

Does God Want Me to Stay in an Abusive Marriage?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. This sermon became necessary when the elders learned that there were brethren in the area advocating that a woman being beaten and abused by her husband must remain in the home and dwell with him, enduring this treatment. It has become essential that we address this matter preemptively lest some here lend an uninformed ear to this error.

B. Must establish some rules for this sermon for the sake of clarity

1. I am not going to define abuse by the more liberal and feministic contingents of contemporary mental health
2. I am not going to waste my time and yours in talking about what brother big name magazine writer says about it.
3. Not interested in how many different views there are on the subject. Completely irrelevant
4. Not interested in how many people subscribe to any particular view. Establishing sound doctrine is not a democratic process
5. Not going to consider what views you hold on this matter nor how this lesson may apply in your own life. I must remain focused and objective.
6. I am going to teach only what I can prove from the scriptures and by reasoning from the word of God

C. Nowhere in the Word is there a place where God tolerates abuse. In fact, abuse is inherently opposite of God's nature.

1. If believers are made new creatures in Christ and partakers in His nature, how can one attempt to justify or excuse abusive behavior by someone bearing the name "Christian?"

I. SCRIPTURAL OBLIGATIONS OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES

A. Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:19

1. Husbands must love their wives in the same manner that Christ loves the church. Jesus would never beat or abuse His Church
 - a. Husbands who abuse their wives do not love them as Christ loves the church; their protests are lies and self-deceit
2. Husbands must love their wives' persons as they love their own bodies. They would not want abuse; therefore, they must accord their wives the same treatment. The golden rule applies
3. Wives must be subject to their husbands. It is critical to God's design for harmony in the home. The same disharmony occurs in the home as happens in the church when the church is not subject to the Lord
4. Wives must respect their husbands. They must show the same kind of respect for them that the church shows the Lord.
 - a. When a wife fails to manifest Christian subjection and respect for her husband, it is no less a sin than his abuse of her mate.
 - b. God does not weigh sins the way we do.

- B. 1Peter 3:1-7
 - 1. Peter echoes Paul's principle for principle, adding to it the fact that failure to keep our obligations to our mates interferes with our relationship with God
- C. Prov. 10:12, 22:8-11
 - 1. Husbands, you are not smarter than God, and you never will be.
 - 2. Your pride will be your undoing - Num. 32:23
- D. Ecc. 12:14
 - 1. What you try to hide in your home is not hidden from God, and will be exposed on Judgment Day

II. HOW DOES ONE DEAL WITH AN ABUSIVE SPOUSE?

- A. Obviously it will not be a textbook marriage with a happy ending
 - 1. Some commandments require the cooperation of others in order to have a successful outcome.
 - 2. You wanted to live together for life as husband and wife and then go to heaven when life is over
 - 3. However, you find yourself in a relationship that endangers you. What do you do? What are the steps in dealing with an abusive spouse?
- B. First, examine yourself to be certain of a healthy relationship with God.
 - 1. I am not suggesting that sin in your life means that you have earned abuse from your mate. Wrong!
 - 2. But the first thing we do in any undertaking is to begin with a clean heart and soul
 - 3. Trials teach us things we would not learn otherwise, exposing our own places that need to be refined and conforming us to the image of Christ while dealing with an abusive spouse.
- C. Second, maintain a humble spirit, remembering that God loves us all equally, including an abusive mate.
 - 1. It is easy to get a prideful and judgmental spirit. We have to remember that every person is created in the image of God, even the abuser.
- D. Third, remember that the abusive mate bears all of the responsibility.
 - 1. The ending of a marriage is wrong and the mate responsible will be held accountable. An abusive mate who drives his spouse away or endangers her life is guilty of the breakup of the marriage.
 - 2. You have been through enough bearing with the abuse; do not abuse yourself with blaming yourself for his sin
 - 3. Take care of yourself with the means God has given you:
 - a. Prayer, meditation, worship, Bible reading, good works
 - b. The companionship and support of fellow Christians and friends.
- E. Fourth, Matthew 18:15-17 outlines a very specific process for dealing with an offender, which would include marital abuse.
 - 1. A Christian does not enable another person to continue in sin. By remaining in an abusive home, a Christian sends the message that the abusive behavior is acceptable; it is a de facto affirmation of the abuser's sin.

