

The Wife's Perspective

When Your Husband Has Fallen Into Sexual Sin

Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services

877-370-9988

www.accounseling.org

info@accounseling.org



Psalm 71:1-3

"In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress."

A Very Important Message:

- You are not responsible for your husband's sexual sin.
- He is responsible for his sin (in thought and behavior) just as you are responsible for your own sin.

However...

- You must also search your heart to ensure you are carrying out the biblical duties of a wife.
- **Ephesians 5:22** *"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."*
- **1 Corinthians 7:5** *"Defraud ye not one the other,..."*
- **Colossians 3:18** *"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."*
- **Proverbs 27:15** *"A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike."*
- **Proverbs 21:9** *"It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."*

Why Your Perspective Matters

- Your reactions will impact how your husband progresses in his own recovery.
- Historical, familial, emotional, relational, and spiritual factors play a big role in how you react and process the situation.
- When a spouse falls into sexual sin, much of the effort goes into helping the one who has fallen. Sometimes, the needs of the spouse who has not fallen are neglected. You need to know it is okay to speak up and share your perspective and acknowledge your needs.

Isaiah 50:7

"For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

Who's To Blame?

- At times, people (friends, family, and ministers, etc.) put the bulk of the blame on the wife.
- Sometimes, one of the first questions they want to have answered is the extent to which the wife has been withholding sex from her husband.
- This unexpected and unjustified reaction from outsiders can spur a variety of reactions in you:
 - Self-doubt
 - Anger
 - Resentment
 - Bitterness
 - Hopelessness
 - Distrust of reaching out for help from others.

Scripture References

Jeremiah 15:18

“Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed?...”

Revelation 21:4

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Your Healing Journey

- Despite the fact your initial reactions may hinder you from seeking out support, remember you are responsible for taking the first step towards your own recovery.
- To help you along the way, you will need to connect with individuals who can listen to you without judgment, who can handle the intense emotions you will experience, and will walk with you along the journey towards healing, regardless of how long it may take.

“I know how difficult it is to find motivation to take first steps after a life-altering tragedy—of any kind. You are already flooded with feelings prompted by painful information. You have important practical things to attend to, but no energy to do anything. You may be getting too much advice or too little help to know how to move on. But only you can take your first steps on a healing journey, and they need to be *for you*. If you are facing a relationship damaged by sexual betrayal, nothing is more important right now than getting help for yourself. You are worth it! If you have children, getting help for yourself is the best thing you can do for them as well. If you are like I was, you are doing a lot of crying alone. You are obsessing about how this could have happened to you. You are replaying your life and wondering where you went wrong. You are beginning to feel crazy and out of control—alone. You need and deserve companionship now.”

—Debra Laaser in *Shattered Vows*

Laaser, Debra. (2008). *Shattered Vows*.

Why It Is Hard To Understand

- In the typical female's mind, it is extremely difficult to conceptualize, rationally and emotionally, why a husband would fall into sexual sin.
- Women are typically unable to remove the *emotional* component from sex in the way some men do.
- Since for women, sex is so much about an intimate emotional relationship, wives interpret men's struggles as a relational offense and evidence of a betrayal of their marriage.

Personal History Factors That May Impact Your Reactions

- If you have been more “sheltered” from sexuality (due to age, previous experience, family upbringing, etc.), the situation may seem worse in your mind.
- Conversely, if you have experienced sexual trauma in your past (abortion, abuse, rape, etc.), dealing with your husband's sexual struggles may be particularly difficult.
- It is not uncommon for men dealing with sexual addiction to be married to a wife with a trauma history of some kind.

Emotional Awareness

- Knowing *what* you are feeling, how *intense* it is, and *why* you are feeling it, is key to your healing and also to regaining emotional intimacy after the betrayal.
- Understanding and acknowledging emotions, (*any* and *every* emotion) allows you to be in a position to manage them appropriately.
- *Feeling* can be painful at times; however, it is an essential ingredient in building and re-building relationships.

Common Emotional Reactions

- Feel Betrayed, Rejected, and Hurt
- Anger
 - May be passive, aggressive, or both.
 - May also serve as a cover for the hurt and fear.
- Depression
 - Feelings of helplessness and/or intense sadness.
 - Could develop as a result of anger turned inward.
- Jealousy
 - Of husband's affections and intimacy (although addiction lacks intimacy).

Emotional Reactions cont.

- A Sense of Powerlessness
 - To compete with a fantasy image to which you can't possibly compare.
 - To control your husband or even yourself.
- Bitterness
 - Precipitated by unresolved anger.
- Damaged sense of self-worth; feel rejected.
- Negative feelings about your body-image.
- Confusion over your feelings about the marriage and about how your husband feels about it as well.

Common Behavioral Reactions

- Obsessive preoccupation with thoughts about the transgressions that have occurred.
- Extensive blaming to try and make your husband feel guilty enough to balance out your hurt.
- Defensiveness: denying any wrongdoing on your part.
- Becoming overly focused on trying to fix him.
- Becoming overly assertive; making sure none of your rights are trampled on again.

