



## Scripture Supports for Separation from a Destructive Spouse

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The Scripture that most people use to support some grounds for Biblical separation is 1 Corinthians 7:10 where Paul writes, “To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): The wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.”

When one spouse Biblically separates from his/her spouse it is usually for one or two primary reasons:

1. The spouse who chooses to separate does so for the purpose of waking her unrepentant destructive spouse up to the destructiveness of his ways. In most cases (with the exception of physical/sexual abuse or adultery) she has already had numerous conversations about his actions and attitudes that she find destructive and hurtful, with little change to their relationship. The destructive pattern continues. Separation is the only consequence she knows that has the power to jolt her spouse awake with the message that “I will not pretend that we can have a good, safe, or healthy marriage when you continue to \_\_\_\_\_ .

Where there is physical/sexual abuse or adultery, separation may be the first and immediate consequence in order to send a clear message to the offending spouse that his behavior is completely unacceptable and damaging to their marriage. In cases of physical/sexual abuse, in addition to separation, legal consequences should be implemented.

### Consequences:

Below are some examples from Scripture that supports the necessity of confronting serious sin (rather than forbearing) as well as implementing consequences.

1 Corinthians 5:9 “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an

idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler – not even to each with such a one.....Purge the evil person from among you.”

James 5:19 5:19 If anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (is a wife to be an enabler of sin or a champion of truth and righteousness?)”

Proverbs19:19 “A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again. Consequences are the best teacher

Proverbs 29:1 “He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing”

Jeremiah 4:18 “Your own conduct and actions have brought this upon you. This is your punishment. How bitter it is. How it pierces to the heart.”

Galatians 6:7 “Do not be deceive: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

Ephesians 5:11 “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”

2. The spouse may decide separation is necessary because to continue living in the home with her destructive spouse is unsafe and taking a serious toll on her (and/or her children’s) physical, emotional, mental, financial, relational, and spiritual health. God values the sanctity of marriage but not more than the safety and sanity of the individuals in it.

Below are some examples from Scripture that supports safety and sanity goals in the body of Christ and relationships with one another.

### **Safety:**

1 Samuel 18-31: For example, in spite of God’s general instructions to submit to the laws of the land and to higher authorities, when David feared for his life because of King Saul’s jealous rages, God didn’t instruct David to “submit to the King and trust me to take care of you.” Instead, David fled, always respecting the position of King Saul, but not allowing himself to be abused by him.

Matthew 2:13-15 When Jesus was born and King Herod sought to exterminate all the Jewish babies two years old and younger, God told Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt until it was safe to return

Hebrews 11:31 When Rehab hid the Jewish spies, she lied to keep them safe and God commended her.

Luke 14:5 Jesus himself valued safety and said even the well-being of an ox was a higher value to God than legalistically keeping the Sabbath by not working.

Proverbs 27:12 teaches us, "The prudent see danger and take refuge."

Safety is an important component of trust, especially in marriage. There can be no freedom or honest communication if someone feels afraid or is threatened, either physically and/or emotionally, or has a price to pay whenever they honestly share their thoughts and feelings.

Women (and sometimes men) fear taking measures to protect themselves because they've been taught it's unbiblical or ungodly. They suffer endlessly with verbal battering, even physical abuse, believing that by doing so, they're being godly martyrs. Keeping the family together at all costs is seen as God's highest value.

Psalm 12:6 I will place him in the safety for which he longs."

Psalm 120:1,2 "I took my troubles to the Lord; I cried out to him, and he answered my prayer. Recue me, O Lord, from liars and from all deceitful people."

Jeremiah 9:8 "Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully; with his mouth each speaks peace to his neighbor but in his heart he plans an ambush for him."

## **Sanity:**

The scriptures are clear. People influence and impact us, both for good and for evil. When we live with an abusive, destructive, manipulative, deceitful person, it definitely takes its toll on our mental, spiritual, emotional, physical and spiritual health. Often separation is not only good, it's necessary for our emotional, physical and spiritual health.

Proverbs 2:12 "Wisdom will save you from evil people, from those whose words are twisted. These men turn from the right way to walk down dark paths, they take pleasure in doing wrong, and they enjoy the twisted ways of evil. Their actions are crooked and their ways are wrong."

Proverbs 3:5,6,7 "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing for your flesh and refreshment to your bones."

Proverbs 4:14,15 "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on it.

Proverbs 4:23 "Keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flow the springs of life"

Proverbs 12:4 "A worthy wife is a crown for her husband, but a disgraceful woman is like cancer in his bones. (The same health consequences would be applicable to a wife's bones when her husband is disgraceful).

Proverbs 12:5 “The plans of the godly are just; the advice of the wicked is treacherous.” (So how is a wife to submit to treacherous advice without serious harm to herself and her children?)

Proverbs 14:7 “Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge.”

Proverbs 14:11 “The house of the wicked will be destroyed...”

Proverbs 16: 27-29 “A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire. A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends. A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good.”

Proverbs 22:10 “Drive out a scoffer and strife will go out and quarreling and abuse will cease.”

Proverbs 22:24-25 – “Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man

Proverbs 29:9 If a wise man contends with a foolish man, whether the fool rages or laughs, there is no peace.

Psalms 1:1 “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers,”

Psalms 26, 4, 5 “I do not sit with men of falsehood nor do I consort with hypocrites. I hate the assembly of evildoers and I will not sit with the wicked.”

Psalms 51:6 “Behold you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.”

Psalms 120: 6,7 “My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.”

Psalms 123:3,4 “Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorn of those who are at ease with the contempt of the proud.”

Romans 16:13 Watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals.”

2 Thessalonians 2:3 “Don’t let anyone deceive you”

2 Peter 3:16 "...There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability."

2 Timothy 3:1-5 – For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people."

2 Thessalonians 3:6 "Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us."

Titus 3:10 "As for the person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned."

A spouse may choose to stay separated from a destructive spouse when she sees no evidence of genuine change (in heart or in habit) despite the offender's pleas to the contrary. John the Baptist said it best when he challenged the Pharisees "Prove by the way that you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God" (Luke 3:8).

Genesis 42-46 Joseph forgave his brothers before they ever came to Egypt seeking to buy bread. He was kind to them in meeting some of their needs for food, but he did not trust them nor did he reconcile with them until he tested their hearts to see if they had truly changed.

1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not PRACTICE the truth. (Jesus' words in Matthew 6:22)

1 John 1:\* If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (Talk is cheap and deceiving)

1 John 2:3 Now by this we know that we know Him. IF we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him, and does not keep His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Jeremiah 7:4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say...If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien the fatherless or the widow and do not shed...THEN I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers....But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

Jeremiah 9:4 "Let everyone beware of his neighbor and put no trust in any brother, for every brother is a deceiver and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. Everyone deceives his

neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity. Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the Lord”

Jeremiah 12:6 “For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them; though they speak friendly words to you.”