

Choosing Wisely

Before *you* **DIVORCE**™


CHURCH
INITIATIVE™
Equipping churches for results

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Choosing Wisely

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Help when it hurts.

Choosing Wisely Before You Divorce is published by Church Initiative, a ministry that assists churches in establishing support groups for people dealing with life crises and for those searching for spiritual answers. There are thousands of DivorceCare divorce recovery support groups meeting throughout the US and Canada and in nearly 20 other countries and territories.

About Church Initiative

Church Initiative is a church-equipping ministry based in Wake Forest, North Carolina. We are a nondenominational, nonprofit ministry serving thousands of churches around the world.



Grief recovery support groups
www.griefshare.org

Locate a nearby *GriefShare* group using the searchable database at this web address. The site is filled with material helpful to those grieving the death of a friend or family member.



Recovery program for children of divorce
www.dc4k.org

DivorceCare for Kids is designed to bring healing and hope to children whose parents are separated or divorced and to give them tools to develop healthy relationships.

www.churchinitiative.org



Divorce recovery support groups
www.divorcecare.org

The *DivorceCare* website features a searchable database of groups and other valuable resources to assist in recovering from separation or divorce.

Chance to Change™

Gambling addiction recovery support groups www.chancetochange.org

Chance to Change is a pioneering resource that helps gambling addicts find freedom from their addiction.



Using This Workbook

Your *Before You Divorce* workbook is a valuable tool to help you reach a decision on the future of your marriage. Use each of its sections to help you focus on the important issues:

Promise Page

This is a short promise you make to your spouse that you will view the videos and complete the workbook material before taking any further steps toward a divorce.

Foundation for Healing

If you are interested in personal healing built on a solid foundation, this is an important section for you to read. You'll find out how to heal in a way that can change your life forever!

Notes pages

An outline is provided for each video session. This outline enables the participants to follow a structured format during the videos for note taking, writing questions and emphasizing important points and Scriptures..

On Your Own

This is an interactive section of the workbook, designed to help you organize your thoughts and feelings about your particular circumstances. The Bible references will help you examine your circumstances in light of the Bible's teaching on marriage, divorce and related topics. You'll find this section practical and insightful.

There are five On Your Own segments corresponding to each video. Do one each day after viewing the video. They are easy to complete and shouldn't take more than 10 minutes per day.

Bookstore

There are many reasons why marriages face difficulties. Visit our online bookstore for a selection of books that may address your specific areas of interest or concern. You can access the bookstore through www.beforeyoudivorce.org.

Resources for Couples Who Are Separated or Divorced

It is particularly difficult to restore your marriage if you have already separated or divorced. In this section, you will find some special resources that will provide you a foundation on which you can restore your marriage.

Your Choice

You face one of the most serious decisions of your life. Your marriage is in trouble and you must choose between staying together and getting a divorce. There is no simple formula for making this decision. In fact, most divorce decisions are driven by emotion, often without full knowledge of the effect divorce will have on your life.

Choosing Wisely Before You Divorce is designed to provide you with solid information about the divorce process. It will help you step back from the emotional turmoil you now face and take an objective view of how divorce (if you select that path) will affect your life in several different areas including

- ◆ Legal
- ◆ Physical
- ◆ Financial
- ◆ Spiritual
- ◆ Emotional
- ◆ Effects on children

It is essential that you have this information before making your decision.

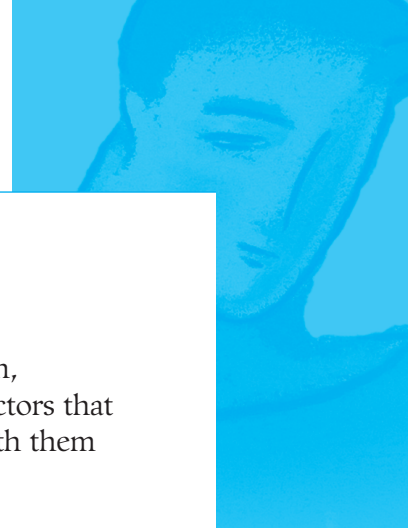
Who should view these videos?

You'll find these videos very helpful if your current status falls in one of these categories:

- ◆ You are still married but having major problems; you and your spouse may have already talked about separation or divorce.
- ◆ You are still living together but have separated emotionally.
- ◆ You have separated physically but are still married. You or your spouse may be involved in a relationship with another person.
- ◆ You have divorced but have not remarried. Again, you or your spouse may have already become involved in a romantic and/or sexual relationship with another person.

It is ideal that you watch these videos as a couple and talk about your reactions to what you have seen. If your relationship is so strained that you are unable to view the videos together, we suggest you view them independently and then get together and talk about your feelings.

It will be especially helpful if you have the assistance of a pastor, counselor, family member or close friend as you go through this material. This person will be able to provide you with objectivity and insight that will help in your decision-making process.



Don't expect marriage counseling

This material does not address typical marriage problems such as communication, money, sexual difficulties, dysfunction, abuse and intimacy. There are so many factors that contribute to the breakdown of a marriage that it would be impossible to deal with them all in the scope of the *Before You Divorce* materials.

***Before You Divorce* will help you resolve the decision you must make**

- ◆ You will proceed with plans for a divorce.
- ◆ You will decide to remain married and attempt to resolve your problems.

If you choose the second option, then it will be important for you and your spouse to find the help of a Christian counselor or pastor who can assist you in resolving the difficulties. Even if you have already tried counseling, you may want to give it another chance after viewing these videos.

Most people who divorce don't understand the many implications of their decision before making it. By spending just a little time with these videos and this workbook, you will have a good overview of the divorce process and the effects of divorce on your life and a better understanding of the alternatives to divorce.

No matter how bad things are between you and your spouse right now, we believe it is essential for you to know this information. Don't proceed with a divorce until you've seen the material on these videos. This material can have a lasting effect on the quality of your life.

Promise Page

I, _____, make the following promises to my spouse:

1. I will view each of the *Choosing Wisely Before You Divorce* video sessions.
2. I will complete each of the daily On Your Own workbook exercises.
3. I will not consult an attorney about separation or divorce, or I will suspend such discussions if I have already been in consultation regarding separation or divorce.
4. I will continue to live with my spouse (if not already separated or divorced).
5. I will not date or have significant or repeated social contact with a person of the opposite sex during this period.
6. I will refrain from being physically abusive toward my spouse.
7. I will not make any major financial decisions, withdrawals or adjustments without the knowledge and consent of my spouse during this period.
8. I will faithfully attend any counseling sessions that are associated with this process.
9. I will work together with my spouse to protect our children from exposure to our marriage problems. I will be supportive and positive about my spouse when interacting with our children.
10. Through prayer and Bible study, I will attempt to find God's will and direction for the decision of whether to divorce or stay together.

Your signature

Promise date

Witness or spouse signature



Foundation for Healing

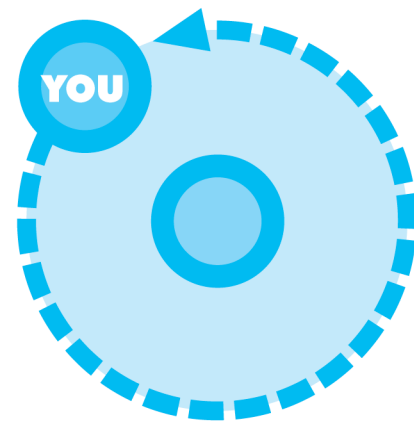
A personal relationship with Jesus Christ

Throughout *Before You Divorce* you will hear people talking about the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Please read the information in this section carefully. It will show you how to have a relationship with Jesus Christ and how this relationship can make a real difference in your life.

WHAT IS AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE?

You tend to “orbit” around certain people, things or events in your life. They are the relationships, possessions and circumstances you value most. They give meaning to life and bring joy to you.



Here are some examples:

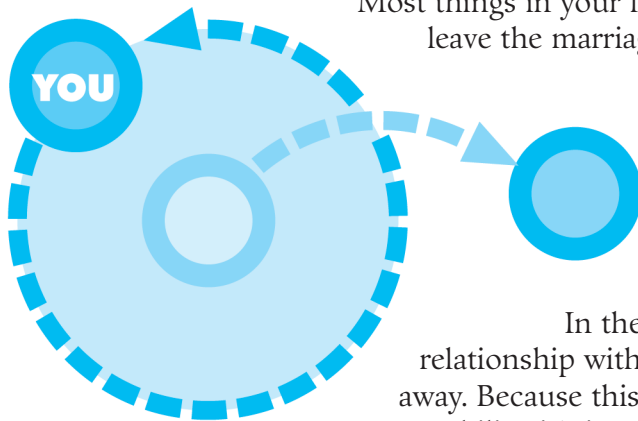
- Husband or wife
- Job
- Children
- Financial resources
- Favorite activities
- Houses, cars and possessions
- Friends
- Health

Take a minute and list the people or things that your life revolves around. It may be one thing or a combination of items.

HOW SOLID IS YOUR CENTER?

In our solar system, planets have a predictable orbit because the sun is a stable gravitational “center.” Imagine what would happen to those planets if the sun suddenly disappeared.

Now look at your list comprising the things at the center of your life. Which are permanent (cannot disappear or be lost)?



Most things in your life can disappear. A husband or wife can leave the marriage or die. Your financial conditions can change suddenly. Possessions break, rust and wear out. Your health can deteriorate. When these things happen, your “orbit” will disappear as well, sending your life into an emotional tumble.

In the end, only one thing is permanent. Your relationship with God, if you have one, cannot be taken away. Because this relationship with God is so critical to your stability, it’s important to know for sure that you have the kind of relationship with Him that will ensure He is permanently in the center of your life.

ACHIEVING PERMANENT STABILITY

How can God become the center of your life? The first step is to remove a major barrier between you and Him.

The Bible says that our sins separate us from having a relationship with God. Sin is disobeying God’s written commands. Romans 3:23 says, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** It also says that the result of sin is death (separation from God). **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23 NAS).**

Your sin keeps you from God. Many people try to “earn” a relationship with Him by “being a good person” and “doing good things.” But notice in the verse above that eternal life is a gift. It cannot be earned.



