

Can an Adulterous Spouse Truly Be Forgiven?

Adultery is a sin that causes a huge amount of destruction in the family. The person who was betrayed endures intense emotional pain. The unfaithful person experiences guilt and shame. Children suffer confusion and the loss of family stability.

God understands the severity of the consequences of adultery so much that it is dealt with in the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14 KJV).

Once the damage is done to the marriage, the only way that complete restoration can take place is if the betrayer repents not only from the adultery, but also from the accompanying sins. Many other sins come along with adultery, such as coveting, deceit, and pride.

Adultery also includes five of the seven things that the Lord hates according to Proverbs: "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19 KJV).

Adultery involves a lying tongue, a heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and sowing discord among people. When committing adultery, one must consistently lie about his or her whereabouts, plan secret meetings, go to those meetings, and the result is discord and strife among every person affected.

Once the adulterer begins to tell lies, this leads to more and more lies as the deception continues and the chasm between

husband and wife grows wider. What a dangerous trap! “A prostitute is a dangerous trap; a promiscuous woman is as dangerous as falling into a narrow well. She hides and waits like a robber, eager to make more men unfaithful” (Proverbs 23:27-28).

The resulting trauma that the unfaithful person puts their spouse through is indescribable. In the aftermath, what is the best way for the loyal spouse to respond? The Bible is our guide for living, and it is the ultimate resource for how to respond to the inevitable trials and tribulations of life.

“Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32 NLT). “Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God” (Ephesians 5:2 NLT).

The Bible instructs us to be kind to each other, to be tenderhearted, to forgive one another, and to live a life filled with love. That is much easier said than done when you have been deeply hurt by someone you love. The abandoned spouse did nothing wrong and did not ask to be put in this situation of immense pain; yet he or she is there because of the actions of two other people.

What is the right thing to do? It hardly seems fair that the betrayed spouse be given the burden of extending forgiveness and love to the one who has broken trust. But God’s ways are not our ways, and God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. Although in our limited human understanding it may seem unfair that the betrayed spouse should extend forgiveness and love to the person who walked out on the relationship, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12 KJV). “There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death” (Proverbs 16:25 NLT). Lack of forgiveness is detrimental to the betrayed person’s health. It is spiritual poison that will eventually

lead to spiritual death.

The Bible instructs us to forgive and to pray for our enemies. Forgiveness is not for the benefit of our enemies, but for our benefit. Forgiveness does not condone what was done. Forgiveness severs the link of control between the betrayer and the betrayed. Forgiveness does not mean that the unfaithful spouse will not have consequences for the offense. The consequences will come. Forgiveness is the betrayed person's way of leaving the consequences in the hands of God and allowing God to heal the forsaken person's heart.

Some have said that forgiveness is not necessary and that acceptance is good enough. Acceptance means you accept the facts that you were betrayed and cannot change the past. However, if one does not take the extra step of forgiveness, he or she may still suffer from a negative mental and emotional condition.

I understand that forgiveness is not easy. I have been hurt deeply by the man who I loved for 23 years. I could have chosen to just accept that I was betrayed and attempt to move on with my life. However, I would still have unforgiveness in my spirit that would take root and result in bitterness.

Unforgiveness has many negative consequences for the one who was abandoned. Unforgiveness allows the betrayer to continue to invade their mind and heart and hinder the healing process. The negative emotional and mental condition of the wounded person may appear to be resolved, but the bitterness and negativity will always creep back into the picture and block the complete healing that the Lord has for that person.

The Bible instructs us to forgive, not to merely accept. The benefit of forgiveness is not for the other person. It is for the one who was betrayed. Forgiveness takes place inside. It is not necessary for you to have the forgiven person involved in your life.

Forgiveness means that, in your heart, you release the other person to God. It means that deep inside of you, there are no hard feelings and you choose to wish the person well. You are not allowing that person to invade your mind and to generate feelings of hate. You are not drinking the poison of unforgiveness but rather choosing to allow God to completely heal your heart with no trace of bitterness.

Forgiveness is the last thing that we feel like doing when we are in so much pain. However, if we will just make the choice to forgive in obedience to God, He will give us the ability to truly forgive and heal completely so that we will not suffer any more negativity in our spirit. As a result, we set an example for our children, encouraging them to give up anger and bitterness. This restores peace and stability in the home.

Even though adultery causes so much destruction, it is possible, and even necessary, to truly forgive in order to prevent the situation from causing further destruction in our homes. The spouse responsible, however, must truly be repentant of his or her actions so that it does not happen again.

*Are you or someone you know facing the aftermath of adultery? People will betray us, but God will never leave us nor forsake us. He gives us the ability to truly forgive and be set free from the pain of betrayal. Check out He Will Never Leave You by **Jaylin Palacio**, now available on Amazon.*

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