

*Fighting for Your*

# MARRIAGE

*While Separated*

A Practical Guide  
for the Brokenhearted

LINDA W. ROOKS

“Marriage on the rocks? Wondering if you are the only one who cares about your marriage? Linda Rooks has written HOPE and HELP into your future! This book is a healing balm for one of life’s very unwelcome, unwanted, and unbelievably difficult journeys. It’s a must-read for anyone finding themselves struggling to hold on to his or her marriage.”

**Pam Farrel**, Author of forty-five books including bestselling *Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti*; codirector of Love-Wise

“Practical, powerful, confidence-building, and enlightening describe this book by Linda Rooks. Her wisdom is greatly needed and will embolden those who feel lost and hopeless in the midst of marital separation and abandonment. As lay counselors, we will be recommending *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated* knowing it will give others biblical hope in God’s care and the Holy Spirit’s empowering.”

**Kathy Collard Miller and Larry Miller**, Lay counselors, speakers, and authors of many books including *Never Ever Be the Same*

“Powerful! Practical! Biblical! *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated* walks couples step-by-step through separation to possible reconciliation. Linda Rooks, with a heart filled with understanding and hope, shares biblical truth, her own three-year separation, and real-time stories of brokenhearted couples. A must-read for anyone contemplating the end of their marriage. You may not fix your marriage, but God can!”

**Elaine W. Miller**, International speaker; author of *We All Married Idiots: Three Things You Will Never Change About Your Marriage and Ten Things You Can*

“When you open this book, you enter into an intimate conversation with a trusted friend. Linda Rooks warmly extends a hand of compassionate support to the brokenhearted spouse, offering both biblical hope and wisdom. With great purpose, she draws upon countless years of serving hurting spouses. We highly recommend *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated* not only to spouses in crisis, but to counselors, pastors, and other marriage champions.”

**Clint and Penny A. Bragg**, Authors of *Marriage Off Course: Trusting God in the Desert of Unwanted Separation or Divorce*

“Linda Rooks not only understands what it means to fight for a marriage—she understands what it takes to win the war that separated couples face. The book you are about to read is filled with hope, direction, and ‘Heart Work’ exercises that will help guide you through whatever battle you are facing in your marriage. A tremendous book we will have on our resource list for every separated person.”

**Joe and Michelle Williams**, Authors of *Yes, Your Marriage Can Be Saved*; founders of Marriage 911 God’s Way Ministry

“As a counselor, I’ve witnessed firsthand the heartbreak of a person who wants to save his or her marriage with someone who has no interest in reconciling. Linda Rooks has not only successfully navigated this confusing, complicated path herself but offers hope through her true-life stories and excellent strategies. While making no guarantees, *Fighting for Your Marriage* lays out helpful do’s and don’ts, showing that a restored marriage is possible.”

**Georgia Shaffer**, PA Licensed Psychologist; professional certified coach; author; founder of ReBUILD, small-group internet coaching for the separated and divorced

“Anyone who is dealing with separation in marriage or works with those who are in deep marital distress can benefit from reading *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated*. Linda Rooks shares her story of separation and reconciliation with vulnerability, encouragement, and hope. She doesn’t offer a quick fix, but gives practical wisdom for navigating the difficulties, as if talking with you over a cup of coffee.”

**Nancy Kay Grace**, Speaker; author of *The Grace Impact*; member of the board of directors for United Marriage Encounter; former presenter for United Marriage Encounter

“Fighting for your marriage is absolutely essential, even while separated! God has a process and a plan for our lives, and waiting and going through a wilderness period may be just that plan for a time! Linda’s book is an incredible resource for walking this out, keeping you focused, and potentially waiting for God’s direction for your marriage!”

**Jeff & Cheryl Scruggs**, Speakers; biblical counselors; authors of *I Do Again*; founders of Hope Matters Marriage Ministries and *Thriving Beyond Belief* podcast for women

# FIGHTING FOR YOUR MARRIAGE WHILE SEPARATED

A PRACTICAL GUIDE  
FOR THE BROKENHEARTED

Linda W. Rooks



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# Dedication

I still remember my husband looking up at me from the papers I had handed him, a mixture of wonder and grace settling over his demeanor. “This is a Romans 8:28,” he said. “This is the way God will bring good from our pain—by using our story to help others.”

