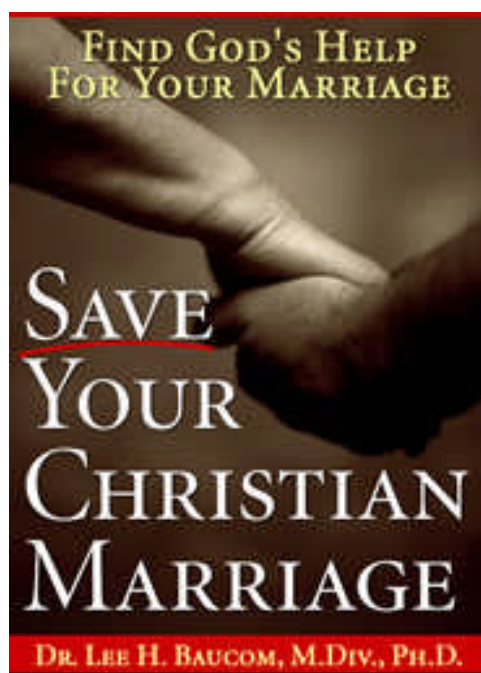


# The Quick-Start Guide To Saving Your Christian Marriage

From the Best-Selling Author of  
[Save Your Christian Marriage](#)



by Lee H. Baucom, Ph.D.

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You find yourself in a marriage crisis, and you don't know what to do. Often, people find themselves stuck in paralysis, unsure what to do, and afraid to do the wrong thing.

This is why I prepared this special report. This report will give you the information you need to begin the process of saving your marriage. And it doesn't matter in what stage you find yourself.

**I have but one caveat:** *I cannot encourage persons to stay in abusive relationship. If there has been any physical abuse, protection is most important. Being in the relationship is dangerous, and I cannot condone a marriage that has physical abuse. If the abuse is emotional or verbal, the abuse MUST stop if the marriage is to survive. Abuse makes a relationship of equals impossible. It is based on power and maintaining a power differential.*

## **What Stage Are You In?**

Before getting started, you need to know where you are. There are some distinct stages of relationship problems. We will go from less severe to more severe. You will see that each stage is hyperlinked (clickable) to the stage information. Wherever the text is blue and underlined, you can use your mouse to click the text and immediately find the pertinent information. Let's get busy saving your relationship!

[Stage 1: You see problems down the road in your relationship.](#)

[Stage 2: You see problems in your relationship, and you don't know if you want to stay in the marriage.](#)

Stage 3: Your spouse has told you that he/she is unhappy.

Stage 4: Your spouse is threatening to leave.

Stage 5: Your spouse has left. No legal proceedings. Still communicating.

Stage 6: Your spouse has left. No legal proceedings. No communication.

Stage 7: Your spouse has left and has started legal proceedings. Still communicating. (Also applies when spouse has started legal proceedings while in the home.)

Stage 8: Your spouse has left and has started legal proceedings. No communication.

## ***Solutions:***

### **Stage 1: You see problems down the road in your relationship.**

Congratulate yourself! Your problems aren't placing your marriage at risk, yet. Perhaps you just know that the issues are down the road, coming toward you, but not yet an issue. This is an excellent time to be finding solutions, understanding, and answers.

I have the solution for you. And fortunately, it is very simple. Read the ebook, *Save Your Christian Marriage*. You see, this powerful book is really a primer on relationships. While it helps those in trouble, the information can be beneficial for any relationship. Read it for the theory and understanding of what a marriage relationship can and should be about, then go and create that.

## **Stage 2: You see problems in your relationship, and you don't know if you want to stay in the marriage.**

At this point, you have become aware of the issues at hand, and those issues are sufficiently significant that you are considering the possibility that the marriage will not survive.

As in Stage 1, you should congratulate yourself. You can see the problems, but you are still seeking solutions for yourself. Understand one simple truth: We all have no capacity of changing anyone or anything but ourselves. A spouse is not under our control, so looking for a solution that teaches you to somehow change the other is headed for failure.

So, you have a very powerful solution: look to yourself for changes and shifts to happen. First, commit yourself to staying in the marriage and making things work. Decide that you will be the impetus for change.

Also, be intentional about praying for your spouse and praying for your marriage. The more focused you are on that, the quicker transformations happen. First, you become more attuned to your relationship. Second, you are using the power of prayer.

Next, read the ebook, *Save Your Christian Marriage*. The information in that book will help you transform your thinking, and likewise transform your relationship.

