

Caring in Cases of Adultery

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- I. Introduction.
 - A. You need to be prepared to help. Gal. 6:1-2 James 5:20
 - B. God's grace in the gospel is the key to everything. Heb. 13:5-6 1 Co. 10:13 Ps. 42

- II. Your initial involvement is vital. Prov. 11:14 12:15
 - A. Data gathering.
 - 1. What was the nature of the marital unfaithfulness? Heb. 13:4
 - 2. How was the sin exposed?
 - 3. Are both parties open to reconciliation?

 - B. Help both parties deal with their emotions. Ps. 55:4-5,12-13,20 2 Co. 1:3-5
 - 1. Jesus knows what it is like to be betrayed and He has compassion for sinners.
 - 2. Encourage both parties not to be hasty. Wait and see what God may do.

 - C. Nothing is more important than building hope.
 - 1. Your hope has to be in God, not in the other person or in the marriage. Jer. 17:5-8
Heb. 13:5-6 6:18-19 Ps. 46:1-3
 - 2. God will not allow you to be destroyed by this trial. 1 Co. 10:13 Ro. 8:28-39 Ps. 34:17-18 Js. 1:2ff
 - 3. God has a purpose and is working – perhaps in many lives. Rom. 8:28 Gen. 50:20
 - 4. Adultery is not the unforgivable sin. Isa. 55:6-7 Ps. 32 51 103:11-12
 - 5. Broken marriages can be redeemed.

 - D. Your focus is on pleasing God, regardless of what the other person does. 2 Co. 5:9

- III. Helping the Adulterer.
 - A. Why do people commit adultery?
 - 1. Common factors in adulterers - conflict/anger with spouse, family or personal history of sexual immorality, isolation from accountability, boredom, influences of media, temptation/opportunity, sexual idolatry. Isa. 55:1-2 Ro. 1:25ff
 - 2. A wise perspective on why people fall into sexual sin in Proverbs 5. (W. Mack).
 - a. Failure to pay attention to God's wisdom. 5:1-2
 - b. Association with sinful people. 5:3-8
 - c. Failure to consider the consequences. 5:4-11
 - d. Inattentive to one's own marriage. 5:15-19
 - e. Desire for something new and different (greener grass). 5:20
 - f. Lack of God consciousness/fear of the LORD. 5:21
 - g. Failure to understand the enslaving nature of sin. 5:22-23
 - 3. Adultery is a "heart" problem. Mt. 15:19 12:33-35 Js. 1:13-16 Ga. 5:19 Ro. 1:2

- B. The adulterer must first repent and confess his/her sin before God. Ps. 51:1ff 32:1ff
1. The greatest sin is against God. Ps. 51:4 Gen. 39:9b Pr. 2:17 3:5-6 14:12 2 Samuel 11-12 **Isa. 55:1-2 Mt. 19:6**
 2. Such deeds reflect the condition of one's heart before God. Mark 7:20ff Gal. 5:16-21 Ps. 51:4 Isa. 55:1-2 Gen. 39:9b Mt. 12:33-35 Gal. 5:19-21
 3. One does not suddenly fall into such sins. James 1:14-15
 4. He/she must fully accept blame – no excuses or minimizing. Pr. 28:13 Ps. 51:3
 5. The adulterer has been lying to himself and needs to address the lies he/she has believed about God, his/her spouse, marriage, etc. Ps. 51:6
 6. The adulterer may find that his heart has grown cold and hard towards God and that it may take some time for it to be warm and soft again.
- C. The adulterer must make a clean break from his sin – repent. Pr. 28:13 2 Co. 7:10-11
1. Adulterers are often double-minded and weak.
 2. The guilty party needs to see both his/her sin and the other person as God sees them. Prov. 2:16-19 7:6ff
 3. The break from the past cannot be protracted. Mt. 5:29-30 2 Tim. 2:22 Pr. 5:8
 4. All contact with the third party must be broken off and every bridge burned.
 5. Every excuse and rationalization must be obliterated.
- D. The adulterer must confess and seek forgiveness of his/her spouse. Mt. 5:23-24
1. Must he/she confess if the spouse doesn't know? Yes!
 2. The greatest sin against one's spouse is the breach of trust.
 3. The lies need to stop – NOW! Pr. 12:22
- E. Go through the seven As of confession (from "The Peacemaker", by Ken Sande).
1. Address everyone affected.
 2. Avoid if, but or maybe. Pr. 4:5-6 7:4-5
 3. Admit specifically.
 4. Acknowledge the hurt.
 5. Accept the consequences.
 6. Alter your behavior.
 7. Ask for forgiveness. Mt. 5:23-24
- F. How specific should a confession be? Eph. 4:29 5:4
1. The guilty spouse needs to confess how he/she fell into sin, the duration and the nature of the sinful relationship.
 2. Guilty parties tend to hold back details and minimize sin, thus undermining trust and hope for restoration. Eph. 4:25
 3. The innocent spouse has to make it "safe" for the guilty spouse to be honest.
 4. Often the innocent spouse wants to know more than would be edifying. Eph. 4:29
 5. It can be very helpful to involve a counselor during this process. Pr. 11:14 12:15
- G. Make a specific action plan for godly change by God's grace.
- H. Prepare the guilty spouse for the challenges he/she may face.

1. Temptation to go back to the affair.
2. Temptation to self-pity and despair.
3. A heart which feels cold towards God and one's spouse.
4. Dealing with the emotions of the innocent spouse.

