

The Adulterous Heart

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1 and 2 Samuel: The Heart After God Series

2 Samuel 11-12

There is almost no subject about which Americans show more ambivalence than the subject of adultery. A recent Gallup Poll indicated that 80% of Americans believe that adultery is always wrong. And that is actually up from 1970 where only 70% of Americans said adultery is always wrong. And yet, shows like *Desperate Housewives*, *Sex in the City*, not to mention daytime talk shows attract huge audiences of people who apparently think adultery makes great entertainment. There is a reality TV show called "Cheaters" in which they comb the country tracking down cheating partners. And then on camera you get to watch a cheating spouse busted in their motel room. And you get to see the horrified expressions of their betrayed spouse.

More and more articles, particularly in women's magazines, are devoted to the question: Is he cheating on you? There is a book out now titled *Is He Cheating On You: 829 Tell-Tale Signs* which documents practically every known sign of infidelity. The author has a website, www.ishecheatingonyou.com. She breaks the 829 tell-tale signs down into 21 general categories including:

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- Physical Appearance – If he embarks on a drastic self-induced make-over, it is probably not for you.
- Car Clues – The glove compartment, car seats, the tire well, the underside of the visor, the ashtray, the side pockets or compartments, under the floor mats and other nooks and crannies can reveal a wealth of information.
- Financial Affairs – No matter how carefully he tries to cover his tracks, sooner or later this will be reflected in the family finances.

The September issue of "O", Oprah's magazine which, of course, I read religiously, contained an article titled "You Got Nailed." The article suggests some high tech ways of snooping on your spouse to discover whether he or she is involved in infidelity. There is almost always going to be a high tech trail, particularly with the use of the Internet and cell phones. The article speaks about a woman named Brenda, who had been betrayed before by her husband, and now believes again that her husband is fooling around. Here is what the article said:

Through friends she got wise to the new spy equipment, and her arsenal now includes a keylogger, a tiny device that plugs in where the keyboard hooks up to the computer and captures whatever he types; Internet surveillance software designed to record both sides of the dialogue; a data recovery program for resurrecting deleted files. Just for good measure, she planted a GPS tracking unit the size of a pack of chewing gum inside his truck so that she could monitor where he goes and how long he stops.

In contrast to 20-30 years ago, in which suspicious spouses would hire private investigators to tail their mates around town, now people hire computer forensic specialists because it appears that almost everyone who is having an affair inevitably emails or makes arrangements on the Internet and in the hands of a computer specialist the adulterer's hard drive becomes a personal diary of guilt full of detailed messages, text documents, websites visited, direction mapquested all retrievable long after they've been deleted from your history. People are more and more confronted in divorce court with a stack of downloaded documents from their own computers detailing an affair.

We live in the age of adultery. Think about the famous people that you've read about who have had affairs: John and Bobby Kennedy, Bill Clinton, Prince Charles, Jesse Jackson, Marion Barry, French President Francois Mitterand (whose mistress stood beside his wife at his funeral), Gary Hart, Frank Gifford, Bill Cosby, television evangelist James Bakker.

An attorney recently sued E-Harmony, the online dating service that matches people up according to their personalities and interests, because after he completed their survey, which apparently takes an hour or two to fill out, they rejected his application because he was married. He said they were discriminating against him under California law which prevents discrimination based on marital status. What difference does it make, he argues, if I'm married regarding whether a dating service ought to take my application. That E-Harmony actually had to muster a defense in this case; it wasn't thrown out as frivolous harassment with damages attached, is a sign of the ambivalent feelings that Americans have about adultery.

Of course, there are websites devoted to married people who want to hook up online with other married people. 700,000 Canadian and American cheaters have turned a man named Darren Morganstern into a multi-millionaire in four years. Darren Morganstern created a match-making for married people online service.

Let me share personally with you. I've been in full-time pastoral ministry for almost 20 years. During that time I've had the opportunity to talk to lots of people who have had affairs, or everything but the ultimate act. I've interacted with many folks whose parents had affairs, who were still bearing the scar of that. Having heard so many stories, and having read voraciously as I do, I really

thought that I was unshockable, until I found out that there is a service now available to provide you with an alibi so that you can have a cover story for an extra-marital affair. I'm quoting from the promotional material of this company that provides cover stories for people who want to have affairs. Listen to this.

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1. Do you want to create an impression that you are staying in a certain hotel anywhere in the world? Complete with a 24-hour hotel receptionist answering in the accent of your choice and confirming your stay?

2. Do you want to create an impression that you are flying by a certain airline on a certain date anywhere in the world?

3. Are you in Paris, but telling your partner you are in Tokyo? Would you like to have us assign a Tokyo number to you, receive the phone call on your behalf, and forward it to your number in Paris?

