

GOING FURTHER - RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE FAITH @ HOME CENTER

➤ ***Love and Respect*** (by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs) discusses a powerful biblical model for each spouse understanding and meeting the other's most deeply felt need.

➤ ***Breaking the Cycle of Divorce*** (by Dr. John Trent) helps those who had no model of marriage stability break the cycle by creating a successful relationship.

➤ ***Boundaries in Marriage*** (by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend) shows couples how to apply the 10 laws of boundaries that can make a real difference in relationships by learning when to say yes and when to say no.

➤ ***Love Must be Tough*** (by Dr. James Dobson) offers hope for marriages in crisis—including those who have an unfaithful spouse.

GOING FURTHER - CHURCH SUPPORT

➤ ***Life Group Ministry:*** Authentic Christian community and mentoring is available through Riverview's Life Group ministry. Contact our Life Groups pastor Michael Beene at Michael@rbclake.org for more info.

➤ ***Pastoral Counseling:*** Pastors are available to counsel those who would like more Godly wisdom on this issue. Please call the church office for more info: 573-348-3515

➤ ***Love & Respect:*** is a short-term course that is offered to couples who are interested in becoming intentional in their marriages. Contact our Next Generation and Life Groups pastor Michael Beene at Michael@rbclake.org for more info.

A DIFFICULT MARRIAGE FINDING HOPE AND HELP

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BAPTIST CHURCH

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HOPE FOR A DIFFICULT OR ABUSIVE MARRIAGE

Those who marry will have troubles. That's what Paul told the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 7:28). Even the best couples can struggle to protect their marriage vows. But what happens when marriage troubles become unbearable? Is there a point at which couples should end a bad marriage? Or is there hope for something better? Walk through the following steps as you prayerfully evaluate your situation.

STEP ONE: *Discern Minor from Major Trouble*

Unfortunately, many marriages end today over troubles that could have been overcome. University of Texas researcher Norval Glenn has found that divorces today are often blamed on problems such as "lack of commitment," "too much conflict and arguing," "unrealistic expectations" and "lack of preparation." These are problems that both husband and wife can and should work to overcome. Despite what friends, family, or popular culture might say, these issues are no reason to end a marriage—especially in light of the serious long-term impact of divorce on your children.

In their book, *The Case for Marriage*, Maggie Gallagher and Linda Waite explain that couples who think their only options are to either divorce or be miserable often find things getting better if they'll just stick it out. In fact, almost eighty percent of husbands and wives who were very unhappy in their marriage yet stayed together described themselves as very happy just five years later!

STEP TWO: *Anticipate the Hope after the Trouble*

Major trouble occurs when someone either abuses or abandons their role in a marriage—when they break faith with their spouse and violate their vows. While God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), He permits it for marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:1-8). In God's grace, He allows men and women whose spouses have been unfaithful to start over. However, it should be noted that God has forgiven us for our unfaithfulness to Him. See the book of Hosea as a living illustration for how God is faithful even as we have been

unfaithful. God is in the business of helping couples redeem what many would see as a hopeless situation.

"Even marriages that have faced one or more of the big 'A's—abuse, affairs or addictions—can be saved," says Mitch Temple, a licensed counselor. Temple has led numerous intensive counseling sessions with couples that faced these major challenges and even though they had Biblical grounds for divorce they found a way to save their marriages.

STEP THREE: *If Needed, Protect Yourself and Children*

If your relationship is marked by physical abuse, you may find yourself confused, frightened, and unsure about what to do. The most important thing you can do right now is take steps to protect yourself and your children from harm. Even if you want to save your marriage, you should not risk the safety of your children or yourself. A period of structured and therapeutic separation may be needed and can make it possible for you to get the help your marriage needs while making your family less vulnerable.

While saying that separation is important for abusive situations, it is worth noting that couples who are experiencing non-abusive marital stresses should NOT move quickly towards separation. Separation in a marriage is not natural. It may indeed provide some immediate relief to some of the current stresses present in a marriage. However, the temporary relief is often-times short-lived, and ultimately separation does not easily facilitate healing between the couple.

STEP FOUR: *Seek Guidance—Don't Go It Alone*

Whatever situation you're in, don't struggle through a difficult marriage alone. You need the church body like never before—for perspective and advice, counseling and encouragement, and hope for God's redemption. Take advantage of the resources available at our Faith @ Home Center as well as our mentors (many of whom have walked through difficult marriages) who would be willing to meet with you and pray with you. In addition, any couple seriously having questions about divorce is strongly encouraged to meet with one of our church pastors who would love to hear your story, provide Biblical counsel, and pray with you.