



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on January 20, 2012

CNN Debate: Newt “Appalled” at Question on Marital Infidelity

“To take an ex-wife and make it two days before the primary a significant question in a presidential campaign is as close to despicable as anything I can imagine,” Gingrich [told](#) King in the January 19 South Carolina debate. I am appalled that you would begin a presidential debate on a topic like that. The South Carolina presidential primary is scheduled for Saturday, January 21.



He said the problem with me was I wanted him all to myself, Gingrich’s ex-wife Marianne [told](#) the *Washington Post* in a story published earlier that day. I said, “That’s what marriage is.” The former Marianne Gingrich [concluded](#): “He was asking me for an open marriage, and I wouldn’t do it.”

Though Gingrich has called the claims by his ex-wife Marianne “false,” he [admitted back in 2007](#) that he kept his current and third wife Callista as a mistress during his marriage to Marianne. In essence, though Gingrich is denying that he asked his ex-wife for an open marriage, he has admitted he acted as if he had an open marriage. Gingrich began the sexual relationship with Callista (nee Bisek) in 1993, and continued it through the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky scandal. In 2000, Gingrich, then 57, [married](#) Callista, then 34.

“There were times when I was praying and when I felt I was doing things that were wrong. But I was still doing them,” Gingrich [told](#) Focus on the Family back in 2007. “I look back on those as periods of weakness and periods that I’m not only not proud of, but I would deeply urge my children and grandchildren not to follow in my footsteps.” Gingrich formally [converted to Catholicism](#) Callista’s faith in 2009.

At the debate, Gingrich’s three remaining Republican opponents former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, Texas Congressman Ron Paul and former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum all said they believed in the power of forgiveness, though Romney and Paul hinted at their own long and stable marriages.

Gingrich’s angry response to King’s question drew loud applause as he blamed the media for what he called a major media smear campaign against Republicans. My two daughters wrote the head of ABC and made the point that it was wrong” to make this an issue, Gingrich [said](#), adding “I am frankly astounded that CNN would take trash like that and use it to open a presidential debate.

Photo of Newt Gingrich: AP Images



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