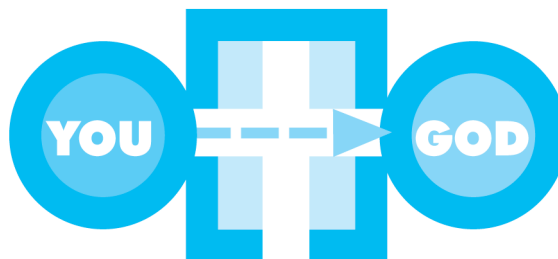
You must receive it from the Giver. **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).**



BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIER

If you can't overcome your sin and earn a relationship with God, how can He become the center of your life? The Bible says that Jesus Christ removed the barrier between God and you by dying in your place. He paid the price for your disobedience. Romans 5:8 puts it this way: *"But God demonstrates his*

own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." It's also important to realize that Jesus Christ is the only way to a relationship with God. John 14:6 reads, *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"*



MAKING IT REAL IN YOUR LIFE

Maybe right now you ache for the stability, security and wholeness that come from having God at the center of your life. Once He's there, you can access His power to help you heal from your separation or divorce. He can help stabilize your life's orbit.

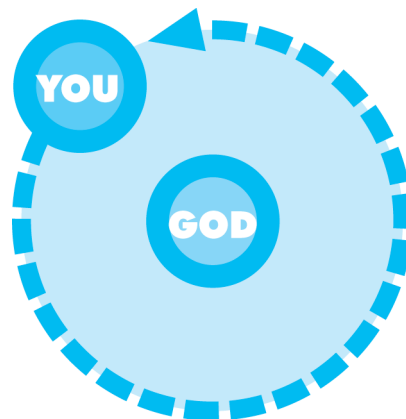
The first step is to believe that Jesus is God's only Son. There is no other Savior.

You cannot get to God except through Him. If you believe in Him, you can act on that faith. He can stabilize your life's orbit.

HOW CAN GOD BECOME THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE?

The Bible says that each person must receive Jesus as personal Lord and Savior through faith. To do this you must first realize that you are a sinner and repent of (turn away from) your sin. The Bible says, *"They should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds"* (Acts 26:20).

Receiving Jesus through faith means trusting Him alone as the payment for your sin and surrendering your life to Him. *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved"* (Romans 10:9-10).



TAKING THE STEP

If you would like to surrender your life to Jesus Christ, here is a prayer you can pray. Why not do it right now?

Dear Lord,

I know I have done things that are wrong. Please forgive me for these sins.

I invite Jesus Christ into my life as my Savior and Lord.

As my Savior, I ask You to save me from the effect of my sins.

As my Lord, I receive You as the center of my life and give You control of it.

Thank you for forgiving my sin and giving me the gift of eternal life with You.

In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen

God's promise to people who invite Christ into their lives is described in 1 John 5:11–13: *"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."*

The Bible says your relationship with God through Jesus Christ can never be taken from you.

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27–29).

THINGS REALLY ARE DIFFERENT NOW

If you invited Christ into your life, many things have changed. Look at what has happened.

Christ is in your life:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).



Christ's power is in your life:

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13 NAS).

Your sins are forgiven:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7).

You are a permanent part of God's kingdom:

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe (Hebrews 12:28).

You have the gift of eternal life:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

You can find abundant life now:

"The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 NAS).

You can find God's peace:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

WHAT'S NEXT?

Inviting Jesus into your life is only the first step in an exciting relationship with God. You'll want to get to know Him better and learn His plan for your life.

If you have just asked Jesus into your life, let your pastor, counselor or a mature Christian friend know. He or she can help you grow even closer to God. A good way to learn more about Jesus Christ is to read the book of John, found in the New Testament of the Bible. We suggest you commit to reading a chapter of this exciting book each day. As you read, pray that you will gain an even better understanding of how Jesus is changing your life.

Choosing Wisely

You'll meet each of these people on the *Before You Divorce* videos in the coming weeks. They are experts on marriage, divorce and recovery topics and can help guide you whether to divorce or stay together together.

Video Experts



Dr. Robert Abarno is a Christian author, counselor and clinical psychologist. He is the founder of Christ Centered Development, a teaching and equipping ministry in Wake Forest, North Carolina.



Dr. Bob Barnes is a popular conference speaker and author. He is the executive director of Sheridan House Family Ministries in Fort Lauderdale, Florida: a residential treatment program for teenage boys and girls, a marriage and family counseling center and a social services center.

www.sheridanhouse.org



Larry Burkett was cofounder of Crown Financial Ministries, the world's largest Christian financial counseling organization. Mr. Burkett hosted a daily radio program and authored several books.



Dr. Les Carter is a counselor at the Southlake Psychiatry and Counseling Clinic in Southlake, Texas, and is the author of *Grace and Divorce* and *The Anger Workbook*. Having been divorced himself, it is his desire to share God's healing truths to people in need. Known as "America's Anger Expert," Dr. Carter conducts anger management workshops across the nation.

www.drlescarter.com



Doug Easterday has ministered in over fifteen different nations on the topic of forgiveness and other subjects, teaching in Bible schools, camps, marriage conferences and youth programs. He is on the pastoral staff at Christ's Center Church in Junction City, Oregon.



Dr. Tony Evans is the founder and president of the Urban Alternative. He is also the founder and pastor of the Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas. Dr. Evans is a regular speaker at crusades and Bible conferences in the United States and abroad. He has authored several books.

www.tonyevans.org



Dr. Archibald Hart is the senior professor of psychology and dean emeritus at Fuller Theological Seminary's Graduate School of Psychology in Pasadena, California, and a practicing clinical psychologist. Originally trained in South Africa, Dr. Hart was dean of the School of Psychology at Fuller Seminary for thirteen years. He is a popular speaker and teacher. Dr. Hart experienced the divorce of his parents when he was twelve years old and is the author of *Helping Children Survive Divorce* and numerous other books.



J. Warren Kniskern is a Christian attorney and Certified Family Mediator in the state of Florida. Based on his own experience with divorce, he authored *When the Vow Breaks: A Survival and Recovery Guide for Christians Facing Divorce*. His current book, *Making a NEW Vow: A Christian Guide to Remarriage and Blending Families After Death or Divorce of a Spouse*, is a guidebook for a healthy remarriage.



Dr. Myles Munroe is the founder, president and senior pastor of Bahamas Faith Ministries International, a church and international ministry organization based in Nassau, Bahamas. He travels internationally as a popular speaker and teacher, and he is the author of *Single, Married, Separated, and Life After Divorce* and numerous other books.
www.bfmmm.com



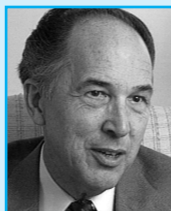
Gary Richmond is pastor to single parents at First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, California. He counsels single parents and people experiencing divorce. He has also authored several books.
www.fefcful.org



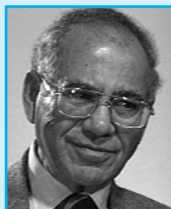
Dr. David Seamands and his wife served as missionaries to India for sixteen years. Dr. Seamands also served as a pastor for twenty-two years and then took an appointment as a professor of pastoral ministries at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. He has written numerous books including *Healing for Damaged Emotions*.



Dr. Jim Talley is an international author whose ten books are in six languages. He served as a minister to single adults for nearly fifteen years at First Baptist Church in Modesto, California. He now heads Relationship Resources, Inc. and is a marriage counselor in private practice in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He conducts a wide variety of seminars for singles on topics including dating, divorce recovery and marriage reconciliation.
www.drталley.com



Dr. H. Norman Wright is a trauma therapist and the author of seventy books including *Recovering from the Losses of Life* and *Crisis Counseling*. He is on the faculty of Talbot Graduate School of Theology and on the executive board of the American Association of Christian Counselors.
www.hnormanwright.com



Dr. Spiros Zodhiates is a recognized authority on the Greek New Testament. He is the president of AMG (Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel) International, an organization ministering in over fifty countries. He is the author of over 200 books and booklets.
www.amginternational.org

The Legal and Financial Impact of Divorce

The Decision

Divorce is your decision.

It's your decision

- Influences
 - Family and friends
 - Attorney

Major decision

Painful decision

No such thing as a “friendly” or “civilized” divorce

The Legal Process

Attorneys: hire cautiously

Anticipate lengthy process

Anticipate expense

“It is important not to be pushed into divorce.”

“Everything that you have and everything that you own is on the line.”

“What used to be ‘you and me against the world’ is now ‘you against me.’”
—J. Warren Kniskern

The Divorce War

Divorce litigation is war

Warriors

- Husband and wife

Battlefield

- Your home

Spoils

- Your children
- Everything you've worked for

Who wins?

Who decides?

Adversarial nature of divorce

- Attorney pressure
- Legal tactics

"If the spouses can't agree on custody, it's almost sure that a stranger is going to decide."

—J. Warren Kniskern



- Your role in the adversarial process
- Attorney conflict

Alternatives to litigation

Divorce Procedures

“I hate a man’s covering himself with violence.” Malachi 2:16

Property settlement

Assignment of debt

Spouse support

Child custody

Child support

- Aggressive enforcement
- Support after remarriage

The Bible and divorce

- 1 Corinthians 6:1–8

“You need to count the cost. You need to consider the consequences of your own decisions before you run down the road.”

—J. Warren Kniskern

“You lose a part of yourself forever.”

—Dr. Myles Munroe

Divorce Finances

Two households

Financial sacrifice

Bankruptcy

Workforce reentry

Single parent finances



On Your Own

Interactive journal and Bible study

You are surrounded by a flurry of advice, emotion and stress as you try to resolve the problems in your marriage. You probably don't have much time to just think and reflect.

This On Your Own section will help you

- focus
- organize your thoughts
- look beyond your emotions
- find God's guidance for your circumstances

This process is crucial to a wise decision—one that will affect the rest of your life. Don't skip over this essential part of your *Choosing Wisely* study. You'll find five daily exercises to be completed after viewing each video. Plan on spending about 10 minutes per day with this material.