Finally, institute the changes you find necessary as you read the ebook.

### **Stage 3: Your spouse has told you that he/she is unhappy.**

This can be a particularly difficult stage. You have just discovered that doing what you naturally do is missing the mark. In other words, the way things are is headed for disaster. You may be aware that there are problems. But it is possible that you are blissfully unaware.

This discovery may throw you in a tailspin. So, first, calm down. Here's the good news: your spouse is telling you that things are not right, but since he or she is not threatening to leave (Stage 4), there is also an implicit desire to have things change.

So at the same time, you are dealing with crisis and hope. Things must change, but there is hope that things could change.

There are several areas to be addressed:

- 1) Do not panic.** As I noted above, this is not a time to give up, panic and over-react, or be paralyzed. Somewhere in the middle is important.

When you panic, the part of the brain you need active is shut down. You need to be in your rational, reasonable place. This is not possible when you are caught in panic.

Our brain's most primitive part is designed to detect threat. It is not designed to be good at assessing whether a threat is actual or not, only that there is a threat. Brain researchers tell us that there is an area of the brain, the Amygdala that is deep within our brain structure. It is always scanning for threat.

Survival depends upon over-reacting. So, we are better off, survival-wise, responding to real threat and perceived threat with equal speed and force. If I am walking down a path and see a crooked stick, my mind registers the possibility of a snake, and I freeze. Then, the rest of my brain catches up and assesses that it is only a stick. I move on. Had it been a snake, but my brain was set to assume it was not a threat I would have been bitten. Not good for survival.

Unfortunately, what is good for survival is not so good for personal relationships. When someone raises their voice to me, or uses critical words, my deepest instinctual part sees threat. And since the person probably doesn't just stop, my mind continues to register threat. Suddenly, my body is ready for one of two responses: fight or flight. Neither are particularly useful responses in having an intelligent discussion.

Panic is a fear response. Don't give in to a sense of panic. It will only make you desperate and look like a pitiful person. That is not a useful position.

- 2) Don't try to argue with your spouse.** It is time to admit that there is a problem to be addressed. Our tendency is to become defensive and deny that there is anything wrong.
- 3) Be intentional about praying for your spouse and for your marriage.** This is a transformational process. It attunes you to the relationship, and it accesses the power of prayer. DO NOT skip this one!
- 4) Opt to change yourself to become the person you should be.** Over time, we all have a tendency to become complacent and lazy, get into bad habits and patterns, and lose sight of our true selves.

But your spouse is clearly giving a signal that things must change. It is time to take that on as a challenge.

In her excellent book, [Mindset](#), Carol Dweck distinguishes between a “fixed mindset” and a “growth mindset.” The fixed mindset leads to not thinking anything can be changed: our personality is fixed, our intelligence is fixed, our ways of relating are fixed.

This is different than the growth mindset. The growth mindset is marked by a knowledge that people can change, can discover new ways of being and relating.

Guess which mindset is correct? Study after study shows that the growth mindset is true. In other words, we have a greater capacity of change than we believe. So, take on that approach, and decide it is time for the “new-and-improved” you.

**5) Engage your spouse in helping you redesign your marriage.** Understand, this is different than having your spouse redesign YOU. It is about changing, transforming, or modifying the relationship.

**(As a side note:** there are times when you do need to look at yourself, your personality, and your issues. That is for you to do. It should not be up to anyone to determine what you need to change and address. You need to do the soul-searching to determine this. However, if you hear some consistent issues from others, including your spouse, it is time to take a look at them.)

Changing a relationship is a relational issue. It requires both people to be on-board with the transformation. You cannot do it alone any more than your spouse can do it alone. Instead, the two of you must become a force of change in your relationship.

Ironically, this is also the first step in moving forward: becoming a team to make the changes needed to become a team.

**6) Set aside the relationship talks.** At this point, you need to work on having a good time together. Doing things you enjoy doing -- with NO pressure for affection, reassurance, or any loving gestures. In fact, you need to have no big talks about the relationship.

Here's the thing: when things are not going well, the issues seem huge, almost insurmountable, and you feel the need to have big talks to get you on-track. This is a bad idea. Do not fall into that trap. The feeling that things are nearly insurmountable will become a cancer between the two of you, and both of you will feel less and less like working on things.

Instead, focus on having enjoyable times together. Think back: what are the things you used to do that you enjoyed? How did you spend time together in ways that were simple, no pressure, just time together? Do those things. Take walks, go to movies, go for coffee or to the bookstore. In other words, do things that are not about the relationship, just about sharing space.

