

## The Warrior's Bride, Chapter II The Pain of Pornography and Infidelity

How many safeguards do you have in your marriage?

*In this excerpt from *The Warrior's Bride*, author Kathy Barnett asks six questions. As you read this, think about how actively you are currently working to protect your marriage.*

There are signs when infidelity occurs, warnings if we look for them. I don't say that to frighten anyone reading this, or to say that if you see weaknesses in the following safeguards in your marriage that you should automatically assume your husband is having an affair. But I would suggest that if you do see some of the following signs, you are possibly disregarding the value of your marriage and you aren't investing enough energy to protect it. Don't ever grow complacent in the precious relationship you share with your husband.

1. Is your normal sex life as frequent or fulfilling as it has been in the past?

It's diminished quite a bit

The last few years have been about the same

Right now, it's awesome!

Now let me add conditions to that. In the first few weeks after having a baby, during deployments, or seasons of extreme duress or health issues, your sex life is going to be affected. But examine how much time and energy is being invested in your bedroom. Being busy with raising kids and living life is not an excuse to place sex on the back burner. I have nine children and my life is always full and exhausting. But, clearly, from

the sheer number of children I have, you can see that I did not stop having sex because I was tired!

I have purposed in my life to put my God first and my husband second. That means my children, friends, and ministries will sometimes have to wait while I meet needs within my marriage. Making time to ensure I have the energy to give to my husband at the end of the day is important to the health of our marriage. I often say no to other things so I can have the strength and longing to enjoy my husband in our marriage bed at the end of the day. When I realized the value of that and the blessing it was to my husband, I began to reap bountiful blessings within my marriage. My husband was eager to give me his energy in other areas of our life outside the bedroom when his longings within the bedroom were met.

I'm not saying you should have more frequent sex out of fear that you will lose your husband. I do recommend that you focus your energy with purpose. The enemy is looking to gain a foothold in your marriage anywhere he can. Don't give him any room in your bedroom. Keep your man wanting to come home. Don't ever give him a reason to want or need any of his physical or emotional needs to be met somewhere else.

Your thoughts:

## 2. Do you spend your leisure time together or largely apart?



This is a particularly difficult one for me. Sam likes to do things I don't like to do. For instance, he loves to ride road bikes. He wanted to include me in his passion and he bought me a \$700 bike with all the accoutrements to go with it. I hated it. I tried, but riding twenty-five miles at 20+ miles an hour is not enjoyable to me. I like jogging, but he doesn't like that. We've recently started taking a walk together a couple of times a week. We just walk for a couple of miles, but it is wonderful. We get to talk and

communicate without the children with us.

If you don't enjoy the same things as your husband, don't use that as an excuse to not spend any of your leisure time together. There had to have been something you liked doing together when you were dating, or you wouldn't have wanted to marry. Find those things again. Begin to date one another again. Keep looking until you find something you both like. It could be doing yard work, playing Scrabble, or riding motorcycles! But keep searching until you find something! Sharing your time outside the bedroom is healthy, and it promotes better communication and more satisfaction in your relationship.

Your thoughts:

### 3. How many of your emotional needs are being fulfilled by your spouse?



This one is perhaps a little harder to immediately answer. When I was struggling with Sam, I wasn't drawn into infidelity because I wanted an affair. I just found a person who spoke into my life in the ways I best receive love. You may recall that I love words of affirmation. When Sam wasn't meeting my needs in this way and someone else stepped up to affirm me, I was drawn to share my heart with that other person.

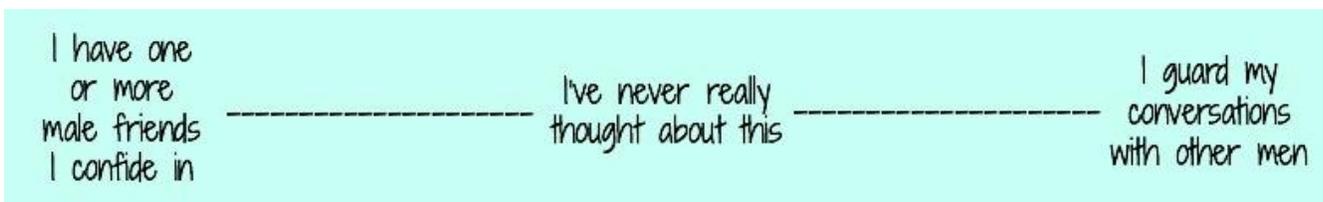
God showed me other unhealthy ways I was filling my emotional needs. One was watching romantic movies. I would get my "feel good" from a chick flick. Another was from reading a lot of Christian romance novels. Now there is nothing wrong with watching a discreet PG-rated movie or reading Christian romance novels. I happen to love reading, and I think my coauthor has written some of the best on the market. But during the time I was trying to love my husband with all of our weakness and failings, I was doing him a serious dis- service by continually comparing him to a fictional character—one who always seemed to say the right thing and stroke the heart of his

heroine perfectly. Most fiction romance novels are written by women, so they know what women want to hear. But my poor man usually didn't know what to say. By watching those movies and reading the books, I was always setting him up for failure, because he wasn't saying what I had scripted in my head that he should say to me! So I would encourage you: if you are finding your intimacy fulfilled between the pages of a book other than the Bible, put it down and seek the fulfillment between the sheets of your bed!

