

Overcoming Spousal Betrayal

1 Corinthians 7:10-15 HCSB I command the married--not I, but the Lord--a wife is not to leave her husband. (11) But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband--and a husband is not to leave his wife. (12) But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she is willing to live with him, he must not leave her. (13) Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband, and he is willing to live with her, she must not leave her husband. (14) For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the Christian husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. (15) But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to peace.

A couple weeks ago I spoke to those who are tempted by the sin of adultery. This morning, if I may, I would like to address their victimized spouses. I want to offer you some practical advice as you deal with the horrible pain of spousal betrayal.

First, may I offer you the dubious comfort of knowing that God too knows what it is like to be betrayed and left for another. Hashem knows this particular pain very well.

God gave the Northern Kingdom of Israel her certificate of divorce.

- Jeremiah 3:8 HCSB I observed that it was because unfaithful Israel had committed adultery that I had sent her away and had given her a certificate of divorce. Nevertheless, her treacherous sister Judah was not afraid but also went and prostituted herself.

God left Judah, but did not initiate a divorce. Judah broke her relationship with Him, but God chose to enact a temporary period of separation by exiling Judah rather than divorcing her. His goal was to reconcile with her.

- Isaiah 54:6-8 HCSB For the LORD has called you, like a wife deserted and wounded in spirit, a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," says your God. 7 "I deserted you for a brief moment, but I will take you back with great compassion. 8 In a surge of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but I will have compassion on you with everlasting love," says the LORD your Redeemer.
- Isaiah 62:4 HCSB You will no longer be called Deserted, and your land will not be called Desolate; instead, you will be called My Delight is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land will be married.

Jesus offers the avenue of divorce to those who have been sexually betrayed.

- Matthew 5:31-32 HCSB "It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce. 32 But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

However, that doesn't mean that if your spouse has been unfaithful that you HAVE to divorce. God did divorce the ten northern tribes, but He did not divorce Judah. Like God, you have the option but it isn't a necessity.

According to 1 Corinthians 7, you should try to reconcile with your spouse – stay with your spouse if it's possible. However, if they abandon you – they abandon you – and you are “free from the law”. You are free of your vow just like a widow (Romans 7:2).

The unfaithful will offer justification, excuses, and rationalization – even to themselves. Even as their consciences accuse them, they will try to spin a tale that explains why they have every right to commit their sin. Yet the Bible says,

- **Proverbs 10:9 HCSB** The one who lives with integrity lives securely, but whoever perverts his ways will be found out.

If you suspect your spouse is being unfaithful, the following may be signs to consider.

Signs of infidelity

1. Change in:
 - a. Behavior
 - b. Mood
 - c. Spending patterns
 - d. Schedule
 - e. Physical appearance – weight, clothes, jewelry, cologne
2. Less:
 - a. Personal conversation
 - b. Vulnerability (sharing from the heart)
 - c. Discussion of future plans
 - d. Spontaneity
 - e. Sexual intimacy
3. More:
 - a. Out of town “business” trips
 - b. Unaccounted for time away
 - c. Faultfinding
 - d. Emotional distance
 - e. Unexpected “guilt” gifts
 - f. Anger when questioned

Do’s and Don’ts for the betrayed

One of the worst parts of betrayal is the sense of emasculation; the debilitating, undermining sense of being deprived of strength or vigor; the weakness that comes from being rejected and having your trust broken.

As a counselor, one of the things that I have to deal with the most with these folks is their sense of hopelessness, of helpless powerlessness. If you are one of them, I want to bring your mind to:

- **Isaiah 54:4-5 HCSB** "Do not be afraid, for you will not be put to shame; don't be humiliated, for you will not be disgraced. For you will forget the shame of your youth, and you will no longer remember the disgrace of your widowhood. (5) For your husband is your Maker--His name is Yahweh of Hosts--and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth.

Use “I” statements when expressing your doubts. Go ahead and talk to them. Don’t be concerned about planting ideas in their head. If they are loyal, it will not affect them that way. If they are disloyal, the conversation might be a deterrent or be used by the Holy Spirit to convict them. However, don’t attack. Don’t blame. Say things like “I feel lonely. I feel distanced from you. I feel like you are keeping something from me.” Talk about your feelings, don’t project them on your spouse. Do this in private and do your best to keep them from losing face.

- **Matthew 18:15 HCSB** "If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother.

