

When Things Go Horribly Wrong

How to Fight Back from
Betrayals, Lies, and Other
Marriage Devastations



By Jill and Steve Grossman

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If you've chosen to read this book, it's likely your marriage is in trouble. Let us first say we are sorry. Let us then say there is hope, and we don't take that statement lightly.

We have been where you are.

We nearly lost our marriage around year seven. The details don't matter except to say that we faced everything you're wondering if we faced. We were in the same position you are in and possibly for the same reasons. Yet we successfully fought back.

Rebuilding a totally wrecked marriage can be done. It is worth the fight and worth the work. There is nothing more worthy of a fight than your marriage.

And so we offer this book of help.

Yes, It Can Be Done

Based on our own personal story, our professional training and experience, and God's Word, we believe any and all marriage issues can be fought through and overcome. We will always advocate doing anything and everything to fight for marriage.

But we acknowledge that some marriages make it and some do not and there are no definitive answers as to why. We know that decisions to stay together, to separate, or to divorce are personal ones. We know that these decisions and their eventual outcomes involve two people. We cannot and do not pass judgments. May God's grace and mercy cover us all.

*We have been
where you are.*

Please rest in the fact that there is also no personal glory in “success” or shame in “failure”. Marriages succeed through and for the glory of God. Likewise, people from broken marriages are covered and redeemed the same way.

We cannot promise success but we can offer the hope that fighting back together is highly likely to save your marriage. We’ll go a step further and say that it is highly likely to yield a stronger and better marriage than you ever imagined.

With all this in mind and knowing that we cannot address every part of rebuilding or every single issue in this short book, we offer the following key steps to fighting for your marriage together:

Step 1 – Accept Your Reality

You must first face the reality of what has happened and what it means. The feelings are raw and real. The questions are raw and real. It hurts more than you could have imagined and your world has been turned upside down. Don’t make decisions. Fixing will come later, step one is about two people accepting that there is a big problem.



One of you, possibly both, has hurt the covenant of marriage. This too must be accepted and it must be accepted by both partners because what has happened has happened to you both. Both sets of dreams, both sets of hopes, and both sets of expectations and plans are now forever changed. Yes this is really happening.

Your initial conversations are likely to be all about blame, defensiveness, blame, defensiveness, and then more blame and defensiveness. It would be a waste of time to tell you not to have these conversations because they will happen anyway.

This is a good time to bring up Ephesians 4:26 which clearly states: “Do not let the sun go down on your anger.” What does this mean for two people facing a destroyed marriage?

Let’s start by saying this verse does NOT mean you can’t be angry. It also cannot be used to force yourself or your spouse to “get over it” by dinner time. Nor can it be used to suggest that you both stay awake until all the anger is gone.

Earlier in the chapter, Paul writes, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).” When he addresses anger later in the passage, Paul is cautioning against angry words and behaviors that separate and divide believers. He’s saying don’t allow anger to tear each other down or apart.

The key to adhering to Ephesians 4:26 and other Scriptures is to check the intent of the heart.

So the key to adhering to Ephesians 4:26 and other Scriptures is to check the intent of the heart. So, do your best to avoid calling each other names. Avoid assumptions and accusations about intents, meanings, and purposes. You may think you know, but you do not. Instead, focus on the facts and realities of behaviors and their consequences.

And as far as the sun going down? We’ll say this: A couple that decides to get a good night’s sleep so they can continue to work on their marriage another day is actually obeying this verse. They are choosing their

marriage over their anger by getting rest so they can think and talk more clearly. This is the heart of Paul's instruction.

Step 2 – See it Biblically

Choosing to view what's happening from a Biblical perspective is another step to take before talking through and fixing things. There are a couple of points to consider, and your decisions will set the tone for what will or won't happen next.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
– Romans 3:23



Here are the points to consider:

- Remember God's perspective and purposes for marriage. Your marriage matters even more to God than it does to you. He has promised to never leave you nor forsake you (Duet. 31:6, Heb. 13:5).
- The Biblical cause of what has happened is brokenness. We'll talk about forgiveness in a moment, but the place to start is to see your spouse as God sees them: a broken, failed, human being.
- And you are broken, too. There are exceptions of course, but marriages get into trouble because of the failings and brokenness of both spouses. The cliché “it takes two to Tango” is indeed true.

Bringing the Biblical perspective into your situation is crucial to moving forward because it allows for the power of forgiveness.

A Note About Forgiveness

We're not calling forgiveness a step because it is so much more than that. It is the mechanism that allows everything else that is needed for healthy relationships. There would be no love, peace, or contentment without forgiveness. There would be no healing or hope without forgiveness. There would be no Christ.

So we'll agree that forgiveness is foundational. We'll also say it's very hard.

Allow us to help by saying that forgiveness is a process with one repeatable step: the decision to forgive. It is not a one-time thing that turns everything around in an instant. Forgiveness only works when we decide to forgive and then decide to repeat that decision day after day after day after day.

