

Question: Is abuse an acceptable reason for divorce?

Answer from Got Questions.org: While it seems obvious abuse should be an acceptable reason for divorce, the Bible gives only two reasons in which divorce is permitted: the first is in the case of abandonment of a Christian by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15), and the second is if one partner is involved in a lifestyle of infidelity (Matthew 5:32). Although God allows it in these circumstances, He has never been an endorser of divorce. It should be assumed that two Bible-believing Christians will not mutually agree to divorce, but should practice the forgiveness and love that God freely gives us. "For I hate divorce!" says the Lord, the God of Israel..." (Malachi 2:16).

The Bible is silent on the issue of marital abuse as a reason for divorce, although it is obvious that God despises the mistreatment of wives by their husbands (Colossians 3:19, 1 Peter 3:7, Ephesians 5:25-33). Abuse should not be tolerated by anyone. No one should have to live in an abusive environment, whether it involves a family member, friend, employer, caregiver, or stranger. Physical abuse is against the law, and the authorities should be the first ones contacted if this occurs.

The best way to prevent ending up feeling trapped in an abusive marriage is to get to know a potential spouse before making the commitment to marry. The signs of being an abuser are manifested in one's personality. These "red flags" are always there, but are often overlooked or even ignored when attraction and infatuation take over. These signs can include: irrational jealousy, the need to be in control, a quick temper, cruelty toward animals, attempts to isolate the other person from his or her friends and family, drug or alcohol abuse, and disrespect for their partner's boundaries, privacy, personal space, or moral values.

A wife who is being abused should get herself, and any children, out of the situation immediately and find a new temporary home. There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that separation (not divorce) in this instance would be wrong. Although friends and family will likely tell the woman to immediately file for divorce, God places a much higher value on marriage than the world does.

Once separated, the abuser has the responsibility to reach out for help. First and foremost, he should seek God. "For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And the door is opened to everyone who knocks" (Matthew 7:8). No one has more power to heal individuals and relationships than God. He must be the Lord of our lives, the Master of our assets, and the Head of our households.

Both husband and wife must commit themselves to God and then develop a relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. "And this is the way to have eternal life " to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth" (John 17:3). This should be accompanied by intensive Christian counseling " first individually, then as a couple, and even for the entire family if necessary.

During this time, the wife should let her husband know of her unconditional love and

support, and devote herself to much prayer. Although the effort must be made on the part of her husband to make the changes, she should not give up hope if he is at first resistant. However, if he never even takes the first step, she should not consider returning to him until he does.

The abused spouse should not return home until a trained Christian counselor decides that the family will be safe in the same home as the former abuser. Together, the couple should then commit to serving and obeying God. They should spend individual time with God daily, attend a Bible-believing church, begin serving God through a ministry, and get involved in small Bible study groups that fit their needs. "What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun" (2 Corinthians 5:17)!