

Unfaithful Mate

Compiled by Dr. Dan Cheatham, www.devotional.net

Written by Dr. James Dobson and The Message Bible

As a pastor, I am regularly required to help people who are victims or violators in their marriage covenant. Today's cultural breakdown of morality, marriage and the family unit is at an epidemic level, in my opinion. But I hope the following answers to questions which are quotes by [Dr. James Dobson](#), will minister to you. Dr. Dobson is the man of God whom I respect to be the foremost authority on marriage and family issues in the greater Body of Christ today. If you have a spouse that has been unfaithful to you and is committing adultery, or has a "soul-tie" relationship with another person, you will find these questions and answers very helpful. You should reference them over and over again to glean more grace and wisdom. I also recommend purchasing Dr. James Dobson's book, "[Love Must Be Tough](#)," for further help in your crisis. At the end of Dr. Dobson's answers below, I will also briefly address the situation.

Question:

Why does my husband treat me with indifference when I beg him not to leave me?

Early this year, my husband of 11 years announced that he didn't love me anymore. Joe told me that he would be leaving, though by begging and pleading with him I convinced him to stay for a while. Then one night he became so cruel and said many mean things before walking out. Every time I see him I humiliate myself. I beg him to call the kids and me, but he only says, "I don't want to talk to you." I tell him how much I love him, and he'll reply, "I have no love for you! I don't hate you, but I don't love you either." I was recently told by my doctor that I must have surgery on my eyes next week and that I might lose my vision. Out of fear and panic, I broke down and called my husband, but he responded with indifference to the news. I asked if he would take me to the hospital and stay in the waiting room while I had the surgery. Joe hesitated and then said, "Well, I guess so." Why is Joe acting this way to me? Is there something I am doing wrong?

Dr. Dobson's Answer:

I'm going to speak very directly to you, although I understand the pain that you're going through. There is no greater heartache in life than to be rejected by the one you love. By God's help, however, you will survive the crisis that has beset your home.

With that, let me say that the compulsion that is driving you to plead for Joe's attention and love is systematically destroying your last glimmer of hope for reconciliation. By groveling before him, you are stripping yourself of all dignity and respect. Those two attitudes are critical ingredients in any stable and fulfilling relationship, and you are systematically destroying them.

This is the message you are conveying inadvertently: "Oh, Joe, I need you so badly. I can't make it without you. I spend my days waiting for you to call and am crushed when the phone doesn't ring. Won't you please let me talk to you occasionally? I'll take you any way I can have you -- even if you want to walk all over me. I am desperate here without you."

This is a classic panic reaction, and it is leading you to appease your husband. Appeasement is virtually never successful in human relationships. In fact, it often leads directly to war, whether between husbands and wives or between antagonistic nations. Attempts by one side to buy off an aggressor or offender may seem like proposals of peace, but in most cases they merely precipitate further insult and conflict. Nothing destroys a romantic relationship more quickly than for a person to throw himself or herself, weeping and clinging, on the back of the cool partner to beg for mercy. That makes the wayward spouse even more anxious to escape from the leech that

threatens to suck his lifeblood. He may pity the wounded partner and wish that things were different, but he can rarely bring himself to love again under those circumstances.

You need to understand that Joe's withdrawal from the relationship is directly linked to his quest for freedom. He is feeling suffocated and wants to escape from the marriage. By humiliating yourself and clinging to his ankles each time you meet, you increase his desire to get away. The more he struggles to gain his freedom, the more he feels your clutches around him. It becomes a vicious cycle.

Question:

How can I deal with my wife blaming me for her adultery?

My wife tried to make me feel guilty when she left. She angrily blamed me for the divorce despite my desperate attempts to hold things together. I'm not a perfect man, but I loved her and would never have left. But in her mind, I failed so miserably as a husband that she was forced to run around with her boss! Can you believe that? She blamed me for her adultery!

Dr. Dobson's Answer:

Your wife is trying to transfer her guilt to you. Nearly every spouse does something similar when engaging in infidelity. Guilt is a very painful emotion, and the person who is in bed with a new lover is very vulnerable to it. Such people must find a way to deal with the condemnation of their own consciences. They have torn up a home, rejected their spouse, wounded their children, and jeopardized their future. Such outrageous behavior demands an explanation of some sort. Thus, they construct a vigorous defense against moral condemnation, usually by shifting blame to the spouse.

