

# **My Mate Wants a Divorce**

## ***What Do I Do?***

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No doubt you are hurt, and perhaps even stunned after hearing your mate say, "I want a divorce." What do you do, then? The following guidelines are offered for handling this crisis:

#### **Rely On Spiritual Resources**

Draw near to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the redeemer of life's messes. Make use of the means of grace, such as prayer, Bible study and public worship. Seek biblical counsel from a pastor or other Christian counselor in making decisions and handling stress. The resources of your faith can give you the strength and wisdom you need.

#### **Remain Faithful**

Purpose to be obedient to God and keep your wedding vows regardless of your mate's stated intentions or actions. Remember that you are married until divorced, so continue to wear your wedding ring. Recognize your vulnerability and avoid dating temptations. Guard against even the appearance of an improper relationship.

#### **Rally Your Emotions**

Undisciplined feelings can cause you trouble. Talk to God about your anger over past issues and your anxiety about the future. Don't let these feelings mold your attitudes and actions. Face reality that your emotional needs are not a high priority to your mate right now. Even if your mate rejects you, God does not. Trust God to meet your emotional needs.

#### **Repair Your Wrongs**

Examine yourself honestly and consider whether you may have contributed to the marriage breakdown. If your mate is divorcing you because of your own wrongdoing, then admit your sinful behavior and ask your mate's forgiveness. Don't try to apologize and find fault at the same time. Your repentance should be a genuine concern to clear your own conscience before God and your mate.

#### **Restrain Romanticism**

Sometimes a hurting mate who strongly desires reconciliation will pursue the withdrawing mate with increased attention. Sending gifts, such as candy, flowers and cards, may help to lessen the pain of rejection felt by the sender. Romantic gestures, however, generally don't bring the desired result when a mate has clearly expressed an intention to initiate divorce proceedings. If such gifts were not common in the marriage, they may be viewed as attempts to buy favor. Gifts can also be perceived as an avoidance of dealing with important issues. In a divorce crisis romanticism may drive a mate farther away.

#### **Resist War Games**

Resist the temptation to revenge. Negative reactions to your mate will only erect obstacles to reconciliation. If you are separated, don't harass your mate by frequent phone calls or unannounced visits where your mate lives or works. Don't spy on your mate, either. Don't open mail addressed to your mate, but ensure that it's delivered promptly. Don't hide, sell or dispose of property and assets. Avoid the "what's-yours-is-mine" mentality. Don't make

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threats. Follow the example of Jesus who didn't allow the actions of His adversaries to determine His reactions (1 Peter 2:21-28).

## **Respect Your Mate**

Regardless of the circumstances God wants you to give your mate love and respect. Seek to understand your mate's feelings. Don't preach, argue or nag. Avoid criticism of your mate to your family and friends. Don't fuel gossip by openly airing your complaints of hurts and wrongdoing. Treat your mate's reputation as if it were your own.

## **Reassure The Children**

Children suffer when parents separate or divorce. Children may react with confusion, anger or fear. Be honest with them about what is happening to their family, and assure them of your continued love. Children also have a right to love both their parents, so don't make their lives worse by using them to carry messages, interrogating them about your mate's activities, or degrading your mate to them. Put your child's needs before your desires. Above all, point them to the security of God's care.

## **Respond To Legal Actions**

If your mate has filed for divorce, consult with an attorney, preferably a Christian, to understand your rights and responsibilities, as well as to ensure that your interests are protected. The attorney hired by your mate cannot represent you or advise you. Even if a proposed settlement by your mate seems fair, you still should seek independent legal advice.

Don't ignore the time limit set by the court to respond. Failure to respond by the court deadline could result in your mate being granted a divorce without the court considering your desires. While you might be able to delay the divorce, don't expect to stop it through any legal tactic.