

# The Pain of Separation and Divorce

“It was a sad day when my wife told me she was leaving,” said Robert. “I really thought I would die. I am a Christian and I wondered how God would let this happen to me. It was painful. All kinds of questions went through mind. I did not have a hint that she was having an affair. Over the fifteen years of our marriage I did my best to love her, satisfy her needs and spend time with her. Yet, she chose another man over me.”

This story is real and is similar to many others occurring far too often in our country. Divorce is very painful. Even separation, when individuals are not sure whether or not to divorce, is painful. Although in The Bahamas the divorce rate is increasing every year, this article is not about the reason people divorce or how to prevent it. This article is for the divorced persons themselves who are wounded and all alone. This article is to provide guidance, hope and encouragement for those who are separated or are going through divorce or have been divorced for years and still cannot find peace.

When a person is divorced he or she feels as though they have been pushed into an ocean where the waters are too deep to swim. They struggle to survive but are often abandoned or treated coldly by friends and sometimes relatives. Some divorcees will tell you that the church did not help either. Those Christians they thought would surround them with unconditional love and compassion were judgemental, critical, and distant. Isn't that a paradox? Christians say that the church is a hospital for sick people but they often shoot the “sick” in their feet. Let's treat our divorced church members, friends and associates better. I hope that this article will also help everyone to understand better the pain of divorce and separation and how to treat these individuals.

## DIVORCE RECOVERY

In spite of all of the disappointments and pain, a divorced person can have a healthy recovery. Dr. Tom Whiteman, clinical psychologist, shares key elements that are required for a healthy divorce recovery. Here they are:

**EMOTIONAL NEEDS:** “During and after divorce most people feel as if they are on an emotional roller coaster, vacillating between desperation to get the spouse back no matter what and feelings of anger and revulsion toward the spouse. People who go through divorce are very vulnerable,” says Whiteman. In my own counselling practice I can see the pain, frustration and vulnerability my clients experience when deciding what to do when a partner leaves. “This vulnerability,” says Dr. Whiteman, “can make the divorced person prone to other hurts.” For example, it is common for divorced persons to feel rejected by family and friends. Others are drawn to anyone who gives them attention and “stroke the damage areas of their lives,” says Dr. Whiteman. It is also important to note the people who have been recently divorced need to be careful about forming new relationships or making any major changes. They need a close relationship with friends or a counsellor who will help guard and protect them from making poor choices.

**TIME:** When a person gets divorced he or she actually goes through a grieving process and grieving takes time. Before getting emotionally entangled a divorced person needs two to five years for healing. “People typically go through stages of denial, anger, bargaining and depression. The final stage of acceptance, is when they learn to be satisfied with the changes that God has allowed them to experience, and to move forward in a productive new lifestyle.”

**SOCIAL NEEDS:** When someone get divorce that often brings to an end many other social relationships. This makes the divorced person very vulnerable to a “rebound relationship” says Dr. Whiteman. Thus, they many need friends to help them through the trauma of divorce. Divorced persons should wait at least two years before entering a new romantic relationship. The emptiness in one’s soul after a divorce requires God’s healing and completeness apart from a romantic relationship. There it may not be wise for divorced woman to share her deep pain with a man, especially all alone in his house.

**SPIRITUAL NEEDS:** Most Christians who go through a divorce feel guilt and shame. These feelings says Whiteman “may be compounded by the reaction of others, and who in an effort to discourage divorce are afraid to minister to those who experience this brokenness for fear f appearing to condone divorce. Divorced people need to know that God loves then and forgives them and wants them in his fellowship.

**THE NEED TO FORGIVE:** If there is one great need to important to the divorce is the need to forgive. It is not only forgiving those who caused them pain but forgiving others who might have hurt them also. Dr. Whiteman states that “most divorce persons blame themselves, so healing includes confessing those mistakes and then accepting the forgiveness that God offers (1 John 1:9). The divorced person must be reminded that forgiving is more important for him or herself than for the one who actually cause the pain. While the one who has caused pain may or may not be aware of the frustration caused, the victim goes in engrossed in an unforgiving spirit cause feelings of sadness and increasing the chances of getting physically ill. Why? The unforgiving spirit can suppress the immune system of the body making one susceptible for illnesses.

**GIVING BACK:** This is Dr. Whiteman’s final step to recovery. Following the teachings of Christ the divorced person is to focus on giving back to others (2 Cor 1:3-7). “Giving to others too early in the process will only lead to new pain. In the proper time, however, comforting with the comfort that has been received can give divorced people purpose, meaning and fulfilment” say Dr. Whiteman.

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Send your questions and comments to marriage and family therapist, Barrington H. Brennen P.O. Box CB-13019 or email at [question@soencouragement.org](mailto:question@soencouragement.org) or visit the website [www.soencouragement.org](http://www.soencouragement.org)