We can offer you a carefully constructed 2-5 day alibi package for clients who attend seminars and conferences. You will receive an invitation to an [imaginary] seminar or a conference confirmed by many phone calls and emails from the seminar and conference organizing company. You will get airplane ticket confirmation, 24-hour hotel phone number answered by a hotel receptionist where you will be staying. Certificates of completion and various photos of you and other conference participants are also available in addition to other services validating your participation in the seminar or conference. We are here to monitor your alibi from beginning to the end.

And then they tell you how to sign up for this online service promising:

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One of our Personal Alibi Specialists will respond to you as soon as possible, usually on the same business day.

Now this is a job you can be proud of. Imagine being a Personal Alibi Specialist assisting people to provide cover stories so that they can lie to their spouses and cover extra-marital affairs.

The founder of this online business dedicated to helping cheaters cheat was interviewed about his business in the Chicago Sun Times. The concluding line in the article by this conscience-less entrepreneur was this:

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After all it's not the cheating that breaks a couple up. It's the finding out.

In other words, I'm a marriage saver. My business is an act of compassion. I'm protecting all the spouses and children from the pain of discovering that your mate, mommy, or daddy is a cheater.

Isn't America great? What's wrong with all of those countries around the world that don't have the blessings of American freedom and culture? What's wrong with all those folks overseas?

Over the last couple of months we've been looking at the subject of the heart by examining the life of King David, the second king of the Old Testament nation of Israel. Today we are going to look at one of the most famous incidents in the life of King David – his adulterous affair with Bathsheba. I've called today's talk, "The Adulterous Heart." Let's pray.

SLIDE – 2 Samuel 11.1-5

^{2Sa 11:1} In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

^{2Sa 11:2} One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,

^{2Sa 11:3} and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

^{2Sa 11:4} Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home.

^{2Sa 11:5} The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

This incident between David and Bathsheba turned out to define David's entire legacy. What happened to his children, what happened in the history of Israel, national politics, international politics all find their root in this affair between David and Bathsheba. And how often do we see this friends, whether fair or unfair, a man or woman's entire legacy, what people remember about you is often not all the good that you did, the people you helped, the sacrifices you made in your family – what people remember is the adultery.

Before we look at this text, I do want to say one other thing. Biblically affairs are not just confined to those relationships in which two people who are not married to each other have intercourse. Affairs can clearly be affairs of the heart. Jesus says in Matthew 5.28,

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^{Mt 5:28} But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The apostle James says in James 1.14-15,

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Jas 1:14 but each of you is tempted when you are dragged away by your own evil desire and enticed.

Jas 1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

When I'm talking about an affair of the heart, I mean someone replaces your spouse as the primary object of your affection or your relational connection. And this can all take place in your mind. There is great reality to emotional affairs.

Well, let's look at the text in 2 Samuel 11.1 we read this:

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2Sa 11:1 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

Up until modern times men did not fight wars in the Fall or Winter. In fact, the month of March was named for the war god, Mars, because people would go to war beginning at the end of March. This was particularly true in Palestine where the rainy season ended in the early Spring. This was the only time the roads would be in good condition and there would be grass and fodder for the animals to eat. The story goes on to say,

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2Sa 11:2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,

2Sa 11:3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

2Sa 11:4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home.

2Sa 11:5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

Now I want you to consider with me what the occasion was of this sin because sin does not arise from nothing. If you want to deal with adultery and sexual sin, you need to consider the circumstances in which sexual sin arises. In David's life it was when he had reached the pinnacle of success. He was comfortably

ensconced in middle age. He was about 50 at this time which tells you that lust and sexual desire is not something confined to teenagers. It is a lie that lust or sexual brokenness goes away with age. It doesn't.

But David is at the pinnacle of success. He's like the executive who is at the high point of his career making money hand over fist. He has the big house, the country club membership, the respect of the community. David had just experienced incredible success in battles. He is wealthy and secure.

And I believe that a major occasion for falling sexually is precisely when you are on the top of the heap, when you are at the pinnacle, when things are going well for you because there is an illusion of invulnerability. "God, after all, is with me. His hand is on my life. Everything that I touch is being blessed. I can do no wrong." The illusion of invulnerability. Every year people are killed at the Grand Canyon when they venture close to the edge.

I'm fine. I'm secure. Surely, I am not a candidate for an affair. One of the things that causes me to shudder is when I hear people say something like, "It could never happen to me." If you look at someone else's sin and you shake your head and say to yourself, "You know, I don't understand that; I don't understand how someone could be led astray; this could never happen to me," friends, you are putting yourself right in the cross hairs of the enemy's gun sights.