If you focus on that, you will leave the anxiety of your spouse about having to deal with the relationship problems again. You will begin to put some deposits into the relationship account (yes, at this point, your spouse is probably doing the relationship accounting). And you will be building up trust and communication.

The funny thing is, once you are doing these things, the insurmountable problems may seem quiet simple to overcome. In fact, some won't even feel like problems anymore.

## **Stage 4: Your spouse is threatening to leave.**

At this point, your spouse is not only saying he/she is unhappy, but is also ready to make an exit. The leaving may be seen as a temporary solution, a chance to think things through.

However, understand this: separations are rarely effective in working on a relationship. Almost always, a separation is a step toward divorce. Here's why: you are saying that you are going to work on the relationship by being apart.

So, for the long-term survival of the relationship, it is best to try to avoid separation. Find ways to intervene as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- 1) Everything in [Stage 3](#) information applies.** At this point, you need to be quickly working to discover what has led to the unhappiness.
- 2) Do not agree to a legal separation.** Let me clarify: you may have to agree to this because your partner may begin legal proceedings that force this. However, if it is a request, i.e.: "Do you think we should separate?" Your answer is "No. I want to work out our relationship. I want to do what it takes to get us on-track."
- 3) Do not blame, try to turn it against your partner, or allow your anger to be ignited.** If you do, you will be proving the point that you need to be apart.

Remember, in the end, you have control over change in one area, and one area only: YOU. You have no control over your spouse, and do not have the power to change him or her in any way. You have demonstrated by investing in this program, that you desire to have the

marriage remain intact. So you must take it upon yourself to make the changes necessary.

The hope (as you will see in the Save The Marriage ebook) is that this will lead to your spouse making changes in him- or herself. But you cannot start with that as an expectation. You must start by making the shift within you. Begin the process of change within you.

**4) Begin a conversation with “What would it take to keep us together?”** This is important on two different levels. First, you need this information so that you can begin to work on making those changes. But second, and more important, it establishes that you want the relationship to continue. This helps your spouse see that the relationship is important to you, and something that you value.

Often, a spouse needs to hear that you treasure the relationship. This is because it is usually the case that a spouse is testing the waters to see if there really is a commitment to the relationship. So, the threat to leave can be a plea to hear that you treasure the relationship and want to keep it.

A defensive response, especially one that says, “Go ahead and leave, if that is what you want” only proves what the person fears, that you do not treasure the relationship. Don’t fall into that trap.

Hear the spouse out. Listen to what needs to happen to keep the relationship, then decide: is there something in what your spouse wants that you cannot do? It is possible. You may hear something that truly is impossible.

For example, you are asked to make a change that goes against your morals (for example, accepting an affair),

requires you to change fundamental parts of who you are, or means that you cannot possibly get any of your needs met.

If that is the case, you may decide that the cost is just too high to agree to that. Don't give up, but do point out the impossibility of the request. But more often than not, what is requested is not unfair or out of the question. In fact, it is often important to hear the request, and ask for some time to consider this. In other words, take a little time to not react, think through the request, and respond thoughtfully.

**5) Do not procrastinate.** Your danger at this point is inaction. If you say you want things to change, but then make no changes, you will only precipitate a separation. You will create a point of no return.

Your spouse needs to see that you are ready to move forward. Do not let this opportunity pass you by. Once someone is out of the house, the difficulty in reconciling rises exponentially. Make the change now, and do not be paralyzed by fear.

**6) Do Not Become Defensive.** I may have said this before, but this is so important that I am reiterating it here. I know that a natural reaction of anyone hearing anything that attacks our sense of the world and our place in it tends to create a defensive response. We feel the need to protect ourselves and defend our paradigm (see my ebook, *Save Your Christian Marriage*, for more on this). But I can tell you from personal experience: being defensive is not efficient in creating change in a relationship, but it is highly effective in lighting the fire of anger and resentment in the other person.

Your spouse will see your defensiveness as verification that you will not change, and that you do not care how

things are. You are, in his or her mind, much more interested in defending the way you see things than making the relationship work.

So, when you are hearing something, do not respond immediately. Pause, breathe deeply, accept that what is being said may have validity, and then respond from a caring place. You are not there to change the other person's perceptions. You are there to hear them and see what you need to change in order for the relationship to work.

