

Commitment vs. Immorality and Divorce

- The Marriage commitment and vows are meant to be a permanent and exclusive union of two people, a covenant broken only by the death of one partner.
- Immorality threatens and may destroy the marriage union.
- Divorce (and remarriage) are God's concessions to human weakness and sin, not solutions.
- God's solution calls for faithful and forgiving agape love despite offenses (no matter how immoral) and an endeavor to seek after a full reconciliation and restoration of the relationship.

God hates divorce! When God permits Divorce – it is only when adultery or desertion have destroyed the marriage! Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:22-32; Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-11, 1 Corinthians 7:15-16.

(Swindoll correctly calls these “biblical grounds for remarriage”)

Immorality is condemned as sin and contrary to God's will, regardless of whether people accept or tolerate it. Proverbs 5:3-11; 21-23; 6:20-7:27; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; (cf 2 Corinthians 5:11); 1 Corinthians 6:12-18; Ephesians 5:3-7; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4

(These are sins that can be forgiven, but their bitter consequences will remain.)

Scripture encourages faithfulness and commitment even when the offending partner sins grievously, persistently and immorally against their mate and the relationship. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; 10-24, 25-40.

Hoshea's love for Gomer is a model of an Agape-love commitment in the face of awful immorality and unfaithfulness. Hoshea 1 – 3 It reflects Christ's love for His people: Ephesians 5:25-32.

Four Laws of Sexual Satisfaction

But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:1-5)

1. **Marital Fidelity** (1 Cor. 7: 2 *But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.*) Marital faithfulness is paramount. A good sex life where two people give themselves to each other is based upon trust and confidence. Vows need to be kept (Eccl 5:4,5)
2. **Immediate Response** . (1 Cor 7:3 *The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.*) There is an immediate response to the other partner's sexual need. To avoid the wrong use of sexual desire, the husband and wife need to learn to respond to each other. Sensitivity to needs does not come easily – and needs change with time. There needs to be an openness and honesty about needs. If your partner needs affection than give it, regardless of how you feel – whether it is an embrace or much more.
3. **Sexual Submission** (1 Cor 7:4 *The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.*) When you marry you relinquish control over your body to your marital partner. It belongs to him or her and should be available for their enjoyment and satisfaction. Withholding puts up barriers in the relationship – a willingness to submit to the advances of one's mate without fear and hesitation requires trust and confidence, and open communication. And it is a mutual submission, each willing to submit to the needs and desires of the other, and committed to caring for the other.
4. **Continual Habit** (1 Cor 4:5 *Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*) The Bible warns about withholding facts. They open doors to temptation and immorality. Frequency will certainly vary from couple to couple, and will change with time, but clearly it should be an ongoing part of the relationship. And there is also a responsibility to communicate those needs to each other.

Four ways of showing Marital fidelity

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? (Proverbs 5:18-20)

1. **Rejoicing in the wife of your youth:** A husband's Loyalty is seen in his contentment and excitement in the woman he married. This is rooted in the commitment made in that wedding vow, made long ago, but continuing as a cause of rejoicing.
2. **Being satisfied at all times with her appearance (breasts)** – The man's attitude is show in a mental and physical commitment that enjoys her, represented by an intimate delight and gentle and tender touching of her breasts. (Cf Song of Solomon 1:13; 4:5; 7:3; 8:10)
3. **Being excited with her love** - He continues to be "exhilarated" with her love for him. As he finds his "joy" in her, she responds to him with the excitement he desires.
4. **He refuses to find Sexual Satisfaction in others** – He avoids displays of affection or any improper contact with other people – flirtations, hugs – which are steps that can lead into adultery.

A Time to Run: Three signals of improper relationships:

As seen in the adulteress of Proverbs Chapter 7 - **She comes on with. . .**

1. **Enticing Speech**
2. **Provocative dress**
3. **Unrestrained Physical Affection**

(She displays discontent and a wanton lack of trustworthiness towards her own husband.)

(From Good Marriages Take Time by David and Carole Hocking)

Do's and Don'ts for Saving a Marriage

By Ed Wheat

"In summary - you need to give love to your mate biblically, emotionally, and physically whether you receive a response or not. This is altogether possible through *agape* love. One wife, whose husband was involved with another woman, said, "I tried to show him that my love for him did not depend on how he treated me. I still showed him physical affection. I said to him sometimes, 'I love you, no matter what you are doing right now, and I believe the Lord means for us to be together.' I sent him little cards with appropriate messages that expressed my caring while we were apart. And, do you know, when we reconciled, I found that he had saved every one of them!"