You may be surprised to learn that the Bible is full of information that can help you make a decision about the future of your marriage. God's words in the Bible are directly and powerfully relevant to your current circumstances. We urge you to set aside a specific time each day this week to explore the material in this section and find answers to your questions and concerns.

Ask for help

Before you begin each On Your Own exercise, take a moment to ask God what He would like to communicate to you during your reading and study time. This is a prayer He is sure to answer!

If you are unsure what to say to God, here is an example of how you might ask Him for help:

Lord God, open my eyes, my heart and my mind to focus on You today. I know that You will speak, if I will just listen. I want to be filled with Your wisdom and follow Your will for my life. What do You want me to learn? In Jesus' name, Amen.



Day One

The divorce decision

In your life

Name the person (other than your spouse or child) who is having the most influence on your decision.

Do you feel comfortable with the level of influence this person is having? Why or why not?

Identify others who are helping shape your decision.

In what ways do you feel pressured by people to make a decision?

From the Bible

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. Proverbs 15:22

You are faced with an extremely important decision, and the last thing you want to do is FAIL!

What are the advantages of getting advice from many different sources?

What is the result if you don't?

The Bible teaches that in order to make successful decisions, you must seek wise counsel. Read Proverbs 3:13-14. What are the benefits of seeking wise advice?

Think of the people who have given you advice about your situation up to this point. Some advice has probably been sound and some has probably been biased and opinionated. Name a person whose counsel you consider wise.

What makes this person's judgment sound and mature?

The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice. Proverbs 12:15

Think about it.



Day Two

The right advice

In your life

What's the best advice you've received about your situation so far?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

What's the worst advice you've received?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

Describe the type of advice you would like to be receiving.

Three horizontal lines for writing.

When someone is offering you advice, how do you typically respond? What emotions or attitudes start to rise up within you?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

Christian attorney J. Warren Kniskern says:

"It's important to deal with the bitterness and resentment and put aside any attitudes for revenge—as mad and angry as you may be and as unfair as the circumstances may be. It is a time to exercise restraint and use good judgment. Get the advice of many counselors and do not rely on your own feelings and just react without thinking."

From the Bible

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20

What's the value of seeking wise advice?

Two horizontal lines for writing.

What is the consequence of getting advice from the wrong place?

Two horizontal lines for writing.

Read Proverbs 14:7–9. Where does the advice you've been receiving fall in light of these verses?

Two horizontal lines for writing.

We have stressed the importance of seeking wise counsel and of being wise yourself. But where does wisdom begin?

For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless. Proverbs 2:6–7

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. James 1:5

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10

Choose one of the above Bible verses on gaining wisdom. Write it down on a piece of paper and place it where you will see it daily. Memorize this verse and keep it in the forefront of your mind when others are offering their advice.



Day Three

The divorce war

In your life

The divorce process can be likened to a war. You may be surprised by the adversarial nature of the process. After viewing the video session, which aspects of the divorce war are of primary concern to you?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

What could you lose in a divorce war?

Two horizontal lines for writing.

Do the difficulties in your marriage outweigh the potential losses in a divorce war? Why?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

“And it was about winning, instead of what is right for these children, what is best and what does God say is right.”

—Ginny

From the Bible

Being involved in a war for the wrong reasons can have serious consequences.

Read Psalm 37:14–17. These verses describe two sides of a war: the side of the wicked and the upright. On the chart above, write the actions and consequences for those on each side of the war.

Wicked	Upright
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The “wicked” are those who go to war for the wrong reasons and those who just go too far. Which side of the war are you on?

Two horizontal lines for writing.

Perhaps you feel that you are somewhere in between. Continue in prayer and Bible study to learn how to become upright in God’s eyes.

God is clear about what He expects from you:

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12:18

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” Matthew 5:9

In light of the above Scriptures, what role are you taking in the current difficulties in your marriage?

Three horizontal lines for writing.



Day Four

Where are you standing?

In your life

How would you describe your spiritual life right now?

What is a Christian?

Are you a Christian? _____

Is your spouse? _____

If you do not know the loving power of Jesus Christ personally, read the Foundation for Healing section starting on page 9 of this workbook.

If you and your spouse were to get a divorce, how would your situation square with the Bible's teaching on marriage and divorce?

Why is this important?

The Bible offers specific guidance on when divorce is and isn't appropriate.

From the Bible

Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. What do these verses say about going to court against another Christian?

What alternative is offered?

Where do your circumstances fall in light of this teaching?

Turn to 1 Corinthians 7:10-15. How do your circumstances compare to what you've read here?

Positive Actions

1. Set aside time to talk to someone who will give you wise advice about your situation. Write the person's name here:

2. Pray for God to protect you, your children and your spouse this week.

3. Memorize a Bible verse.



Day Five

Divorce costs

In your life

You must count the costs of divorce. List the things in your life that are at risk if you enter divorce litigation.

Which of these are most precious to you?

How much additional money will it take to operate two households? Use the space below to list your additional expenses.

Will your income (or combined incomes) support this overhead?

How much will the legal aspects of divorce cost you?

“Just be prepared that it will always cost more, that it will always take more, than you can ever, ever imagine.”

—Susan

From the Bible

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

*“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.”
Luke 14:28–32*

What is the consequence of not “counting the cost”?

Does accurately counting the cost ensure a successful conclusion to the divorce process? Why or why not?



Read the following verses out loud: Mark 8:36, Proverbs 15:6, Proverbs 17:16. Meditate on how each verse applies to you (not to your spouse, but YOU).

Write a short prayer on the lines below asking God to give you His wisdom in your financial decisions.

4. Choose people of the same sex. . . . Mates who initially want to save their marriage have often fallen into an affair themselves because they were vulnerable to the attentions of a “comforter” of the opposite sex.

5. Don’t wear out your supporters. Yes, you are hurting. And, yes, you need the help of others, but be considerate of them and their families.

(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), pp. 43–44.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Isaiah 55:2

Expert Advice

When seeking advice for your marital troubles, Jim and Sally Conway make the following suggestions in their book *When a Mate Wants Out*:

1. Tell only one or two people. And choose people you know will keep the matter absolutely confidential. . . .
2. Choose wise people. Older people who have experienced the good and bad of life will be able to give you a broader perspective than your peers. Friends who are walking closely with God will probably give wiser help than friends who are not in touch with the Lord.
3. If possible, choose people who can pray effectively. More will be accomplished inside your wandering mate by the power of the Holy Spirit. . . .

Weekly Journal

1. The worst thing that happened to me this week was . . .
2. My greatest blessing this week has been . . .
3. Emotions I have felt toward my spouse this week:
4. Describe your health this week.
5. Describe any steps you have taken this week to gain spiritual, godly wisdom.
6. Write out two things you have learned or that God has taught you this week.

Personal Evaluation Section

	Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
Emotionally				
Physically				
Spiritually (Closeness to God)				
Relationally (Closeness to others)				
How your life is in general				

Rate how you have been this week by marking the appropriate boxes.

Attitude Check

	Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
My attitude this week was...				
My spouse's attitude this week was...				

Place a mark in the appropriate boxes.

The Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Effects of Divorce

Physical Effects of Divorce

Consumes energy

- Normal energy distribution
(physical, emotional, spiritual, mental)
- Energy distribution during and after divorce
(physical, emotional, spiritual, mental)
- Effect on your spiritual energy
- Rebalancing your energy distribution:
How long does it take?

*"I was dying inside, outside—
physically, emotionally, mentally."
—Susan*

*"It was the most excruciating pain
I have ever had in my life."
—Cathy*

*"Talk about a painful time. . . . My heart
would be racing so hard that I thought
I was going to have a heart attack.
Then I started praying to have a
heart attack."
—Sherry*

Creates stress

- Physical symptoms of stress
 - Fatigue, headache, chest pain, abdominal pain,
heart palpitations
- Serious stress complications
- Clinical studies on effects of divorce
 - Male cardiovascular disease¹

- Male pneumonia²
- Mortality risk of men and women divorced or widowed³
- Changes in lifestyle caused by divorce

Emotional Effects of Divorce

Divorce losses

- The dream you had for your marriage
- Companionship
- Home
- Children
- Family traditions
- Spouse's family
- Financial security
- Friends

"I've been where you are, and you're going down a path that's going to lead to more hurt."

—Phil

"Research shows us that your best opportunity for happiness is
a) the marriage you're in OR
b) the one you just came out of."

—Dr. Jim Talley

"If you do not heal completely, you'll carry that baggage into the other relationship. And the same set of problems will occur the second time. The pain of going through it again is even more painful than the first time."

—Rebecca

Grieving your losses

- Grieving process is complex and on many levels

Depression

- Symptoms
 - Sadness
 - Hopelessness
 - Guilt
 - Lose interest in things you like
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Change in eating habits
 - Loss of energy
 - Thoughts of suicide

Anger

- Physical violence

Loneliness

- Rebound relationships

- Remarriage failure rates
 - Second marriage
 - Third marriage
 - Fourth marriage

- Time required to heal

- Sexual temptation is common

- Sexual activity exposes you and your spouse to risk

- Sexual activity impedes reconciliation

“I hate divorce.” Malachi 2:16

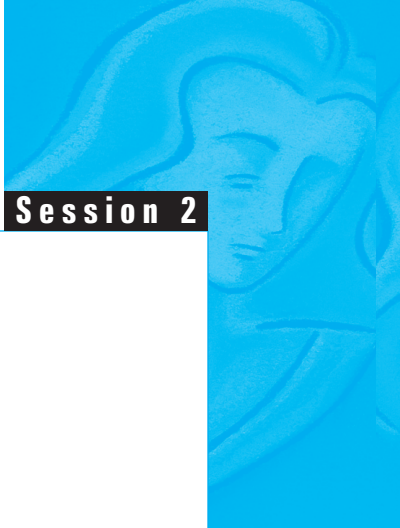
“Can I really stand with a pure heart, a clear conscience and clean hands before God?”