Remember, if you are still hearing about the relationship, your spouse still has commitment to the relationship, but wants to see things change.

## **Stage 5: Your spouse has left. No legal proceedings. Still communicating.**

At this stage, the ante is much higher than any time before. When a spouse either moves out of the home or starts legal proceedings (or both), the beginning of an avalanche is there. In other words, it does not require much in terms of a wrong move to start a slide that is unrecoverable.

It takes a substantial amount of resolve to move out and start legal proceedings. Some people remain in the home because they are the primary caregivers for the children, or for other practical reasons, but start legal proceedings. Either situation fits here. This is clearly an emergency. However, you need to proceed with caution. Remember, in First Aid training, the first rule is not to panic. We rarely make good decisions in panic-mode. So, this leads to #1:

- 1) Do not panic.** This is not a time to panic and over-react, or be paralyzed and do nothing. Somewhere in the middle is important.

When you panic, the part of the brain you need active is shut down. You need to be in your rational, reasonable place. This is not possible when you are caught in panic.

Our brain's most primitive part is designed to detect threat. It is not designed to be good at assessing whether a threat is actual or not, only that there is a threat. Brain researchers tell us that there is an area of the brain, the Amygdala that is deep within our brain structure. It is always scanning for threat.

Survival depends upon over-reacting. So, we are better off, survival-wise, responding to real threat and perceived threat with equal speed and force. If I am walking down a path and see a crooked stick, my mind registers the possibility of a snake, and I freeze. Then, the rest of my brain catches up and assesses that it is only a stick. I move on. Had it been a snake, but my brain was set to assume it was not a threat I would have been bitten. Not good for survival.

Unfortunately, what is good for survival is not so good for personal relationships. When someone raises their voice to me, or uses critical words, my deepest instinctual part sees threat. And since the person probably doesn't just stop, my mind continues to register threat. Suddenly, my body is ready for one of two responses: fight or flight. Neither are particularly useful responses in having an intelligent discussion.

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**2) Do not blame, try to turn it against your partner, or allow your anger to be ignited.** If you

do, you will be proving the point that you need to be apart.

Remember, in the end, you have control over change in one area, and one area only: YOU. You have no control over your spouse, and do not have the power to change him or her in any way. You have demonstrated by investing in this program, that you desire to have the marriage remain intact. So you must take it upon yourself to make the changes necessary.

The hope (as you will see in the SaveYourChristianMarriage ebook) is that this will lead to your spouse making changes in him- or herself. But you cannot start with that as an expectation. You must start by making the shift within you. Begin the process of change within you.

**3) Be intentional about praying for your spouse and for your marriage.** This is a transformational process. It attunes you to the relationship, and it accesses the power of prayer. DO NOT skip this one!

**4) Begin a conversation with “What would it take to get us back together?”** This is important on two different levels. First, you need this information so that you can begin to work on making those changes. But second, and more important, it establishes that you want the relationship to continue. This helps your spouse see that the relationship is important to you, and something that you value.

Often, a spouse needs to hear that you treasure the relationship. This is because it is usually the case that a spouse is testing the waters to see if there really is a commitment to the relationship. So, the threat to leave can be a plea to hear that you treasure the relationship and want to keep it.

A defensive response, especially one that says, “Go ahead and leave, if that is what you want” only proves what the person fears, that you do not treasure the relationship. Don’t fall into that trap.

Hear the spouse out. Listen to what needs to happen to keep the relationship, then decide: is there something in what your spouse wants that you cannot do? It is possible. You may hear something that truly is impossible.

For example, are asked to make a change that goes against your morals (accepting an affair would be an example), requires you to change fundamental parts of who you are, or means that you cannot possibly get any of your needs met.

If that is the case, you may decide that the cost is just too high to agree to that. Don’t give up, but do point out the impossibility of the request. But more often than not, what is requested is not unfair or out of the question. In fact, it is often important to hear the request, and ask for some time to consider this. In other words, take a little time to not react, think through the request, and respond thoughtfully.

**5) Do not procrastinate.** Your danger at this point is inaction. If you say you want things to change, but then make no changes, you will only precipitate a separation. You will create a point of no return.

Your spouse needs to see that you are ready to move forward. Do not let this opportunity pass you by. The longer someone is out of the house, the difficulty in reconciling rises exponentially. Make the change now, and do not be paralyzed by fear.