IV. Helping the victim of adultery.

- A. The non-adulterer must also come to grips with his/her sin.
 1. Such a trial may expose sins and weaknesses.
 2. His/her sin does not excuse what the other person has done.
 3. But he/she may have been guilty of making the temptation greater. Lev. 19:14
 4. Has he/she been bitter/angry/alooof/self-righteous since finding out? Ro. 12:17-19
- B. The innocent spouse must see the sin of the guilty party as God sees it.
 1. His/her spouse's sin is primarily against God. Ps. 51:4
 2. Your role is to restore (not to judge). Gal. 6:1-2
- C. How can you know if your spouse's repentance is genuine? 2 Co. 7:10-11
 1. Characteristics of worldly sorrow.
 - a. Self-focused. Gen. 4:13
 - b. Hates the consequences of sin.
 - c. Blame-shifting.
 - d. Resents accountability.
 - e. Impatient – demanding to be trusted and restored immediately.
 2. Characteristics of godly sorrow.
 - a. Focused upon the other person.
 - b. Hates the sin itself.
 - c. Fully accepts responsibility.
 - d. Seeks accountability. 1 Co. 10:12
 - e. Patient.
 3. What is the difference between repentance and penance?
 4. What if you are not sure whether the other person is repentant?
 5. While waiting to see if the guilty party is truly repentant, some form of separation may be appropriate.
 6. How long should the innocent party wait to see if the guilty spouse will repent?
- D. Should forgiveness be granted if the guilty party is not repentant?
 1. What if the guilty spouse continues in adultery? Mt. 18:15ff 19:9 Luke 6:27-28
 2. One can have a forgiving attitude regardless of the attitude of the guilty party. Mark 11:25-26 Luke 23:34 1 Pe. 2:22-23 4:19 Ro. 12:19 Eph. 4:31-32
 3. But full transactional forgiveness can only be granted when forgiveness is sought. Luke 17:3-4 1 Jo. 1:8-9
 4. Forgiveness is only possible because of the gospel. Mt. 18:21-35 Col. 3:12-14
 5. How long can the innocent party wait before granting forgiveness?
 6. Must the innocent party fully forgive and take back the guilty party? Num. 14:20
- E. What does biblical forgiveness look like? Jer. 31:34

1. The four promises of forgiveness (from “The Peacemaker”). Jer. 31:34 1 Co. 13:5
 - a. I will not dwell on this incident.
 - b. I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.
 - c. I will not talk to others about this incident.
 - d. I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our relationship.
 2. Forgiveness is declared.
 3. Forgiveness is sacrificial and complete.
 4. Sins which have been fully forgiven cannot be used as grounds for divorce.
 5. Once forgiveness has been granted, normal marital relations should be resumed.
- F. Prepare the innocent spouse for the challenges he/she will face.
1. You may be tempted to keep bringing up and rehashing the past. Phil. 4:8-9
 2. Some family and friends may be an unhelpful influence. 1 Co. 15:33 1 Ki. 12:8
 3. You may be tempted to anger and revenge. Rom. 12:17-21
 4. You may be tempted to fear. Ps. 46:1ff 91:2
 5. Be prepared to deal with setbacks.
 6. Forgiveness is both an event and an ongoing process.
- V. Rebuilding the marriage.
- A. Seeking and granting forgiveness only clears away the weeds and rubble so that something new and beautiful can be built.
 - B. It may be appropriate to formally re-commit to the marriage covenant.
 - C. The guilty spouse needs to rebuild his/her relationship with the Lord. Rom. 12:2
 - D. The innocent spouse needs to look to the Lord, not the guilty spouse, to give him/her strength to forgive and love. Jer. 17:5-8
 - E. The object is not merely to go back to the way things were before the adultery, but to bring the marriage into the greatest possible conformity to the biblical ideal.
 1. Sin patterns from before the affair must be addressed.
 2. Expectations and accountability.
 3. Communication patterns need to be transformed.
 4. Each spouse needs to learn how to be a dispenser of grace to the other. Phil. 2:3-4
 - F. Resuming marital intimacy can be a challenge for both parties. 1 Co. 7:3ff
 - G. Over time wounds heal and relationships grow by God’s grace.
- VI. Conclusion.
- A. The path for the offender (from Robert Jones).
 1. Break the adulterous relationship immediately.
 2. Admit the facts; disclose honestly.
 3. Confess to God, spouse, and appropriate others both the adultery and the deception/lies and seek their forgiveness.
 4. Develop and implement a specific action plan for godly change.
 5. Believe the gospel and move forward, continuing the action plan.
 - B. The path for the innocent party (from Robert Jones).
 1. Your security and identity are in Jesus Christ, not your spouse and your marriage. Ps. 27:10 73:25-26
 2. View this trial biblically, seeing God’s sovereign, wise, loving purposes. Ro. 8:28
 3. Forgive your spouse attitudinally and unconditionally in light of the gospel.

4. Forgive your spouse relationally and transactionally if he repents.
5. Healing is a process. Deal with bad memories when they arise.

VII. Recommended resources.

- A. Jones, “Restoring Your Broken Marriage”
- B. Smith, “Help! My Spouse Committed Adultery”
- C. Summers, “Help! My Spouse has been Unfaithful”

VIII. Homework assignments.

- A. For the adulterer.
 1. Read “Repentance” by Miller.
 2. Read Psalm 51 and 32.
 3. Make a plan for decisively breaking with your sinful relationship.
 4. Make a list of your sins. First confess to God, then your spouse.
 5. Make a plan for helping your spouse through this hard time.
- B. For the spouse.
 1. Read “From Forgiven to Forgiving” by Jay Adams.
 2. Read Matthew 18:21-35.
 3. Make a list of your sins. First confess to God, then your spouse.
 4. Make a plan for helping your spouse through this hard time.
- C. Both – listen to “Rebuilding a Marriage after an Affair” by Mack (www.idbc.org).