

My Spouse Cheated, Now What?

It's probably the worst fear within a relationship. What if my spouse meets someone else?

For ladies, the fear is that her husband will give his heart to another woman, pouring into her his feelings and attention and time. For men, it's more so the fear that your wife will meet someone else and have a physical relationship with them.

There are two stages of adultery and affairs, the first is emotional; the second is physical. Some affairs are found out and ended while still during the emotional stage; others have gone on long enough (time is relevant to the people involved) to have made it physical. Both of which started in the mind.

I must warn you that what I'm referencing here is very different from a sexual addiction. Some may cheat multiple times in many different scenarios looking to fulfill a lust driven by the flesh that is fueled by an addiction of which there is very little emotional involvement. This is different and should be handled differently.

Pure Life Ministries is a resource that concentrates on this type of situation if that is your case. This article is specific to an emotional or physical affair that seems to take the place of your spouse. If I were to give you one single piece of marriage advice that I believe trumps all others, it would be this: Guard your thoughts.

Proverbs 4:23 states "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

That's not a verse advocating a breakfast cereal to cut down on heart disease. It means guard your thoughts. Guard your emotions. Guard who or what you rent space to in your mind. Bounce your eyes when you see an attractive person, cut off a conversation if it seems to linger too long or evoke

feelings of flattery within you. These are all protective maneuvers to be placed beforehand.

A great resource for this is the book *Hedges* by Jerry Jenkins. For the rest of this article I want to focus on your choices in the event an affair has happened and come into the light, what choices do you have? You have two—release or restore.

1. Release. Trust is broken. Your heart feels as though it has been put through a meat grinder. Your view of the world has probably grown a little colder and a little dimmer. You have an anger that burns within you and your first inclination is to either run or to get revenge. You don't possibly see how things could ever recover and you lose hope that you have a future together.

At this point you begin to focus on all your rights. I have the right to be happy. I have the right to be loved by someone else who will treat me with respect. I have the right to a divorce. Jesus said so. "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9). "*I have the right!* Jesus said, 'Except for sexual immorality.' That is my out and I can be released from this marriage without guilt, without trying to salvage it and without a fight."

The problem is, you may be released without any of those things, but you will be released with consequences, especially if you have children. The following areas have been statistically proven to be affected by divorce:

- Children's mental and emotional well-being
- Children's academics
- Adults' emotional well-being
- Chance of divorce rises for second marriage
- Chance of divorce in children's future marriages rises
- Financial hardships due to supporting two households on

same income

The first statement that went through your mind is: *"Yes, but it is not healthy for children to see mom and dad fighting all the time either."* Agreed, it's not. But there is no statistic that says children suffer because mom and dad figured it out and then sought help and made their marriage work. There are plenty of statistics to the contrary though. There are lots of rights that you have if your spouse has cheated on you, but don't forsake your responsibilities over your rights.

2. Restore. Understandably there are going to be times when both people just cannot get on the same page and make an agreement to move forward. That's not an excuse, but it is a reality. So I'm going to focus on the ones in which the cheating spouse says, "I was wrong, I'm sorry. I want to come home."

Should you forgive them? Yes. There is life for a marriage on the other side of a nasty crisis. It takes two hearts yielded to God—both the offending and the offended—to make it work. It starts with a decision. There are times when one spouse wants to be restored and the other doesn't want to restore. Those are times when you can seek God for help with forgiveness and pray for the turnaround of your spouse's heart.

People make mistakes. People go too far. Sometimes people break your heart, but if you focus on your responsibilities rather than your rights, you can get through this. When both the offending spouse and the offended spouse seek God and recognize their own faults that resulted in this crisis, healing can begin.

It takes two to tango, it takes two to admit their wrongs, and it takes two to fix a marriage. Restoration is not an easy road and neither is release. So if you're going to have to endure the pain of a process, why not choose one that can have better results and long-lasting positive effects on your

family? My wife and I chose the restoration route, and we have never looked back. Life and marriage is good.

Lord, I pray over those who have read these words today. Give them direction, give them strength, and allow Your love and forgiveness to shine through them like You did for me and my wife. Allow their restoration to be as miraculous and healing and beautiful as ours was. Pick them up from the miry clay and set them firmly upon the Rock that is Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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