

A WIFE'S RESPONSE

To



UNFAITHFULNESS

Broken Covenant

If you are married to a man who has some type of sexual addiction, you know intense pain. His weakness might be pornography, prostitution, homosexuality, or affairs with other women. In my case, my husband's involved gender confusion. So though we may each have a different slant on it, we are basically in the same place when it comes to the source of our pain. I would describe it in two words – broken covenant. At some point, the marriage covenant was broken, then repeatedly, over and over again.

I remember our wedding day; I was a starry eyed bride of twenty. Although I knew that my husband had some issue regarding his gender, I was very naïve about it. I assumed that since he loved me and wanted to marry, these matters could not be very serious and we would go merrily on from there. I was sure that my love for him would be all he needed. I had no idea of the years that were to follow, years of pain and disappointment and turmoil.

My father, a minister, married us. He waked me down the aisle, and then performed the ceremony. As we stood before the altar, I in my lovely white gown, and Jeffrey in his black tuxedo, we repeated our vows to one another. It was a very special moment when we made our promises of fidelity, loyalty and faithfulness. And I kept the commitment. When we said, “forsaking all others and cleaving only to each other,” I meant it. And I assumed that my beloved meant it, too.

An Exclusive Relationship

This is an accurate description of our husband's lustful actions and the source of our anguish. Here we are – wives who have given their husbands an unflinching pledge of marital fidelity, while they have given their years, their time, their love, and their financial resources to those who are “strangers”. Our husbands have spent their wealth on those things that do not profit – investing in their addictions rather than their wives and children.

The more you understand the violation that comes with a broken

covenant, the deeper the pain goes. It is very real and absolutely legitimate. We are not emotional hypochondriacs, as our husbands have sometimes wanted to paint us. If you are in touch with reality, then you are in agony.

God's Identification with Our Pain

What a rare and precious experience it is when we have the opportunity to meet with other women who are walking a similar path. We don't have to explain ourselves to each other. We don't have to go into all of the elaborate details. We can look into each other's eyes and *just know*. Isn't it a relief to be with women who really understand? Suddenly we are no longer alone.

In a similar way, how important it is for us to know that God identifies with our pain. There was a time when I thought, "Sure, His disciples abandoned Him at one point, but that was not the same thing. They were his friends, not His wife! It cannot be compared to the marriage relationship. I know Christ's experience was painful, but it was so different from my situation."

Then I found the book of Hosea and I lived in that book for a couple of months. Hosea was the "weeping prophet of Israel," just as Jeremiah was the "weeping prophet of Judah." In Hosea, God speaks of His relationship with Israel as a husband with an adulterous wife. He even told Hosea to go and marry a prostitute. He wanted Hosea to know first hand what a grievous thing it

was to marry (and love) an adulteress.

So the source of God's pain is the same as our own – a broken covenant.

It is precious for me to know that God fully understands because He is "all knowing". But on the human side, He has exhibited this in a very specific way in Hosea. If you study and read through this book, you will enter into a deep appreciation of how much God does understand your pain.

The broken covenant is described in Hosea 6:7 when God says; they have dealt faithlessly and treacherously with Me." We know how it feels. The terms of His covenant were: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. (Luke 10:27) He is talking about an exclusive relationship, just as when we took those vows, saying "I am your only wife. I am to be your lonely love in this way. There shall be no other. We're leaving all others so that we can cleave only to each other.

But our experience has proven otherwise. We know about lies, deceit and treachery. We have lived with them for a one time. We know about someone not being stable while we remained faithful. That's not just patting ourselves on the back, but simply saying, "Hey, When we made the commitment, we kept it!"

Deep inside (or perhaps very openly)

you may be angry and frustrated with God because this happened in your life. You were so certain God had brought you and your husband together, and then look what happened...and where has God been in all of it?

It's time to meditate on the truth of God's intimate identification with your pain. Read Hosea and ask the Holy Spirit to make it come alive in you. It can be a new step of healing in your life.

God's Response to a Covenant-Breaker

So far, we have touched on the source of our pain as being a broken covenant. The exclusive relationship of husband and wife has been violated by other loves. In the book of Hosea we discovered God's intimate identification with our pain as He speaks of His relationship with Israel as a husband to an adulteress wife.

Now we are going to look at the way God response to a covenant breaker. For this, we go to the second chapter of Hosea and to a book entitled *Bold Love* by Dan Allender and Tremper Longman where the message in Hosea is echoed in the chapter entitled *Loving a Fool*. "A fool's folly must be exposed, consequences experienced, and the failure of love discussed and worked through toward repentance,"¹ (using the term fool is not demeaning our husbands. They are Biblical fools in the truest sense. Anyone who is involved in an addictive cycle is a fool, according to Proverbs, for a "fool returns to his

folly" over and over and over again. You can probably relate to this.