I sometimes wonder if because of our pride and our sense of invulnerability that God withdraws his grace from us and says: "OK, well you are on your own. I need to reveal your heart to you. I need to show you what you are like apart from my restraining grace."

Anyone is a candidate for adultery. Psychiatrist John White in his book "Eros Defiled" said this:

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Adulterers cannot be classified. They may be old, young; cultured, crude; lusty, refined; selfish, generous; kindly, cruel, and even, if we use the term with the slightest degree of flexibility, spiritual or carnal.

Any married person can commit adultery. The conscience lashed Puritan preacher of Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is as likely a candidate as a Casanova or a Don Juan. A Jew, a Catholic, a Quaker and a Pentecostal can all be committers of adultery; a business convention and a religious revival can both be occasions for it while cars, doctors offices, homes, and church offices are all possible places for the practice of it. You cannot distinguish adulterers by class, color or creed, but by their attitudes to their behavior. Some slowly strangle their consciences and let their self-indulgence grow like fungus. Some laugh and seem to have no conscience.

And even having a good marriage is not an ultimate cure for committing adultery. Approximately 40% of affairs occur when marriage relationships appear positive or at least neutral. One researcher said that over half of the men and a third of the women who had affairs said they were happy with their spouses and happy with their marriages.

The issues that drive people towards affairs are varied as people themselves. Some people are looking for more excitement. Some people have gotten bitter regarding how life has turned out for them and think they deserve a little more. Some people are going through life crises or new developmental stages. Some folks feel that they just can't communicate with their spouses. Some people are looking for intimacy. Some people are just looking for sex.

At the bottom of much 21st century adultery is the moral confusion that hangs like a fog over people's decision-making ability. You can circle that reason for committing adultery – moral confusion. We'll get back to that in just a moment.

And of course along with vulnerability there is idleness. We read in 2 Sam. 11.1,

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2Sa 11:1 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

You know, one of the main roles of Middle Eastern kings was to lead their troops into battle. David had always led the army before, but this time he decided to take a break from the action. Perhaps he felt he deserved a break. After all, he had been a warrior for 35 years. He had worked hard and served others faithfully. He had sacrificed his youth. Perhaps he thought: "Now it's time for me."

A lot of folks, women who have faithfully served their families, men who have sacrificed and worked and paid for everyone else's needs – a lot of women and men come to the point where they say: "the kids are growing up. We just sent the last one off to college. Now it is time for me and what I want in life. It is time for a little self-indulgence."

You know, it is not for nothing that the wisdom of the ages has said,

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"Idle hands are the devil's play things."

We are way too sophisticated to believe that in the 21st century. But the unoccupied life, a life that isn't devoted to and busy with the work of God, provides an open door for sexual sin. I've seen that in my life and you may have

seen it in your own life. The fact that I have a routine with a certain order to it; I get up at a certain time every morning. I read the Bible. I use the Anglican Book of Common Prayer to guide my prayers each morning. I go to work; go to the gym; come home. My routine keeps me out of a lot of trouble.

But if my routine was destroyed; if I was put alone in another city where I was anonymous for a few months and I had no planned activities to fill that time for several months, something not so nice will fill the gap. You've heard the old expression:

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Nature abhors a vacuum.

Well, your sinful nature abhors a vacuum. That's why Jesus said that after a deliverance from a demonic power, when the house is unoccupied, if it is not quickly filled seven worse demons can enter in. You absolutely have to develop a healthy routine of life, a pattern of living that develops health. You need activities and healthy relationships that structure your life in healthy, God-honoring directions. We don't approach sexual sin in isolation from the whole of life.

Of course, not only does this text suggest the occasion when sin arises, we also have the rationalization of sin. In v. 2 we read,

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^{2Sa 11:2} One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,

In the ancient Middle East when it was hot people would often bathe outside. David had a large palace and so he was able to look out over the city from his roof. Rather than turn his head away from this woman, rather than flee from immorality, it says that David sent someone to find out about her.

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^{2Sa 11:3} and David sent someone to find out about her.

I'm not interested in having sex with her. I just want to find out about her, maybe have a cup of coffee together. Maybe she is unmarried. And when he discovers that she is married, as we read in v. 3,

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^{2Sa 11:3} The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

He still doesn't turn away. Rather, in v. 4 it says:

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2Sa 11:4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her.

Too bad she's married. I just want to talk with her. I want to spend a little time in conversation with her and get to know her better. She might have some intriguing views on world politics and military campaigns. Maybe she could give me some advice about how I could be a better husband to my wives.

