

## *Hope When Your Wife has Left* - by Chris Garner

Being told that your marriage is over is a horrible feeling. You feel like a failure, like the scum of the earth, like your world has come crashing in around you. Often, going through such a momentous event causes you to feel like your life has come to an end. You don't know how you can go on. I know about these feelings, I've experienced them. There is the pleading, begging, promising to change, praying, seeking God's intervention – anything that will provide another chance and save the marriage. Too many times, in counseling, I've seen the wife with her arms folded over her chest saying, "I am done."

Men in this position want hope that their marriages are going to come back together, but it is impossible to know if it will or won't. Yes, divorce is sin and yes, wives shouldn't divorce their husbands, but the problem usually is that the wife has put up with some sin or neglect or abuse for so long, they have checked out and emotionally are not willing to put back into the marriage. When I am able to speak to the wives, I challenge them to consider 1 Corinthians 7:10, which says, "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." But I don't often get a chance to talk to the wife; usually I am with a broken husband grasping at what is no longer there.

There IS hope; hope whether your wife chooses divorce or not; because God is bigger than all of it. There is a book, "Can My Marriage Be Saved?" – it is a great book that tells 22 true stories of marriages that were on the brink of divorce and were saved. Our story is in this book and more than that, we have *seen* God save many marriages; marriages most people would have written off. God can do it, but both parties must be willing. We pray that God will change your wife's heart. Your wife's heart may change, but it may be so hard from years of problems that it doesn't. This happened to me thirty years ago. My career was my priority and my wife got the left-overs. When she left me, I told her I would do anything to make things right. But she left anyway. I've seen this time and time again. Men do their own thing, whether it is career, pornography, drugs or alcohol, infidelity, abuse, neglect – I've seen it all; but the man doesn't wake up until his wife finally throws him out. The problem is that her heart is elsewhere and it is difficult to bring her back.

One thing that you must realize is that a divorce does not have to ruin your life. It IS sin, but it is not the unforgivable sin. If your wife divorces you, she will be in sin, but friend, listen to me here because I've had to come to terms with this – the bigger sin is on you as the husband and the "head" of your household. Were you the prophet, the priest, and the king of your home? Did you bring the word of God to your wife and family? Did you lead them into prayer and worship of God? Did you protect and provide for them? All of their needs? Physical, financial, security, emotional, educational, and spiritual? Did you love your wife as Christ loved the church? We men (me included once and then almost a second time) tend to live in our own world while our wives spend years trying to pull us in to their world. At some point they give up

and then may get emotionally involved with someone else. We finally wake up, get spiritual and pursue after her with a repentant heart, willing to do anything to make the marriage work, but she is *gone*. And we say Satan has won the battle for our marriages, when we weren't even in the battle until after it was over.

So, what do you do now? **First**, you get your life right with God. Whatever sin you have, you get rid of it. It is spiritual surgery time! Go for help to get rid of the drugs, alcohol, anger, sexual or whatever problems there are. Do whatever it takes to make sure any and all of it is behind you *forever*. Get into an accountability group, a men's study group, or a mentor relationship – something that will help you grow spiritually. **Second**, you sit down and figure out what it means to be the prophet, priest and king of your household. Look up: Romans 8:29, Romans 12:1 & 2 about being transformed by God's word so that you can be the prophet; 1 Peter 2:9 and throughout the Psalms to see how you are to be the priest worshipping God and leading your family in worship; and Matthew 20:25-28 and Ephesians 5:25-32 to see what it means to be the king of your home and family. If you need more help on this, purchase Bob Lepine's book, "The Christian Husband." **Third**, you write your wife a letter and confess how you have not measured up as the husband God wanted you to be. You confess not only the open sins that you fought about, but the ways that you were not the prophet, priest and king to her and your family. Confess first and then ask for forgiveness. Tell her that you will do whatever it takes to prove your repentance. Tell her that you have sinned against her, your children and God and that you believe that God can make this marriage right, if she will give it a chance. Finish the letter with an affirmation of your commitment to her and your children (don't use the word "love," it will turn her off), and sign it "Sincerely." **Fourth**, you leave it the hands of God. If you do not understand *boundaries* (when to say yes, how to say no to take control of your life), get the book *Boundaries* by Cloud and Townsend and also *Boundaries in Marriage* – read them both and implement them into your life and your relationship with your wife. **Fifth**, you be the husband and father you *can* be. If she chooses to divorce you, you still do what you can to be the prophet, priest and king – not to shame her or put her down, but to uplift her and build her up (keeping in mind the boundaries you've learned). And most of all you love your children and pour yourself into them. You NEVER put down their mother in front of them and you get involved in their lives as much as you are able. Call them weekly, see them every time you are able, attend ALL of their school and extracurricular events. Don't whine about being alone or having to sacrifice; be strong and someone your children can depend on.

God promises never to leave, nor forsake those who love him. Hebrews 13:5-6 is a great passage in this instance: "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" You have nothing to fear. God promises to be with you if your marriage is restored and if it is not. The restoration of your marriage cannot be your ultimate objective here. Your walk with God and being the godly man He wants you to be *must* be your ultimate objective. My wife divorced me in 1981; it is the one of

the biggest failures of my life (of the many), because I was not the man I should have to care for and protect my wife from that sin. But to show you how great, awesome, gracious and merciful God is; He uses me and my present wife to touch marriages all over. I almost destroyed my second marriage, not once, but twice! Yet, I have the incredible privilege to see a great and awesome God work in lives and marriages in different parts of the world. God promise means that if you submit your life to Him, He will redeem it - not perhaps in the way you want it to be redeemed, but in ways too fantastic for you even dream about.

Get your life right with God, serve Him; be available, vulnerable and teachable - be a man after God's own heart and he will turn your failure in to success.