



Biblical Counseling and Marital Separations

I. Introduction

A. A Few Observations:

- i. Things must be rough if you're talking about a separation to begin with,
- ii. The reality is that separations are necessary,
- iii. The reality is they often do not work,
- iv. The reality is biblical counselors often encourage either separation or reunification, but rarely get to be a part of the actual separation and reunification. These are more commonly a pastoral effort.
- v. Sometimes biblical counselors view that this process of separation is that there is only transgressor and one being transgressed, and that you will rescue the one being hurt. But our Bible teaches us that we are all sinners. When you care for sinners, it's not going to be neat and tidy!

II. Definition:

- A. Marital separation is when one spouse physically leaves the home for a period of time, with the goal of distancing themselves from their spouse.

III. Primary Reasons for Separations:

A. Safety (Prov. 22:3)

- i. Physical
- ii. Emotional

1. Consult the Wheel of Power and Control

B. Unrepentant Sins ("Not Consent to Live with")

- i. Church Discipline for Believers
 - ii. "Unbelieving spouse": 1 Corinthians 7:12-13
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iii. Thus, the spouse would be addressed as a Christian through Church discipline or treated as an unbeliever. The determining factor would be, “Is the unbelieving spouse living with their believing spouse in a way that corresponds to the marriage covenant?”

iv. Reviling,

v. Controlling/Manipulative Behaviors,

vi. Angry Outbursts

1. Explosive (Most likely safety issue),
2. Ignoring

vii. Financial Withholding/Misdealing’s

viii. Isolation from Friends/Family

IV. Theological Realities that Frame a Separation

- A. The Covenant of Marriage as being Sacred and Holy (Gen. 2:24)
 - B. The Divine Calling of Roles in Marriage (Eph. 5)
 - C. The Requirements of Pastors to Protect the Flock (1 Pet. 5)
 - D. Excusing Unrepentant Sin isn’t an Act of Love
 - E. Church Discipline Is a Protective Measure for Spouses (Matt. 18:15-18)
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V. Methods for Separation

- A. With encouragement of spiritual authorities/leaders
- B. Quietly (Unknown to family and friends),
- C. Publicly (Known to family and friends).

VI. While Separated

- A. Work on intensive, personal growth rather than focusing on marriage conflict.

- i. Sinner

- 1. Demonstrable repentance,
 - 2. Affirmed Change by Spiritual leaders who are familiar with the circumstances

- ii. Sinned Against,

- 1. Focus on Nourishment
 - a. Acclimate to life without constant trouble and turmoil.
 - b. This should also include focusing on any temptation toward bitterness and hyper-criticality.



2. Learning to Trust Others who are Trustworthy

B. Agreed upon benchmarks rather than a strict timeline.

i. Be willing to cease, or limit, contact if wisdom dictates

C. Hold a posture of “open to reconciling” while expecting things must change.

D. “Date Each Other”

i. After demonstrable change, move in.

VII. Methods for Reunification

A. Don’t move back in until spiritual authorities / BC’ers recommendation

B. Accountability,

C. Continued Counseling

D. Ongoing emphasis on individual growth and marital restoration.

VIII. Goals of a Separation:

A. Glorify and Honor the Lord,

B. Establish Personal Holiness in Each Spouse,

C. Then Reconcile the Marriage,



D. The marriage may not reconcile, but your goal is to minister effectively to them while pursuing reconciliation.

IX. Conclusion