately look for someone that you can have a strong connection and have a mutual respect for, and ultimately

have a really long, happy, healthy family dynamic and relationship.

Kristen: Yeah, I think, I think that's a great perspective to have, and I love what you said about opening your child's heart to there. She has so much love. And so many people love her and there is no choice in like she doesn't have to choose one person over the other. It's just, we can love everybody. And so many people love her

Craig: Ginger so beautifully spoken. I knew it would be. And thank you for offering yourself in this way. And Kristin, thanks for coming back and being my sidekick while Matt is out earning money and we're getting to do fun stuff. So, Kristen, before we go, could you tell our listeners how they can get in touch with you?

Kristen: Thanks for having me back. Our website is the best place to get in touch with us.
www.cornerstone.com

Craig: And ginger again. So beautifully bravely tole. Thanks again for spending time with us today.

Ginger: I really appreciate the opportunity, Craig. Thanks for having me.