The papers he had just read chronicled my healing from the pain of our separation, and since my husband’s first reading of those words, his enthusiasm for passing healing words onto those in hurting marriages has not wavered. His support and encouragement has kept me going through many months of writing and many years of ministry.

And so, to you, my husband, Marv—the man I have loved over these many years—I dedicate this book. Thank you for your love, support, and encouragement, which has enabled us to share with others the hope we found together and the story of the renewed love we enjoy today.

*“And we know that in all things  
God works for the good of those who love him,  
who have been called according to his purpose.”*

ROMANS 8:28

# Acknowledgments

In acknowledging those who played a part in bringing this book about, I must begin with you, my readers and those who have sat in our marriage classes week after week. Time and time again, your stories and your lives have taught me about God's grace, his redemption, and his power to transform. Your tears and the pain you shared with me along with God's wondrous promise in Romans 8:28 serve as the seeds of inspiration for what follows on these pages. For, indeed, "all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Your perseverance and your willingness to let God make changes is a beautiful testimony. I particularly want to thank each and every one of you who allowed me to share your stories so others could find hope. Your honesty and vulnerability shine a light on what is possible with God to provide hope for those in hurting marriages.

Secondly, I must thank my husband, Marv, whose enthusiasm and support for this book kept me on track. Thanks for your faithfulness in reading each and every chapter, sharing your thoughts with me, and being my consultant when it was challenging to make decisions.

A special thanks also to my daughter Julie Wolf for sharing her story as a teen dealing with my husband's and my separation, and for contributing to the chapter on "Protecting Your Child's Heart" by sharing her experience as a mental health counselor.

And thanks to those who spent time with me in person or on the phone, sharing their professional expertise. Robert S. Paul shared his vast knowledge and experience about the uniqueness of marital counseling. John Tardonia helped me address the issue of physical abuse. P. J. and Frank Turner gave me a workable plan for those with addictive spouses. Pastor Carl Stephens offered his wise counsel. Cheryl Scruggs advised on reconciliation after divorce. My appreciation also goes to William Donahue for allowing me to share from his insightful writings on marriage counseling

Thanks also to Barbara Juliani for believing in this project and bringing it to fruition, to Ruth Castle who helped me sharpen my focus, and to Mollie Turbeville for her fine-tuning.

To Lyle Cain, thanks for rescuing me from computer stress on a number of occasions, and to my friends in Word Weavers, thanks for many helpful suggestions and critiques for portions of my manuscript.

Finally, thanks to my agent Jonathan Clements for enduring with me through good times and bad.

## A Personal Note to My Readers

While my own tears and my own breaking heart were ground zero for my first book, *Broken Heart on Hold*, it has been the tears and heartbreaking stories from readers and those in our crisis marriage classes that are ground zero for *Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated*.

As I have watched them grapple with mind-numbing circumstances and listened to their stories, I have learned from them. I have seen them overcome incredible obstacles, surmount impossible odds, gently woo reluctant and prodigal spouses, and stand strong when divorce threatened to bring them down. I have seen the beauty of hearts resurrected and lives renewed, regardless of the results, when God becomes the center. Many of these stories (with prior consent) can be found throughout these pages.

If you, my reader, are new to this battle and feel you are stepping into it alone, the true and heartfelt stories sprinkled throughout this book will reassure you there is hope for you and your marriage. Although these stories use fictional names to protect identities, the enthusiasm each of these people showed for giving to you what God has given to them has been a beautiful testimony of God's healing grace.

Wherever you are in the battle for your marriage, this is your book. These chapters are answers to your questions. The tears and pain many

others have shared with me through the years have prepared the soil and watered the seeds for what will be shared in the following pages. You are not alone.

So, let's get started. Your Commander is calling, and it's time to charge into battle. Together, we are going to fight for your marriage.

# Chapter 1

## Reacting to Your New Situation

**T**hough he has been gone six months now, I still wake during the night with that sense of fear, sick to my stomach, enveloped with a stinging heat in my body. It's the most horrible feeling I have ever encountered. I suspect you know very well this feeling, and all the other feelings and sensations I suffer. I have, for the first time in my life, begun to have anxiety attacks. Can I tell you how scared I am? I have, at this point, lost my husband of nearly twenty-seven years. If you have any suggestions to help me learn to take my focus off of my husband and my great grief and pain, I would love to hear from you. — *Sarah*



With a crumbling marriage at your feet, reckless and thoughtless words swirling through your head, and a gnawing pain eating at your heart, where do you go from here?

