

# ***Infidelity....A Burning Issue...***

## **A case study on infidelity written by a Christian woman...**

Forgiving infidelity starts with admitting it. I know first-hand the anguish that marital infidelity can inflict, but not because I suffered from the pain -- it was because I caused it. I was sexually unfaithful in both my first and my second marriages. Actually, "sexual unfaithfulness" is just a euphemism for "cheating," and I definitely cheated on both my husbands.

My story of adultery actually began before my first marriage. I had my first affair with a married man when I was 19 years old, and my pattern of adultery and marital infidelity continued for many years after that. Ironically, I grew up in a fairly conservative household that frowned on premarital and extramarital sex, and I remember early in my teenage years wanting to remain a virgin until I got married. However, I also wanted to be noticed by members of the opposite sex, so I spent a lot of time making myself attractive and "sexy" for them. I felt empty if I wasn't trying to attract a man, yet once I had gained his attention and had begun an affair, I soon grew bored and began looking for a new conquest.

I never thought of myself as the "other woman" type, but without a doubt, I was the other woman. There were times when I was even "friends" with the wife of the man I was having the affair with. My behavior was abominable, but I had myself convinced that everything was all right because I never intended the break up anyone's marriage. I just wanted to see if I could entice a man enough that he would cheat on his wife to be with me. Although I know of only one wife who found out about me, I'm sure that I caused all of the other wives excruciating pain. For that I am truly sorry. "Sorry" doesn't really begin to cover it, but unfortunately that is all I can offer at this time.

With my sexual history, I should have never gotten married. I cheated on my first two husbands before and during our marriages. I couldn't seem to stop myself. Although my extramarital affairs certainly involved sex, ultimately, they were not about sex. My marriages were not sexually dissatisfying, so it was not sex that I was seeking when I had affairs. Instead, I was searching for something to fill the emptiness in my life-the hole in my heart that never seemed to heal. Some people use drugs, alcohol, or money to try to fill that emptiness; I used sexual affairs. I had what is known as a "process addiction." I needed the "high" of my latest sexual conquest to feel alive-to feel anything.

I "needed" my sexual affairs until, at age 35, I finally found the one and only thing that could fill the emptiness and heal my heart for good -- or should I say, "the one and only person." That person is a man, but He is not just any man; He is the perfect man. He is the man, Jesus Christ. When I was 35, I had sunk about as low as I could go. A friend introduced me to Jesus and I gave my life to Him and accepted Him as my Lord and Savior. Because Jesus is God, and He is my Creator, He is the only one who knows me inside and out and is able to heal me of my addiction. When I asked, He forgave me of all of my sexual sin and He cleansed me of my immoral lifestyle.

## **What does the Bible say about 'forgiving' infidelity?**

### **❖ Forgiving infidelity is essential.**

God takes a very strong stance against marital infidelity. The term adultery is used 15 times in the Old Testament and 18 times in the New Testament. Every mention is some sort of admonition about or against the act. In the book of Proverbs, we learn that whoever commits adultery lacks understanding and destroys his or her own soul. "You shall not commit adultery" is the seventh of God's Ten Commandments to us, and in Jewish law, anyone who committed adultery was to be given the ultimate punishment and be put to death. There were not a lot of offenses punishable by death in the Jewish law, but adultery was one of them. That's how strongly God feels about marital infidelity. So how do we 'forgive' infidelity?

### **❖ There is help for forgiving infidelity...**

God created the sacred bond of marriage between a man and a woman and He wants to protect that bond, so He gave the commandment against adultery. God knows that marital infidelity will tear a marriage apart, so He never

condones it, and He always requires that the offenders be punished. However, He also knows that we are weak, selfish individuals who will commit adultery despite His warnings and commandments, **so He provided a way for us to break out of our destructive, sinful patterns.**

God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer the ultimate punishment of death for our sins. Jesus died in our place; He died in my place. People in our lifetime commit the adultery, yet God put His only Son to death for it. This is God's grace to us. We put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and God wiped away our sins. We essentially get a 'do over' with the Lord...a way to start fresh, as if we are just born (actually reborn through God's Holy Spirit); and through the power and love of Jesus Christ, we are able to stop committing adultery. **The strength does not come from within us.**

We can try to break the destructive pattern on our own but we won't be successful because the focus is on our problems and 'our' finding a way to change. The emptiness is still there that needs filling. Only a relationship with our loving Creator could fill that emptiness.

Through that relationship, Jesus changes us so that rather than being focused on ourselves, our heart is turned toward helping others. As we begin to look outside ourselves and see the needs of others, we find that our life is no longer empty and that God alone has changed our focus. We become excited (and continue to be excited) about our future of serving others and glorifying God.

#### ❖ **The Source of Forgiveness**

If you are struggling with the issue of marital infidelity -- either as someone whose spouse has or is being unfaithful, or as someone like me who is or was an unfaithful spouse -- you can find help in the person of Jesus Christ.

#### ❖ **Bible Verses to Help in the healing**

Christians recovering from adultery have a resource that will help heal the hurts of the betrayal: **The Bible.** Our 'Instruction Manual' for life...The verses found below can help in the healing process.