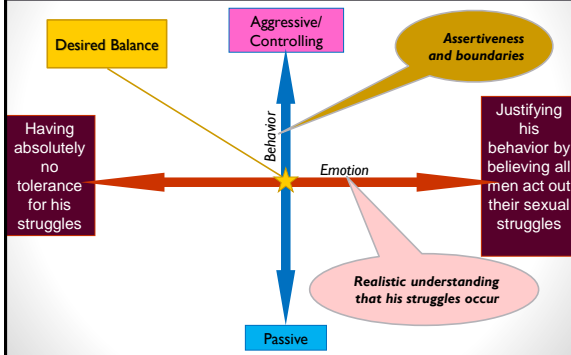
Behavioral Reactions cont.

- Attempting to know and control all aspects of your husband's life including his behaviors, thoughts, and emotions. (Note: A balance is needed between no accountability and controlling every move he makes.)
- Adopting the victim role.
- Cutting off all sexual activity with spouse.
- Coming to global conclusions:
 - "All men are sex addicts."
 - "Men can't be trusted."

Spiritual Reactions

- Spiritual struggles are common along with feeling hindrances in your relationship with God.
- You may question God's role in allowing this type of sin to enter your marriage.
- "Why me?" questions are also common.
- You may struggle with the practical application of Scriptural direction about forgiveness.

Spectrum Of Reactions



Managing Your Emotional Reactions

- Emotional: Share your emotional reactions with support people and with your husband. He needs to see and experience an accurate expression of how his actions have impacted you.
- Know your needs and act in accordance with what you need. Do not let the motivation be to simply reprimand or “punish” him.
- Acknowledging the emotions can lead you to the Lord for help. For instance, feeling powerless can lead you to rely on God’s power instead.

1 Peter 5:7 “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

Grieving Your Losses

- Many losses come as a result of sexual betrayal. Acknowledging these losses and allowing yourself to grieve them is essential for healing. The losses may include:

- Trust
- Employment losses
- Finances
- Health
- Reputation and respect
- Freedom
- Dreams for the future
- A sense of peace
- Confidence
- Innocence

Romans 8:26

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Scripture References

Psalm 31:9

“Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly.”

Psalm 109:22

“For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.”

Managing Your Behavioral Reactions

- The situation calls for consequences and changes in the relationship. Utilize counsel and wisdom as you decide how to respond (instead of reacting intensely and impulsively).
- You will need to set boundaries and consequences. Clearly articulating these and following through are essential in this process.
- The more of an intense desire you feel to want to *control* him and know every detail of his life, the more you should consider letting go and allowing a male accountability partner of your husband’s to have that role.

Decisions About Marital Sexuality

- Decisions about when and how to be sexually intimate with your husband after betrayal are very difficult.
- You are encouraged to seek counsel.
- Feeling “pressure” from him or others to resume intimacy, or feelings of fear about how your decision to be intimate will impact his recovery, can all interfere with this decision.
- **The decision to resume this level of connection must be out of a mutual desire for authentic intimacy consistent with God’s design.**

Managing Your Spiritual Reactions

- If you have felt betrayed by God in addition to being betrayed by your husband, first acknowledge your feelings and thoughts to God through prayer and/or journaling.
- Remember it was not God's will for your husband to sin.
- Then, begin to slowly reconnect with God. Consider meditating on verses that speak of God's trustworthiness, goodness, mercy, love, etc.
- Consider connecting with God in various ways: a nature-walk, listening to music, serving the less-fortunate, etc.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;"

Remember...

- You didn't cause your husband's sinful choices...you cannot control his choices...and you cannot cure him.

Isaiah 51:3 *"For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."*

Psalms 147:3 *"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."*

Laaser, Debra. (2008). Shattered Vows.

Couple Recovery

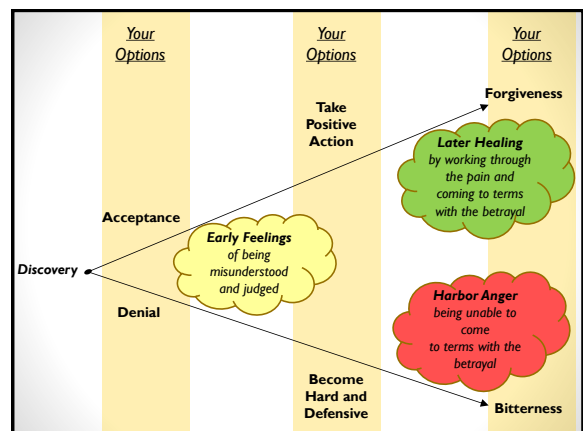
- Both you and your husband must each consider your own role in the marital problems.
- You are not exempt from participating in the recovery process; rather, you have an opportunity to take stock of your own issues that have impacted the marriage and will need to come to your own brokenness and dying to self.
- At the same time, your work on your issues should not diminish your husband's responsibility to deal with his sin.