What does it look like to fight for your marriage? Is saving it even possible?

The shock that comes when your spouse walks out the door or announces a desire for divorce shakes you, the one left behind, to the core of your being. It's a moment of panic. Of desperation. Every fiber in your body cries out for action. You feel like that proverbial chicken

whose head was cut off. You can't think, but every muscle in your body is ready for action.

But what action?

What do you do?

How do you fight for your marriage?

In the emails I get from readers, I hear the heartache. Each story is very different, but the pain bleeds from each sentence and paragraph. My heart grieves for those who write as they tell about suffering through an agony I know all too well because of my own three-year separation a number of years ago.

Because my own marriage was restored and because I have been able to work with so many others to reconcile their marriages, I can confidently tell you it is possible to fight for your marriage and win—even when your spouse has turned away from you.

But what does it look like to fight for your marriage?

## **FROM NEVER TO FOREVER**

Alexandra could not eat or sleep. Bill would not talk to her or answer her calls. When she found him at the house he was renting, he refused to let her inside.

From the moment she found her husband standing beside his Hyundai Sonata packed with all his belongings, her world turned upside down.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“I’ve been telling you for months I can’t handle it anymore.”

“Where are you moving? When are you coming back?”

“I rented a house,” Bill said. “I don’t know what’s going to happen. I need space. I need time.”

During that first month after he left, all Alexandra could do was cry. She lost twenty pounds. When they eventually went to counseling, Bill told her week after week he did not see them getting back together—ever. He agreed to keep things as normal as possible for the kids and reluctantly spent the holidays with her and occasionally went on outings as a family. Bill was adamant, however, that this was only for the children. They were not getting back together.

Grasping for something to relieve her pain, Alexandra decided to go to church even though her past experiences had not been particularly pleasant or meaningful. This new church seemed different though. From the first moment she stepped inside, she felt at home. She felt God's presence and a new peace. As a result, Alexandra started seeking God with all her heart. She found a prayer partner who continually lifted her up to God. She attended a class at the church called Marriage 911 where she saw God leading her to make changes in herself. She earnestly asked God to show her what she needed to do.

Even as Alexandra began to change, however, Bill regularly dashed her hopes by saying there would be no reconciliation.

Still, Alexandra pressed on with God and clung to hope. Whenever she engaged in conversations with her husband, she sought God's guidance. Alexandra stopped pushing and began to show Bill a new respect that reflected a fresh understanding of his needs as a man and as her husband. When they had arguments, she realized pressing her point until she could prove she was right was not productive. Instead, she stepped back and put everything in the hands of her Savior.

Eventually, Bill saw the changes in her and began initiating times for them to get together and talk while doing things they both enjoyed. But he still insisted he had no interest in ever reconciling.

One day he asked to come over and talk.

"I think it's time," he said.

"Time for what? What do you mean it's time?"

"I don't see us getting back together. I think it's time to file. I've saved some money in my savings and my 401(k). I'll cash it out. Half of it is yours. I'll do what I can to help you. But it's time to file for divorce. This isn't going to work out."

Although stunned, Alexandra remained calm. "If that's what you want, I cannot stop you, but I'm not going to file or take the first step. You'll have to do it. You're going to have to sit down and talk to the kids too. I don't want any part of it. God isn't telling me it's done yet."

Alexandra knew she had done everything she could to save her marriage. She had talked and tried to convince him. She'd cried. She'd read books and had gone to classes. She'd sought counsel from others

and made serious changes. Now it was up to God. It had been two years, and there was nothing more to do.

“God, if this is what you want,” she prayed, “then give me the strength.” With those words, she finally let go and surrendered it all to the Lord. If Bill wanted to end the marriage, she could not stop him. Despite her pain, she was at peace.

Because they had lost their house, Alexandra found a small apartment for her and the kids. She cobbled together a few new pieces of furniture and decorated the walls with Scripture art.

During the next few months, a series of accidents and surgeries in the family shone a light on Alexandra’s new demeanor. She was calmer and more at peace. Her new independence and ability to handle all the tumult caught Bill’s attention. Over the next few months, Bill’s heart began to change, and so did his decision about the divorce.