1. Exposure

First, let's look at –exposure. In Hosea 2:10, God is speaking in regards to Israel: And now will I uncover her lewdness and her shame in the sight of her loves, and no one shall rescue her out of My hand. The first step in God's response to a covenant breaker is exposure. God is not going to ignore or overlook Israel's sin. He is exposing it in order for Israel to begin facing the condition of her heart. In bold love the author's adder this issue:

Adultery or any form of sexual immorality should be viewed as a serious breaking of the covenant of marriage. I would not argue that once immorality has been committed there is no hope for reconciliation, but the deceit and foolishness involved in order for immorality to occur are rarely recovered without a radical change.²

Have you seen that ? What a scurrying around there is to patch up with leak with rationalizations, excuses, blaming others and pity parties to name a few. They want to get that boat patched up just long enough to get it afloat again. It's filling up with water and they might just go under.

But guess who's right by their side, bailing out water as fast as we can? If you we can keep the water level down, the situation doesn't appear to be quite so critical. Yes, the opposite response to exposure is that well worn (but accurate) word: denial. In Melody Betty's book *Co Dependent*

No More defines denial as “*ignoring information that I don’t want to deal with.*”³

You have got at least two people in denial. The husband is wanting to ignore the information about his behavior and it’s consequences. And the wife is ignoring information about he husband’s behavior and how she feels about it. Both do this because if they begin facing it, the pain hits even harder. But again, I quote from *Bold Love: Love is not naïve, and does not ignore harm nor redefine it to make it more palatable.*”⁴

I spent over twenty years of marriage either ignoring harm or redefining it, often under the guise of “Christian love and forgiveness>” but this is not God’s response. He says, “I am going to uncover their lewdness and no one is going to rescue them. I am gong to block all the escape routes. It is time they faced up to their sin.”

The purpose of exposure is “to leave the fool alone to wrestle with God.”⁵

2. Consequences

Which leads us to the next step – consequences. In Hosea 2:11 God says: I will cause to cease all her mirth, her feat making, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts and appointed festive assemblies. The party’s over! The religious front is crumbling. Going to church on Sunday morning and praising God, and then acting out the next day, then coming back the next week has to come to end.

Continuing in Hosea 2:12:13, God spells out the consequences: I will

lay waste her vines and her fig trees of which she has said, these are my reward that my lovers have given me...and I will visit (punishment) upon her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned incense to them...and went after her lovers, and forgot Me, says the Lord.

We know what it is like to be forgotten when our husbands have gone after other lovers...males, females, pornography, fantasies. We have experienced the consequences of their adultery, but have they?

Another word for consequence is **pain**. The definition given in *Bold Love* is “*a warning and /or a small does of pain that alerts others to violation of love. A merciful bit of discomfort, pain or loss that invites the offender to deal with his harm.*”⁶

Love has been violated, and it should not be ignored. So there needs to be a measure of pain that wakes the person up to the violation of love. It is merciful because it is intended to lead the person to repentance.

The opposite response is to protect he offender. I would do this time and time again. I protected my husband like a mother does with her child because of my fear of him facing consequences through his actions. There is a real good chance that you know what it is like to respond by protecting the offender (our loved one).

One wife has shared “I protected my husband through premature peacemaking. When I would discover he had been acting out, I would initially be strong to confront,

drawing my boundaries with clarity and resolve. But then he would be remorseful and tell me that I was the last person he ever wanted to hurt and how sorry he was for what he had done (And he truly was sorry at the time).

He would tell me of his desire to change and to be free from the inner torment. When I would see his pain, I would begin feeling sorry for him and want to relieve comforting mode. I would become his comforter—the understanding, anger and hostility. After all, wasn't he enough pain? Why should I add to it? So I hid most of my pain from him."

