



Adultery; Is recovery Possible?

Your spouse was unfaithful. Betrayal is a word that cannot describe how you feel. You go from rage to fear to just feeling plain numb.

1. Adultery tears you apart. In marriage, two people become one. If you put your hands together and rub them against each other before moving them apart, some of what was on your left hand will be on your right hand and vice versa. That is the way it is in marriage. Two people are “joined in marriage” and not meant to be torn apart
2. Shame and betrayal go hand in hand. In Psalm 55, we have an example of how David dealt with betrayal:

My heart is in anguish within me: the terrors of death assail me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me...If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend...My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant. His speech is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords. (Psalm 55:4-5, 12-13, 20-21)

Expressing pain to God allows you to agree with him about the horrors of betrayal. **Our betrayal of God is the reason Jesus had to go to the cross.** When you share your pain with God, you are agreeing with Him that betrayal is an ugly sin. Jesus knew what it was to be betrayed. Your cries are reaching an understanding ear.

3. Adultery is a sin that can be forgiven. Whatever the situation is right now, you need to know that it is possible for your spouse to be truly sorrowful and repentant and change. If you do not examine the ramifications of forgiveness you will travel down a path of bitterness and divorce.
4. God protects His people. Forgiveness rests on a decision to trust God. Often our sense that we can't forgive is rooted in self-protection. God calls you to trust Him to protect and comfort you. A good Psalm to use is Psalm 91:2: *“I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’”*

5. Trust God for your spouse. The natural temptation at a time like this is to hold on to your own hurt and try to make your spouse suffer as much as you are. The Holy Spirit will do a much better job than you at dealing with your spouse.
6. Forgiveness is a process. You have to make daily (and sometimes) moment by moment decisions to turn from bitterness and self-protection to God.
7. God is a God of second chances. All marriages are damaged in one way or another. It is beautiful when marriage partners face their brokenness and ask Jesus to work in them. The gospel is about dead people and dead things being made alive; it is about renewal. A marriage that has passed through death is truly beautiful. Why? It calls attention to the resurrection and the gospel.
8. Slow down and exercise patience. Some decisions affect you and your family for the rest of your life. You don't want to live with regret that you could have (or should have) done more to save your marriage.
9. Seek good counsel. When a person is in pain they will often seek someone to help alleviate their pain. What is really needed is someone who will tell the truth in love.
10. Set appropriate boundaries. It is not unusual for a person who has stepped into adultery to take time to make "a clean break." Your spouse needs to know that for the marriage to "get better," the adulterous relationship has to end. Indecision is a decision against your marriage. This is another place where godly counsel can play a significant role. Decisions need to be reached regarding separation and the degree of separation.
11. Examine yourself for failure. Even if you did not commit adultery, you are not sinless. Self-examination brings an atmosphere of humility, honesty, and grace.
12. Only take responsibility for yourself. One trap Satan will sometimes lay is to make you feel responsible for the adulterer's sin. If you take responsibility for what your spouse did wrong, you are only exposing your own fears.
13. Avoiding the subject will not help. For you and your spouse to rebuild your relationship, there must be a willingness on both of your parts to do the hard work of talking through what happened. This must be done in the spirit of Psalm 103:11-12: *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Think of adultery as a painful and serious injury. Probing and cleaning the wound might be painful and frightening, but wounds that are ignored or covered up don't heal well.
14. Be perceptive with your questions. A good rule of thumb before asking questions is to ask yourself: "What is the point of my question?" Sometimes after a traumatic event, we feel desperate to be secure and in control again. It is tempting to think that if you know enough about your spouse's sin you could master it and be able to protect yourself in the future.

On the other hand, there should not be hidden information that will surface later and create new wounds. Ask these questions: What do I need to know that will help me work through the process of forgiveness? What do I need to know that will help me entrust myself to God?

CONCLUSION

“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:17, 18). Recovery from adultery is a long, difficult road. To stay the course you will need daily encouragement and hope. You will need godly and wise friends who will encourage you, pray with you and for you, and be available to listen to you. But most of all you will need to meet daily with Jesus, the One who makes all things new.

(NOTES TAKEN FROM Winston T. Smith; CCEF)