

Surviving an Affair

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My husband, Patrick, confessed he'd committed adultery. His revelation was as unbelievable as if someone had told me the moon had fallen from the sky. The man who told me he'd lived a secret life of sexual sin seemed so different from the man to whom I'd been married for nine years.

My rage, disillusionment, and confusion were intense. Yet Pat was so broken, so willing to do whatever it took to break free from his sexual addiction, that despite my anger and hurt, I agreed to go through counseling with him.

There came a moment during counseling when I thought our marriage would end. I was five months pregnant, and we had a four-year-old daughter. Our counselor sat with me one night and said, "Connie, you have to accept the possibility Patrick might not break free." That was the worst night of my life. It was only my confidence in God that gave me the courage to hold on.

How to Handle Tough Times

Stay connected. When I felt weak or angry, I'd call my Christian friends for prayer. They kept me on track and boosted my faith.

Soak it up. As I recovered from my broken heart, I found it essential to stay immersed in God's Word.

Be good to yourself. Go to the movies. Laugh. Eat well. If you don't take care of yourself, you'll be less able to care for your husband.

Take note. Remember, God won't waste your pain! Some day he'll use you to encourage somebody else who's going through a tough time. —**CN**

But as the months went by, Pat found the strength to change, and our marriage was slowly, painfully restored. I discovered I needed God's grace as much as Pat did. And I had to choose—with God's help—to remember that if God could forgive Pat's wrongs, I could, too. Today, almost 11 years after Pat's confession, thanks to God's love and power, our life together is better than ever before.

As I share my story of hurt and hope, women often reveal the terrible traumas their husbands have gone through: infidelity, bankruptcy, depression, rebellion against God. But you can't "fix" your husband; you can only pray for him. When you come to the end of yourself, God will come through.

I've learned that, as a Christian, forgiveness isn't optional. But I don't think we ever forget the pain. Suffering teaches us deep truths about God's grace and love.

A few years ago, Pat surprised me by planting tulip bulbs in our flower beds. For many months—before beautiful tulips bloomed everywhere—all I saw was dirt pelted by rain. That's just like life. Sometimes all we see is the dirt watered by our tears. But God promises to bring back our joy (Isa. 61:1-3). If you or your husband is hurting right now, trust God to bring blossoms of joy out of the dirt of your despair. He brought joy and laughter back into our lives; he can do it for you, too.

—as told to Jane Johnson Struck