

# A Survival Guide For A Marriage In Crisis

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FAITHFUL MARRIAGE BLENDED FAMILY



Acknowledgements

## *A Survival Guide For A Marriage in Crisis*

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## *Definition of Crisis*

:an emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life.

:an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially : one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome.

# Introduction

Rough roads don't mean it's the end of the road.

The ride usually begins to get bumpy once the honeymoon is over and reality sets in.

Too many couples focus only on the wedding. With the increase in pre-wedding parties and numerous showers, there is minimal to zero attention given to pre-marriage counseling. Yes! Even if you've been married before!



A marital crisis doesn't "just" happen, nor does it miraculously disappear. You can't escape from its pain without suffering greater consequences, and you can't trivialize its impact without strengthening the negative affect. Nor can you define it as a temporary glitch without causing it to become a chronic problem. It's serious business.

If you didn't receive pre-marital counseling or have never heard of it, it's not too late now that you're married. You can still get counseling with a trusted pastor or trained professional. We've done it, and we highly recommend it.

Like we said, marriage is serious business.

*Get the point?*





Once the wedding celebration's euphoria wears off, so does the mystical veil of being married. There's suddenly someone in your bed who is just as responsible for cleaning the home, paying the bills, and taking out the trash. But guess what, they do it differently than you and IT'S ALL WRONG!

We like to call this person a spouse (Surprise!).

Your special day is just the starting line to a covenant between your spouse and God.



Unfortunately, we as a society only prepare the couple for the party, not the perseverance of marriage.

Times will get tough. But you can survive this.

# *If We Can Do It, You Can Do It!*

By modern standards, our marriage should've ended in divorce. We've been through just about every crisis imaginable, and all within the first two years of our marriage. It's by the grace of God that our marriage not only survived these moments of crisis, but that it also THRIVES. Here's a list of what we went through.

- High Stress job as chief of police
- Combining households across multiple states (move #1)
- Both traveled frequently for work (30-40 flights a year) and lived apart at times
- Special needs child
- Young children that had to adjust to new man in their life (it wasn't always easy)
- Difficult exes and money
- Building a house with an unscrupulous builder
- Selling house at a great loss and moving (move #2)
- Infidelity
- Changing residency and moving to a different state (move #3)
- Lawsuit and attorney fees
- Death of a parent
- Broken relationships with family
- Retirement/career changes
- Aging parent living in household and long-term care decisions



# *How Will You Get Through This?*

You both will get through this crisis the same way you dated, fell in love, got engaged, and were wed. You will stick together.

Most couples in crisis immediately abandon the equity they'd established through their past together. The memories shared and dreams pursued together are quickly tossed out the window. Often with much regret.

Instead, understand the reality of what marriage is. Stop comparing a fantasy of the wedding day to the humdrum minutia of real life. This is the effort that reaps the reward.

You both entered into a holy covenant with God. You may want to walk away from your spouse, but in effect, you are walking away from God. And, He's not going to take sides and walk away with one of you over the other.

This is not a contract that is easily broken with an early withdrawal surcharge. This isn't your cable provider, this is a vow that began at the very creation of humanity.

It's important to understand the difference between a contract and a covenant. One is breakable and built with "out" clauses. The other is ironclad.

## *Contract*

- term limits
- designed so both parties "get something"
- Have an "if \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_" mentality

## *Covenant*

- Unselfish
- Binding
- Unconditional Love



*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate.”*

Mark 10:7-9



# *How Can I Forgive Them?*

Forgiveness isn't for the offender. The act of forgiving sets you free from the offense. This doesn't mean that you've forgotten the offense, but the truly destructive dynamic isn't your memory, it's the bitter thorns of unforgiveness.

Begin the process of reconciliation with forgiveness.