Ask any victim of an affair; he or she has probably heard a version of four specific rationalizations designed to handle several sources of guilt. They are:

1. Marital guilt. "I know that what I'm doing is difficult for you now, but someday you will understand that it's for the best. I never really loved you, even when we were young. In fact, we should never have gotten married in the first place. Furthermore, this divorce is really your fault. You drove me to it by (insert grievances here, such as frigidity, in-law problems, nagging, overwork, or all the foregoing)."

This message has a transparent purpose. The first sentence, above, marvelously purifies the motives of the unfaithful spouse. It says in effect, "I'm really doing this for your good."

The second sentence is also a beauty. It is designed to serve as an "annulment" to the marriage instead of a cruel abandonment of a loved one. By saying that they should never have gotten married, their union becomes an unfortunate mistake rather than a relationship that God Himself ordained and cemented. (Henry VIII used this approach to eject his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.) Then by putting the remaining responsibility on the other party, the blame is successfully transferred from the guilty to the innocent. So much for wedding vows. Now let's deal with the children.

2. Parental guilt. "This will be hard on the kids for a while, but they'll be better off in the long run. It certainly isn't healthy for them to see us fight and argue like we've been doing. Besides, I will spend just as much time with them after things settle down as I do now."

Zap! Zap! Guilt over the children is also tucked away. Would you believe that Dad's escapade with another woman or Mom's flight with Don Juan is actually a constructive thing? Never mind what the children see and comprehend with their big, beautiful eyes. Pay no heed to the conclusions they draw about why Mommy or Daddy left and why he or she doesn't love them anymore and why God let it happen and why the divorce may

have been their fault and why life is so painful and scary. Try to ignore the fact that everything stable has just come unstitched in the lives of some very impressionable and sensitive little people. Don't think about it and maybe your pounding heart will settle down. Guilt over the children can be the toughest to rationalize, but, fortunately, hundreds of books and tapes are available today that will help you silence your writhing conscience.

3. Social guilt. "I'm sure our friends won't understand at first, and I can hardly wait to hear what your mother will have to say. But it's like I told the pastor last week, our divorce is really no one's fault. We've just outgrown each other. People change as the years go by, and relationships have to change to accommodate them." (If a woman is speaking she may say: "Besides, I am entitled to do what's best for me once in a while. I've given my entire life to everyone else; now it's time for me to think of myself. It's only fair that I fit into the picture at some point, and this is it. Anyway, what's right for me will prove best for you and the children, too.")

This line of reasoning has been provided for women today almost word for word by the more radical elements of the feminist movement. It is only one of many rationalizations by which selfishness can be purified and made to appear altruistic. Three down and one to go.

4. Divine guilt. "I've prayed about this decision, and I am now certain that God approves of what I've chosen to do."

There it is in living color--the ultimate rationalization. If the Creator in His infinite wisdom has taken the matter under advisement and judged the divorce to be in the best interest of everyone, who can argue that point further? The conversation is over. Sin has been sanctified. Guilt is expunged. Self-respect is restored, and, alas, evil has prevailed. Having settled the "big four," every moral and spiritual obstacle is removed. The stage is set for further infidelity and eventual divorce.

Dan Cheatham's comments: Marriage reconciliation and restoration is possible and preferable if true repentance is demonstrated by a cheating spouse. With the assistance of counselors and much prayer on both spouses parts, a marriage can be healed and made even stronger. But true repentance **MUST** happen. All contact with inappropriate relationships must be severed forever, and points of contact for accountability must be established. Spouses must be willing to go through a **PROCESS**. Asking forgiveness is an **EVENT**, but reconciliation is a **PROCESS** that must be worked through over time. And this process requires dedication and patience.

Below are marriage and divorce passages by Jesus, Paul and Malachi out of "The Message Bible" version, which I feel best captures the spirit of the Bible on the subjects of marriage, adultery, divorce, unfaithfulness, cheating, etc. I trust they will be helpful to you and enlighten you with further wisdom in handling your situation.