It is also not an instant cure for feelings. In fact, feelings are the reason we have to re-decide to forgive every day. We can promise you this though, a daily decision to forgive allows the feelings of forgiveness to grow over time.

Another note about forgiveness. It is best approached in three separate categories: the other person, your feelings, and your responsibility.

- The other person: Yes they hurt you. Deeply. They are broken, messed up, untrustworthy, etc. Deal with that honestly by giving them to God. Only God can heal them and change them. You cannot. So give them fully to God.
- Your feelings: Deal with your feelings honestly and completely. This is where giving them to God helps. You are then free to admit that you are crushed without the guilt and confusion of thinking badly about them. You can then be open to the comfort of Christ who also experienced deep betrayals by people He loved.
- Your responsibility: This is the part where you ask honestly, “what did I do to contribute to our mess?” Once again, the separateness of these three categories helps.

This approach helps untangle these three interconnected categories so they can be managed and healed correctly

Step 3 – Work on You

When we fought to save our marriage, a counselor told us that a healthy marriage involves two healthy and whole individuals who don't need each other but want to live life with one another. This may seem counterintuitive and it is certainly different than society's beliefs like, "you complete me" and, "I could never live without you" and many, many, more.

However, it is truth. And it is Biblical.

When God said, "it is not good for man to be alone" in Genesis 2:18, He wasn't saying the man would never be complete without a woman (or vice versa). He was saying man would be even better if there was a comparable partner.

Yes, God loves marriage but He loves you more. And if you're reeling from a devastating blow in your marriage, you're also reeling from a devastating blow to your self image and worth. You need to know, and you need to actively seek, God's growth and healing for you. Don't forget that God promises to conform you to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

This is critical if you are ever to consider that there are reasons this has happened in your marriage. And yes, there are reasons. Remember the hurting persons we described earlier? If you can begin to consider the hurting on both sides, then you can begin to possibly consider healing. And possible healing brings hope.

Please note that these steps to thinking this through can't be rushed but they can be done. This will take time precisely because of the enormity of the pain and devastation. Which brings us to the next step.



Step 4 – Get Help

We understand that counseling can be a scary word, but we have a question for you: do you check how you look in the mirror before you leave your home for the day? Of course you do, we all do.

Counseling is a mirror for your insides. Counseling will help you check, straighten, and rearrange your emotions, perspectives, and thinking patterns about yourself and your marriage.

Whether you seek professional help or not, make sure that you get help processing your emotions, thoughts, and questions. As we just said, we all need help from time to time, and this is definitely one of those times.

Counseling is a mirror for your insides.

The first rule of seeking counsel is to find safe people. The last thing you need is criticism, guilt, unhealthy, and unGodly advice. The second rule is that you have the final say in all decisions. You are free to prayerfully implement or throw away any advice you hear.

Step 5 – Find Your New Dance

When we were fighting to rebuild our marriage our counselor suggested we think of our communications and interactions as a dance.

She said that we had developed bad relational dance moves that eventually got us into big trouble. Since we had developed them together, we were hardly aware of how “out of step” we were with one another until our marriage collapsed.

She then said that we had to create new relational dance steps together. We had to learn how to communicate and interact in new and better ways.



She went one step further to make her most important point: learning these new steps was going to be painful. She told us to expect stepped on toes, elbows in the eyes, missed cues, and more than a few failed attempts at graceful dips – including metaphorical drops to the floor.

Changing your dance will revolutionize your marriage.

Step 6 – Help Each Other Stay Married

Decide that you will never go back by committing together to always move forward. You must reach a point where you both say, “we’re not talking through what happened anymore.” It doesn’t mean it can never be spoken of or discussed, but it does mean it can no longer be used for ammunition.

You must also get to the point of dreaming, planning, laughing, and encouraging one another to grow individually and as a couple. Or said another way, communicate, communicate, COMMUNICATE.

In Conclusion

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7:28 that, “those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.”

This is not Paul’s warning against marriage. It is a Biblical revelation that marriage is hard work and we better be aware and prepared. We better be prepared to fight. And now you are.

We hope you now have more hope. Not just for marriage in general, but hope for your specific marriage. Hope that you and your spouse can do the work and have the marriage you want. We know you can.

Steve and Jill have spent most of the married lives counseling and mentoring couples about the challenges, benefits, and victories of marriage. Jill holds a Masters in Pastoral Counseling and is Advanced Certified in Cognitive Therapy and Temperament Counseling. Steve is a certified Life Coach and Temperament Counselor. They are both Ordained Pastors and own and operate Erchomai Counseling and Coaching.

Erchomai (er-ko-my) is a Greek word meaning, “come, be established.” Jill and Steve help individuals and couples be established in identity, purpose, and the application of God’s Word.



To learn more, visit erchomaicounseling.com