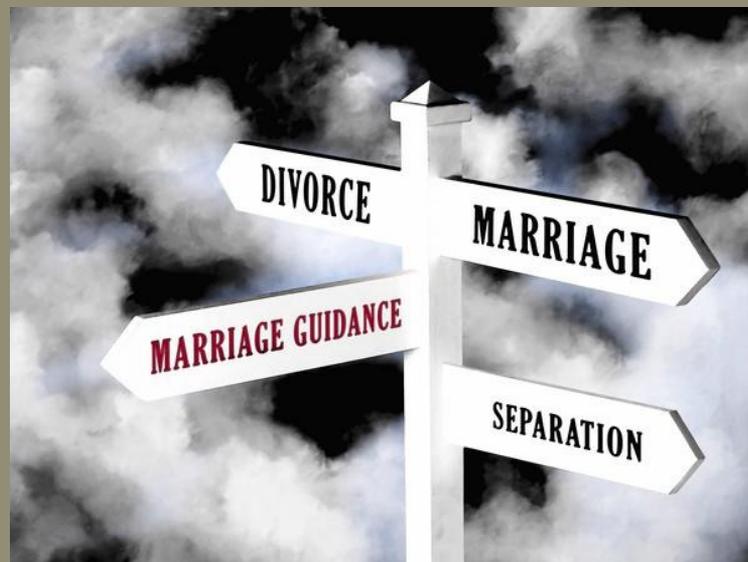


Once forgiven, you must determine to what degree you will allow the relationship to continue. Trust is an entirely different topic, but with love and a willingness to address the offense that hurt you, there is great promise for reconciliation.

Many couples affected by adultery actually stay together and grow stronger.

The level of the offense as it wounded you will determine the course required for your spouse to begin the trust rebuilding phase. This usually requires counseling for both parties.

We always recommend Christian counselors. *Always.*



# What If My Spouse Wants A Divorce?

Divorce has lost its sting in most marriages. It's usually a threat until it's seen as an "easy" way out. Over half of couples married for the first time opt for the quick out. But, the true cost is in the reality of breaking a solemn covenant with God.

*The grass is not greener!*



If your spouse has told you they want a divorce, after the shock of the news, you should not give in or give up. This is the time to pray for change. You must begin to pray that God will change you.

*Change me?*

Yes! Pray God will make you the person He wants you to be, and the kind of person who sets an example to the other of a Godly spouse. Changes in your will change them. By only praying that God changes your spouse, you place yourself on a pedestal as though you don't have fault or sin. You do! We promise!



*We all sin and fall short of the Glory of God*



Work on being a good listener so open communications have room to develop. Often, there are misunderstandings or pent up hostilities because of the lack of understanding and communication. Christian counselors are an excellent way to facilitate the opening of channels for dialogue.

# *What Are Crisis Warnings?*

These are just a few triggers or warnings that may signal your marriage is heading toward those rocky roads. One or two by themselves may not ring the bell, but it's best to have the information and keep your heart open and sensitive to your spouse.

1. You are no longer affectionate with your partner.
2. You don't create time for activities together.
3. You stop having sex or have it very infrequently.
4. One or both of you stop good grooming habits and self-care.
5. You blame them for being unhappy.
6. You are lonely even when together.

7. Contempt controls conflicts.
8. You're living separate lives.
9. You miscommunicate over even the most insignificant things.
10. You don't like being together.
11. You have more interest in other people.
12. You spend a lot of time away from home.



# Survival Tips

1. Pray for your spouse. Not to CHANGE them, but to lift them up in prayer.
2. No one is strong all of the time. The bible says to encourage each other. Try this and see if you see a change in your spouse.
3. Women! Men need respect, even when they don't deserve it. Men! Women need love and security, even when they don't deserve it.
4. Give as much grace as you want to receive.
5. Forgive. And do it without conditions. Once grace has been given there's no more going back to hash up the past.
6. Have your spouse's "back." Even in crisis, don't talk bad about your spouse.
7. Remember whose team you're on.
8. Maintain perspective. Most disagreements start out of selfishness.

9. Make a list of all the issues

10. Fix your focus solidly on yourself. Worry about changing *you* first.

11. Learn how to express concerns constructively.

12. Learn how to make decisions cooperatively.

13. Eliminate the three A's that ruin marriages. Affairs, Addictions, and excessive Anger. If one of these describe your situation, please seek counseling, even if your spouse won't go.

14. Look back at the strengths and weaknesses of your parent's marriage. Decide what you want to do differently.

15. Attend church and worship together

# Questions to Consider

1. Is there at least 10 percent of your marriage worth saving?
2. Is this a crisis? Or just a rough patch?
3. When was the last time you touched your spouse? Touch them again, even if it feels weird. Just a hand on the arm to start.
4. Have you sinned against your spouse? Confess and ask forgiveness.
5. Do you want to work on your marriage? Does your spouse?
6. Do you think the grass is greener somewhere else? Accept that starting over with someone different doesn't mean there will be less issues. Each marriage after the first has a greater failure rate.
7. Do you have children? Consider what a divorce will do to them.
8. Have you prayed for God to make the changes in you so you can make change in your marriage?



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