Luke 16:18 MSG - *Using the legalities of divorce as a cover for lust is adultery.*

Matthew 19:3-12 MSG - *One day the Pharisees were badgering him: "Is it legal for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?" He answered, "Haven't you read in your Bible that the Creator originally made man and woman for each other, male and female? And because of this, a man leaves father and mother and is firmly bonded to his wife, becoming one flesh - no longer two bodies but one. Because God created this organic union of the two sexes, no one should desecrate his art by cutting them apart." They shot back in rebuttal, "If that's so, why did Moses give instructions for divorce papers and divorce procedures?" Jesus said, "Moses provided for divorce as a concession to your hardheartedness, but it is not part of God's original plan. I'm holding you to the original plan, and holding you liable for adultery if you divorce your faithful wife and then marry someone else. I make an exception in cases where the spouse has committed adultery." Jesus' disciples objected, "if those are the terms of marriage, we're stuck. Why get married?" But Jesus said, "Not everyone is mature enough to live a married life. It requires a certain aptitude and grace. Marriage isn't for everyone. Some, from birth seemingly, never give marriage a thought. Others never get asked - or accepted. And some decide not to get married for*

kingdom reasons. But if you're capable of growing into the largeness of marriage, do it."

Mark 10:11 MSG - Jesus gave it to them straight: "A man who divorces his wife so he can marry someone else commits adultery against her. And a woman who divorces her husband so she can marry someone else commits adultery."

1 Corinthians Chapter 6 MSG (YOU MAY SKIP THIS IF YOU WISH AND READ CHAPTER SEVEN BELOW. However, Chapter 6 is preparatory to Paul's counsel on marriage issues which is in Chapter 7.)

And how dare you take each other to court! When you think you have been wronged, does it make any sense to go before a court that knows nothing of God's ways instead of a family of Christians? The day is coming when the world is going to stand before a jury made up of Christians. If someday you are going to rule on the world's fate, wouldn't it be a good idea to practice on some of these smaller cases? Why, we're even going to judge angels! So why not these everyday affairs? As these disagreements and wrongs surface, why would you ever entrust them to the judgment of people you don't trust in any other way?

I say this as bluntly as I can to wake you up to the stupidity of what you're doing. Is it possible that there isn't one levelheaded person among you who can make fair decisions when disagreements and disputes come up? I don't believe it. And here you are taking each other to court before people who don't even believe in God! How can they render justice if they don't believe in the God of justice?

These court cases are an ugly blot on your community. Wouldn't it be far better to just take it, to let yourselves be wronged and forget it? All you're doing is providing fuel for more wrong, more injustice, bringing more hurt to the people of your own spiritual family.

Don't you realize that this is not the way to live? Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom. A number of you know from experience what I'm talking about, for not so long ago you were on that list. Since then, you've been cleaned up and given a fresh start by Jesus, our Master, our Messiah, and by our God present in us, the Spirit.

Just because something is technically legal doesn't mean that it's spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I'd be a slave to my whims.

You know the old saying, "First you eat to live, and then you live to eat"? Well, it may be true that the body is only a temporary thing, but that's no excuse for stuffing your body with food, or indulging it with sex. Since the Master honors you with a body, honor him with your body!

God honored the Master's body by raising it from the grave. He'll treat yours with the same resurrection power. Until that time, remember that your bodies are created with the same dignity as the Master's body. You wouldn't take the Master's body off to a whorehouse, would you? I should hope not.

There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one." Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never "become one." There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another. Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.

Chapter 7 MSG: PAUL'S COUNSEL ON MARRIAGE ISSUES

Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me. First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations?

Certainly—but only within a certain context. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it.

I'm not, understand, commanding these periods of abstinence—only providing my best counsel if you should choose them. Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.

I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.

And if you are married, stay married. This is the Master's command, not mine. If a wife should leave her husband, she must either remain single or else come back and make things right with him. And a husband has no right to get rid of his wife.

For the rest of you who are in mixed marriages—Christian married to non-Christian—we have no explicit command from the Master. So this is what you must do. If you are a man with a wife who is not a believer but who still wants to live with you, hold on to her. If you are a woman with a husband who is not a believer but he wants to live with you, hold on to him. The unbelieving husband shares to an extent in the holiness of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is likewise touched by the holiness of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be left out; as it is, they also are included in the spiritual purposes of God.

