

WHEN IS IT TIME TO GIVE UP

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When is enough enough? When has one stood for the marriage long enough? Forgiven enough? Prayed enough? Hoped for change enough? Been abused enough? When is it time to cut your losses and just hope for the best? After all, God will forgive us. He knows how hard we've tried. Surely He will understand and forgive us if we throw in the towel. These are some of the very real questions and concerns many people bring to the counseling room that deserve an answer.

Though God's design for marriage is forever, we live in a sin-sick world where God's design isn't always the reality. Even Jesus seemed to acknowledge that. When asked by the Pharisees about divorce Jesus said it wasn't God's plan from the start but because of the hardness of men's hearts God allowed Moses to write a certificate of divorce. Jesus even acknowledged there may be a time when we see less than God's best. But nevertheless, divorce is sin, and sin, though it can be forgiven if there is sincere repentance from the heart, there will always be consequences. The consequences may effect us, our children, our extended family and the community in which we live. Yes, divorce effects everyone. In a sense this kind of sin can become contagious. It isn't unusual for a family or a neighborhood to go through a particular time of ongoing divorce, like a disease that everyone in the family or community catches. No one sins alone.

But there does come a time in the lives of a spouse when they can no longer take the abuse, they've run out of grace to stay. They feel like it's time to put an end to the hurting. No need to run to Divorce court. Separation is not divorce. Separation may be the what is needed to give everyone time to see more clearly what to do and where to go. Very often it may take a separation for couple to take their issues seriously enough to seek counseling. If separation doesn't bring about reconciliation, then divorce may be the last resort, but understand, it is not without consequences. For a Christian divorce is not permission to pursue a new relationship. A divorced Christian is not eligible for re-marriage as long as there is any possibility for reconciliation, and restoration of the original marriage covenant.

So taking everything into consideration, and understanding that separation can be an option instead of divorce, we can answer the question about when is enough enough by remembering Winston Churchill: "Never give up; never give up; never, never, never give up!"

Besides, God is a miracle working God!

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." -Galatians 6:9