



ABBA Ministries

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Illuminating Life through Scripture

Surviving An Affair

Surviving a partner's affair is one of the most difficult experiences a marriage can encounter. The personal sense of betrayal and the emotional roller coaster resulting from discovering a partner's affair shakes the very foundations of one's identity. Yet, it is possible for a marriage to survive if both partners commit themselves to the following tasks:

First, both partners will be afraid to recommit themselves to their marriage. Many couples needlessly forestall reconciling their marriage by ruminating on the question, "Do I really want things to work?" Far better questions to ask are: "What will it take for us to make it? How can we make our marriage last?" A simple change in focus often provides the necessary momentum to help couples recover.

Second, accept that ending the affair needs to happen now. It is not advisable to continue a relationship of any kind after two have been so intimately involved outside their marriages. The unfaithful partner should be prepared to say "Good-bye forever" to the one with whom he/she had the affair. The offended partner must be prepared to deliver such an ultimatum if he/she wishes to reconcile their marriage. Rebuilding trust is a gradual process which cannot be rushed. The sooner one starts, the sooner a sound, rewarding relationship begins to blossom.

Third, get to a good marriage counselor who is prepared to help you explore what it takes to salvage and rebuild your marriage. A good counselor will help both partners deal with issues of repentance and forgiveness, as well as identify previously unmet needs that distanced the partners in the first place.

Fourth, begin meeting each other's needs now. Couples frequently make the mistake of thinking that time alone will heal their wounds. Other couples think that somehow rehashing the pain will "get it all out" so that they can "feel the love" once more. But actually practicing love toward one another is necessary for the feelings to return. Couples who wait until they feel more love will end up waiting forever. Couples who demonstrate love for each other are amazed at how quickly loving feelings return.

Fifth, expect progress to be hard, painful work. Few people understand the pain of betrayal unless they themselves have gone through it. Yet others often expect the betrayed partner to quickly and easily forgive and forget, sparing them the reality of the partner's pain. The unfaithful partner typically has difficulty in accepting that trust must be earned through strict accountability, not merely granted.

Finally, throughout the rebuilding process, keep your eyes fixed on your goal: expect your relationship to be better than ever before. The traumatic experience of an affair serves as a wakeup call to both partners. Paying attention to the needs of each other, both partners work at making the relationship what they want it to be rather than just settling for what they can get with little effort.

Affairs do not have to end marriages. People can, and do, learn to trust one another again. The process of rebuilding a marriage is almost invariably more fulfilling than abandoning it and looking for someone else with which to build one's life. Recommitting oneself to the relationship is frightening, but the ultimate payoff can be well worth whatever the cost.