He began dropping by the house on a regular basis. He invited her to dinner and on bike rides. As he saw Alexandra truly let go and prepare to move on, his heart began to open to her. On the morning of Ash Wednesday as he lay in bed praying, he felt the Spirit saying, “Trust me for forty days and allow my Spirit to go before you. Go back to your family.”

Bill fell in love with her all over again and moved back in. Thankfully, he had never filed for divorce.

The way each person handles a separation can make the difference in the outcome. You may mess up and not do it right at first, but if you can eventually give it to God, you might be surprised at how God works it all together for good as in the story of Alexandra and Bill above. Even as you fight this battle for your marriage, however, it’s important to realize God’s idea of victory in your life may not be the same as yours. A restored marriage may be part of that victory, but it’s not guaranteed. However, as you assemble your armor and learn new strategies, God will give you the strength you need to become all he wants you to be so you can enjoy the victory ahead, whatever form it takes.

The following principles provide an important and proven strategy for those who eventually find reconciliation and healing. Take these steps prayerfully. Never step out on your “to-do” list or walk into battle

without listening for guidance from the Commander. God will guide you step-by-step.

### **Give Space**

If your husband or wife left, your first intentional response should be to give your partner space. Spouses who leave are usually confused and need space to sort themselves out. They may be running from conflict, which may be conflict in the home or a conflict raging within themselves. Either way, chasing after them with questions or accusations only pushes them further away.

Although your heart may be crying out for answers, a spouse who has left probably has no answers for you. Chances are your mate doesn't even know himself what he wants, and any attempt to respond to your questions will likely produce something you don't want to hear. However, if you can give him time to clear his head, your partner may come to a better place where answers will be more gratifying.

But how do you give space? For most of you this is an extremely difficult assignment and goes against the desperate cries of your heart. How do you fight for your marriage if you have no contact with your spouse? In this battle, you have a Commander whose strategy far exceeds your own. Take this time to look to him. Let him guard your heart and begin your healing while you take necessary measures to move into a better place emotionally.

Giving space to the one who has left means that for a period of time you don't call, email, or text unless you need to discuss something significant. When you do have contact, don't put pressure on your partner or talk about issues. Instead, pray for your spouse and use this time to get closer to God. Let your husband or wife contact you. Wait and pray.

After a period of time with no interaction and after praying for guidance, you might extend an olive branch to just say hello and see how your mate is doing. But don't call to put pressure on. Simply make it a friendly exchange and say something positive. Your purpose is not to create a standoff but to provide time for her to clear her head. After giving your partner space for a while, it's appropriate to send a message that says I'm thinking of you. Give her something positive to hang onto.

## **That “In Love” Feeling**

Why, you ask, should I have any hope at this point if my spouse said he doesn't love me anymore? After all, I can't change his feelings.

Having now been in marriage ministry for so many years, I have found this to be one of the most common statements I hear from women whose husbands have left. With hearts breaking, they repeat to me their husband's words: he doesn't love her anymore or he isn't “in love” with her anymore. Sometimes, he adds that he doesn't think he ever loved her. A few words bring her whole world crashing down upon her. In the case of a man whose wife has left, it seems more typical for her to say something like, “I don't know if I love you anymore.”

The amazing, but undeniable truth, however, is these feelings can change. What your spouse feels right now may be very different in six months. Feelings are only temporary, and people make a tremendous mistake when they allow emotions to shape their decisions.

In our marriage classes, my husband, Marv, drives this point home on a regular basis to those in attendance.

“Feelings change,” he says. He even writes the words on the whiteboard at the front of the class and underlines them to emphasize his claim. He knows the truth of this firsthand because many years ago, when we were separated, he was one of those spouses who left and questioned his feelings of love for me. After three years of separation, we reconciled. Today he has no doubt and tells me daily he loves me. We have seen this turnaround to be true with many other couples as well.

Feelings change. That “in love,” euphoric feeling, in fact, is scientifically considered a very temporary state, which lasts anywhere from three to thirty-six months.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Michael R. Liebowitz, author of *The Chemistry of Love*, calls it the “attraction” stage of love and describes the feeling of love as a powerful disturbance of our normal brain chemistry. “Love is a brain bath of dopamine and norepinephrine,” he writes. But this feeling of love does not last long.