We also must be extremely careful with social networking. Many people share their lives online and seem eager to share in your life, but it's often superficial and can even tend toward gossip. I always discourage much social networking for people who are working on their marriage. If you are struggling with your primary relationship, why would you invest time and energy in countless other people? You don't have it to spare. Their opinions shouldn't come anywhere close to mattering as much as your husband's, and they don't need to know the intimate details of your marriage, anyway.

Your thoughts:

4. Do you or your husband have a friend or co-worker of the opposite sex who you talk to frequently? How often without others around?



I can't stress enough the importance of guarding your conversations with other men, especially when you are sharing anything emotional. And joking around with witty comments is emotional. It creates a sense of joy and laughter that perhaps you haven't experienced within your marriage for some time. You must guard your emotions on every level and guard your conversations with everyone other than your husband. For those of you who work with men, you must be diligent to protect your marriage by keeping yourself and your heart only for your husband.

If your husband works with women and this is a particular sticking point for you, then you need to work extra hard at creating those boundaries. Perhaps your husband sees no need for that and so doesn't share your eagerness to create those boundaries. I would encourage you to pray frequently a hedge of protection over your husband's eyes, ears, and heart. I would also encourage you to work hard at meeting his needs at home, so he has no need or excuse to go looking elsewhere to have them met.

Your thoughts:

5. Do you have complete access to each other's passwords and accounts for all things financial, as well as communication outlets (email, phones, social networking)?



If your husband has a phone or computer that you don't have access to, then you need to gain access to them. If he tells you that he can't let you have access because it has to do with his job, you need to exercise caution to determine if he is trying to hide something from you. But if the equipment from his job is unsecure enough to be carried from his military office into his car or home, then it isn't high security, and his job isn't that secret. Why would he need to keep that secret from you, his wife?

I can tell you that my husband has an extremely high security clearance. Very few ever work where my husband works. He has held positions that required him to know government secrets and military dealings that most people do not know. I'm not trying to make him out to be James Bond, but the things he did were not what the typical soldier engages in. I say all of this to say that there were many things my husband had to have access to that I could never see. But as much as he was able, that man shared everything with me. He trusted me to keep the information safe, and I trusted him to keep my heart safe. There is very little or nothing that your husband should have to

keep secret from you.

After we dealt with secrets in our marriage that had caused us pain, I struggled knowing that Sam worked in a place that would be off limits to me on many levels. But Sam worked very hard to keep every area of his life open for me to see. He has had an email and phone that I didn't have access to, but they couldn't be reached except behind the walls of the compound in which he worked. The places where I couldn't go and the experiences he would have that I couldn't share, I had to learn to trust God with. That usually looked like me learning to trust my husband. Remember, God uses our marriages to mirror our relationship with him.

You also need to look at your own choices. Are there things you are keeping from your husband? I submit to you that if your husband doesn't have full access to all your accounts and pass- words, you are withholding places of intimacy from him. You should purpose to stay open with your husband in all areas, even if they seem insignificant.

Your thoughts:

## 6. Can you account for each other's whereabouts on most days?



Obviously, during deployments this will be nearly impossible for you to know. I often only had a vague idea of my husband's whereabouts. I usually knew the country, and sometimes a city, but I never knew where he was staying or how he spent his days.

But when he is home, do you know that if you showed up at his work he would be there? Or more importantly, does he know where you are spending your time? I knew a woman who would spend hours shopping and never told her husband. She had an addiction to spending money. She didn't want him to know, so she didn't tell him. She

even went so far as to secretly take out credit cards in his name so that he wouldn't know how much money she had spent. She ended up spending them into bankruptcy, and the man claimed he never saw it coming. My question to him would have been, was he watching for the signs I've just given you? There were many secrets, but few safeguards in that marriage.

Your thoughts:

*To read more, check out The Warrior's Bride: Biblical Strategies to Help the Military Spouse Thrive by Kathy Barnett and Carrie Daws, available at bookstores nationwide beginning in October 2014.*