Rationalization. I'm going through a really dry time in my own marriage right now. My husband, after all, is so preoccupied with his work. We never talk. I can't remember the last time I felt connected to him. He has no capacity, after all, for intimate conversation. He's an engineer. He is an accountant. It just feels so good to have someone in my work that I can confide in who is a great listener. We laugh together. I really look forward to our little talks every day.

I'm not looking for an affair. But my wife certainly doesn't look like the woman that I married 25 years ago. She is always angry. We can't talk about anything without getting in a fight. And after our last baby was born, it's like she totally shut down emotionally and sexually.

We aren't hurting anyone. We are two mature adults. We didn't seek this out, it just happened.

I can't tell you how many times I've had people say that to me in my office. It just happened. It just seemed like it was meant to be, implying perhaps that somehow that God is blessing this affair.

My marriage is hollow. We're just holding it together for the sake of the kids.

I really do not intend to hurt my wife or husband or this other person's wife or husband. They've never understood me.

We all understand rationalizations regarding the issue of sex, don't we?

- I was just going to visit him at his apartment on Friday night because I was in the neighborhood. It was all so very innocent. I just wanted to pop up and say "hi." I don't know how we ended up in bed.

Friends, it is not just circumstantial. It is not external. We sin sexually because of the internal lies we tell ourselves.

One of my friends who is a counselor had a client say to him, “Well, look, all men view sex this way. All men sexualize their relationships with other women.”

The counselor said, “At that moment I looked him in the eye and said, ‘I don’t.’”

All men do not sexualize every relationship with women. We rationalize and we lie to ourselves.

- This relationship with this Christian woman is purely spiritual. We just encourage each other and pray for each other. Sure, every time we get together we share a long hug and embrace. But all those signs of affection and intimate sharing are not going to lead anywhere.

Can we agree together to cut through all of the moral fog and confusion? I could, of course, simply quote the 7th Commandment:

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Thou shall not commit adultery.

I don’t need to offer a defense for God’s commandments. They don’t need a defense. The Bible makes it clear in many places and in various ways how and why adultery is wrong. It betrays someone else’s trust. It results in harm to our kids. It breaks a life-long covenant. It unites our bodies, which are members of Christ, with someone else.

We have no capacity to draw a line and say: “this much marital difficulty justifies adultery.” Tell me, friend, where on the spectrum of having a great marriage to having an awful marriage do we reach the point where adultery is justified? You can’t do it. And God forbid that you try to do it. For the Christian who has given their life to Christ, the issue is crystal clear. Marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and the church. Is it conceivable to you that Jesus Christ would commit adultery because his bride has offended him, or disappointed him, as his bride has done for 2000 years? Is it conceivable that Christ would commit adultery?

The part in v. 4 where it says:

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2Sa 11:4 (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home.

2Sa 11:5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.”

It means simply that she had just gotten over her period, so it was not conceivable that she was pregnant by her husband when David slept with her. Her husband was out in the field. She conceived because of her intercourse with David.

The Bible then describes how David tried to cover up this sin. He hatches a 3-phase scheme. In the first phase, he calls Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, back from the battlefield and tries to get him to sleep with his wife. It says in vv. 6-7,

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2Sa 11:6 So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David.

2Sa 11:7 When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going.

Is this not absolutely true to life? Let's talk about anything other than the thing I'm truly concerned about. This is a masterfully constructed piece of literature. And then in the midst of all this talk, David says, "Oh by the way, go down to your house and wash your feet." Actually, this is a euphemism for sleeping with your wife. Feet in the Bible are occasionally a euphemism for the sexual organs.

But David's plan doesn't quite go the way he intends, vv. 8-11,

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2Sa 11:8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet."

So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him.

2Sa 11:9 But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

2Sa 11:10 David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"

2Sa 11:11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents,¹ and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

Uriah, the Hittite's, words must have stung David because what David was hearing from Uriah was this: "David, I wouldn't do legitimately what you did illegitimately. I won't sleep with my wife because I have certain kingdom commitments. How could you, David, sleep with my wife and violate all of your kingdom commitments."

Phase 1 of the cover up is over.

Friends, let me just say this. If you are at all involved in having to cover your tracks, that is a really good sign that you are out of the will of God and doing what you ought not to be doing. The person who is in the will of God does not have to cover their tracks. A person who is in the will of God does not have to go through the history of their computer and delete certain items. A person who is in

the will of God does not have to delete text messages from their cell phones, or hide certain financial transactions, or pretend to be where they aren't, or have someone else providing them with an alibi, or get their friends to lie for them. If you are involved in some sort of cover up, you are almost by definition in sin and outside the will of God.