**6) Do Not Become Defensive.** I have said this before, but this is so important that I am reiterating it here. I

know that a natural reaction of anyone hearing anything that attacks our sense of the world and our place in it tends to create a defensive response. We feel the need to protect ourselves and defend our paradigm (see my ebook, *Save Your Christian Marriage*, for more on this).

But I can tell you from personal experience: being defensive is not efficient in creating change in a relationship, but it is highly effective in lighting the fire of anger and resentment in the other person.

Your spouse will see your defensiveness as verification that you will not change, and that you do not care how things are. You are, in his or her mind, much more interested in defending the way you see things than making the relationship work.

So, when you are hearing something, do not respond immediately. Pause, breathe deeply, accept that what is being said may have validity, and then respond from a caring place. You are not there to change the other person's perceptions. You are there to hear them and see what you need to change in order for the relationship to work.

Remember, if you are still hearing about the relationship, your spouse still has commitment to the relationship, but wants to see things change.

**7) Opt to change yourself to become the person you should be.** Over time, we all have a tendency to become complacent and lazy, get into bad habits and patterns, and lose sight of our true selves.

But your spouse is clearly giving a signal that things must change. It is time to take that on as a challenge.

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mindset.” The fixed mindset leads to not thinking anything can be changed: our personality is fixed, our intelligence is fixed, our ways of relating are fixed.

This is different than the growth mindset. The growth mindset is marked by a knowledge that people can change, can discover new ways of being and relating.

Guess which mindset is correct? Study after study shows that the growth mindset is true. In other words, we have a greater capacity of change than we believe. So, take on that approach, and decide it is time for the “new-and-improved” you.

Here are the two reasons this is so important at this time:

- a. You need to be able to look at yourself in the mirror, after everything is said and done, regardless of the outcome, and like yourself. You need to be able to see yourself as someone who either became who you should have been, or stayed who you should have been. This process is brutal on people’s self-esteems, and often lures us into acting in ways that is not true to who we really are. That is a tragedy.
- b. You are trying to lure someone back into the relationship. When they see you acting in ways that are positive for you, they will be attracted back. Do not be discouraged or put off by statements like “why didn’t you do this when we were together?” or “I should have left earlier, so you would have done this earlier.” Take both as acknowledgements that your spouse is liking the changes, but doesn’t know what to do with them.

### **8) There are no “ultimate relationship talks.”**

Often, people begin to see each interaction as having

the potential to make or break a relationship. This is rarely the case. So, relax and make the interactions you do have enjoyable.

After having the “what would it take . . .” conversation, don’t keep having discussions about the relationship. Here's the thing: when things are not going well, the issues seem huge, almost insurmountable, and you feel the need to have big talks to get you on-track. This is a bad idea. Do not fall into that trap. The feeling that things are nearly insurmountable will become a cancer between the two of you, and both of you will feel less and less like working on things.

Instead, focus on having enjoyable times together. Think back: what are the things you used to do that you enjoyed? How did you spend time together in ways that were simple, no pressure, just time together? Do those things. Take walks, go to movies, go for coffee or to the bookstore. In other words, do things that are not about the relationship, just about sharing space.

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The funny thing is, once you are doing these things, the insurmountable problems may seem quiet simple to overcome. In fact, some won't even feel like problems anymore.

## **Stage 6: Your spouse has left. No legal proceedings. No communication.**

At this stage, the ante is much higher than any time before. When a spouse moves out of the home, the beginning of an avalanche is there. In other words, it does not require much in terms of a wrong move to start a slide that is unrecoverable.

It takes a substantial amount of resolve to move out. This is clearly an emergency. However, you need to proceed with caution. Remember, in First Aid training, the first rule is not to panic. We rarely make good decisions in panic-mode. So, this leads to #1:

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The hope (as you will see in the Save The Marriage ebook) is that this will lead to your spouse making changes in him- or herself. But you cannot start with that as an expectation. You must start by making the shift within you. Begin the process of change within you.

**3) Be intentional about praying for your spouse and for your marriage.** This is a transformational

process. It attunes you to the relationship, and it accesses the power of prayer. DO NOT skip this one!

**4) Open a line of communication.** OK, I need to clear with this one. I assume that there is no legal reason that you cannot communicate with your spouse (a protective order of some type). And I must caution you to carefully open the lines of communication. In other words, don't leave multiple voicemails, repeated emails, or drop by unannounced.

Having said that, it is important to begin opening the lines of communication. I suggest that you start small. "How are you doing?" is a good start, whether it is a letter, an email, or a voicemail.

