

BOOKS I RECOMMEND FOR BETRANDED SPOUSES

Christian Books (and their links)

- [*Formerly a Wife*](#) (2018), by Welby O'Brien, M.A..

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 highly recommend it. She is the one who advised me, "Stop trying to make sense of the insanity of sin."

- [*\(UN\)faithful: Finding Healing After Your Husband's Affair \(Whether Your Marriage Survives Or Not\)*](#) (2022), by Ruth Erickson

Terrific story by a wife and mother who was betrayed and forsaken by her husband. She shares the raw grief she worked through and how she relied on the Lord in the midst of her sorrow. She is currently remarried with "his, hers, and ours" kids, and serves as the lead worship leader at a thriving church. Through my contacts with her, I decided to ask her to write the Foreword to my new book. She is truly a fine person and her book is worth reading.

- [*Living Unbroken: Reclaiming Your Life and Your Heart after Divorce*](#) (2021), by Tracie Miles.

Excellent book for women who discover their spouse's secret, vow-breaking life that comes crashing down all around them at mid-life. She covers the grief, sorrow, and trauma of her divorce and briefly refers to the financial strains it caused her. She is honest yet encouraging in her approach—there is hope, you can heal when you rely on God. I especially appreciated her chapter on the trauma (Chapter 8 "Girl, You Are Not Crazy") and post-traumatic growth. Simpler than my new book, but definitely a good read. Highly recommend.

- [*When "I Do" Becomes "I Don't"*](#) (2008), by Laura Petherbridge (Divorce Care Expert).

This has become one of my favorite books 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 believers ask when experiencing this unwelcome trauma in their lives. Very practical.

- ***Better than OKAY*** (2023), by Brandi Wilson.

Brandi chronicles her experience as the betrayed wife of a mega church pastor in Nashville, much to the shock of everyone. He left with his church secretary after nearly 20 years of marriage. While she shares her sorrows, she doesn't directly discuss his infidelity in the book—only on podcasts. She is upbeat about what she learned and how she is rebuilding her life. She offers hope to anyone going through an unanticipated divorce. She includes great advice on helping your kids through a family break-up.

- ***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 who speaks from firsthand experience as a coach and a therapist, helping many women along the way. Her well-known, now deceased husband, Mark Laaser, chose the hard path of recovery alongside her. The book's strength is her personal story and numerous true vignettes of other women who've experienced intimate betrayal. In my opinion, her book is most suited for women who are still in their marriages.

- ***Intimate Deception: Healing the Wounds of Sexual Betrayal*** (2018), by Dr. Sheri Keffer.

One of the most complete books on betrayal trauma. She uses helpful illustrations to help someone better understand the impact of trauma on the nervous system. She understands this both personally and clinically. She is a popular conference speaker, radio host, and runs weekend intensives for recovering Christian women.

- ***Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal*** (2009), by Barbara Steffens, PhD., and Marsha Means, MA.

Well-researched book on the impact of sex addiction on spouses of addicts. 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 perspective that brings balance to those who've felt invalidated or blamed for their reactions to trauma from spousal betrayal. They put out a new version in 2021 that may be updated.

- ***A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss*** (1996, 2021), by Jerry Sittser.

This book on grief is one of the best for Christians who've experienced what he describes as "catastrophic loss." He wrote this during his tenure as a professor at Whitworth University in Spokane, after he lost his mother, wife, and young daughter in a tragic car accident. He includes other kinds of loss in his examples. Filled with spiritual wisdom. I often give it to grieving friends who've lost a parent, child, or spouse—after any (if any) public acknowledgements are over.

Secular Books

- ***The Betrayal Bond: Breaking Free of Exploitive Relationships*** (1997, 2019), by Patrick Carnes.

Helpful for traumatized, betrayed spouses because sometimes the betrayer has other abusive tendencies. It offers insights that can help a person let go of their hurtful partners. Patrick Carnes, best known for his writings and training on sex addiction and partners of sex addicts, knows how to help recipients of abusive behavior. He likens trauma victims to people unhealthily attached to their betrayers, much like hostages who bond with their captors (as in Stockholm Syndrome). Very enlightening.

