



## **iQuestions Faculty, Dr. Gary Smalley**

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Question:

*My wife left me. What can I do to win her back?*

Answer:

I know that probably there's no greater emotional pain than what you're going through right now. Couples have told me for forty years that the greatest misery they've ever experienced is having their mate walk out on them.

Oftentimes, we don't even know they're thinking about it. They've left us [emotionally] a year ago, and we don't even know it. But the day comes when they actually pack their bags, and they're gone. I know that tremendous pain.

I want you to realize that you're going to be going through several days, maybe months, of deep grief, the feeling of loss, the feeling of misery. You don't want to eat, you can hardly sleep, you wake up in the morning and you're just sick. Your kids maybe are still with you, and you have to deal with them, and they're crying, and nobody's in a good mood. Nobody's happy. I mean, everything is falling apart. It affects every area of your life.

Do you know one of the reasons why this does this to you? It's because there's a section of your brain right in the center of your brain, it's like the core of our brain, that is so connected to our emotions, it's the seat of our emotions, and it affects our thinking, our motivation, everything. And so, it's just so discouraging.



I want you to know that as soon as you can, as soon as you're capable of it—it might take you a while—I'm going to encourage you to not deny this pain. Don't say, "This is a bad dream. It's not happening. I'm going to get over it soon." No. This isn't going to happen to you.

You're actually being deepened as a human right now, because the pain is so overwhelming. And I know you don't like to hear this right now, but great things are happening inside of you right now. You're going to be so much better at loving people in the future—but you won't know it for at least a year, or six months at minimum.

I want you to consider some things, as soon as you are able to. If you can reach your wife, I want you to find out from her—just ask her the question. You could do this by email, you can do this with a letter or phone call, but there's nothing better than if it's possible for you to see her. I know this is not easy, there's probably going to be tears and everything, but if you could ask her, if she hasn't already explained it, "Why did you leave me? Why can't you live with me? What's so bad that it's just impossible for you to be here?"

Maybe she's met somebody else that she loves more than you. I don't want you to panic, because I want you to know that the easiest person to win back is a wife who leaves her husband and doesn't have a boyfriend. If she hasn't developed a boyfriend yet, she's of course available, she's maybe looking—but if she hasn't, and she has that personality where she's got a soft spirit and not an attacking person, your chances of winning her back are great. If she has a boyfriend, it's just harder. You're in competition with him.

But I want to encourage you to get in competition immediately with this other person or into your wife's heart. Here's how you're going to do it. You're going to be softer than you've ever been in your life. If you could cry over the sadness of this broken relationship, now is the

time to do it. And it's got to be genuine, because a woman can spot it if it's a fake attempt to get her back in your house.

But if you will seriously feel the pain, after you get the picture of why she left, and feel the pain of what she must have been going through living with you—and if you really get it, and you explain it back to her by email or in person or on the phone, and you're gentle and soft by saying things like, "Honey, I don't even know how you lived with me as long as you did. In fact, I should be giving you a trophy for putting up with me for as long as you did. I can see it now, Hon, and I'm so sorry. I am so grieved now in my heart that you had to live in these conditions."

And when she can feel your pain, because she's not going to move until she thinks you're hurting over what she had to live with. Not blaming her, or bawling her out for what she's doing to the kids, or anything at all. If you get on her case, she'll be even farther away from you. This is not the time to try to correct the wife. She's left *you*. I mean, if she wants change in the future, that's fine. But right now, what we're talking about is you winning her back.

What she really needs is gentleness. She needs to see that you're understanding. She needs to see your soft touches, if you can—and a lot of times, they don't want to be touched, but if you could touch her on the top of the hand or on her shoulder and just say, "Honey, I understand. Will you forgive me? You may not be able to, and I would understand that, but if you ever find it in your heart to forgive me, oh, would I love that."

That starts the process. But do you know that there are three golden questions that you have to ask her? Because, this gets her involved in helping you win her back. If she will answer these questions—you may have to get a pastor or a counselor or a friend to ask her these questions. If she has a girlfriend you know trying to get you back



together, that's great. Maybe your kids. Maybe your teenage son or daughter could ask her.

But these are very important questions. Number one: "Where are we today, and where were we when you left, zero to ten? Where was it? Was it a two, a one, or a zero? Maybe it was a minus." You just be as totally honest as you want. And tell her, "I just want you to know, I'm not going to react. I just wanted to know where it was."

Zero to ten. She may say a zero.

OK, second question. "Where would you have wanted it to be while we were together? Where could it have been where you would have felt comfortable about staying together?" And let her say, "Well, I would have had at least a five. A five would have been great."

Now, this third question is like to gold of gold questions. It's the one that actually can motivate her to join your team to win her back. Here's the question: "Is there anything I could do in changing, is there anything that needs to happen for you to be even remotely interested in working on our marriage, so we can be a couple again someday? I mean, what would have to happen in me before you would be even a little interested? Like, if I had a magic wand to wave over both of us, and it would change me, what would have to happen with me before you would be interested in working on our marriage?"

Here's what you're going to hear: "You never talked to me." "You never held me." "You never touched me." "All you ever thought about was sex." "You were critical." "You tried to change me all the time." "You were blaming me for your unhappiness." Whatever she says—even if it's only two things.

And you might have to milk it, and say, "What if I did this, and this, and this?" And she might say, "Nah. That didn't mean anything." Well,



what was the biggest thing? If she says it, write it down. Let her see you're passionate about this. And as you're writing it, you might even quiz her a little bit, if she's open, just to clarify it—because that's what you work on for the next several weeks or months.

You value that statement she made so much. Validate her. Don't ever think, "Oh, that's so stupid that she would say this. Why was it this?" No, you can't do that.

And then, as you become softer, listening better, communicating better, admitting where you were wrong, seeking her forgiveness, as she sees you taking great care of the kids, as she sees you not demanding and you are becoming the person you could have been.

See, all the pressure of the separation is making you a better person. So, whether you ever get back or not, you're going to become a much better lover by listening to this woman, and finding another woman that's been through similar things, and asking her the question, "What did you wish your husband would do?" As you do this, watch the changes.

I've seen this type of thing work within a week, a day, a month. I mean, it's amazing how powerful it is.

I know that you are hurting right now. I know that. And you might not be able to do these three things that I've asked you to do for a while. I can understand that. The pain may have to last for a while. Go through your grieving process. But as soon as you can, start those three golden questions.