That was exactly what he did not need. He needed his pain to intensify, not lessen. Consequences will vary according to the situation and the people involved and what measure of recovery both husband and wife have experienced. But consequences must come before the next step will be fruitful. "When the fool's pain is sufficiently high and something supernatural is working his heart, then it is time to talk".⁸

3. Discussion Working Through to Repentance.

Now we are ready for discussion working through to repentance. Continuing in Hosea 2:14-15, *Therefore, behold I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and I will speak tenderly and to her heart. There I will give her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor (troubling) to be for her a door of hope and expectation. And she shall sing there and response as in the day so of her youth, and as at*

the time when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

In *Bold Love*, the authors emphasize this as the third step, not the second one. "A serious, heartfelt discussion of the fool's sin, damage, style of relations and wounds ought not to precede or take of the place of exposure and consequences."¹⁰ Usually we want to begin the discussion right after the exposure, but without consequences – without the wilderness and the Valley of Achor (troubling) –there will be no repentance. "The fool must have some sings of sadness, grief, or sorrow over sin before lengthy, and productive conversation can occur."¹¹

And we want to substitute discussion for consequences. We see the picture so clearly, we are sure just a bit more clarification is needed for him to "see the light". But a fool is extremely self-centered and involved in his own pain, and he cannot remotely understand the damage and hurt he has inflicted until there has been some genuine repentance. He just does not understand; he is focused on his own issues, not ours. "The temptation to create conversations that we are designed to get the fool 'to see' is stronger than the most addictive drug known to humankind. I can identify with this. The temptation must be resisted, fought, and fled from, however, or else the fool will trample over the pearls spread before his cloven feet. If and when a fool begins to feel some sadness over his sin, discussion should be poignant, penetrating, and visionary".¹²

This was alluded to a few paragraphs back in the discussion on premature peacemaking. When my husband began to “fess up”, instead of easing his pain, I needed to help intensify it. “What is required is a mirror that reflects the behavior”.¹³ We need to be those mirrors for our husbands to reflect back and affirm the pain and damage they have done... enlarge upon it; amplify it. This does not mean pointing a finger of accusation, but it does call for honestly expressing the feelings we have as a result of their sin.

This is being true to our selves for a change. For so long we have denied our feelings and have been unable or unwilling to let our husband s know how we feel. As a wife, I hid my fear and anguish from my husband and everyone else. I would usually cry when he was not around, but would ‘suck it up’ when I was with him. I knew it would cause him some pain to see my pain (to differing degrees at different times, perhaps, but true nevertheless). To shelter him from that was a big mistake.

A husband’s response to your “mirror” is very important to note. It is a very enlightening time and can give you a fairly accurate picture of where he is in his journey. If he gets angry and defensive, with statements like, “what do you want out of me, anyway, perfection?” If he begins to make excuses for himself to accusations like, “Well Miss Holiness, you’re not above sin yourself. Let me point out a few character flaws you may have missed.” Or, “if you would only be more understanding and quit

condemning me, I might be able to make better progress.

Time out. No more discussion right now. The consequences have not yet “taken”—a little more pain is needed before going back to the discussion again. Remember, the more pain, the more motivation to repent.

That’s what God was doing with Israel. The purpose of the Valley of Achor was to turn it into a Door of Hope. But just like Israel, we cannot skip that Valley of Troubling if we want genuine, lasting change. There is no way we can, and there is no way our husband’s can.

So let’s reflect on what we have covered thus far. We have discovered that the source of our pain is a broken covenant. We have begun to see God’s identification with our pain. And this time we have learned the basics of how God deals with covenant breaker through exposure, consequences and discussion working through repentance. In the Part III, we are going to look more deeply into the kind of love that is involved in “moving into another’s life and with divine purpose.”¹⁷ This could also be termed *collaborating with God*.

Collaborating With God

Do you see the world ‘co-labor’? More is at stake than our happiness, our marriage, our peace of mind, our well-being, and our children’s lives. To be sure, these are all very important and are not to be ignored. But sometimes we tend to stop there. We just want things to get better for

me and mine. But God wants us to begin to collaborate with Him and move in divine purpose, not just human purpose encompasses our human purpose, but it is not limited to that. What are God's purposes for me and for my husband? We need to broaden our vision.

God had a purpose for Israel. It was to honor Him, to bring Him glory, to be fruitful, to have intimate relationship with Him. It is the same for us.

Before going any further, I feel the need to insert a side note for any wife who has just been hit with the first stage of exposure. It's OK if you not thinking in terms of divine purpose at this particulate point. Don't feel condemned if all you can think about right now is your pain and what is gong to happen to your marriage your children. God is in this with you and fully understand your anguish and inability to go beyond that at this time. Pour out your heart to Him. And also ask Him to give you someone in whom you can confide and who can walk with you through this dark valley.

But for many other wives who are reading this I, I believe God is saying that it time to get a vision bigger than just you and your four walls. He wants you to begin to search out and see how you can collaborate with Him in His divine purpose for yourself and your husband.

Sometimes we are so focused on our husband's sin against us that we fail to acknowledge the significance of his sin against God and god's

purposes—his broken covenant with God. In Psalms 51:4 when David is confessing his adultery and murder, he comes to the point of crying out, "Against You, your only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in Your sight."