I asked some wives who had been through the experience to give me their list of do's and don'ts for any woman trying to save her marriage. Here are the excellent suggestions they compiled:

- There can be no growth in your relationship as long as there is doubt as to your commitment to your marriage. Make your commitment!
- When your husband withholds his love, trust the Lord to meet your emotional needs. He won't let you down!
- Give your husband honor, love, and biblical respect even though his actions do not deserve it. Give him warm acceptance no matter what. The more hopeless your situation is, the more your loving behavior is apt to be accepted as genuine.
- Don't try to reform your husband. Just love him.
- Live one day at a time.
- Don't try to do it on your own. The Lord is with you!
- Don't be bitter against anyone in the situation. Never turn your children against their father. Forgive!
- Don't ask family or friends to take sides against your husband.
- Don't discuss your intimate marriage problems. Don't give fuel to gossip. Confide in the Lord, your counselor, and perhaps a close Christian friend whom you can trust to keep silence.
- Choose your biblical counselor wisely. *Never* discuss your problems with a friend of the opposite sex.
- Spend as much time in the Word of God as possible.
- Concentrate on yourself, redeeming the mistakes you have made, and asking God to show you how to change, rather than concentrating on your partner's failures.
- Do not separate. Encourage your husband to stay in the home, no matter what.
- Do not give your husband a divorce. Do all in your power to delay or prevent it. If you must consult a lawyer, make it clear to the lawyer that it is only for your financial protection and that of your children. Find a Christian lawyer who will help you preserve your marriage.
- Spend your time with people who will encourage you in spiritual growth.
- Do not overcompensate with your children. They need your love and stability while their father is gone, but they still need discipline. It will be hard to build a new love relationship with your husband when he does come home if the children are out of control.
- Do not try to defend yourself from gossip or criticism. Keep your mouth shut. The Lord will fight for you and you will hold your peace.
- Remember that the most innocent thing you say will get twisted. Avoid loose talk and do not listen to tale-bearing.
- When you do anything (large or small) to pull~ the marriage apart, you are going against God's will. Let that be your guideline for all decisions.
- Don't expect your husband to change overnight when he does come back home.
- The hardest time may be when you are reconciled and you have a tendency to fall back into old habit patterns. Don't do it!
- Hope all things, believe all things, endure all things. (Love Life, pp. 227, 228)

The Book of Hosea in the Old Testament gives us the ultimate pattern for a love without limits which eventually reunites husband and wife in spite of great obstacles. This holds particular meaning for the husband whose wife has left him for someone else. Read the narrative account of the love story of Hosea in Love Life pp. 228ff and ask God to strengthen your own resolve through this retelling of His Word."

Dealing with Broken Marriages

... some comments and some notes from Ed Wheat's Love Life: *How to save your marriage alone.*

Whether it is our own marriage, or a friend's marriage, God's word offers much counsel on how to repair and restore broken relationships – even when one partner wants out or refuses to deal with the problems in the marriage. **The best prevention for “divorce-proofing” a marriage is an active application of effort on building and strengthening the marriage relationship** in all the areas already mentioned in this class.

All Marriages have difficulties and problems. Sometimes these problems become major – moving one partner towards seeking separation or divorce. The roots probably lie within the relationship itself – poor communication and neglect of the relationship. One partner may lack maturity, faith, or persist in selfish or sinful behaviors. Seldom is there a marriage conflict or crisis without some fault by both parties. We always need to search our own hearts for sin, and deal with it through God's grace.

But other factors may be involved too – money problems, outside interferences, providential circumstances, substance abuse, etc. Temptation and weakness may lead to infatuations or immoral relationships (adulterous affairs) that will strive to shatter the relationship in order to keep their “lovers.” A healthy marriage is a bulwark against these temptations, but Satan sets many traps, and we are exhorted by Scripture to be always watchful, lest we stumble and fall.

But when things break down, Dr. Wheat stresses **“First, we do not have to be controlled by our feelings. And, second, we are not prisoners of our past.”** God doesn't ask us to change our feelings, but He does ask us to forgive. *“Forgiveness involves three steps: (1) Using your free will to make the choice to forgive; (2) Deliberately behaving in the manner God has shown in the Bible to be right; (3) Trusting Him to do His part by renewing your mind and giving you new, transformed attitudes.”* Forgiveness frees us from the power of the past. Through forgiveness, God can heal the bruises and emotional wounds within us and put an end to bitterness. Forgiveness enables us to replace our negative behaviors with positive behaviors, to leave our past behind, to maturely deal with our personal hangups and sins, and reach forward in hope.