—Dr. Jim Talley

Spiritual Effects of Divorce

One-flesh relationship

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Genesis 2:24



Covenant commitment

She is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Malachi 2:14

Lifelong commitment

*“For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even if she marries another man.”
Romans 7:2–3*

Biblical allowances for divorce

- Adultery

“But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.” Matthew 5:32

- Departure of a nonbeliever

But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 1 Corinthians 7:15

Reconciliation preferable

Non-biblical reasons for divorce

- Irreconcilable differences
- Don't love each other anymore
- To “find” yourself

Sexual sin

- Barrier between you and God

Remarriage

Christ—the key to healing your hurts

Read the Foundation for Healing section (page 9) for more information about having Christ in your life.

1. J. J. Lynch, “The lonely heart, broken heart, and sudden death” in *The Medical Consequences of Loneliness* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1977).
2. Ibid.
3. Y. Hu and N. Goldman, “Mortality differentials by marital status: an international comparison” *Demography*. 1990, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 233–250.



Divorce will directly affect your health, your outlook on life and your relationship with God. Take time this week to examine how your life is being impacted by the problems you face.

How is this affecting him or her?

Day One

The divorce decision

In your life

How are you feeling?

How have your marriage difficulties affected your energy level?

What percentage of your total energy supply is being consumed by this energy drain?

How is this affecting the rest of your life?

How is your spouse being affected by your energy drain?

Is he or she also investing major amounts of emotional energy?

From the Bible

You may feel as if you are constantly drained and fatigued. You do not have to feel that way; you can be strengthened again and can start accomplishing that today!

My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. Psalm 119:28

How does this psalm suggest that you gain strength?

Read Psalm 119:25–31. According to these verses, how can you get yourself out of this weariness?

Psalm 31 was written by King David in a time of great distress; this prayer for deliverance expresses his strong trust in the Lord.

Read Psalm 31 and let it be your prayer to God as you call on His mighty, victorious help and unfailing strength.

List all the words, phrases or ideas from this psalm that describe your feelings right now.



How did David deal with his emotions?

Do you think you will have more or less stress in your life if you proceed with divorce?

On what do you base your opinion?

In order to receive strength and protection from the Lord, you must first ask. God is mighty and faithful to answer your prayers, but He is allowing you to choose who will control your life. Who do you think is better qualified to direct the paths of your life—you or the Sovereign God?

From the Bible

When you give control of your life to Jesus Christ, the Bible says the Spirit of God comes to live inside you; this will help to relieve the stress in your life.

Day Two

All stressed out

In your life

On the video, Dr. Dougherty describes five major indicators of stress. Check those that are affecting you:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Palpitations
- Chest pain
- Abdominal pain

Listen to the qualities that will be an outgrowth of your life if God's Spirit lives within you:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-25

What other stress symptoms have you experienced?

How does God's Spirit become a part of your life?

Describe the overall state of your health.

What are the indicators that you have the Holy Spirit in your life?

Is it improving or declining? _____



Which of the nine qualities listed in the previous Bible passage could best describe your life now?

The following verses list characteristics of those who do not have God's Spirit in their lives:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21

Which of the above words could apply to your life right now?

Have you invited Christ to be the ruler of your life? If not, why not do so now? See the special Foundation for Healing section (page 9) for more information about how to do this.

Day Three |

I'm really depressed—I'm really angry

In your life

Dr. Hart lists several symptoms of depression. Check those that are most significant for you:

- Sadness
- Hopelessness
- Disinterest
- Guilt
- Difficulty sleeping
- Loss of energy
- Thoughts of suicide
- Change in eating habits

What effect do these have on your daily life?

Would these go away if you got a divorce? Why or why not?

Describe the anger you've been feeling about your current circumstances.

How is anger affecting your behavior?



Think carefully about your answer to this next question: What is the cause of your anger?

What attempts have you made to resolve this cause?

“Stop looking at your circumstances and look at the answer, which is God, because looking at your hurt doesn’t change your hurt. Centering on yourself does not relieve the pain and resolve the issue. You must look beyond people and immediately look to God. Jesus must become the foundation of your life. Self-focus keeps you from the very healing you need.”
—Dr. Myles Munroe

From the Bible

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40:28–31

What will God give you?

What do you have to do to receive God’s comfort and restoration?

God does not want you to face depression; He also does not want anger to eat away at your life. The book of Isaiah describes how the nation of Israel rebelled against God, how Israel suffered because of that rebellion and how God showed compassion and restored the people of Israel.

How might you be rebelling against God?

When you don’t deal with the conflicts surrounding divorce, it is easy to lose control of your anger. This is damaging to you as well as to those around you. Take a look at the consequences of your unbridled anger:

An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.
Proverbs 29:22

“For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife [bitter conflict].”
Proverbs 30:33



What are the consequences of anger?

What specific conflicts has anger caused in your current circumstances?

Who has been hurt by your anger?

Proverbs 29:11 describes the differences between someone who controls his or her anger and someone who does not. Take a moment to read this verse and honestly assess where you stand on this issue.

Day Four

I'm feeling lonely

In your life

When a marriage is in trouble, there is little intimacy between the partners, which leads to feelings of loneliness. How has this affected you personally?

Have you been tempted to find companionship with another person? _____

What feelings do you have about developing a relationship with someone other than your spouse?

Have you become sexually active with someone other than your spouse? _____

How do you feel about this relationship?

Are you willing to break it off to save your marriage? Why or why not?



From the Bible

It is natural to reach for a new relationship to fill the void you feel when your spouse is not meeting your needs, but . . .

- 1) this is a violation of your marriage covenant.
- 2) such a relationship will hinder your healing.

The verses below offer another way to fill that void and overcome your loneliness:

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:8

According to this verse, what is your responsibility and what does God do in response?

Read Psalm 147:3, 6, 11. What else does He promise to do when you draw near to Him?

If you are not actively turning to God, how could His absence be contributing to your loneliness, marital discontent or your relationship outside your marriage?

The following verses contain a prayer found in Ephesians 3:16–21. Pray this prayer, inserting your name in place of “you.” Meditate on the power of His words.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen _____ with power through his Spirit in _____’s inner being, so that Christ may dwell in _____’s heart through faith.

And I pray that _____, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that _____ may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The verse above says that God is able to do far more than all we could possibly ask or imagine. Take time now to imagine yourself in a wonderful, happy, contented marriage. Describe what you see.

Whatever you have just imagined as the most wonderful marriage—God can do better!

In order to access His power, you must be filled with His Spirit by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life. See the Foundation for Healing section in this book for details about how to have a relationship with Christ (page 9).

Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you!



Positive Actions

1. Acknowledge your sins to God and begin today with a fresh, new attitude.
2. For every negative thought that comes to mind about your spouse, counter it with a positive thought.
3. Think before you react.

Day Five |

Checking the Owner's Manual

In your life

What does the Bible say about your specific situation? We like to think of the Bible as the Owner's Manual for life. It has real-world answers to real-world problems.

Based on what you saw on the video, explain why your reason for considering divorce is biblical or not biblical.

What do you think might be the consequences of getting a divorce for the wrong reason (one not allowed by God)?

Have you sought advice from a pastor who counsels from the Bible? Why or why not?

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. 1 Corinthians 7:39

Although this verse specifically addresses the woman's responsibility in a marriage, it is clear throughout the Bible that a husband is expected to demonstrate the same commitment to the marriage.



Did you make a lifelong commitment in your marriage vows? _____

If so, how do you feel about breaking that covenant?

Why would you want to be in obedience to God on this issue?

From the Bible

“So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” Matthew 19:6

What happened to you and your spouse on the day of your marriage, according to this Bible verse?

What warning does the above verse contain?

What do you think will happen to you if you do not heed this warning?

According to Genesis 2:23–24, what is the nature of the union with your spouse?

How would it feel to have your flesh torn from your body?

You cannot escape the hurt that comes from a torn marriage relationship.

Ephesians 5:28–33 offers biblical guidelines for a husband and wife. Read the verses and think about how they apply to you. How have you followed (or not followed) these guidelines?

Marriage is a commitment before God:

If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth. Deuteronomy 23:21–23



What are the consequences of not keeping your vow?

If you and your spouse get a divorce, will you be breaking such a vow? _____

Expert Advice

Truth in Marriage

In his book *Broken Vows*, Dr. Les Carter lists seven truths for married partners.

He says, "In order to break the deception of adultery, the unfaithful spouse must seek true knowledge, then *both* married partners need to become committed to truth as a way of life. . . ."

Truth #1:
Eternal needs are more important than temporal cravings

Truth #2:
Mutual accountability is part of a healthy marriage

Truth #3:
True love involves more than enamored emotions

Truth #4:
Sexual temptations may not be eliminated but they can be controlled

Truth #5:
There is no such thing as the ideal relationship

Truth #6:
Marriage always requires work

Truth #7:
Real character is revealed in private moments

(Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), pp. 196–205. Emphasis added. See Dr. Carter’s book for a complete description of these truths.

Weekly Journal

1. The worst thing that happened to me this week was . . .
2. My greatest blessing this week has been . . .
3. Emotions I have felt toward my spouse this week:
4. Describe your health this week.
5. Describe any steps you have taken this week to gain spiritual, godly wisdom.
6. Write out two things you have learned or that God has taught you this week.

Personal Evaluation Section

Emotionally
 Physically
 Spiritually (Closeness to God)
 Relationally (Closeness to others)
 How your life is in general

Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great

Rate how you have been this week by marking the appropriate boxes.

Attitude Check

My attitude this week was...
 My spouse's attitude this week was...

Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great

Place a mark in the appropriate boxes.

The Many Effects of Divorce on Your Children

Divorce—can it be best for children?

*"Divorce is always damaging."
—Dr. Archibald Hart*

Divorce Negatively Affects Children

Types of effects:

*"The loss of structure is devastating."
—Dr. Bob Barnes*

Divorce Teaches Negative Lessons

Divorce Produces Loss of Family Structure

Types of effects:

Effect of Divorce by Age Group

Preschoolers

- Try to restore marriage

Ages 5–8

- Difficulty in school

Preteens

- Poor self-esteem

Teenagers

- React strongly to divorce

“There’s no way I would have been the same person if I hadn’t been through this.”

