

Question: I love my husband and deeply regret a one-night stand with an old friend. Should I tell my husband about this? What might Jesus say?

Generally speaking, I would say that total honesty is essential to a lasting and healthy marriage, even if it means revealing a “one-night-stand” with someone else. Keeping a secret of this kind affects the intimacy between married couples in some very subtle but important ways. However, there are several things to consider in making this decision to reveal the affair. What kind of relationship do you have with your husband? An affair, even if one-night only, may have happened because of a momentary weakness in midst of temptation. But it also may be an indication that things have not been altogether what they should to be. You may need some counseling to strengthen your marriage before revealing this affair. What kind of man is your husband? Revealing this information to an abusive husband could be dangerous. Is he a forgiving person or one who will hold this against you for the remainder of your life? With thoughtful consideration of these and other issues, I still believe that establishing and maintaining total intimacy in a marriage is worth almost any risk.

When Jesus was questioned about divorce, he answered with a quote from the Genesis creation story that says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:23-24; cf. Ephesians 5:31-32)). The concept of “one flesh” describes not only sexual union but also complete knowledge of one another; they become one flesh in every possible sense of the word. Implied in knowing and becoming one flesh is the deepest intimacy between husband and wife. Any lack of complete openness with one another in a marriage relationship undermines trust and the principle of intimacy.

To understand the importance of this kind of intimacy, we need to consider the potential consequences of either telling your spouse or not telling him. For example, if you do not tell your husband about this past affair, he may learn of it from some other source. You have a better chance of receiving forgiveness and renewal of your marriage if he hears it from you first. If you do not tell him, you may live with a sense of guilt. I’m not saying that husbands and wives must share everything to have intimacy, but secrets of this kind often

have some very subtle ways of affecting how you interact with your spouse. You will never feel as close to your husband as long as you keep this secret. Also, by being honest with your husband about this affair, you can demonstrate a willingness to be accountable to him so as to prevent a recurrence of an affair in the future.

Having said the above, I also recognize that some spouses claim that they had rather not know this kind of information. Others cannot handle this information, and they may decide to end the marriage. However, I would suggest to you that the affair has already undermined your marriage. By demonstrating a trust in the love of your husband, as well as a spirit of genuine repentance and attempting to restore true intimacy as God intended it you may have a chance of saving your marriage. If the marriage ends because of your decision to seek true intimacy through complete honesty, it is very likely the marriage would have eventually ended anyway.

I propose that you seek the guidance of a Christian counselor to help you approach your husband with this kind of information. If your husband genuinely loves you, he will be hurt; but it is possible to tell him in a way that will make it easier for him to hear and forgive.

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