Most torn marriages are brought to new life, new vitality, by the interest, basically, of only one party. In the great majority of cases, the outcome depends squarely on the committed partner's ability to behave consistently in accord with Biblical principles, as designed by the Author of marriage. So in a literal sense, it's all up to one. They need not expect their partner to do anything constructive about the marriage if he or she wants out. The committed partner will need to clarify his or her thoughts, stabilize their emotions, and learn to love in God's way.

There must be an irrevocable commitment to the marriage – no matter how troubled it has become, regardless of the resistance of the partner – with the courage to face our own problems instead of running from them or hiding behind false pride; and by exhibiting the maturity which, even when there is no response, can choose to love with a steadfast love that is tough and real, intelligent and purposeful, wholly committed to our partner's well-being.

- Husbands must be prepared to actively pursue their wives and win them back by initiating and consistently demonstrating their love.
- Wives must win their husbands back by responding with love to them at every opportunity.

(This is in keeping with the biblical roles and distinctive natures of husband and wife since the Creation.)

God's Resources for Restoring a Marriage!

GRACE LOVE
GOODNESS JUDGEMENTS



THE WORD OF GOD

God's Word is a firm foundation - it reveals to us His plan for our marriages, and how to deal with the sins and weaknesses that threaten it. And it reveals God's nature to us as well. We draw by faith upon Him for the strength and power to rebuild and repair our relationships. Prayer is a vital element.

- God's Grace enables us to face our own sins and to forgive the sins of others. And to endure hardships.
- God's Love empowers us to love unconditionally. And God love for us provides us the sustaining love we aren't receiving from our partner.
- God's Goodness assures us that God is in control and everything is happening is for our good. His patience and kindness in dealing with sinners is an model for us in dealing with an erring spouse.
- God's judgements assures us that while God is patient, sinful behaviors will not prosper. The pleasures of sin for a season become bitter and distasteful, often driving the sinner to to turn back to God.

Rebuilding a marriage will place great demands on our faith and endurance,

we must BE PREPARED . . . knowing we have a sufficiency of grace in Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9-10b).

- **FOR THE WORST** - be prepared practically, emotionally and spiritually - even infidelity and adultery can be forgiven - and may the problems may need to be coped with until the partner comes to their senses regarding their infatuations and sin. Avoid separation no matter how serious the problems are, unless there is danger of physical abuse or injury.
- **TO BE OBEDIENT** - doing and being everything the Bible prescribes for our role in the marriage. Don't give the resentment and rationalization of our partners any ammunition to be used against us.
- **TO BE REJECTED**. Give love biblically emotionally and physically whether we receive a response or not.

Three rules must be followed as you learn to love your partner with a love that can save your marriage:

- **First, consistently do everything you can to please your mate and meet his or her desires.** Love your partner in such a way that it will be interpreted as love.
- **Second, consistently show your mate the respect and honor commanded in Scripture whether your mate personally merits it or not.** All the Scriptural admonitions concerning marriage are rooted in this one principle.
- **Third, totally avoid criticism of your mate.** Accept whatever your partner is or is not doing without comment or histrionics.

FLEE IMMORALITY

Proverbs 2:16-17 (Wisdom) will save you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. (cf. **Proverbs 7:5, 10, 21, 27:8; 1 Timothy 2:9**)

Proverbs 5:3-23 For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, And smoother than oil is her speech; But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of Sheol. She does not ponder the path of life; Her ways are unstable, she does not know *it*. . . For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress, and embrace the bosom of a foreigner? For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths. His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray. Drink from your own cistern . . . rejoice in the wife of your youth . . . ever be captivated by her love.

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life, To keep you from the evil woman, From the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her catch you with her eyelids. For on account of a harlot *one is reduced* to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched? So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished. (See also **Proverbs 7:1-27**)

Matthew 5:27-30 You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Romans 1:21-32 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. . . God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. . . Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. . . Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst. . . *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (Cf. **2 Corinthians 2:5-6** Sufficient for such a one is this punishment . . . in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.)

1 Corinthians 6:13-20 Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! . . . Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 10:7-13 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, . . . So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (cf. **James 1:13-15; 1 Peter 2:11**)

Ephesians 5:3-13 But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. . . . for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. (cf. **Job 24:13-17, 2 Peter 2:11-19** in context)

Colossians 3:5-10 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. . . Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (cf. **Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:16**)

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; . . . For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage *be held* in honor among all, and let the *marriage* bed *be* undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.