—Melissa

“The breakup of a home creates a tremendous amount of anxiety for children. They’re afraid of the future. They don’t know what it holds. They don’t have the perspective that parents have. Fear and anxiety give way at a later stage to anger and hostility.”

—Dr. Archibald Hart

Contrast in Effect on Boys and Girls

Girls

“They have an active feeling and a dream that their parents ought to stay together.”

—Gary Richmond

Boys

Emotional Reactions to Divorce

"They see the stepparent as the enemy."
—Gary Richmond

Depression

Dealing with stigma of divorce

Impact of Divorce on School Performance

He was seeking godly offspring.
Malachi 2:15

Negative Impact on Health

Children of divorce are 25–30% more vulnerable to becoming ill¹

Children of divorce live shorter lives²

Children Hope for Reconciliation

Visitation Difficulties

Loss of Bond with Noncustodial Parent

New Relationships

Children not supportive

Children don't like visible affection toward another person

Remarriage

Children/stepchildren are leading cause of marriage failure

Long-Term Effects of Divorce³

Boys

Men

Girls

Women

1. D. A. Dawson, "Family structure and children's health and well-being: data from the 1988 National Survey of Child Health" *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 1991, Vol. 53, pp. 573–584.
2. H. S. Friedman, et al. "Psychosocial and behavioral predictors of longevity" *American Psychologist*. 1995, Vol. 50, No. 2, pp. 69–78.
3. J. S. Wallerstein and S. Blakeslee, *Second Chances: Men, Women and Children a Decade After Divorce* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989).



This session looks at divorce through the eyes of a child. Take time this week to honestly assess the impact divorce would have on your children.

Day One

Are they better off if we split?

In your life

Do you believe your children would be better off if you and your spouse separate or divorce? Why or why not?

The video presented information on the impact of divorce on children. What points did you agree with and what did you disagree with?

Agree: _____

Disagree: _____

What would be the most harmful effect of divorce on your children?

From the Bible

The Bible offers clearly defined expectations of marriage and of parents. As you read the following passage, focus on how these verses apply to you.

Malachi 2

13 Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

15 Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

What did this person do to lose favor with God?

Read verse 15 and explain how this applies to your life.

Godly offspring are those children who are brought up in a way that pleases the Lord. What are you doing that is pleasing to God?



What does God think of divorce?

Why should it matter to you what God thinks?

Does this Scripture change your view of whether you and your spouse should separate or divorce? Why or why not?

Positive Actions

1. Attend church this week.
2. Pray for healing from the hurt that you, your spouse and your children have experienced.
3. Look up the word "love" in a Bible concordance (an index of main words in the Bible). Read a few of the verses to help broaden your understanding of Jesus' definition of love.

Day Two

Where are you right now?

In your life

How did your children become aware of the marital difficulties you and your spouse are experiencing?

What has their reaction been?

What concerns do you have about their response?

From the Bible

Read Matthew 18:3–10. These verses show us that God holds a special place in His heart for children. Reread verses 3–4. What do these verses suggest for you to do?

Now look at verses 5–6. How does God view someone who causes a child to sin?



How might a divorce between you and your spouse cause your children to sin? (Think back to the video and the descriptions of ways children react to divorce.)

What evidence have you seen of this type of sin in the lives of your children?

Verse 10 suggests that God has special protection for children. How might such protection enter into your decision-making process?

Day Three |

Predicting the future

In your life

Each child is special and has his or her own personality. In the space below, try to predict how each of your children would respond if you and your spouse separated or divorced.

Which child would be most deeply affected and why?

“Children love the idea of reconciliation. They hate separation and divorce. And the reason they hate it so much is it distorts their lives, even though they can’t verbalize it. Anything that distorts their well-being, their safety, their comfort, is something they despise. So reconciliation would be something to restore the child’s comfort zone.”

—Dr. Robert Abarno

From the Bible

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

As a parent, you have special responsibilities in raising your children. There are certain things God wants you to pass on to them.



Read Deuteronomy 11:18–21. What is one of the primary responsibilities you have regarding your children (verse 19)?

Make a list of what a separation or divorce would teach your children.

Dr. Archibald Hart talks about some of the lessons your children may learn during a divorce process:

“Divorce teaches some very, very nasty things. It teaches you how to be hateful. It teaches you how to backstab. It teaches you how to be spiteful. It teaches you ways of expressing your temper, your anger. It also teaches you not to trust people. People let you down.

“Feelings that you have about love end up as unfinished business that children who go through divorce have to contend with later in life. How do you trust someone? How do you believe that somebody loves you when you feel like the ones who said they loved you have betrayed you?”

Day Four

Another person in your life

In your life

Children are especially upset when you begin a new relationship after separation or divorce.

If you are currently involved in a relationship with someone other than your spouse, are your children aware of this?

If so, how have they responded? If not, how do you think they would react?

“I went from one man to another. I wasn’t considering my future or the future of my two little boys who were watching me.”

—Kay Arthur

From the Bible

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Colossians 3:21

What have you done that your children would have reason to be bitter about either now or later in their life? (Think not only of words and actions, but also think about your attitudes, coping skills, motivations and daily focus.)



What might be added to that list if you were to get a divorce?

“Research has shown that children as long as ten years after the divorce are still depressed. What is at the root of the depression is the loss they have experienced. Not only the loss of a parent, but the loss of dreams, the loss of ideals, the loss of the intact home. God has designed us to respond to loss with depression, which can be damaging to children [if they do not learn how to recognize and cope with it]. Of all the emotional consequences of divorce, that is the one emotion that parents pay least attention to.”

—Dr. Archibald Hart

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 (NAS)

How does God want you to bring up your children?

How would a divorce hinder or be directly opposing this command?

Day Five

Remarriage

In your life

How often do you think about the possibility of remarriage after divorce?

What would you expect your remarriage to be like?

After viewing the video, how do you think your children would respond to you marrying another person? (List a response for each of your children.)

Statistics show that 75% of all second marriages fail, due in large part to the fact that it is difficult to blend parents, stepparents, children and stepchildren. How would you avoid being a part of that statistic if you remarried?

How emotionally prepared would you be to face another divorce?



Session 3

From the Bible

Many people do not realize what the Bible teaches about divorce and remarriage. Jesus directly addresses this issue in Matthew 5:31–32:

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."

What is the one reason stated here that allows you to divorce your spouse and remarry?

If you divorce and remarry for other reasons, what sin have you committed?

Where do your circumstances fit in relation to this teaching?

Maybe you feel that your circumstances don't fit into the biblical guidelines we have discussed. Everyone's circumstances are unique, but be assured that the Bible has a teaching for your specific situation. The Bible addresses some issues directly, while other situations must be approached by following general biblical principles and procedures.

If you would like to examine the Bible's teaching in more detail and learn how it relates to your particular circumstances, we encourage you to study further with the help of some of the books listed at our online bookstore (access the bookstore through www.beforeyoudivorce.org).

Expert Advice

The consequences of divorce

"The general misimpression is that a person will have a great chance to be happy if she/he dumps the bum or sends the witch away," says Gary Richmond in *The Divorce Decision*.

"Studies have proven that this is just not the case. The truth is that you will introduce a new chain of events into your life. If you had known how painful they would be, you would have stayed with the process of working at your marriage problems longer, maybe even until they were solved."

Richmond goes on to describe eight effects of divorce:

1. If you have children you will damage them in several ways if you opt for divorce. . . .
2. If you choose to divorce, your finances will be affected for years to come. . . .
3. If you choose to divorce with the thought that love is better the second time around, you need to know that second marriages have a less than 30 percent chance of surviving five years or more.
4. Don't think for a minute that your mate will be the only one fighting for what you feel is your fair share of the money. . . . Lawyers are the only winners in a divorce proceeding.
5. Choosing to divorce means putting the major decisions of your life into the hands of a judge who may or may not be fair. . . .



6. Divorcing your mate means divorcing your friends. If you go to church, it means facing the reality that your faith will not be respected as it once was. You will find yourself starting over in the making of friends, and you will feel awkward in the making of new ones. Old friends are best.
7. Divorce is a process that never really ends. . . .
8. Most importantly, you will have to deal with your own conscience if you decide to divorce. . . .

(Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1988), pp. 12–15. Used by permission of author.



Weekly Journal

1. The worst thing that happened to me this week was . . .
2. My greatest blessing this week has been . . .
3. Emotions I have felt toward my spouse this week:
4. Describe your health this week.
5. Describe any steps you have taken this week to gain spiritual, godly wisdom.
6. Write out two things you have learned or that God has taught you this week.

Personal Evaluation Section

	Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
Emotionally				
Physically				
Spiritually (Closeness to God)				
Relationally (Closeness to others)				
How your life is in general				

Rate how you have been this week by marking the appropriate boxes.

Attitude Check

	Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
My attitude this week was...				
My spouse's attitude this week was...				

Place a mark in the appropriate boxes.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness

Forgiveness produces freedom

What are the consequences of unforgiveness?

Forgiveness Is Not

A feeling

Pretending you were not hurt

Accepting what the other person did was right

Automatically trusting the other person again

Relieving the other person of responsibility

“But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Matthew 6:15

What if I don’t forgive?

“You will not feel like forgiving.”
—Doug Easterday

“It is very hard for us human beings to
put down that pride and forgive.”
—Ron

What happens if we are able to forgive?

"Forgiveness is the antidote for resentment and anger."

—Dr. Archibald Hart

Forgiveness Is

My decision

"Holding unforgiveness and bitterness is bad for our health."

—Dr. David Seamands

A decision only I make

Obedying God

"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Psalm 66:18

What if I don't obey God?

"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14–15

Is forgiveness a one-time event?

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'" Matthew 18:21–22

Helps us live in a higher realm

“The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.” Deuteronomy 28:13

Responsibility for my actions and attitudes

- What if the other person doesn't respond?