On the other hand, if the unbelieving spouse walks out, you've got to let him or her go. You don't have to hold on desperately. God has called us to make the best of it, as peacefully as we can. You never know, wife: The way you handle this might bring your husband not only back to you but to God. You never know, husband: The way you handle this might bring your wife not only back to you but to God. And don't be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. Where you are right now is God's place for you. Live and obey and love and believe right there. God, not your marital status, defines your life. Don't think I'm being harder on you than on the others. I give this same counsel in all the churches.

Were you Jewish at the time God called you? Don't try to remove the evidence. Were you non-Jewish at the time of your call? Don't become a Jew. Being Jewish isn't the point. The really important thing is obeying God's call, following his commands.

Stay where you were when God called your name. Were you a slave? Slavery is no roadblock to obeying and believing. I don't mean you're stuck and can't leave. If you have a chance at freedom, go ahead and take it. I'm simply trying to point out that under your new Master you're going to experience a marvelous freedom you would never have dreamed of. On the other hand, if you were free when Christ called you, you'll experience a delightful "enslavement to God" you would never have dreamed of. All of you, slave and free both, were once held hostage in a sinful society. Then a huge sum was paid out for

your ransom. So please don't, out of old habit, slip back into being or doing what everyone else tells you. Friends, stay where you were called to be. God is there. Hold the high ground with him at your side.

The Master did not give explicit direction regarding virgins, but as one much experienced in the mercy of the Master and loyal to him all the way, you can trust my counsel. Because of the current pressures on us from all sides, I think it would probably be best to stay just as you are. Are you married? Stay married. Are you unmarried? Don't get married. But there's certainly no sin in getting married, whether you're a virgin or not. All I am saying is that when you marry, you take on additional stress in an already stressful time, and I want to spare you if possible.

I do want to point out, friends, that time is of the essence. There is no time to waste, so don't complicate your lives unnecessarily. Keep it simple—in marriage, grief, joy, whatever. Even in ordinary things—your daily routines of shopping, and so on. Deal as sparingly as possible with the things the world thrusts on you. This world as you see it is on its way out.

I want you to live as free of complications as possible. When you're unmarried, you're free to concentrate on simply pleasing the Master.

Marriage involves you in all the nuts and bolts of domestic life and in wanting to please your spouse, leading to so many more demands on your attention. The time and energy that married people spend on caring for and nurturing each other, the unmarried can spend in becoming whole and holy instruments of God. I'm trying to be helpful and make it as easy as possible for you, not make things harder. All I want is for you to be able to develop a way of life in which you can spend plenty of time together with the Master without a lot of distractions.

If a man has a woman friend to whom he is loyal but never intended to marry, having decided to serve God as a "single," and then changes his mind, deciding he should marry her, he should go ahead and marry. It's no sin; it's not even a "step down" from celibacy, as some say. On the other hand, if a man is comfortable in his decision for a single life in service to God and it's entirely his own conviction and not imposed on him by others, he ought to stick with it. Marriage is spiritually and morally right and not inferior to singleness in any way, although as I indicated earlier, because of the times we live in, I do have pastoral reasons for encouraging singleness.

A wife must stay with her husband as long as he lives. If he dies, she is free to marry anyone she chooses. She will, of course, want to marry a believer and have the blessing of the Master. By now you know that I think she'll be better off staying single. The Master, in my opinion, thinks so, too.

Malachi 2:13-17 MSG - *And here's a second offense: You fill the place of worship with your whining and sniveling because you don't get what you want from God. Do you know why? Simple. Because God was there as a witness when you spoke your marriage vows to your young bride, and now you've broken those vows, broken the faith-bond with your vowed companion, your covenant wife. God, not you, made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest details of marriage. And what does he want from marriage? Children of God, that's what. So guard the spirit of marriage within you. Don't cheat on your spouse. "I hate divorce," says the God of Israel. God-of-the-Angel-Armies says, "I hate the violent dismembering of the 'one flesh' of marriage." So watch yourselves. Don't let your guard down. Don't cheat. You make God tired with all your talk. "How do we tire him out?" you ask. By saying, "God loves sinners and sin alike. God loves all." And also by saying, "Judgment? God's too nice to judge."*