Sometimes we fail to see the significance of this stage of their repentance. We just want them to focus on how they are sinned against *us*. Forget anyone else! We would like to hear "against you and you only have I sinned" directed toward ourselves. But David had gotten to the point with God that everything else paled in significance. He had sinned against the Holy God. This was uppermost in his mind. He had violated his relationship with this One who had walked and talked with him and for whom he had composed love songs. Sometimes we want our husbands to deal with us and our bottom line, not God and His bottom line. But the divine purpose that God has for them will never be fulfilled if they just end up acknowledging their sin against us and work on getting our marriage relationship on tracked again,. Are we going to be satisfied with that? What about the divine purposes in their lives?

When confronted with this, we being to get an inkling of the work God needs to do in our own hearts that will cause us to desire above all else for them to say to Him, "Against You and You only have I sinned." That's where things really begin to get rolling. That is where the hope of restoration comes alive?

In order to collaborate with God,

bold love is needed. Bold love is demonstrating courage and grace by setting aside our personal agenda. Bold love is courageous. It takes courage to love in ways that we are not accustomed to and in actions that press beyond the perimeters of our comfort zone. So bold love take courage!

Courage to do what? Courage to “set aside our personal agenda.” What is our personal agenda? Mine varied from day to day, even moment to moment, but it was mostly rooted in self-protection aptly described as the self centered commitment to act without courage., compassion boldness, and tenderness for the sake of the other.”¹⁶

Some days it was, “god, just give me relief from the pain.” Some days I was trying to pull of a rescue. Other days my agenda was “Oh god, I ant revenge!” or this could change to, “Well, at least lets’ have some solid restitution Make it up to me, Bud, make it up to me! The next day it might e escape; I’d just want to forget the whole thing, shuck it all off and go start my life somewhere else. Then there were times I just longed for reconciliation.

My personal agenda had its ups and downs! But through it all, God was working in my heart to set aside my agenda and submit my heart to Him and His divine purpose.

Seeking the Sinner’s Well-Being

Next, we come to moving “humbly into the world of others”. That’s a tough one. I went through a time

when, honestly my sin was much great than my husband’s. I had so much spiritual pride and arrogance, it was nauseating. But god was faithful to reveal it to me and initiate repentance (though it took a much longer than he’s had liked!). We can be so blinded to our won sin. We need to ask the Lord to search our own hearts to ‘see if there be nay wicked way in me.”

What are we to have in view as we collaborate with God in our husband’s life? We are to have “their well being in view.” This is where we can get muddled in our concept of what constitutes their well being to hide from him my pain. But protecting him from consequence s was not his best interests, nor in mine. When he would confess his acting to me, I tended to offer him what I would term ‘instant forgiveness’. I did not allow myself to name the sin for what it was—adultery—because that would have been far to devastating and much harder to forgive. What I called forgiveness was “just an avoidance of the offense...in order to achieve an end other than biblical reconciliation.”¹⁴

I would forgive to avoid conflict. I just wanted to have some sense of things getting back to normal in our home. I would offer reconciliation before my husband had truly repented. Again, I did not have his well being in view.

Costly Reconciliation

Reconciliation is costly for both the offended and the offender. The

offended forgives (cancels) the debt by now bringing immediate judgment and termination of the relationship, as might be reasonable and expected, given the offense. Instead mercy is offered in order to invite the offender back into the relationship. The cost for the offender is in withholding judgment and instead offering the possibility of a restored relationship. The cost for the offender is repentance. Biblical forgiveness is never unconditional and one sided. It is not letting other go off scot-free, forgiven, and enabled to do harm again without any consequence. Instead forgiveness is an invitation to reconciliation, not blind, cheap granting of it...¹⁵

That is food for reflection and prayer!

Now let's see where we are in our definition of what bold love is: **bold love is having the courage of setting aside our personal agenda to move humbly into the world of others with their view, willing to risk further pain our souls...**

Wait a minute! Enough is enough! Risk further pain in my soul? No thank you. I think I have had my share. Just how much pain does co-laboring involve?

Drawing the Line with God

This is the place where wives can draw the line with God, dig their heels in and go no further. I have seen it especially when God nudges the wife to begin offering the gift of trust once again to her husband.

There is timing or this (as was mentioned in preceding paragraphs) for there should be some evidence of some fruits of repentance. But there come a time when God (if He has not already) is going to nudge you to begin to offer that gift of trust against your husband.