Not requiring accountability from the other person

- What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?

Willingness to move in the opposite spirit

- How do I know if I have really forgiven?

God's Forgiveness

Comes through Christ

Jesus paid the price for our sins

“Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

*“He who creates changes in people's hearts is hard at work creating a change in my heart.”
—Harriet*

*“If I can't forgive him, God can't forgive me, and that's a strong statement.”
—Sherry*

*“I just sensed the Lord saying, ‘You need to forgive.’”
—Angie*

God forgives all sin

“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.” Isaiah 61:1

Received by asking Christ into your life

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”
1 John 1:9*

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

What’s the result of receiving His forgiveness?

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:17–19



Forgiving your spouse may seem undesirable and nearly impossible, and without God's strength and power, it probably is impossible. Let's find out why forgiveness is such a crucial step in your life.

Day One

Do I have to forgive my spouse?

In your life

Make a list of things your spouse should ask your forgiveness for (things he or she has done to hurt you). Talk this list over with your mate sometime during the week.

Horizontal lines for writing a list of things.

"It's important for each spouse to keep in mind that each has a role in dealing a death blow to a marriage that's in crisis. Don't think that it's all your spouse's fault. You're fooling yourself. You have a part in it too.

"And it's important to confess that to your spouse and say, 'Forgive me for what I've done.' And be specific and ask for forgiveness and repent of anything that you're continuing to do, in order to make things right."
—J. Warren Kniskern

From the Bible

You may feel so angry or hurt by what your spouse has done that the last thing you want to do is forgive. Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is something God expects of you—it is getting your heart right with God.

Do you feel like forgiving your spouse? Why or why not?

Horizontal lines for writing an answer.

Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (KJV)

What iniquity (wrongdoing) are you holding in your heart?

Horizontal lines for writing an answer.

"If I don't forgive, what I'm saying by the inference of my actions is what that person did to me is more important to me than going on with God."
—Doug Easterday



Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:31-32

In the above Bible verse, God is commanding you to do several things. Which of these commands have you obeyed in regard to your spouse?

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. Romans 7:18

According to Romans 7:18, why do we not deserve God's forgiveness?

Read Colossians 3:12-13 for a description of God's people and what He expects of them.

Forgiveness is the action of a person whose priorities are mature and in order.

Day Two |

Being honest with myself

In your life

Make a list of things you need to ask your spouse to forgive you for (things you have done to hurt him or her). Talk this list over with your mate sometime during the week.

"You're not alleviating responsibility from anyone by forgiving them. You are transferring it to where it really belongs and that's to God. They will answer, but if you're requiring them to answer to you, then you are having just as significant a problem as they do."

—Doug Easterday

From the Bible

A marriage crisis can be very adversarial. It may seem like your spouse has become "the enemy," and you are constantly under attack.

Today's verses will be helpful if you find yourself in that situation.

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Romans 12:19-20 (NAS)



What acts of revenge have you contemplated taking?

How does God expect you to respond to your "enemy"?

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44

Pray for those who persecute you!

What could you pray for your spouse? (Ideas: salvation, wisdom, a desire to reconcile, a closer walk with Jesus)

When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him. Proverbs 16:7

Look up the word "peace" in the dictionary. Which definition best describes the type of peace that you desire to have in your marriage?

Forgiving brings peace.

Day Three |

If you haven't forgiven

In your life

Make a list of things you have done for which you need God's forgiveness. Remember Matthew 6:14-15 says that God cannot forgive your sin until you have forgiven people who have sinned against you.

Spend some time in prayer right now asking Him to forgive these things.

From the Bible

When you don't forgive, you must live with the consequences of your unforgiveness. Unforgiveness will lead to bitterness and possible health problems. Most importantly, it will affect your relationship with God.

How has your unwillingness to forgive affected your relationship with God?



For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15

What will happen if you do not forgive your spouse?

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. Psalm 66:18

How can unforgiveness affect your prayers?

Positive Actions

1. Make a decision this week that's not based on your emotions.
2. Reread the Promise Page (page 8). Are you keeping your promise?
3. Write down all your thoughts and feelings about forgiving your spouse and about your spouse seeking forgiveness from you. This will help you to sort through confusing emotions.

Day Four

Forgiveness breakthrough

In your life

What effects has unforgiveness had on you? (Describe physical, mental and spiritual effects.)

On your spouse?

On your children?

What will it take for you to find the freedom that comes with forgiveness?

*"I felt free. Sometimes I look back and I say 'Where was I when I lost that connectedness to the Lord or that real peace with the Lord?' And I realized that unforgiveness was not freeing me with the Lord."
—Joyce*



From the Bible

Letting go of the feeling that you have a “right” to restitution or revenge is a key step in reaching the point of forgiveness. It allows you to move your attention from the past to what lies ahead of you.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13–14

In this Bible passage, what is Paul’s attitude toward his past?

Although it is impossible to fully forget the past, Paul considers his past done and settled. What is his focus and goal now?

How can you adopt a similar attitude and focus toward your situation?

Read Isaiah 43:25. What does God do once He forgives you?

You, too, can have the attitude and mind of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. If you try to control your thoughts and mind using your own strength, you will always fall short.

If you would like to invite Christ Jesus to be the master of your life, talk to your pastor or a mature Christian friend or read the Foundation for Healing section on page 9.



Day Five

Forgiveness—square one

In your life

Have you ever asked God for forgiveness of your sins?

Do you feel that He heard you? _____

If so, what was the effect? _____

If not, why do you think He didn't hear you?

Make sure you have an open channel to God through Jesus Christ. Work through the Bible verses listed below for specific information on how to connect with God.

From the Bible

It is hard to forgive someone else if you have never experienced God's forgiveness. We have all done wrong things (see Romans 3:23) and, therefore, are in need of His forgiveness.

If you have never received God's forgiveness or if it's been awhile since you asked Him to forgive you, then it's important to seek His forgiveness in your life before attempting to forgive someone else.

Read 1 John 1:9. What must you do to receive God's forgiveness?

If you do this, what will He do?

Read Ephesians 4:32. What is the source of your forgiveness from God?

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9

How do you have a saving relationship with Jesus?

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

What are you being saved from?

What does that mean?



Expert Advice

How Should I Pray?

Jan Northington offers four principles for effective prayer in her book *Separated and Waiting*. She says, “Our view of God is distorted when we focus our attention on ourselves and our needs or problems rather than on God Himself. . . . You will pray more effectively if you keep these principles in mind.”

Pray **ACTS**:

Adoration

Adoration is the praise we offer to God. . . .

Confession

Confession is agreement with God about our sin. It is an admission of our inability to be in proper relationship with Him except through forgiveness and the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. . . .

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving shows gratitude. We should thank God for what He does, who He is, and what He makes of us. We are instructed to give thanks in everything, but especially for His work in creation and for His redemption. . . .

Supplication

Supplication is a request made on behalf of ourselves and others. Jesus encouraged us to do so when He said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7).

(Wake Forest, NC: Church Initiative, 1994), pp. 146–148.

Weekly Journal

1. The worst thing that happened to me this week was . . .
2. My greatest blessing this week has been . . .
3. Emotions I have felt toward my spouse this week:
4. Describe your health this week.
5. Describe any steps you have taken this week to gain spiritual, godly wisdom.
6. Write out two things you have learned or that God has taught you this week.

Personal Evaluation Section

	Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
Emotionally				
Physically				
Spiritually (Closeness to God)				
Relationally (Closeness to others)				
How your life is in general				

Rate how you have been this week by marking the appropriate boxes.

Attitude Check

	Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
My attitude this week was...				
My spouse's attitude this week was...				

Place a mark in the appropriate boxes.

Reconciliation

Why do people react so strongly to the word “reconciliation”?

Why should I consider reconciliation?

When Reconciliation Can Occur

Still together but facing major problems

Separated emotionally but still living together

Physically separated but not divorced

Divorced but not remarried

Levels of Reconciliation

Friendship

- Acquaintance
- Casual

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.
2 Corinthians 5:18

- Close
- Intimate

Rebuild your relationship

Restoration of marriage

Reasons to Reconcile

1. Heritage
2. Reduce negative stress
3. Children want it
4. Economics
5. Attraction to people like your spouse
6. Stabilize emotionally
7. God expects it

"We'd always been each other's best friends, so we had a lot to build on if we could bring it back together."

—Alice

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.
2 Corinthians 5:18–19

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. 1 Corinthians 7:10–11

Process of Reconciliation

Reconciliation cycles

- What happens when the “limits of harmony” are broken?
- Where am I in relation to the “line of reconciliation”?
- Where is my spouse?

Waiting at the line

- Why should I wait at the line of reconciliation?
- Is waiting there a waste of time?
- What can I be doing while waiting at the line of reconciliation?
- What areas of my life could I be working on while waiting?
- What about the potential pain?

“The chance of reconciliation with a third party in the picture is zero.”
—Gary Richmond

Dating and Reconciliation

What is the likelihood of reconciliation if you are dating another person?

“Dating leads to marriage, not reconciliation.”

—Dr. Jim Talley

Is dating appropriate if my divorce is not final?

“Married people do not date.”

—Dr. Jim Talley

Dating: What is it?

- Do I have any opposite-sex friendships that might actually be dating relationships?
- Can I date casually and still be open to reconciliation?
- Am I?

Gossip: What’s the effect?

Reconciliation in MY Circumstances

Have I stabilized personally?

What do I need to do to stabilize?

What if my spouse is not willing to reconcile?

Do I want to reconcile?

Is God leading me to attempt reconciliation?

What role does Christ play in the reconciliation process?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ. 2 Corinthians 2:14–15

Levels of Reconciliation

Commitment

Redevelop friendship

Explore reconciliation issues

Confess and repent of your sins

Develop relationship skills

Find help from pastor or counselor

*"It was my heart that He was trying to change."
—Wallace*

Reconciled to God

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20

Confess your sin

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

Ask for forgiveness

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

Move away from your sins (repent)

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Acts 3:19

Ask Jesus Christ to save you from the effect of your sin (by making Him your Savior)

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15:3

Give Jesus Christ control of your life (as your Lord)

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

See the special Foundation for Healing section of this workbook (page 9) for more information on how to know Christ personally.