In the *New York Times* article, “Chemical Connections: Pathways of Love,” Glenn Collins continues the quote from Liebowitz. “In the natural process of acclimation, lovers achieve a measure of toleration or adaptation to each other, and the thrill is gone. Yet in our culture

we demand that our relationships continue to be romantic. I think it's because the media constantly portray only one sort of love as desirable—attraction, rather than attachment.”<sup>2</sup>

As a consequence of these beliefs, people who expect “in love” feelings to continue will have to go from one relationship to another every few years. That, of course, is not the purpose of a relationship. People need to build something deeper, and this comes in the second stage of love. Liebowitz calls this “attachment,” which is “associated with warm feelings that may be calming or comforting.”<sup>3</sup>

Eventually, as your spouse has time to process his feelings, his mixed-up emotions may begin to calm down, and feelings of love toward you may return. Until he or she finds personal healing, however, your mate probably won't be able to respond to you with the love you want. How you handle this stage of the battle can make a big difference in what happens next. Waiting with restraint is extremely hard but important, and at this point it begins by giving time.

### **Give It Time**

As you struggle through this confusion from one day to the next, you want to ask your spouse over and over, “What are you going to do? When are you coming home?” You could even be tempted to make ultimatums so she understands you will not wait forever. You want her to decide to come home. You want this pain to end. And if it's not going to end, then at least you want closure. What you don't want is for the pain to continue. What you don't want is a broken heart on hold.

But God's ways are not our ways. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).

While feelings can definitely change, it takes time for this to happen. You can't rush it. Give God the time he needs to help you and your spouse make the necessary changes to bring about a truly restored marriage.

God uses everything for his purposes. His ways are perfect. If you want to see true healing in the lives of you and your partner, you must

surrender this time to God. Do not put restrictions on him. God is an omniscient, powerful, and everlasting God, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Time to him is like the blink of an eye. Give it to him.

### **Focus on God**

Because of the intensity of what is happening, it's easy to become obsessed with your circumstances. But obsession will only make the situation worse. At a marriage conference I attended, marriage therapist Michele Weiner-Davis shared a five-word slogan that can be pivotal in your thinking. I share it continually in the marriage classes Marv and I lead: "What you focus on expands."<sup>4</sup>

Whatever you allow yourself to think about becomes more prominent in your mind and your emotions. If you fixate on the confusion of your negative circumstances, it will consume you, but if you focus on God, he will fill your heart with his peace.

To keep your sanity, put your spouse on the back burner and keep your focus completely on God, your Commander in chief. Do not allow your husband or wife to define who you are.

Use this time to get alone with God. Let him strengthen you to give you the necessary armor for the battle. Life is a journey of change and growth. During this period of your life, as you come closer to the Lord and put your trust completely in God, he can show you any changes he wants you to make that will fulfill you as a person and perhaps bring peace and healing to your marriage. Proverbs 3:5–6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (NKJV). God has a plan for you, and he will guide you through this battle. Humbly seek God's direction.

To focus on God and your relationship with him, spend quality and quantity time in his Word and in seeking him through prayer. Tune in to radio and television teachers or tap into online teaching resources. Read Christian books. Keep Christian praise music playing throughout the day and sing along with it. Read or reread *Broken Heart on Hold* as a devotional book to keep yourself strong spiritually. Try to identify in yourself habits, reactions, or behaviors that may be a hindrance to a good

marital relationship. Do not do this to win your spouse back. Do it to live out who God says you are and who he's called you to be.

### **Nurture Yourself**

Chances are the stress in your marriage has prevented you from doing a lot of things you used to enjoy. Rekindle some of those interests you may have put aside. Give yourself permission to develop new talents and interests you enjoy.

While God offers you his love and peace to bind up the wounds of your heart, you are responsible for making positive choices that are healthy and satisfying to take care of yourself. Scripture says to “guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23). God wants to lead you into a fruitful and productive life, even in the midst of the chaos surrounding you. As he provides protection for your heart, you need to make choices that will replace the negatives in your life with new positives. God created you and loves you. He has a plan for you, and he will guide you through this time.

### **Respond Positively**

After you have given your spouse space, a time will eventually come when you and your partner will have contact. He may call to check in, or perhaps one of you will need to call or text the other about an important matter. Or you may have to be in communication because of the children. At this point, your response can make a big difference in what happens down the road. Positive instead of negative words can move your relationship in a better direction.

Feeling angry and upset comes naturally in this kind of situation, and if you have expressed such feelings, it's understandable and not surprising. But muster up the resolve to use your words more productively from this time on. Do not hang on to regret and self-incrimination but forgive yourself and move on with a determination to change your reactions. Give everything to God and ask him to calm your heart and emotions so you can have a more upbeat response the next time.

