

Annotated Bibliography on Books for Recovering from Infidelity:
Linda MacDonald's Picks & Personal Reviews

Christian Resources:

- ***Shattered Vows: Hope and Healing for Women Who Have Been Sexually Betrayed***, (2008) by Debra Laaser

A wonderful guide for recovering from sexual betrayal for the faithful spouse. Debra is a Christian and speaks from both first hand experience as well as having helped many women along the way. Her well-known husband, Mark Laaser, chose the hard path of recovery alongside her for the past 20 years. The strength of the book is her personal experience and the numerous vignettes of true stories of other women who've faced intimate betrayal. In my opinion, her book is most suited for women who are still in their marriages, but it is still a valuable resource for any betrayed spouse.

- ***Redemptive Divorce*** (2008) Mark W. Gaither

A unique twist on the "tough love" approach for hurt spouses to help develop a strategy to "wake up" a straying partner. Useful for Christian spouses who have a hard time not being co-dependent while their spouse is involved in vow-breaking behaviors. This book offers a rationale that can empower the faithful spouse and help him/her draw a clear line in the sand. It offers one way for saving marriages, or not prolonging the inevitable.

- ***When He Leaves*** (1998) by Kari West and Noelle Quinn.

General book on an unwanted divorce for Christian women. Not specific enough about infidelity for my tastes, but a very good resource for any female seeking to recover from an unwanted divorce.

- ***Live, Laugh, Love Again: A Christian Woman's Survival Guide to Divorce*** (2006) by Michelle Borquez, Connie Wetzell, Rosalind Spinks-Seay, and Carla Sue Nelson.

Personal journeys of four women who went through a divorce. Three of the divorces were preceded by a partner's infidelity, and one was not. Again, weak on the unique sorrows and complications of divorce after infidelity, but very good advice on recovering from divorce from Christian women who've "been there."

- ***Formerly a Wife*** by Welby A. O'Brien

Excellent, personal story for Christian women who have experienced the tragic loss of a spouse through infidelity. Welby takes you through her journey from heartbreak and the struggles of being a divorcee in the church, to finding new purpose for living. "Feel, Deal, Heal" is her theme. I recommend it highly. Welby is the one who advised me, "Stop trying to make sense of the insanity of sin."

- ***When "I Do" Becomes "I Don't"***(2008) by Laura Petherbridge (DivorceCare Expert)

This has become my favorite book for Christians of either gender experiencing an unwanted separation or divorce. She presents sound material from an obvious wealth of experience helping people find hope and healing during a marital break-up and beyond. Laura does a terrific job answering most of the typical questions Christians ask when experiencing this unwelcomed trauma in their lives. Very practical.

- ***Shattered Dreams*** (2001) by Larry Crabb.

In this book, Larry brings to life the story of Ruth and Naomi, highlighting how they dealt realistically with the grief of shattered dreams in their own lives. I appreciated his candor and insights into how to grieve honestly, without the performance pressure to "get over it" often found in Christian circles. He offers hope that God can bring redemption to

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people who feel like their lives are in shambles. I think this is Larry's best book and one of the most pivotal resources during my own personal crisis.

- ***A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows through Loss*** (1996) by Jerry Sittser. If your marriage didn't make it after infidelity or sex addiction, this book on grief is one of the best. He's a Christian professor at Whitworth in Spokane, who lost his mother, wife and a young daughter in a tragic car accident. Easy to apply to any kind of intimate, catastrophic loss.

- ***Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal*** (2009) by Barbara Steffens and Marsha Means. In depth look at the traumas suffered by spouses of sex addicts as a result of their partner's behaviors. The authors discuss both the benefits and limitations of the classic 12 step recovery-from-co-dependency model for helping offended spouses in their own recovery process. They introduce what they call the "trauma model" for interpreting and treating a spouse's reactions to their partner's addiction. A bit clinical in places, but a refreshing, alternative perspective that brings balance for those who've felt invalidated or blamed in their road to recovery.

Secular Resources:

- ***Runaway Husbands: The Abandoned Wife's Guide to Recovery and Renewal*** (2010) by Vikki Stark. This is my new "favorite" book for spouses who've been betrayed and abandoned! Practical. Well-written. She identifies what she calls "Wife Abandonment Syndrome." Covers ways to cope with the pain, understand what just happened to you, and how to rebuild for the future.

- ***NOT "Just Friends" : Rebuilding Trust and Recovering Your Sanity After Infidelity*** (2003) by Shirley Glass
This is my favorite general, all-around book on infidelity—especially for the hurt spouse. Dr. Glass's research and insights are amazing. She is more firm than all other authors on the stance of "no secrets allowed" if trust is to be rebuilt. She debunks many of the rationalizations about various kinds of infidelity and includes emotional infidelity as a violation of the marital bond. She does the best job of anyone of reducing the shame and blame of the betrayed spouse, demonstrating by her research that not everyone who chooses to be unfaithful does so because they are unhappy with the marriage.

- ***The Betrayal Bond: Breaking Free of Exploitive Relationships***, (1997) by Patrick J. Carnes
I included this with the books on infidelity because it is so helpful for traumatized spouses who are having a hard time letting go of their abusive partners. I believe infidelity is a form of emotional abuse and *may* be an indicator of deeper and more hidden abusive dynamics that preceded the affair. Patrick Carnes, best known for his writings on sexual addiction and twelve step treatment programs, knows how to help the recipients of abusive behavior. He likens trauma victims as unhealthily attached to their betrayers much like hostages who bond with their captors (as in the Stockholm Syndrome.)

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- ***The Journey from Abandonment to Healing: Turn the End of a Relationship into the Beginning of a New Life***, (2000) by Susan Anderson

Probably the most helpful book of all that I read in the aftermath my own crisis and heartbreak. Susan Anderson is a specialist in what she calls "Abandonment Grief." She validates the depth of the pain that follows intimate betrayal and rejection and helps the grieving person understand why it feels so devastatingly personal. She uses a few of her own catchy terms that have a New Age flavor, but she claims to not be into the movement herself. I always give my Christian clients that little caveat about her terminology before I recommend the book. However, for the abandoned, it deserves five stars!

- ***Forgiving the Unforgivable*** (1994) by Beverly Flanigan

Although Beverly does not claim to be a Christian, she is an expert on the subject of forgiveness. I liked this book because it honors the pain of the wounded in a way that I seldom see in the "forgiveness" literature. My copy is highlighted on nearly every page. Highly recommended for those left by a non-repentant spouse and/or who still feel stuck in the mire of pain. No clichés or trite solutions offered.

- ***Transcending Post-Infidelity Stress Disorder*** (2009) by Dennis Ortman.

Very good book with a generic spiritual bent. Helpful and validating for anyone suffering the heartbreak of a partner's unfaithfulness. Contains useful exercises and thoughts that would go well with journaling on your healing journey.

- ***Runaway Husbands: The Abandoned Wife's Guide to Recovery and Renewal*** (2010) by Vikki Stark.

Excellent resource for women whose husbands had an unexpected change of heart and decided to leave the marriage. Often due to a midlife crisis of some sort. Vikki is a psychotherapist with close to 40 years' experience who has experienced the devastating loss of a formerly loving spouse. She identifies "Wife Abandonment Syndrome" in her surveys and offers real tools to help women recover.