

7 Questions You Should Ask When Your Wife Behaves Badly

Neither gender has a corner on bad behavior, so I had to arbitrarily pick which side to address first. Next week we'll address husbands' behavior, but today is for the husband whose wife is behaving badly.

Part of me wants to begin by apologizing on behalf of some women. Both contemporary society and the church have sometimes given the impression that because women have often been victimized women as a whole should get a free pass. Trauma, violence, oppression, abuse and so forth can and do lead to destructive thoughts, words and actions—bad behavior. Violence—physical or emotional—against women is always wrong. But it is not an excuse. Each woman, including your wife, is responsible for her own behavior.

But whether it's a response to trauma or not, your wife's behavior affects you. Perhaps your wife is struggling with an addiction, seeking sexual satisfaction elsewhere, constantly criticizing and belittling you, using the withholding of sex as a weapon or emotionally exploding inappropriately. While she is responsible for her own behavior, right now, I'm talking to you as a husband. And for the rest of this article we're going to talk about you, not her.

Here's the bottom line:

Your wife's bad behavior is no excuse for you to behave badly.

Paul said, "If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). That principle holds true in marriage. Your responsibility is no more nor less than to assure you are doing all that is within your power to have a successful marriage. That's what God holds you

accountable for. Your wife's cheating is not an excuse for you to do so. Your wife's emotional outbursts are not an excuse for you to explode in anger. Regardless of what your wife does or doesn't do, you're responsible for carrying your own stuff.

Here's how you can do that. Survey your side of the equation in these areas:

1. Is your heart open?

An angry, bitter, selfish, hard-hearted man is a huge turn-off, and will certainly make your wife defensive. That doesn't mean you're supposed to look weak; God and your wife need you strong! But your heart must be soft, especially toward your wife. If it's not, do the work necessary with God to get to an open heart.

2. Are you listening?

What is your wife telling you, verbally and nonverbally? Paying attention to what she's saying and not saying may help your heart stay open and offer many helpful clues to how you may be able to help her come closer to you again.

3. Are you seeking to understand your wife?

What would your wife say is the problem in your marriage? Do you know? Seek to understand her. Study her. Look at the world through her eyes. What you learn won't always stop your pain, but it will be invaluable in helping you know how to proceed.

4. Are you connecting with other godly men?

No wife (or any human being) can meet every need you have. Getting around other godly guys can be invaluable in dealing with some of the heart issues you wrestle with. Your heart can be encouraged, and you'll feel stronger in meeting the challenges at home.

5. Are you staying clean?

Sexual integrity can be even more difficult if your wife is not responding to your sexual needs, but God still holds you responsible for guarding your eyes and your heart. One of the benefits of being around other godly guys is the way you can help hold each other accountable in this area. Need more help? Check out *Be Broken* or *Every Man's Battle*.

6. Are you investing in your marriage?

You wouldn't set up a business and then leave it to run itself. Your marriage won't be successful without ongoing intentional investment either. Next to your time with God, your marriage deserves first priority in your life, above church, work, hobbies, guy time, TV time, anything.

7. Are you staying on your knees?

Prayer changes things. Ask God to show you His perspective on your wife, your own heart and your marriage. Seeing things through His eyes will be empowering. Learn to get still and listen for His voice. You will need His grace to keep your heart soft while working with God for the transformation of your marriage.

Trying to assign percentages of blame is a waste of time and energy. God can restore anyone and anything where He is given the opportunity. My prayer is that both you and your wife give Him opportunity to do that in your marriage. And remember that whatever happens in your marriage, God can bless and restore *you*.

Your Turn: Is your wife behaving badly? What kind of husband is God calling you to be in this season of your marriage? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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