- ***The Journey from Abandonment to Healing*** (2000, 2014), by Susan Anderson.

Susan Anderson is a Betrayal Grief specialist. She understands the grief and trauma of spousal abandonment, usually from infidelity, better than most authors. This was the most helpful book for me back when I went through my own marital crisis. She validates the depth of the pain and helps the reader understand why it feels so devastating and personal. While she uses a few catchy terms that appear to have a New Age flavor, she says she is not New Age herself. I have highlighted nearly every page in that book.

- ***Forgiving the Unforgivable: Overcoming the Bitter Legacy of Intimate Wounds*** (1994), by Beverly Flanigan.

Probably my favorite book on forgiving—and I own over 60 books on this subject. She does not allude to any particular faith, but her material fits well within a Christian framework. She is a researcher and expert on the subject and

science of forgiveness in a way that honors the pain of the wounded, better than most books on this subject. My copy is highlighted on nearly every page. Especially helpful for people who've been betrayed and left by a non-repentant spouse or those who still feel stuck in the mire of pain. No cliches or trite solutions offered.

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

Excellent resource for wives whose husbands had an unexpected change of heart and left the marriage, seemingly out of the blue. Often traced to a midlife crisis of some sort. Vikki is a psychotherapist with 40 years' experience, who went through this kind of loss by a formerly loving spouse. She identifies "Wife Abandonment Syndrome" in her surveys and offers practical tools to help in recovery. She is a Buddhist in practice and faith.

- ***The Betrayal Bind: How to Heal When the Person You Love the Most Hurts You the Worst*** (2023), by Michelle Mays.

Great book for understanding the breach of attachment when a spouse sexually betrays a partner, especially due to a sex addiction. While she has much experience helping both partners, this book is meant for the betrayed spouse. It will help you overcome your shame as an injured spouse. My only caveat is that on page 269, she makes suggestions about "having sex with yourself." She means this to help readers learn about their body, its responses, and their sense of self-mastery. However, for spouses of porn addicts, that chapter can be triggering since an addict's dysfunction is avoidance of true intimacy and essentially having sex with himself via porn, rather than with the legitimate partner. The rest of the book is not controversial and is a treasure trove of wisdom by a trained professional who was married to a sex addict.

- ***Transcending Post-Infidelity Stress Disorder: The Six Stages of Healing*** (2009), by Dennis C. 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.

Books on Divorce for Christians

- *Redemptive Divorce* (2008), by Mark Gaither.

Mark presents a unique twist on the “tough love” approach for hurt spouses to develop a strategy to “wake up” a straying partner. Useful for believers who have co-dependent tendencies or are in churches that encourage a betrayed spouse to tolerate the intolerable. This book offers a rationale that can empower a faithful spouse to, in essence, draw a clear line in the sand: “Choose me or your wrong behavior – you can’t have both.” Mark is a seminary graduate and family mediator.

- *The Life-Saving Divorce: Hope for People Leaving Destructive Relationships* (2020), by Gretchen Baskerville.

One of the most thorough books on the struggle for Christians over the divorce question. She offers solid, reasonable, and biblical reasons for divorce in certain situations (abuse, infidelity, neglect, etc.) and ways to cope. She also covers the concerns we have over the impact on your kids and how to mitigate them. I highly recommend. She has led divorce recovery groups in churches for years. She raised her kids as a single mom and is now happily remarried. She also has a great website: <https://lifesavingdivorce.com/>

- *God is My Witness: Making a Case for Biblical Divorce*, 2nd Edition (2014), by Cindy Burrell.

Cindy had a rough time feeling judged for divorcing her husband, although she had biblically sound reasons (abuse, betrayal) for doing so. This book is great for anyone who has been in a legalistic church and needs to understand the scriptures and Jewish history on divorce.

- *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church: Biblical Solutions for Pastoral Realities* (2006), by David Instone-Brewer.

Excellent book on divorce by a theologian, based on the Old and New Testament scriptures and Jewish history. Well-researched and yet lay-reader friendly (213 pages). If you want something even more in-depth, I recommend his other book, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (2002, 336 pages). Both Burrell and Baskerville rely on his research in their books.