Your Choice

Anger, bitterness

Reconciliation

“Choose to get better and not bitter.”

—John

“You choose either reconciliation or you choose the anger path. There’s no other path to choose.”

—Dr. Jim Talley



Reconciliation is a difficult concept to consider because you may be afraid of being hurt again, and the pain still cuts so deep.

If you feel like you don't have the strength to pursue reconciliation on your own, ask God to help you with the process. As you'll see in this week's On Your Own, God wants you to pursue reconciliation, and He will be there to help every step of the way!

Day One |

Why should I even think about reconciliation?

In your life

What is your emotional reaction to the concept of reconciling with your spouse?

How do you think he or she feels about it?

What steps have you taken to effect a reconciliation?

Describe the results of these steps.

Are you willing to attempt a reconciliation? Why or why not?

From the Bible

Even when you've been hurt deeply by other people, the Lord wants you to reconcile damaged relationships, including a troubled marriage.

God expects you to take the initiative in seeking reconciliation.

Read Matthew 18:15-17. Jesus explains how to confront someone who has wronged you. The goal of this process is restoration of the relationship.

Who is to take the initiative in this process?

What is the first step (verse 15)?

What comes next (verse 16)?

What is the third step (verse 17)?



How do you prepare your heart to have the right attitude for this step in reconciliation?

Be filled with prayer and God’s Spirit before approaching a person who has wronged you. If your motivation for reconciling is tinged with bitterness or blame, you must first seek God’s forgiveness for yourself.

In order to have a pure, unadulterated relationship with God, you must obey His commands:

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.” Matthew 5:23–25

What should occur before your heart can be right with God?

Do not despair if the other person is unwilling to reconcile despite your best efforts; God will not hold you accountable for the other person’s response.

Day Two

What shape are you in?

In your life

Examine the list of reasons (on page 72) why reconciliation is desirable. Which two are most relevant to your situation?

1. _____
2. _____

Which reasons would your spouse list?

1. _____
2. _____

Are you obeying God in your current situation? Why or why not?

“We’ve got a good friend who has thought about leaving his wife, and he just comes up with more and more reasons why he ought to do it. And I’ve just tried to tell him through our experience how those reasons are the same reasons that people have had forever, and if you want to find a reason, you’re going to find one. But I told him to try to be a strong person, be a strong man and stay home and try to make it work out.”

—Terry



From the Bible

It is often easy to spot the sins of the other person during marriage difficulties. If there is an affair or abuse involved, the responsibility for the failure of the marriage may be clear-cut.

But it's also true that fault-finding and placing blame can hinder reconciliation. Both parties must accept responsibility for their mistakes and demonstrate mutual forgiveness.

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

Matthew 7:3-5

What should occur before you confront the faults of someone else?

Jesus clearly states how you are to respond to someone who has sinned against you:

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Matthew 18:21-22

How much forgiveness is appropriate in your situation?

Positive Actions

1. Pray that
 - your spouse will desire to reconcile
 - your spouse is kept from inappropriate influences
 - you and your spouse will forgive each other
 - you, your spouse and your children will develop a closer relationship with God through Jesus Christ
2. Read a good Christian book discussing separation/divorce, forgiveness, reconciliation or other related topics. Our online bookstore (accessed through www.beforeyoudivorce.org) has excellent resources.



Day Three

Being receptive to reconciliation

In your life

In a typical marriage, a couple will move in and out of harmony with each other. Arguments, fatigue, outside distractions, money problems and other factors will cause the partners to move away from each other, but the normal cycle is that they always stay within certain limits and eventually meet back together again. Dr. Talley calls this meeting point the "line of reconciliation," and he calls the outer limits the "limits of harmony."

Place a mark where you are right now in relation to the line of reconciliation and the limits of harmony.



Now place a mark where you think your spouse currently is.



Which spouse has broken through or is likely to break through the limits of harmony? Why?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer.

How long are you willing to wait at the line of reconciliation?

Two horizontal lines for writing an answer.

What should you be doing to stabilize your life while you are at the line?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer.

Don't think that waiting on your spouse is a waste of time. Don't think your own life is being put on hold. The purpose of this time is for you to stabilize yourself: spiritually, emotionally, mentally, financially. Get yourself together and use this time for you!

If you have broken the limits of harmony, what do you need to do to return to the line of reconciliation?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer.

"He [God] had taught me not to put the focus on her but to put the focus on Him; it was easier to look at it as Him working in my life to transform me instead of looking at Linda and saying, 'Why are you doing this to me? Why can't you be more understanding?' And the Lord would just impress on my heart, 'It doesn't make any difference what she does. You have to do what's right.'"

—Wallace

From the Bible

Read Luke 15:11-24. This story describes the reconciliation of a father and his rebellious son.

What was the father's reaction when he saw his son returning home?

Two horizontal lines for writing an answer.



What was the attitude of the son (verse 21)?

Your spouse may return to the line of reconciliation. If that happens, how should you respond?

What is your attitude toward reconciliation?

“Circumstances are no more responsible for your attitude than the mirror is for your looks. All the circumstances do is reveal the inner self of who you are; they don’t make you that way.

“You can’t blame the other person or hold that person responsible. God holds you responsible for your attitude, your actions and how you treat the other person.”

—Dr. Jim Talley

The son in the Luke 15 Bible account is often described as having a “repentant heart.” Explain why repentance is necessary before reconciliation in your marriage can occur.

Day Four |

Initiating reconciliation

In your life

When will you be ready to take steps to begin the reconciliation process?

What steps could you take first?

What do you need to repent of (turn away from) in your life?

How and when will you do this?

What do you need to confess to your spouse?

When will you do this? _____

Are you involved in a relationship with another person? _____



If so, are you willing to leave this relationship to help effect reconciliation with your spouse?

From the Bible

It is important to remain open to efforts of reconciliation by the other person. You also need to be responsive to God if He leads you to initiate reconciliation.

The LORD said to me [Hosea], "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods. . . ." So I bought her [back] for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you." Hosea 3:1-3

Who initiated the reconciliation?

What did Hosea do? _____

What lifestyle was his wife leading at the time?

What efforts have you made to truly listen to God's promptings?

"My focus was my relationship with God and what He was doing to me, and when that focus changed, a lot of other things started to change."

—Wallace

Note: The book of Hosea is an amazing picture of the depth of God's love for us, despite the fact we reject Him and put other things ahead of our relationship with Him. Why not take a little extra time and read Hosea this week?

Day Five |

The ultimate separation and reconciliation

In your life

What role does Jesus Christ take in your life?

What steps do you need to take to change your relationship with Him?

Where can you go to find the answers to any questions you may have about a relationship with Jesus?

If you don't have a relationship with Christ, what effect has the lack of a relationship had on your life?



On your marriage? _____

When Christ is the center of your life and your spouse's life, you turn your attention and focus on Him and stop relying on your spouse to meet your needs.

God is Love (1 John 4:8) and God has promised to supply all your needs (Philippians 4:19). When both you and your spouse focus on Love, that is when a true and lasting love is woven into your marriage. A good, whole marriage is a circle of three, not two.

What is preventing you from inviting Christ into your life right now?

From the Bible

The Bible offers another reconciliation that will guide, inspire and change your life for eternity. We are separated from God because of sin, but through Jesus Christ, each person has the opportunity to be restored to Him and experience an amazing relationship with Him.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. Isaiah 59:2

According to this verse, where do we, as sinners, stand with God?

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

What kind of people are sinners?

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Romans 5:8-11

What did Christ do for us? _____

What is the effect in our lives? _____

Do you have a restored relationship to God through Jesus Christ? _____

If not, please read the Foundation for Healing (page 9) for an explanation of how to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In order to live the full, rich life God planned for you, you must be reconciled to Him!



Expert Advice

It's Your Move . . .

In *You Don't Have To Quit*, Anne and Ray Ortlund discuss biblical reconciliation:

When your relationship is threatened, know the biblical thing to do. Eventually any sustained effort, including a friendship, will hit its own "midlife crisis" . . . When it comes, what do you do?

If you're the one who goofed, Matthew 5:23, 24 says it's your move first. If your friend is the one who goofed, Matthew 18:15 says it's still your move first.

In other words, no matter whose fault it was, it's always your move.

And what do you do? You go to him [or her] and talk it over, one on one (see Matt. 5:24; 18:15).

This is key, it's scriptural, it's right.

Don't tell anyone else. Don't grouse around and spread the problem and force others to take sides. Protect your reputation and his by talking it over privately. "If he listens to you, you have won your brother over" (Matt. 18:15), and you've pumped staying power into your relationship.

If that doesn't help, then Matthew says to take one or two others to help the two of you solve the problem (see 18:16).

Then if that doesn't bring a solution, "tell it to the church" (18:17)—probably to official leaders, to spiritual elders with good common sense.

(Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 1988, pp. 164–165.

Expert Advice

A Peacemaker's Checklist

In his book *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande says:

Whenever you are involved in a conflict, you may apply the four basic principles of peacemaking by asking yourself these questions:

Glorify God

How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?

Get the log out of your eye

How can I have contributed to this conflict and what do I need to do?

Go and show your brother his fault

How can I help others to understand how they have contributed to this conflict?

Go and be reconciled

How can I demonstrate forgiveness and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?

(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), 1991, p. 205.

Weekly Journal

1. The worst thing that happened to me this week was . . .
2. My greatest blessing this week has been . . .
3. Emotions I have felt toward my spouse this week:
4. Describe your health this week.
5. Describe any steps you have taken this week to gain spiritual, godly wisdom.
6. Write out two things you have learned or that God has taught you this week.

Personal Evaluation Section

	Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
Emotionally				
Physically				
Spiritually (Closeness to God)				
Relationally (Closeness to others)				
How your life is in general				

Rate how you have been this week by marking the appropriate boxes.

