

## *Recovery from Affairs*

### **Repent**

- If you are the spouse who had the affair(s), you must be honest about and take total responsibility for the thoughts and behaviors that 1) led up to you seeking someone outside the marriage, 2) allowed you to indulge in the affair, and 3) caused you to continue the affair while deceiving your spouse.
- The word “repent” means to have deep regret, to turn away from sin, and to make amends to the one you hurt. Do not justify your actions or blame your spouse. Confessing to God, your spouse, and an accountability partner is imperative. However, do not share graphic sexual details of the affair with your spouse. This will only cause further trauma. Confess as often as your spouse needs to hear it. Endure this, and never minimize your offense.
- If you are the spouse who was betrayed, you must seek help for the trauma you are experiencing. Allow yourself to feel what is real inside you (shock, betrayal, anger, loss, distrust, shame, fear, depression, and anxiety). Write about these feelings daily to help process them. Pray that God will give you strength, peace, and hope. Get support from counselors, friends and family – do not keep secrets.
- Begin new stress reducing practices to calm your heart and brain. Exercise daily, eat good food, and sleep at least 8 hours at night. Read Bible passages that have to do with peace, comfort, and guarding your heart. In time, you can forgive. For now, focus on self-care and resting in the arms of Jesus.
- Don’t get focused on fixing the relationship with the adulterer – a quick fix would only be a band-aid on a festering wound. If you were not the best version of yourself before the affair occurred, admit that, write about it, and confess it to God and those who are your support system. Don’t allow your spouse to use your faults to justify the affair.

### **Repair**

- If you are the spouse who had the affair(s), you must make ongoing repair attempts for a long time. This doesn’t mean that your spouse will accept all your attempts – he/she has been deeply traumatized and may need time away from you for self-care. Be willing to offer any space that is requested (even if you have to move out of the home for a while).
- Read the book *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman to understand your spouse’s love language, and make repair attempts based on that understanding. Be patient and stay with this. Tell your spouse over and over how much you regret the betrayal, how sorry you are for the hurt you caused, and never make any excuses or shift blame. Tell your spouse every day how much you love and want him/her. Sincerely appreciate any kindness or attention he/she offers you.
- Get help to repair yourself first – don’t think marriage counseling is the immediate answer. Use counseling to better understand yourself and get a plan for change. Get accountability, read books, use online Christian helps, and most of all, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth so you don’t deceive yourself and others.
- If you are the spouse who was betrayed, don’t force yourself to trust again too quickly – trust was broken by your spouse, and he/she is the one responsible for building it back one faithful act at a time over the months to come. Your repair work is more about self-care and accepting the repair attempts of your spouse. If you in any way feel responsible for marital issues before the affair, own that and get individual counseling for it. Find a Christian support group and attend it regularly. Marriage counseling will come later but, for now, get yourself in better shape.

## Rebuild

For both spouses: Rebuilding is an ongoing process that has no end. Marriage is like a garden – it has to be well-tended or it will quickly become an ugly mess no one wants to deal with. If you want the benefits of a beautiful and productive garden, you have to invest in it and take good care of it – there is no way around this reality. How can you do this?

- Rebuild your relationship with God who created you and the concept of marriage.
- Rebuild your character and integrity (who you are when no one is looking).
- Rebuild your marital communication – learn proven tools and practices.
- Rebuild your marital problem-solving approaches to avoid emotional reactivity.
- Rebuild your emotional and physical intimacy.
- Rebuild your shared pleasurable experiences in everyday life.
- Rebuild your trust – one positive experience at a time.
- Rebuild your marriage boundaries and shared values.
- Rebuild your future hopes and dreams.
- Rebuild your marriage investment – counseling, time away together, marriage improvement content, etc.
- Rebuild and renew your marriage vows. (Ask for the handout: Relationship Desires Checklist)

Inspirational Verses:

Galatians 5:14 - “For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor (your spouse) as yourself.”

Proverbs 15:1 - “A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.”

Matthew 7:2 - “For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.”

Colossians 3:13 - “Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”

Mark 10:45 – “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Ephesians 5:25 – “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

1 Peter 4:8 – “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”