

My Mate Has Been Unfaithful

What Do I Do?

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The sin of adultery is one of the most serious wounds a spouse can experience. The hurt is real, but God wants to heal that hurt and by His grace restore your relationship with your spouse. To understand God's perspective on adultery read 2 Samuel 11 & 12; Psalm 51; the book of Hosea; John 8:1-11; Luke 7:36-48; and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Following are some insights to consider.

Beware of Pride

No sin is too bad for God to redeem and forgive. Beware of an attitude of superiority, as if you would not have committed the same sin. You are just as vulnerable to sexual temptation as your spouse, especially if you are separated and feeling the loss of your spouse's affection.

Understand God's Attitude

Sexual sin is so grievous to God that sexual misconduct is mentioned in every New Testament list of sins that prevent salvation and condemn one to hell (1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5; Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

Causes of Adultery

Adultery is no accident. It is an illegitimate attempt to meet the legitimate need for love, intimacy and companionship. Adultery may arise from a variety of conditions:

- ☐ Some spouses seek attention, tender talk or intimacy elsewhere when these are missing, denied or not met at home.
- ☐ Some seek escape from strife, contention or an unfulfilling marriage.
- ☐ Some seek to recapture lost youth as a part of mid-life crisis.
- ☐ Some rebel against the feeling of never having had the freedom to pursue personal interests.
- ☐ Some fall prey to temptation because of

lessening spiritual discipline.

- ☐ Some spouses are seduced by predatory pleasure seekers.
- ☐ Some spouses take revenge for a spouse's workaholicism or unfaithfulness.
- ☐ Some spouses seek affirmation of their personal worth, attractiveness, desirability or virility.

Adultery Clouds Judgment

Adultery for your unfaithful spouse is like a "jamming" radio signal - it confuses the emotions and blocks reality. The guilty person may feel "in love" with the other person or with both of you. This "love" is a dream image of love - lust in disguise.

Adultery Confuses Commitment

Because the marital bond has been stretched to include someone else, your spouse may feel responsible for the other partner and will struggle over how to fulfill commitment to both. Often divorce solves the dilemma for the guilty spouse who may be generous with the divorce settlement to compensate for the guilt. The divorce also serves as an act of penance (paying for the sin) by giving you the social sympathy of being the "victim" and affirming the misbelief of being undeserving of forgiveness and that things have gone too far to turn back.

Adultery Resists Repentance

The unfaithful spouse must overcome incredible forces to return home. The longer the affair and/or separation have lasted the harder it will be to reverse events. Adultery is seldom secret for long and once others know about it, pride makes it easier to remain in the sin than to admit to everyone the wrongness of one's actions. It is also difficult to face relatives of the innocent spouse, because they often take an offense for the victim and have great difficulty forgiving.

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Responding to the Adultery

There are no magical methods that will bring about your spouse's repentance. The fundamental path to restoration for anyone caught in sin is to call on God, humble oneself, pray for forgiveness and turn away from the sin. Yet, there are some steps you can take to foster this change.

- ☐ Examine yourself before the Lord to determine whether you sinned in the marriage and contributed to a situation that made it easier for the adultery to occur. Purpose to clear your conscience with your spouse. However, don't confess your own faults and find fault at the same time. (NOTE: This is not to suggest that the offender is any less responsible for his/her sin. Adultery is a willful breaking of the marriage vows, and the innocent spouse, no matter how imperfect, does not deserve the blame for such an abominable act.)
- ☐ Begin to pray earnestly for your spouse's return. Pray that God will enable your spouse to repent. Pray for the other partner, your marital enemy. Pray for yourself that God will deliver you from a spirit of bitterness, resentment and hatred and will be filled with God's love for both spouse and the other partner (Luke 6:27-36).
- ☐ Don't belittle or put-down your spouse to your children. They have the right to love their other parent. If the child has questions, don't try to answer for your spouse. Don't pass on your assumptions about your spouse's feeling, motives or behavior to your child. Focus on "whats" not "whys."

- ☐ Become accountable for your own attitudes and actions. Refrain from telling your story to everyone who knew you as a couple. Don't leave your congregation, either. Seek the support and encouragement that is available from the spiritual ones in your congregation.
- ☐ Seek God's grace and timing to lovingly confront your spouse about the sinful behavior (Matthew 18:15). Show a willingness to accept your spouse back, but refuse to put up with the sinful life-style. It is also appropriate to suspend further marital relations while the adultery is going on. If the adultery involved prostitutes, homosexuals or I-V drug users, a blood test for venereal disease and AIDS should be insisted upon before resuming marital relations.
- ☐ Seek the assistance of your pastor to follow the discipling steps of Matthew 18:16-17. When a professing believer is involved in immorality, the congregation has a duty to confront and seek repentance and restoration (1 Corinthians 5:2; Galatians 6:1), and failing these efforts, to recognize the desire of the unrepentant one to be treated as an unbeliever.
- ☐ If your spouse insists on filing for divorce, then cooperate with his/her desire (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 7:15-16). You gain nothing by being belligerent and you can't prevent a divorce if your spouse wants one. God has called you to peace.
- ☐ If your spouse wants to return, insist on biblically-based marriage counseling to resolve the issues that created the crisis. Without pastoral or professional help, reunion may be short-lived.