Attitude Check

	Really Bad	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
My attitude this week was...				
My spouse's attitude this week was...				

Place a mark in the appropriate boxes.

Resources for Couples Who Are Separated or Divorced

Your marriage can be restored even if you have already separated or divorced. We encourage you to seek the help of a pastor or counselor to guide you through this process.

We also want to stress the importance of taking steps toward reconciliation outside of the legal system. If at all possible, pursue Christian mediation through your church.

Here is an organization that may be able to help by providing resources and guidance in the mediation/reconciliation process:

Peacemaker Ministries

PO Box 81130
Billings, MT 59108
406-256-1583
www.Peacemaker.net

Reconcilable Differences by Dr. Jim Talley, *Hope for the Separated* by Gary Chapman and *Separated and Waiting* by Jan Northington are good tools in helping you structure the reconciliation process. The reconciliation process is also described in the book *When the Vow Breaks* by J. Warren Kniskern. These books are listed at our online bookstore, accessible through www.beforeyoudivorce.org.

A Biblical Reconciliation Agreement

We encourage you to begin the mediation process with a formal commitment to each other in the presence of a mediator (an elder of the church, pastor or attorney). We have provided a model reconciliation agreement written by Dr. Robert Abarno and Attorney Vincent Collura on the following pages. Modify this agreement to meet your needs or come up with one of your own, but be sure that your commitment to reconcile is serious.

The Bible tells us that disputes between Christians should be handled through the church (1 Corinthians 6:1–8). If you involve an attorney in this mediation process, make sure he or she embraces the biblical concepts represented by this model document.

Dr. Abarno, a clinical psychologist and one of the featured experts on the Before You

Divorce videos, developed this agreement for several reasons:

“My personal case in court and the aftermath of that case has been devastating. I contacted an attorney/friend to discuss the possibility of working on a Christian reconciliation agreement based on the Word of God to recommend to my patients.

“I suggested to him that based on Jesus as advocate for both parties, we could in obedience to God’s Word draw up a simple agreement to agree.”

Why use a biblical reconciliation agreement?

- You will be faithful to the Scripture found in 1 Corinthians 6:1–8.
- It is an effective alternative to tort law.
- You can be an active participant in resolving the conflict.
- You will not have to surrender your future to the absolute control of a judge in a secular courtroom. (Once in court, the final decisions will be out of your hands.)
- You will save money that would otherwise go to attorneys.
- It still involves advocacy, but with the love of Christ.
- It is the only viable alternative to our current legal system, even if both parties in the dispute are not Christians.

What is required for a biblical reconciliation agreement?

- A faithful commitment to prayer and biblical principles. Each person should agree to read the Scriptures included in the model agreement.
- Reliance on the church and its leadership to facilitate the conflict resolution (see Matthew 18). If an attorney is involved, he or she should be fully committed to these biblical principles.
- A willingness by each person to confess sins and repent of them.

What are the results of this agreement?

- Often at the end of the agreement period, the parties will have a Christian love for each other that far exceeds the original relationship.



- By eliminating conflict between you and your spouse, you will be free to develop a deeper relationship with the Lord.
- Your sincere effort to reconcile will be blessed by God (Matthew 5:8).

How to begin:

1. Ask your church to select a mediator from church leadership who will help you prepare an agreement similar to the one shown below.
2. Complete the agreement, co-sign it in the presence of your mediator/s and treat it as a formal contract between the two of you.
3. Earnestly seek to live out the agreement.

Begin this process with prayer:

Holy Father, in Jesus’ name help us to be obedient like Jesus and not bring each other to a secular court in violation of Your Word (1 Corinthians 6:1–10). Help us, dear Lord, to love one another in obedience to Your Holy Word (John 15:12). Amen.

Agreement to Seek Reconciliation Through Christian Mediation¹

Agreeing to Agree in Obedience to God: John 14:21–23; 1 Corinthians 6:1–10; John 15:12

DATE OF RECONCILIATION AGREEMENT

1. Names of Participants _____
Both over 21 (Initial) _____
Residence of each/both

2. That they are currently legally married _____
Date of Marriage _____
3. Children: _____ Age _____

_____ Age _____

_____ Age _____

4. Separation date if that has already occurred _____

Proof of separation agreed upon is attached herewith _____

5. Confirmation of agreement by both to reconcile

6. Confirmation that neither party is represented by legal counsel

7. Parties covenant to agree to all the articles of this Reconciliation Agreement

8. Parties covenant to individually and corporately pray and devote together daily; utilize prayer lists and other appendices to facilitate the reconciliation process.

9. Parties covenant to agree to the following articles:

ARTICLE I

If the parties are currently separated and living apart but agree to agree to work toward reconciliation, then a specific time to live separate and apart for (.....) months free from interference, etc., is stated herewith as agreed to by both parties and a Christian attorney. Time can be reduced by written addendum, signed by original signatures.

ARTICLE II

Neither party shall molest or harass. Both parties agree to communicate at least one time a week to seek reconciliation by engaging in godly, constructive dialogue.

ARTICLE III

Agree not to divorce or seek legal separation, and work diligently and honestly toward reconciliation. In the event of violation, agreement is null and void.

ARTICLE IV

Agree to engage in individual/corporate Christian biblical counseling to reassess and re-evaluate their marriage. Biblical counseling will be on a regular basis and will be based on the inerrant Word of God. Prayer will be an essential component of Christian counseling. A prayer list with the parties as prayer partners will be developed to facilitate future goals and godly expectations together in the Lord. Each party covenants with God to pray daily for reconciliation in Jesus' name and according to His will.

ARTICLE V

Beginning on the date this agreement is executed, the parties agree that past mistakes, personal failures, wrongs, hurts and negative memories of the past shall not be remembered or verbalized by the other party. Each party must work through his/her past with God in prayer, confession and repentance. (1 John 1:9)

Forgiveness (Matthew 6:14, 15) is called for by our Lord. Any record of wrongs held against and verbalized against the other party is sin. We are called to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us. Both parties agree to engage in personal prayer and Bible study on a daily basis, be a member of and attend the regular service schedule of a Christian church where the Bible is taught and preached as inerrant. Both parties agree and covenant with God to be subject to the authority and discipline of the Elders. (Ezra 7:25)

ARTICLE VI

Twelve hours of advance notice must be given prior to visiting the other party's domicile, unless both parties agree in agreeing to another interval of time. Participants cannot date or consort socially with members of the opposite sex. Both parties agree to attend family functions when they are invited to do so.

ARTICLE VII

Agreement on possession of family home during the separation and reconciliation process.

ARTICLE VIII

Pooling of income, payment of bills and mortgage payments are required to be paid on time. Tithing should be done jointly.

ARTICLE IX

Neither party can dispose of assets or property without written permission of the other party. Both parties must cooperate fully in matters of financial Biblical responsibility and obligations.

ARTICLE X

Prior to reconciliation, there must be agreement on adequate support during separation.

ARTICLE XI

Both parties must reside in the same town. Moving to another community and away from your church community precludes reconciliation.

ARTICLE XII

Any modification or waiver of any provision of this Reconciliation Agreement shall be effective only if made in writing and executed with the same formality as the original Reconciliation Agreement. The failure of either party to insist upon strict performance shall not be construed as a waiver of any subsequent default of the same or a similar nature.

ARTICLE XIII

Addendum attached to this agreement signed by both participants and mediator(s) and notarized as part of this reconciliation agreement.

BENEDICTION

May God bless us and keep us as we yield in obedience to His Holy will and to His Word. (John 14:21, 23; 1 Corinthians 6:1–10)

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have hereunto set their hands and seals to this Reconciliation Agreement in duplicate originals, one of which is retained by each party, the day and year first above written.

Date

Name of Party (Seal)

Date

Name of Party (Seal)

Date

Elder Board Clerk/Pastor/Christian Attorney (Seal)

Satan would seek to destroy God-ordained marriages and families. Agreement to reconcile in Jesus' name and to live in obedience to Ephesians 5:21–33 defeats Satan's attempt to destroy the family, which is the smallest, most vulnerable unit of the Body of Christ, the Church.

1. Dr. Robert Abarno, "Agreement to Seek Reconciliation Through Christian Mediation" (Raleigh, NC: Dr. Robert Abarno, 1991, 2nd ed 1994). All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Choosing Wisely. Before You Divorce

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Growing closer to God

Depression

Healing from your hurts

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Discover many valuable resources
to help you heal and make wise
decisions, including books writ-
ten by the experts you see on the Choosing
Wisely Before You Divorce videos.

• www.beforeyoudivorce.org/bookstore



Recommended Books

These books will help you deal with specific problems that apply to your marriage relationship. Visit our online bookstore, www.beforeyoudivorce.org/bookstore, for additional titles or to purchase the books listed below.

When the Vow Breaks: A survival and recovery guide for Christians facing divorce
by Joseph Warren Kniskern

Before a Bad Goodbye: How to turn your marriage around by Timothy Clinton

Reconcilable Differences by Jim Talley

Hope for the Separated: Wounded marriages can be healed by Gary Chapman

Separated and Waiting by Jan Northington

The Anger Workbook by Les Carter

When You Can't Say "I Forgive You": Breaking the bonds of anger and hurt
by David Hazard and Grace Ketterman

Forgive and Love Again: Healing wounded relationships by John Nieder

Winning Your Husband Back: Before it's too late by Gary and Greg Smalley

Love Must Be Tough: Proven hope for families in crisis by James Dobson

The Freedom from Depression Workbook by Les Carter

The Soul Care Bible by Timothy Clinton, ed.

The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren

Healing for Damaged Emotions by David Seamands

What About Divorce? by Spiros Zodhiates

And Marries Another: Divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament
by Craig Keener

The *Choosing Wisely Before You Divorce* couple's kit is available at the online bookstore. The kit includes two workbooks, five video sessions and a facilitator's guide, packaged in an attractive, durable case.

Several of the books recommended above are available in Spanish. Visit www.beforeyoudivorce.org/bookstore to find these titles.