I suggest that you not begin communication in person. This will likely be seen as pushy, invasive, and threatening. In fact, I suggest that you write a letter. Start with the "how are you doing?"

Why do I suggest a letter? Voicemails are easy to delete, as are emails. But the power of a sealed envelope is huge! When is the last time you were able to resist opening a closed envelope addressed to you (and not a piece of junk mail)? There is something about human nature and curiosity that will lead most people to open a letter.

If the letter is returned to you, unopened, the next tactic is sending an email. Emails can't be returned. They can be deleted, but you won't know if your email is read or not (don't go for the "opened email confirmation"), so it is safe to read it.

Over the course of several emails, you need to slowly move from "how are you?" to "I want us to have a better relationship than we did." In other words, admit things weren't great, and that things need to change.

**5) Begin a communication with “What would it take to get us back together?”** This is important on two different levels. First, you need this information so that you can begin to work on making those changes. But second, and more important, it establishes that you want the relationship to continue. This helps your spouse see that the relationship is important to you, and something that you value.

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Your spouse needs to see that you are ready to move forward. Do not let this opportunity pass you by. The longer someone is out of the house, the difficulty in reconciling rises exponentially. Make the change now, and do not be paralyzed by fear.

**7) Do Not Use Legal Processes To Express Your Anger.** The legal process is very destructive to reconciliation. But often, someone will respond to the spouse moving out by saying “fine, if that is what he/she wants, then I’ll let them see.” And the person begins legal proceedings to try to “force the hand” of the spouse. This almost always backfires. It fuels the fire of anger and resentment.

**8) Do Not Become Defensive.** I have said this before, but this is so important that I am reiterating it here. I know that a natural reaction of anyone hearing anything that attacks our sense of the world and our place in it tends to create a defensive response. We feel the need to protect ourselves and defend our paradigm (see my ebook, *Save Your Christian Marriage*, for more on this).

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So, when you are hearing something, do not respond immediately. Pause, breathe deeply, accept that what is being said may have validity, and then respond from a caring place. You are not there to change the other person's perceptions. You are there to hear them and see what you need to change in order for the relationship to work.

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**9) Opt to change yourself to become the person you should be.** Over time, we all have a tendency to become complacent and lazy, get into bad habits and patterns, and lose sight of our true selves.

But your spouse is clearly giving a signal that things must change. It is time to take that on as a challenge.

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So, take on that approach, and decide it is time for the “new-and-improved” you.

Here are the two reasons this is so important at this time:

- a. You need to be able to look at yourself in the mirror, after everything is said and done, regardless of the outcome, and like yourself. You need to be able to see yourself as someone who either became who you should have been, or stayed who you should have been. This process is brutal on people’s self-esteems, and often lures us into acting in ways that is not true to who we really are. That is a tragedy.
- b. You are trying to lure someone back into the relationship. When they see you acting in ways that are positive for you, they will be attracted back. Do not be discouraged or put off by statements like “why didn’t you do this when we were together?” or “I should have left earlier, so you would have done this earlier.” Take both as acknowledgements that your spouse is liking the changes, but doesn’t know what to do with them.

**Stage 7: Your spouse has left and has started legal proceedings. Still communicating. (Also applies if your spouse starts legal proceedings while in the home.)**

At this stage, the ante is much higher than any time before. When a spouse either moves out of the home or starts legal proceedings (or both), the beginning of an avalanche is there. In other words, it does not require much in terms of a wrong move to start a slide that is unrecoverable.

It takes a substantial amount of resolve to move out and start legal proceedings. Some people remain in the home because they are the primary caregivers for the children, or for other practical reasons, but start legal proceedings. Either situation fits here. This is clearly an emergency. However, you need to proceed with caution. Remember, in First Aid training, the first rule is not to panic. We rarely make good decisions in panic-mode. So, this leads to #1:

**1) Do not panic.** This is not a time to panic and over-react, or be paralyzed and do nothing. Somewhere in the middle is important.

When you panic, the part of the brain you need active is shut down. You need to be in your rational, reasonable place. This is not possible when you are caught in panic.

Our brain's most primitive part is designed to detect threat. It is not designed to be good at assessing whether a threat is actual or not, only that there is a threat. Brain researchers tell us that there is an area of the brain, the Amygdala that is deep within our brain structure. It is always scanning for threat.

