

“My Husband Cheated”

I cannot tell you how many times in my 20+ years in ministry I have heard those words. I have seen tear stained faces and sobbing shoulders more than I care to recall. I've seen it in every age group from people in the 20-s to people in the 60's. It's never easy. It's never pretty. It's never just a matter of I'll pray about it and forget the whole thing.

Adultery is devastating. It hurts everybody. It hurts the kids – the extended family – and certainly those most closely involved.

So – what should you do?

Don't Make Rash Decision/s

When you've just heard or “discovered” the news that he cheated it's not the time to make rash decisions. This is not the time to tell the children EVERYTHING or even tell everyone you know. Of course you are hurting and scared and angry – very angry. But slow down just a minute. Give yourself time to think, breathe, and pray. Draw strength from the Lord so that you can make wise choices based on this devastating knowledge.

Do you have a trusted friend or pastor that you can talk to and receive support? If so, start there. If not, find a Christian counselor immediately. You do need a safe place to talk. But you do not need to tell everyone – at least not right away. If everyone already knows you do not have to respond with more information or explanations. Quite honestly, it's not everybody's business even if they think it is....even if they are concerned for you – please remember this is your situation and you don't owe explanations. Right now, you have to take care of you and your children. You are navigating through a life crisis and your first priority is you and your children (if you have children).

Make prayerful, deliberate decisions. You've already heard and discovered the worst news any marriage could receive. Don't compound the problem by making rash decisions.

Some good decisions might include:

Christian Counseling (not just for the marriage but for you – you need help just to think straight right now)

Read the book Torn Asunder

Check out websites like Focus on the Family for articles and helpful information from experts and “people that have been there

Check our support groups at your church or local churches

Listen Carefully (James 1:19)

Many times the first response (especially by Christian women) is I want to forgive it all and put it behind us. Ideally, the husband is repentant (this means NO more contact with the other woman – and genuine remorse and new boundaries to protect the marriage). But this will take time. This is not

overnight. You will not say one prayer and have it all “go away”. This is a HUGE betrayal and a big wound it will take time to repair and heal.

Listen carefully to your husband. While you may want to say a lot of WORDS listen to him. Listen to hear if he is truly repentant. What is he willing to do to demonstrate his repentance? Is he willing to cease all contact with her? Is he willing to be open and honest with you? Not just the words....the actions.....is he willing to show you his cell phone bills? Is he willing to be totally accountable with his time? Does he understand that he will have to work twice as hard to be trusted again? Is he willing to say you can call me whenever – follow me wherever – I have nothing to hide? Will he go to counseling? Will he talk to your pastor? Will he get into a men’s group that asks the tough questions? If so, these are all indicators that he is truly sorry. It will still be a difficult road but if he’s truly sorry and if you’re willing to forgive you can start the healing process.

If listening carefully does not produce these results. Let’s say he’s still evasive. Let’s say he says you can check the cell phone bill but doesn’t offer. Let’s say he tells you he wants the marriage but is distant, hostile and won’t seek counseling. When you hear these sorts of things they are indicators to you that there is still a sin problem – there is still a hindrance or obstacle. Until that changes there cannot be total healing in the marriage. If this is going on get help for yourself – even if he is not willing to be a part of the counseling. God will show you what to do. It may be separation – counseling – or setting some specific boundaries. It may take time as you set new boundaries during your own counseling your husband may “come back to his senses”. But you have to start the process so that you can heal. Let God deal with him as you make the right Spirit led choices right choices for you.

If divorce is the result --- God can and will still help you. Continue with the counseling and prayer support. God will give you His GRACE to get through. He will help your children as well. As devastating as it all is – God is faithful and He will never leave you or forsake you.

Seek Wise Godly Counsel & Prayer Support

You cannot go this alone. You need some solid trusted people in your life. People that avoid speaking their opinions and are willing to listen and pray. You don’t need one more person to tell you “what to do”. You need people to pray and speak the Word and love you and support you.

Practical Steps

Take it One Day at a Time

I know it sounds like an oversimplification but it’s not. We only get one day at a time. Remain in Christ today. Trust God to make a way for you today. Trust the Lord to ease your pain and give you godly vision for the future. For today, remain in Him in all things.

Give Yourself Time to Grieve

Grieving is a part of life in fallen world. You need to grieve this loss. You have lost the bonds of faithfulness with your husband. You must grieve that loss. Even if you continue in the marriage – the relationship will not be the same. You now have a “new bottom” so to speak in the relationship.

I am not speaking death over the relationship. If your husband is repentant, and you are willing to reconcile, your relationship over time can be totally healed. In order for healing to take place the sin must be dealt with at its’ root and honesty is required. This includes grieving over the sin and grieving

over what's been lost. There is no "quick fix" to restore trust. It takes time, repentance, honesty, and building a track record of truth and trust.

You might consider allowing yourself 15-30 minutes to cry or grieve each day. Once the time is up you go on with your day trusting God in the details. This helps you grieve but also discipline yourself because life can and will go on. It is not healthy to spend day after day grieving. You must grieve the loss but you also must learn to face life again. It won't ever be "just the same" but it can still be a wonderful life filled with God's promises.

About being Angry

You can be angry and sin not. The bible says that. Do not try to "spiritualize" things and say I am not angry I just want to forgive and put this behind us. You must experience the anger and grieve over what's happened. If a spouse cheats you will be angry and you should be angry. You should NOT throw things or destroy the house or punch your husband (even if you feel like it) – these things are the sinful part of anger. These things do not help the situation and they do not please God. But the emotion of anger is God given. It's your indicator that you've been violated and you have. Trying to pretend like you are not angry only makes it worse. Just find constructive ways to voice that anger and talk to good godly people about your feelings. Tell Jesus how you feel and He will help you walk through this anger without sin.

Again be angry but do not allow that anger to take over your life and emotions. You are right to feel violated and sad. But do not act out of those feelings in ways that are destructive and sinful. Jesus Christ will give you the courage to do this and the power not to sin.

Do Something Positive for "You" Every Single Day

In the midst of tests and trials we stand by faith. Part of the exercise of that faith includes taking care of ourselves. This includes doing positive for yourself every single day. Whether or not the relationship can be restored (and you may not even want that) you must take care of yourself. Take some time to be good to you. You've been hurt and you need to recover. Some positive things might include:

Taking a Walk

Working Out

Reading a good book

Talking with a friend that makes you laugh

Shopping (if you like to shop)

Going to the library (it's quiet there)

Eating your lunch at the park

Just anything that's "out of the ordinary". Anything that is positive that gets you out of the "middle of the chaos". This is important for you –and your children right now. Just like when you get sick you have to take it easy whether or not you want to – or feel like you have the time. Take some time for you each day. Do something good for yourself. Over time you will see the results of that. It will at

some point begin to pay off. You will begin to see yourself as a stronger person. You will see yourself as a person that can deal with the “tough stuff” and not only survive but “thrive”. That’s important for you to know and for your children to know as well.

These things are just a start. They do not answer the question of whether to stay or leave the marriage. You must hear from God and your pastor and Christian counselor can help you walk through those steps. This is a devastating situation but you are not ALONE. You will make it through as you keep your eyes on Jesus and trust Him with every aspect of your life.

What if your husband isn’t sorry?

You can still benefit from the things written above. You can’t make somebody stay in a relationship with you. Yes, you can pray for him to change. Please talk to your pastor, get into a support group, and seek out Christian counseling. God will give you a brand new beginning. He promises to take even those things meant for evil and turn them into good.