Express your anger in a constructive way. Anger, like all the other emotions, is morally neutral. It’s not automatically wrong. God gets angry at sin too. God got angry when Israel

ran off to other false gods and was unfaithful to Him. However, we need to be very careful to not allow this amazingly powerful feeling to drive us into sinful behavior.

- **Ephesians 4:25-27 HCSB** Since you put away lying, **Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor**, because we are members of one another. (26) **Be angry and do not sin.** Don't let the sun go down on your anger, (27) and don't give the Devil an opportunity.

Pray for the Spirit's guidance on your decisions. You may need to temporarily separate from your spouse whether for safety's sake or to bring them to a point where they will change their behavior. You may need to even divorce them, though you need to try everything else first. You may need to get counseling and lay bare some very difficult issues and reconcile with your spouse. Either way, you are facing some incredibly difficult times and you need the Spirit's guidance.

- **Proverbs 3:5-8 HCSB** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; (6) think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths. (7) Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. (8) This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones.

Turn to the Lord to be saved, healed and completed. You don't need a mate to be whole. You don't need any human. You need God.

- **Psalms 27:10 HCSB** Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD cares for me.

You can be whole in Christ. He is not only your Savior and King – He is your Spouse and Completer.

- **Jeremiah 17:14 HCSB** Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me, and I will be saved, for You are my praise.

Deliberately choose to forgive. This doesn't mean you have to forget what they have done. This doesn't mean that there will be no consequences for their sin. It simply means that you strive to remember without holding on to bitterness. It means that you choose to forgive because you remember that you too are a sinner in need of forgiveness.

- **Matthew 18:23-35 HCSB** For this reason, the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. (24) When he began to settle accounts, one who owed 10,000 talents was brought before him. (25) Since he had no way to pay it back, his master commanded that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt. (26) "At this, the slave fell facedown before him and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything!'" (27) Then the master of that slave had compassion, released him, and forgave him the loan. (28) "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him 100 denarii. He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, 'Pay what you owe!'" (29) "At this, his fellow slave fell down and began begging him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'" (30) But he wasn't willing. On the contrary, he went and threw him into prison until he could pay what was owed. (31) When the other slaves saw what had taken place, they were deeply distressed and went and reported to their master everything that had happened. (32) "Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. (33) Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?'" (34) And his master got angry and handed him over to the jailers until he could pay everything that was owed. (35) So My heavenly Father will also do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart."

Don't take responsibility to change your mate. That's not your job. That's between them and the Holy Spirit. In fact, even the Holy Spirit can't do it if your spouse is unwilling to

cooperate. That's the dark side of free will. You need to make sure that you implement things that will ensure your safety and your health. You need to make sure that you work on being and doing right – but your spouse, you leave in God's hands.

- [Exodus 14:14 HCSB](#) The LORD will fight for you; you must be quiet."

Don't keep listing their sins to them. Again, it's not up to you to change them. It's not up to you to convict them of their sins. That's the Holy Spirit's job.

- [John 16:8 HCSB](#) **When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment:**

Don't take blame for sins that are not yours. You probably constantly struggle with thoughts of what you could have done different. You may look back on fights you may have had or moments when you refused intimacy...your mind will sift through every day of your marriage, trying to see what you did wrong. That's normal. That's neurologically natural. It's what the brain does to help us avoid pain in the future. However, don't say sorry for things that aren't your fault. Don't take blame where blame is not yours. That's a form of lying. Besides, even if these things happened, nothing excuses infidelity. You cannot make another person sin. They choose sin of their own free will.

- [Romans 14:12 HCSB](#) So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

I'm sure you have more than enough legitimate sin to deal with in your accounting with God; no need to take on someone else's too.

Don't minimize their sin. Don't try to excuse it. Don't ever make light of sin.

- [1 Corinthians 6:18 HCSB](#) Flee from sexual immorality! "Every sin a person can commit is outside the body," but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.

Don't try to be the one who meets all their needs. No human can do that for another human. Only God can meet all our needs.

- [Philippians 4:19 HCSB](#) And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

In fact, this is a pretty common ploy among adulterers, to claim that they are looking to you for all their needs. When you can't, they use it as an excuse for their sin. Abusers do the same thing. They hit you then lay the blame on you saying, "It's just because I love you so much! You drive me crazy. You push all my buttons."

Don't think that you plus God is not enough. You and God are more than enough. Without Him you can do nothing. With Him all things are possible. That's something that can't be said of any human.

- [Psalms 62:5-6 HCSB](#) Rest in God alone, my soul, for my hope comes from Him. (6) He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I will not be shaken.