Survival depends upon over-reacting. So, we are better off, survival-wise, responding to real threat and perceived threat with equal speed and force. If I am walking down a path and see a crooked stick, my mind registers the possibility of a snake, and I freeze. Then, the rest of my brain catches up and assesses that it is only a stick. I move on. Had it been a snake, but my brain was set to assume it was not a threat I would have been bitten. Not good for survival.

Unfortunately, what is good for survival is not so good for personal relationships. When someone raises their

voice to me, or uses critical words, my deepest instinctual part sees threat. And since the person probably doesn't just stop, my mind continues to register threat. Suddenly, my body is ready for one of two responses: fight or flight. Neither are particularly useful responses in having an intelligent discussion.

Panic is a fear response. Don't give in to a sense of panic. It will only make you desperate and look like a pitiful person. That is not a useful position.

- 2) Be intentional about praying for your spouse and for your marriage.** This is a transformational process. It attunes you to the relationship, and it accesses the power of prayer. DO NOT skip this one!
- 3) Do not blame, try to turn it against your partner, or allow your anger to be ignited.** If you do, you will be proving the point that you need to be apart.

Remember, in the end, you have control over change in one area, and one area only: YOU. You have no control over your spouse, and do not have the power to change him or her in any way. You have demonstrated by investing in this program, that you desire to have the marriage remain intact. So you must take it upon yourself to make the changes necessary.

The hope (as you will see in the Save The Marriage ebook) is that this will lead to your spouse making changes in him- or herself. But you cannot start with that as an expectation. You must start by making the shift within you. Begin the process of change within you.

- 4) Begin a conversation with “What would it take to get us back together?”** This is important on two

different levels. First, you need this information so that you can begin to work on making those changes. But second, and more important, it establishes that you want the relationship to continue. This helps your spouse see that the relationship is important to you, and something that you value.

Often, a spouse needs to hear that you treasure the relationship. This is because it is usually the case that a spouse is testing the waters to see if there really is a commitment to the relationship. So, the threat to leave can be a plea to hear that you treasure the relationship and want to keep it.

A defensive response, especially one that says, “Go ahead and leave, if that is what you want” only proves what the person fears, that you do not treasure the relationship. Don’t fall into that trap.

Hear the spouse out. Listen to what needs to happen to keep the relationship, then decide: is there something in what your spouse wants that you cannot do? It is possible. You may hear something that truly is impossible.

For example, are asked to make a change that goes against your morals (accepting an affair would be an example), requires you to change fundamental parts of who you are, or means that you cannot possibly get any of your needs met.

If that is the case, you may decide that the cost is just too high to agree to that. Don’t give up, but do point out the impossibility of the request. But more often than not, what is requested is not unfair or out of the question. In fact, it is often important to hear the request, and ask for some time to consider this. In

other words, take a little time to not react, think through the request, and respond thoughtfully.

**5) Do not procrastinate.** Your danger at this point is inaction. If you say you want things to change, but then make no changes, you will only precipitate a separation. You will create a point of no return.

Your spouse needs to see that you are ready to move forward. Do not let this opportunity pass you by. The longer someone is out of the house, the difficulty in reconciling rises exponentially. Make the change now, and do not be paralyzed by fear. Legal proceedings compound this. A clock is ticking, and resolution must happen.

**6) Recognize the legal process for what it is.**

Understand, a legal proceeding is a substantial crisis for two very important reasons:

- a. The “versus” they put between your names on the legal document is no mistake! The courts are stating that it really is one against the other. If you are familiar with the concept of WE from my ebook, you see that this is absolute poison for the relationship. Legal processes create an acrimony that is hard to escape.
- b. The same process of coming together, becoming a WE happens in reverse. It is a mirror image, and coming apart is painful. Once begun, the pain and scarring are significant for all parties.

**7) Do Not Use Legal Processes To Express Your Anger.** Remember, this is a legal process, so don't just not respond. I am not suggesting that you ignore the legal process, only that you refrain from responding with aggression.

You must do what you need to in order to protect your interests, so don't just avoid legal matters. But you will have many choices to make, and one is about how aggressively you will meet your spouse's legal proceedings.

If you wish to work toward reconciliation, I would recommend keeping the "big guns" in their holsters. There is a spectrum of legal responses, from inaction to hyper-action ("crush the opposition"). Don't play at either end.

You cannot simply be a "push-over," but you can respond from a rational perspective, and refuse to get caught up in the emotional process.

Request that your attorney protect you, but that they not "go after" your spouse at this point.