- **"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).** The basis for forgiving adultery is the fact that we ourselves are forgiven. That is, because we are forgiven we can then choose to forgive someone else. This does not undo the offense and indeed, unless the other person asks for forgiveness, they cannot receive the benefit of that forgiveness. But we benefit because we remove ourselves from the burden of carrying unforgiveness in our own hearts. Unforgiveness is like acid that eats into the soul and it causes 'soul cancer' such as bitterness, lack of compassion, and anger.
- **"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).** This verse is a comfort and a help to heal because it tells us that what has happened to us is not some thing that is uncommon. Other people have gone through this pain and have been able to get through it with God's help. Notice it says to "stand up under it." That means that it is possible to stand in spite of being betrayed.
- **"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).** Here is the promise that whatever trouble, trial, or test we may face in this world, we can overcome it because the LORD has overcome it for us. What a wonderful thing to know that we are not alone in this and that He has the provision for us to come through the other side of our pain stronger.
- **"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).** When a Christian is recovering from adultery, the trouble that the pain causes stems from allowing that hurt to be the focus of our lives. When we *choose* to focus on putting God and His viewpoint

first in our minds and hearts, we find that the pain of this life is put into its proper perspective. And through time with more of the Holy Spirit in our lives there is less and less pain.

When we allow the principles of God's Word to be the focus of our lives rather than the anger and the pain of betrayal, those principles are a healing balm for our souls. We also must remember that healing is a process and that we need to be patient with ourselves. **It takes a 'choice of our will' to BELIEVE the Word of God and apply it to our hearts;** it is one day at a time, one choice after another.

God makes provision for us to get through pain and suffering and when we choose to allow Him to comfort us, we are then equipped to be a comfort to others. **"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).**

#### ❖ **How do I heal a broken heart from adultery?**

If you are suffering a broken heart from adultery, you realize that life isn't like the movies. Glamorized in soap operas, made to look exciting and harmless by Hollywood, today's society never looks honestly at adultery's fallout. They don't see the broken hearts!

**"Broken-heart" is an apt description. Adultery breaks faith, breaks trust, betrays, and leaves scattered, bleeding pieces of heart in its wake.**

"So how do I heal a heart broken from adultery?" you ask. "Am I destined to be Humpty Dumpty, where all the king's horses and all the kings men are unable to put the pieces back together again? Is healing possible? Is wholeness achievable?"

If you're asking that question, you've been there. You're still there. The suffering and pain and grief still pumps through your heart, broken as it is, and peace remains allusive. The question is real because the pain and despair and searching is real.

"How do I heal a broken heart from adultery?" **You don't!** If healing is ever to come, that realization must be the starting place.

Have you ever broken something important and you don't know how to fix it?...or perhaps you 'try' to fix it and yet every time you look at it you see the brokenness...The only way to fix it is to take it to a 'master' of fixing that item. Their hands are the ones that are capable of repair far better than you.

The same thing is true of repairing broken hearts...The MASTER is the one that can repair our broken hearts. His hands are the ones that wrap around our lives and fix us by His POWER alone! His hands hold the 'healing powers'. Left trustingly to their care, the brokenness seems to vanish. A new and stronger wholeness takes its place.

**"How do I heal a heart broken from adultery?" Only one way. Place it in a Master's hands.** God loves you! You are His masterpiece! His 'something important'...When your heart broke, His heart broke. And He's a master at healing broken hearts.

God tells us that **"love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8)**. And that is exactly what Love (Jesus) did. (**"God is love" - 1 John 4:8**). The sin of betrayal, the sin of rejection, the sin of breaking faith with Him was covered with the very blood of Love Himself. Love shed His own blood upon the cross because of our adulterous hearts - hearts that turned to other lovers, rejecting Love Himself. Love's blood paved the way to forgiveness....

Forgiveness between God and man,. forgiveness between man and man, **FORGIVENESS**, the mending agent of every broken heart.

If God can forgive our adulterous hearts, if He can pay the price Himself...then His love within us can heal our own hearts broken from adultery. The Maker of our hearts, the ultimate heart surgeon, is where the only mending of them lies.

Today, tell God your heart is broken. Then place the ragged pieces into Love's hands and feel the mending power of His work begin.

### ❖ What does the Bible say about forgiving adultery?

The Bible is very specific about forgiving adultery. The gospel of John shares an occurrence of a woman caught in adultery. John 8:1-11 says, ". . .Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' (They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him).

"But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

"At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'"

"'No one, sir,' she said.

"'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and **leave your life of sin.**'"

Jesus was set up by the people of His day. They brought before Him a woman (not the man, because of how women were viewed in Jesus' day), caught in adultery and asked Jesus what to do. Jesus took a few moments (knowing what was in their hearts), He wrote in the dirt, and rose up and responded, "If anyone of you is without sin let him be the first to throw the first stone at her." Everyone there had sinned, so no one threw a stone.

Jesus answered their question regarding adultery. He said to forgive adultery. According to scholars, when Jesus said: "Go now and leave your life of sin" he meant that the woman was forgiven, however she was not to continue in sin. God calls us to leave behind our sin and 'choose' Him...to make a change toward Him...When we truly seek forgiveness and make a life change that moves us closer to God...He receives the glory for changing us. The way to overcome is to **CONTINUE** on the path of forgiveness with God and let Him heal from the 'inside' out...

James, one of the writers of the New Testament, also discusses the topic of adultery. James 2:8-11 says, "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker."

Here James is saying that if we break one part of the law, we are guilty of breaking the whole law. However, in view of this, God is very gracious and forgives all manner of sin, even sexual sin. **1 John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."** If we commit adultery, and confess, God will forgive us.

The issue of 'infidelity' scars our lives and the lives of those who are in bondage to that sin; but the life changing Blood of Jesus can melt away the scars and take away the bondage if asked. When we give ourselves over to the

Lord and 'EXPECT' that He is going to change us and fill ourselves with His Love then we are not in chains to the scars or the bondage any longer! That is where true life starts in the Lord...every small step we make toward the Savior the more Love we receive...His desire is that we are filled with him...not scars and bondage this life has to offer!

Infidelity is certainly a 'burning issue' with women today! It can fill us with hurt, anger, bitterness and unbelief...so much so that we forget what Christ can do for us and the Love that is just waiting for us...