I sue the word "gift" intentionally. The philosophy that trust must be earned has its limitations. Using my relationship with my husband as an example, he had chalked up an overwhelming debt over more than 20 years. A debt of betraying my trust, of making promises only to break them, of living a double life, of deceit, manipulation of taking advantage of my love for him...all so he could hold on to his secret love. What could he have done to convince me that I should ever trust him again? He was too deep in debt. It was impossible. I had seen some fruits of repentance, but what guarantee did I have that this would continue.

The dilemma is that we want a fool-proof guarantee before we will give up the control we have and open ourselves to begin to trust again. What we start out as a legitimate boundary can turn into a barricade, a fortress that gives us a sense of safety by not allowing our husband access to our heart. But more than this, it does not allow Jesus access. In order for trust to be restored, we have to relinquish our control to Christ.

Dealing with our control issues

In the February 1991 issue of "Regeneration news", Alan and Willa Medinger have an excellent

article on this issue of control of woman who had been deeply wounded. They point out that a determination to maintain control is seen as a means to safety and security; to keep from being hurt again...to die to control is to die to our own way of self protection. There will be pain, and we may to test God over and over again. But through our failure and God's faithfulness we will eventually know that our old way was simply a broken cistern that could hold no water...to move from a lifetime of control and self protection is an awesome thing for a woman who has been deeply hurt. It is only possible through the power of Jesus Christ, through His Spirit living in us."9

When I was able to relinquish my control to Jesus I had come to know a deeper level of the One who could restore my trust. If we look to our husband, we are looking in the wrong direction and at the wrong source. They cannot do anything to restore our trust. Not really. The debt is too big. A broken covenant is a broken covenant, whether for 20 years or 20 minutes

The Centrality of The Cross

If this happen, we must look at God's ultimate response to a covenant breaker: the cross. And if we are collaborating with Him in His divine purposes, we must go to the cross – the same place our husbands must go.

The cross speaks of exposure.
The cross speaks of consequences.
The cross speaks of repentance.

It is at the cross where the debt is paid in full and the gift of reconciliation's offered. Listen to the words of Hosea, the weeping prophet of Israel who knew personally what it is like to be married to a covenant-breaker, and how spoke on behalf of God to a people who were deep in debt:

And I will betroth you to Me for ever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, and in steadfast love, and in mercies. I will betroth you to Me in stability and in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord. And I will sow her for Myself anew in the land, and I will have pity, mercy and love for her who had not obtained pity, mercy and love, and I will say to those who were not My people, You are My people, and they shall say, You are my God!
Hosea 2:19-20, 22

It is true that we are risking further pain in our soul. We cannot omit the end of the quotation regarding bold love "in order to be an aroma of life to some and aroma of death to others."

When we co-labor with God and move with divine purpose in the lives of our husbands, we have no guarantee that they will change. This might be an 'aroma of death' for the relationship. When Jesus moved with divine purpose in the life of Judas, it was an aroma of death. With Peter, it was an aroma of life. Same Lord. Death for one, life for the other. And so there is no built in guarantee that our husbands will change. But there is an absolute guarantee that we will be changed...more into Christ's likeness...more into an intimate

relationship with Him growing in love and commitment.

Let it be, Lord let it be.

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Recommended Reading For Wives

An Affair of the Mind by Laurie Hall

Bold Love by Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III

Boundaries by John Townsend & Henry Cloud

Co-Dependent No More by Melody Beatty

From Bondage to Bonding by Nancy Groom

Heart to Heart About Men by Nancy Groom

Living with Your Husband's Secret Wars by Marsha means

Love Must be Tough by James Dobson

Pain and Pretending by Rich Buhler

Restoring the Wounded Woman by Melinda Fish

Endnotes:

1 Dan b. Allender & Tremper Longman III, Bold Love (Colorado Springs: Navpress 1992), 270

2 Ibid., 279

3. Melody Bettie, Codependnt No More (new York: Harper/Hazeldon, 1987)

4. Allender & Longman, 215

5. Ibid., 275

6. Ibid., 245

7. Ibid., 277

8. Ibid., 280

9. Ibid., 281

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 274

13. Ibid. 278

14., Ibid

15. Ibid., 19

16. Ibid., 58

17. Ibid., 30

18. Ibid., 161, 162

19. Alan and Willa Medinger, "Regeneration News", Feb. 1991, 1-3.

We pray that this brochure allows to you know that you are not alone. There are other wives that know right where you are, what you are feeling and understand what you are going through with the difficultness of having your dear husband struggle with his gender.

God has not left you or forsaken you.

My mother had taught me many lessons through out life. The most important and valuable lesson that she has demonstrated to me was that the Lord had not left her nor had God forsaken her.

It was God alone who gave her the strength to hold on and it is God who will give you the strength you need. These are the things I pray for you.

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