**8) Do Not Become Defensive.** I have said this before, but this is so important that I am reiterating it here. I know that a natural reaction of anyone hearing anything that attacks our sense of the world and our place in it tends to create a defensive response. We feel the need to protect ourselves and defend our paradigm (see my ebook, *Save The Marriage*, for more on this).

But I can tell you from personal experience: being defensive is not efficient in creating change in a relationship, but it is highly effective in lighting the fire of anger and resentment in the other person.

Your spouse will see your defensiveness as verification that you will not change, and that you do not care how things are. You are, in his or her mind, much more interested in defending the way you see things than making the relationship work.

So, when you are hearing something, do not respond immediately. Pause, breathe deeply, accept that what is

being said may have validity, and then respond from a caring place. You are not there to change the other person's perceptions. You are there to hear them and see what you need to change in order for the relationship to work.

Remember, if you are still hearing about the relationship, your spouse still has commitment to the relationship, but wants to see things change.

**9) Opt to change yourself to become the person you should be.** Over time, we all have a tendency to become complacent and lazy, get into bad habits and patterns, and lose sight of our true selves.

But your spouse is clearly giving a signal that things must change. It is time to take that on as a challenge.

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Guess which mindset is correct? Study after study shows that the growth mindset is true. In other words, we have a greater capacity of change than we believe. So, take on that approach, and decide it is time for the “new-and-improved” you.

Here are the two reasons this is so important at this time:

- a. You need to be able to look at yourself in the mirror, after everything is said and done, regardless of the outcome, and like yourself. You need to be able to see yourself as someone who either became who you

should have been, or stayed who you should have been. This process is brutal on people's self-esteems, and often lures us into acting in ways that is not true to who we really are. That is a tragedy.

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## **Stage 8: Your spouse has left and has started legal proceedings. No communication.**

You have a real crisis here. I will not lie. Most marriages at this point will not recover. Your spouse is making a clear message: "I don't want to hear from you, and I do want to be out of the marriage." This reaction usually comes on the tails of a major problem, such as betrayal, legal trouble, an affair, abuse, or some other precipitating event.

If there is a precipitating event, it must be addressed, directly and honestly.

If there was not a precipitating event, then a cancer has eaten deeply into your relationship. Your spouse is cutting off communication and is moving to dissolve the relationship.

You need to ask yourself, "have we done so much damage that this relationship is unrecoverable?" As much as I would like to save every marriage, I will tell you, this is a tough one, with fewer promises than any other category.

If you decide to continue working to save the relationship, take note of these things:

**1) Open a line of communication.** OK, I need to clear with this one. I assume that there is no legal reason that you cannot communicate with your spouse (a protective order of some type). And I must caution you to carefully open the lines of communication. In other words, don't leave multiple voicemails, repeated emails, or drop by unannounced.

Having said that, it is important to begin opening the lines of communication. I suggest that you start small. "How are you doing?" is a good start, whether it is a letter, an email, or a voicemail.

I suggest that you not begin communication in person. This will likely be seen as pushy, invasive, and threatening. In fact, I suggest that you write a letter. Start with the "how are you doing?"

Why do I suggest a letter? Voicemails are easy to delete, as are emails. But the power of a sealed envelope is huge! When is the last time you were able to resist opening a closed envelope addressed to you (and not a piece of junk mail)? There is something about human nature and curiosity that will lead most people to open a letter.

If the letter is returned to you, unopened, the next tactic is sending an email. Emails can't be returned. They can be deleted, but you won't know if your email is read or not (don't go for the "opened email confirmation"), so it is safe to read it.

Over the course of several emails, you need to slowly move from "how are you?" to "I want us to have a better relationship than we did." In other words, admit things weren't great, and that things need to change.

**2) Be intentional about praying for your spouse and for your marriage.** This is a transformational process. It attunes you to the relationship, and it accesses the power of prayer. DO NOT skip this one!

**3) Begin a communication with “What would it take to get us back together?”** This is important on two different levels. First, you need this information so that you can begin to work on making those changes. But second, and more important, it establishes that you want the relationship to continue. This helps your spouse see that the relationship is important to you, and something that you value.

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Whatever stage you find yourself, I want you to understand that I have seen couple after couple come back from that stage to the one stage not noted here: Together, Happy, Communicating, and Looking Forward To The Future!

I am supporting you in your hopes to move your relationship in that direction!

God's Blessings to you!

Faithfully,

Lee H. Baucom, Ph.D.

Author of the Best-Selling Ebook,

[\*Save Your Christian Marriage\*](#)