2 Corinthians 5:18 *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."*

"The first pain she encounters is the pain of having to accept what's happening. It's easy for her to stop at that point and go into denial. The second pain she encounters is the pain of being misunderstood and judged, and it's easy for her to stop and become hard and defensive. The third pain she encounters is the pain of working through to forgiveness. She can stay here and become bitter—it hurts too much to go on. Stretching our hearts enough to come to terms with the betrayal can be excruciating. But stopping the work keeps the healing from coming."

—Laurie Hall in *An Affair of the Mind*

Hall, Laurie. (1996). An Affair of the Mind.



Working Through Forgiveness

- Working through forgiveness is a process that takes time and effort.
- Forgiving is not the same thing as forgetting, trusting, or reconciling.
- Forgiving him does not condone his sin or right the wrong; however, it will help you turn the offense over to God and help keep you from becoming bitter.

Forgiveness is Essential

- The ongoing practice of seeking forgiveness and being forgiving is essential to a healthy, Christ-centered relationship.
- Forgiveness need not be predicated upon confession and apology.
- Forgiveness is commanded in God's Word even if it isn't asked for.
- Forgiving and forgetting are not synonymous.
- Trust isn't a prerequisite for forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is intentional and is not easy or cheap.

Forgiveness & Reconciliation

Forgiveness

- Is a releasing of debt.
- Is commanded.
- Keeps bitterness from developing.
- Requires participation by only one party.
- Does not require an apology.
- Is extended with grace.
- Is always possible.

Reconciliation

- Takes two people, the offender and the offended, working together to reconnect, restore, and rebuild a relationship.
- Is not always possible.
- Is hard work and requires mutual trust.
- Steps needed:
 - Repentance
 - Restitution
 - Rehabilitation

Scripture References

Hebrews 12:15

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

Ephesians 4:31

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."

Why Forgive?

- Spiritual consequences of not forgiving:
 - Unforgiveness fosters bitterness which is a spiritual defiler. (**Hebrews 12:15**)
 - Unforgiveness interferes with sanctification as a person falls prey to self-centered reasoning.
 - God's forgiveness of us is predicated upon our forgiveness of others.
- Emotional and relational consequences of not forgiving:
 - Unforgiveness hinders our relationship with God.
 - Unforgiveness can eventually realign our thoughts, actions, and emotions with bitterness.

Hold On To The Truth

- Regardless of the end result of the betrayal, know that God cares about you, loves you, and will take care of you.
- What your husband has done or has not done does not determine your identity.
- Your relationship with the Lord determines your future and your identity. **No one** can take that from you.

Isaiah 41:10

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Specific Points Of Action

- Call ACCFS for a consultation with a counselor by phone or in person.
 - You can discuss your own struggles in a safe and confidential setting.
 - We can provide helpful materials—books, etc.
 - We can help you find a counselor in your area and/or support people.
- Seek spiritual support from your elder and/or ministers.
- Seek an older couple to support and mentor your marriage.
- Marital counseling may be needed as well.

A Future Together

- There is hope for a full recovery and peace after a time of trauma, distrust, and heartache.
- This requires a mutual commitment to each other and to the success of the relationship.
- This is accomplished by living out the attitudes of being accountable, humble, and honest.
- Good communication along with the sharing of fears and concerns, as well as hopes and dreams, is essential for full restoration.

Scripture References

James 3:18

“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

Psalms 37:5

“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”

Psalms 56:3

“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”

Recommended Readings For Wives

**** NOTE:** Not all of these resources may be helpful for you. Your readiness level and needs must be taken into consideration so you are able to absorb the information. Contact ACCFS for more details about these resources.

Recommended Readings For Wives

Informational handouts:

- *It's Not Your Fault the One You Love Uses Porn.* (1998). National Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families.
- “Forgiveness: What it is, What it isn't, and How to Do it.” Developed by the staff of ACCFS.
- “Support for Wives Feeling Betrayed...” Developed by the staff of ACCFS.

Recommended Readings For Wives

Books specifically for wives whose husbands have struggled sexually.

- Hall, Laurie. (1996). *An Affair of the Mind.* Wheaton: Tyndale House.
 - This book is helpful for wives of men who are dealing with pornography and other types of sexual sin. The author shares her personal experience with a husband who was addicted to pornography. Men who are struggling with sexual sin may also read this book so that they can develop insight into how their sin affects their wives, marriages, and families.
- Laaser, Debra. (2008). *Shattered Vows.* Zondervan.
 - For women who have been sexually betrayed by their husband, whether by addiction to pornography or affairs, this book will provide support and strength. The author shares her personal journey through betrayal and also shares insight from working with hundreds of hurting women in similar situations. Women will find guidance and practical tools for dealing with the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual implications of sexual betrayal.

Recommended Readings For Wives

Books for understanding men and their struggles

- Arterburn, Stephen & Stoeker, Fred. (2000). *Every Man's Battle*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press.
- Hart, Archibald. (1994). *The Sexual Man*. W Publishing Group.
- Feldhahn, Shaunti. (2004). *For Women Only*. Atlanta: Random House.
- Schaumburg, Dr. Harry W (1997). *False Intimacy*. Navpress