2. When an abused woman does ask the church for help, it is important to remember that God has always asked people of strength to come to the assistance of those who are weak and oppressed

- a. Ez. 34:1-5

- b. Be aware that if this preacher and elder hears of any man using violence and intimidation on his wife will not only face this congregation, but I will also turn you over to the civil authorities for prosecution

- c. I will not take your side under any circumstances.

- d. "Godly people must not send a battered woman back to her home with the advice to 'be more submissive.' When appropriate, they will help a battered woman to apply the full extent of the law. Their motive must not be to return evil for evil, but to use the principle of government to bring an out-of-control husband to his senses. No one does an abusive husband a favor by allowing him to continue degrading himself and his wife with violence or emotional battering in any way."

- e. "The woman who passively allows her husband to abuse her may be sincerely trying to be obedient to the principles of 1Peter 3:1-6. Or she may have the belief that to report the abuse would result in even greater endangerment to her or her children. In either case, Peter's intent was not to help abusive husbands indulge even more in the childish lust for power and control that Jesus condemned"

III. MUST ONE STAY IN AN ABUSIVE HOME?

A. Can one scripturally divorce a mate for abuse?

1. Can one scripturally divorce for any cause and remain unmarried?

2. I find no Biblical support for God's approval for divorcing for any cause and remaining unmarried; therefore, I cannot advocate it

- a. It requires an assumption and two sophistries

3. Matt. 19:3-8, 5:32; Mal. 2:16

B. Can one scripturally separate from a mate for abuse?

1. There were three matters that brought about separation in scripture

- a. The "present distress" - 1Cor. 7:5, 26

- b. A mate that leaves rashly - 1Cor. 7:10-11

- c. The departure of an unbelieving mate - 1Cor. 7:12-16

2. These constitute extraordinary and unfortunate circumstances

- a. The apostle permits separation on a restricted basis under such circumstances.

- b. It is within reason to view abuse that endangers or damages a mate to be extraordinary and unfortunate circumstances

- c. Therefore, separation that follows the restrictions of 1Corinthians 7 would be permitted

- d. Remain unmarried with a view toward eventual reconciliation

3. What would it take to make reconciliation possible?

- a. Full, unreserved repentance on the part of the abuser

- b. A period of time where the ex-abuser brings forth fruits that manifest repentance

- c. A restoration of trust in the victim of abuse.

4. "But if he says he is sorry, she has to take him back." Would you:
 - a. Put the treasury checkbook back in the hands of an embezzler?
 - b. Put children back into the care of a child molester?
 - c. Forgiveness of sins and temporal consequences are two different matters; sometimes consequences remain
- C. God allows His children the right of self-preservation
 1. Not all commands require suffering and death as an element of successful command keeping
 - a. The authority principle of expediency proves that
 2. Bible examples of self-preservation
 - a. David eating the showbread - 1Sam. 21
 - b. David fleeing the authority of the king and going to live with the Philistines - 1Sam. 21
 - c. Elijah hiding from the King - 1Kings 19
 - d. Paul appealing to Caesar - Acts 25
 - e. Jesus reasoning with Pilate - John 18:36
 3. You are permitted by the Lord to act to preserve your life, even if it means that you must distance yourself from a mate who intends harm
 - a. God does not expect you to remain and be a punching bag

Conclusion:

- A. It is tragic that an ungodly mate makes such things necessary, causing pain in the marriage, and causing heartache when people must flee his evil
- B. It is harmful when professed Christians turn their heads and do nothing when a family is hurt by an abuser; you will answer to God
- C. It is sinful when professed gospel preachers tell abused women God requires them to live with abuse
 1. Such a man is either ignorant, in which case he should not be allowed to preach until he learns better
 2. Or he has some personal agenda, in which case he should not be allowed to preach until he repents
 3. Or he is a false teacher, in which case he needs to be marked and avoided