

Redemptive Divorce

A Biblical Process That Offers Guidance for the Suffering Partner, Healing for the Offending Spouse, and the Best Catalyst for Restoration

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Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson is a trademark of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Published in association with the literary agency of WordServe Literary Group, Ltd., 10152 S. Knoll Circle, Highlands Ranch, Colorado 80130.

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Repentance Inventory

Sometimes people merely pretend to repent in order to avoid loss or to retain control. And they can appear authentically sorrowful, only to return to their destructive behavior later. An obvious change in attitude and behavior always accompanies repentance. Have you observed the six signs of genuine repentance in your partner?

- 1. Repentant people are willing to confess all their sins, not just the sins that got them into trouble.* Has your spouse demonstrated a desire to be completely honest about his or her behavior? Describe the response you would hope to see from your spouse.
- 2. Repentant people face the pain their sin has caused others.* Has your spouse allowed you to express the intensity of emotions you feel—anger, hurt, sorrow, and disappointment—without trying to justify, minimize, or shift blame? Describe how your spouse reacts to your emotions.
- 3. Repentant people ask forgiveness from those they hurt.* Has your spouse asked your forgiveness? Do you believe his or her sorrow is genuine? Does your spouse pressure you to say, “I forgive you”? Does he or she expect you to “get over it” without sufficient time to heal? Describe the attitude you hope to see in your spouse concerning his or her destructive behavior.
- 4. Repentant people remain accountable to a small group of mature Christians.* What has your spouse done to address any issues that may have contributed to his or her destructive choices? What is your partner doing to avoid a relapse and to grow stronger as a God-honoring person?
- 5. Repentant people accept their limitations.* Does your spouse resent your need for reassurance? Does he or she seem to understand the need for the rebuilding of trust over time? How does your partner respond to your request that he or she observe certain restrictions?
- 6. Repentant people are faithful to the daily tasks God has given them.* Is your spouse putting forth good effort to fulfill his or her duties at work and at home? Is your partner moving forward in life with humility, or do you sense that he or she merely wants to get things back to normal as quickly as possible?

Preparing to Respond

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

—Matthew 18:15–17

What behavior on the part of your spouse has compromised your marriage?

Describe what change in your spouse's behavior would demonstrate genuine repentance. Be specific.

What must he or she *stop* doing? What should he or she *start* doing?

If your spouse were to repent and then affirm his or her desire to restore your marriage, what can he or she do to regain your trust?

What program or organization might encourage your mate to remain faithful to the restoration process and provide you with reasonable assurance of progress?