

Chapter 1

Why Try to Save Your Marriage If It Causes You Pain?



What should you do in a marriage when your emotional pain doesn't go away? Should you ignore it? If so, for how long? Should you try to escape the pain through alcohol, infidelity, binge TV watching, and the like? These provide temporary relief, yet all the while, the marriage is dying on the vine.

A Different Way to Look at Pain

Dr. Brand¹ worked with leprosy patients in India and America for most of his adult life. Leprosy (Hansen's disease) represents an attack on the nervous system. Pain that would otherwise warn individuals they are in physical jeopardy does not occur. These individuals feel nothing.

In poorer regions of the world, rats chew on fingers and toes while a person sleeps. People's hands get burned in cooking fires because there is no warning signal to prompt the brain to move the hand. Grim stories of deterioration can also be found in richer nations. Although the details differ, a pain-free existence becomes a living hell for those who contract the disease.

Dr. Brand's goal was to create an artificial system that warned of danger. He and his team tried audible signals, blinking lights, and other innovations, but to no avail. Patients would either ignore the painless yet annoying signals or turn them off – to their own detriment. Nothing grabs one's attention as does the experience of pain.

After five years of work and millions of dollars spent, the team abandoned their project. Though nobody wants it, Dr. Brand concluded that pain is God's gift to us. It compels us to take corrective action for our own good.

The Story of One Divorced New Yorker



This principle also applies to marriage. Listen to the words of one divorced New Yorker who ignored his wife's complaints.

I smoked dope every day for twenty years. I thought I was pretty slick. I could smoke while working. I could get high and still run my company. I could pour concrete. I could roof a building. I felt like I could do anything. But it ruined my marriage. I didn't even realize it until years after my wife left me. But the dope ruined my marriage because it made me content. Nothing could bother me. Her feelings didn't bother me. Her needs didn't bother me. The dope put an emotional cover over what should have been obvious. I told myself that if I didn't see the problem, then it didn't qualify as a problem. All I ever did was give her advice. I never asked for it. I never once felt the inspiration to say: 'Darling, I know there's something wrong. What can I do differently?'

This man blames the demise of his marriage on the fact that nothing bothered him. Failing to recognize and address his wife's pain caused the marriage to crumble.

Conclusion



Emotional pain in your marriage may leave you upset and disheartened. But such distress has an upside. It not only grabs your attention. It should compel you to take corrective action.

For those who want to make things better, this eBook/Course offers practical steps,

insights, exercises, and illustrations that show you how to reduce marital stress and strengthen your emotional connection. It truly offers hope for troubled marriages.

¹ Paul Brand and Philip Yancy, *The Gift of Pain*, chapter 5.

[Return to Table to Contents](#)