The Bible repeatedly highlights the importance of guarding the mouth and choosing words carefully. Proverbs 21:23 says, “Those who

guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity,” reminding us that “a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

Beginning to make encouraging comments on a regular basis can cause your spouse to rethink what she’s doing and open up the lines of communication. Offering encouragement may seem contrary to what feels natural to do right now, and it is. Consequently, for this important assignment, you need to continually build up your spiritual muscles by going back to God again and again to receive emotional and spiritual strength.

It may seem impossible to think of positive words to say to mates who have left. If you are struggling with speaking kindly to your separated spouse, sit down and make a list of encouraging comments you could honestly express that would meet your partner’s emotional needs. Chapter 4 discusses specifics about how to encourage a spouse in the most effective way. Sometimes even the simplest remarks can have a positive effect. But your words must be sincere. Then pray Psalm 141:3 back to God, “Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.” If you ask God to help you with your tongue, he will give you the strength, wisdom, and even the desire to speak words of life into your marriage.

### **Show, Don’t Tell**

If you have given your spouse time and space—and if you are focusing on God and nurturing your own growth—you will begin to see yourself changing for the better. When this happens, you may be tempted to point out these successes to your spouse as you go along. However, if you are genuinely changing, your partner will begin to see it when she is around you. Don’t tell your partner you are changing; show her. And don’t expect to receive any kind of appreciation from her for the next few months. Your mate will hopefully see a new you emerge, but she will probably wonder at first if the changes are real or if you’re just making a temporary show to win her back.

## **Pray**

Praying fervently for your spouse is vitally important. But don't merely pray you'll be reconciled. Also pray that your spouse will know God's redemptive grace and become truly committed to him. If husbands or wives have wandered away from God, they probably need to first have a heartfelt experience with Christ before becoming completely committed to their partners again.

Pray for yourself as well, that God will reveal any changes he wants you to make. Regardless of what has transpired in your marriage, each of you has played a part in the brokenness that has taken place. Let God show you how he wants to use the troubles in your marriage to refine your character. Chapter 7 will focus more on how to pray for your marriage.

## **Surround Yourself with Supportive People**

During a separation or other marital crisis, you must choose carefully with whom to share your situation. If you are working to restore your marriage, make sure you have people around you who support your desire to reconcile. Find friends who will listen and not judge, friends who encourage you to look to God for the answers and wait on him.

Often friends do not know what to say. The troubles in your marriage may seem overwhelming to them. If they have not had a personal experience of reconciliation themselves—or know someone who has—they may have a hard time seeing how reconciliation can occur. They care for you, and they want you to be happy. As a result, many of them will tell you, “You don't deserve this,” or “You're too good for your husband or wife,” or “You can do better.” They may encourage you to “get on with your life.” These friends want to help. They want you to be happy. What they don't realize is their words may be encouraging you in the wrong direction. Inadvertently, they may be discouraging the marriage and pushing you toward divorce.

## **TRUST GOD FOR WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

As you work through these principles, you may begin to see your relationship turn around. The change probably will not be a magical

moment when everything comes together all at once, but a slow, steady evolution where you begin to experience positive conversations and/or positive times together. Nourish these moments. Discover new and more positive ways to interact with your spouse. Identify things that haven't worked in the past and discard them. Approach this time of separation as an opportunity to build something better between the two of you. Realize also your separation provides the potential for growing into a better and stronger you.

### **HEART WORK**

1. List four specific things you plan to do regularly that will help you take your focus off your spouse. Try to come up with specific church services or Bible studies you plan to attend, teachers you will follow in the media, Christian music to encourage you, books you want to read, ministries to help with, etcetera.
2. What is an activity you enjoy that you can start doing again to nurture yourself without taking on too much of an expense?
3. Make a list of positive things you can say to your spouse to meet his or her emotional needs so you are not at a loss the next time you speak. Be sure whatever you plan to say is sincere. If you have a hard time doing this because of the negativity of recent history, you can even go back to the past and reminisce a little. Just make sure it does not sound like a "why aren't you like that anymore?" remark.
4. Write down the names of at least two people of the same sex who will be supportive of your desire to reconcile with your spouse. Then give yourself a deadline as to when you will try to contact these people and get together with them.