And you know, friend, that you have a problem, maybe an addiction, if you are covering it up. People who have eating disorders are always involved in cover ups. You have to hide your bingeing and purging. You have to lie about what you are eating. Those who are involved in cutting themselves cover their scars with clothes. Those who are involved in gambling cover their financial losses. Those who find their comfort by shopping cover their debts by playing financial shell games with credit cards, hiding credit card statements.

If you are involved in a cover up of any kind, you are outside the will of God.

David can't persuade Uriah to sleep with his wife, so phase 2 of the plan is set into operation. Vv. 12-13,

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^{2Sa 11:12} Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.

^{2Sa 11:13} At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.

Uriah drunk was a better man than David sober. Remember, Uriah as a Hittite and not a Jew. Uriah wasn't the one that God had selected out and put his favor on, blessed and encouraged. Uriah wasn't to be the forefather of Messiah, the Deliverer of Israel. Uriah was a Hittite.

Is it not the case that sometimes people outside the community of God's people actually act in ways that are more righteous than what God's people do? Have you ever gotten a moral wakeup call from someone who doesn't even pretend to be a Christian? I have.

Someone says to you: "We really shouldn't be speaking like this about this other person."

Someone says: "I really can't go along with this particular business plan because it just doesn't seem right to me."

Maybe someone who doesn't pretend to be a Christian is a much better worker than you are at the job. They don't waste as much time as you do. They work harder and are more productive than you are.

Phase 3 in this chain of descent is found in vv. 14-17,

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2Sa 11:14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah.

2Sa 11:15 In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

2Sa 11:16 So while Joab had the city under siege; he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were.

2Sa 11:17 When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.

The awfulness of David's scheme is that he makes this good man carry his own death warrant. And in this, David becomes a symbol of unjust government throughout the ages. The government, which is supposed to protect people's lives and uphold justice, becomes an abuser of citizens in order to retain some façade of respectability. David brings about the death of one of his loyal soldiers and we have a horrible abuse of power. David becomes a Saul. He does to Uriah what Saul did to him. We read in 1 Sam. 18.17 these words:

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1Sa 18:17 Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage; only serve me bravely and fight the battles of the LORD." For Saul said to himself, "I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!"

You say, "How did David get to this place from being a person who was really devoted to God to becoming a man who in his obsession to cover up his sin hatched a plan to kill another good man?"

You know, I think we simply do not appreciate the corrosive nature of all sin, but particularly sexual sin. No one gets up in the morning and says: "I think I will go out this morning and have an affair and then cover it up with murder." People start out with a baseline comfort zone in the way they deal with sin. According to the Bible God says that the nature of sin is such that as we continue to sin, as we continue to quench the Holy Spirit in our lives, we sear our consciences. And as our consciences get more and more dulled, as we welcome more and more moral fog into our lives, what was originally a very uncomfortable and inconceivable thing to do become more and more comfortable and conceivable.

Sexual sin starts off for most people as a terrible anxiety provoking experience, especially if you are a Christian, especially if you know better and have been formed in the direction of recognizing the horror of sexual sin. But once our

baseline comfort zone is violated, and we continue to sin and set our hearts against God, we quench the Holy Spirit's voice and we sear our consciences. After a while that reaction fades. We establish new comfort zones. If you don't repent of that new comfort zone, you will drift farther and farther away from God.

Friends, have you opened the door to sexual sin in such a way that you are now capable of doing things that used to be unthinkable for you? How much more darkness do you want in your life?

Let me illustrate this a little bit differently to push the question back to the issue of the heart – not just our behavior, but the heart. This whole series has been about the heart.

See, I believe that what occurs in people's lives when you see significant moral compromise is that the person has been making compromises in their hearts, in their choices, for years before the big fall. You simply cannot live forever with a divided heart. Jesus said: Either we serve one master, he was talking about money there, or we serve another master, namely God. But you can't serve two masters in your heart. Many of us believe we can carry around lust in our hearts on a continual basis and think that it won't grow or have a corrosive effect.

I've often pictured lust in my life as being like toxic waste from a nuclear power plant. There is this little storage tank in the secret place of my soul. The enemy comes along and lies to me and says, "This nuclear waste of lust will remain safely incased in your heart. After all, Rich, it glows and it provides a certain amount of comfort and warmth and thrill inside. You can have this secret little internal life going on in your heart. And you can tap into it and it will give everything a nice warm glow."

The problem with toxic waste is this: it doesn't remain forever safely in the container of your heart. It starts eating through the walls. It starts breaking down your will. And if it is not cleaned out after a certain period of time, it will leak out. It will seep out in terms of an emotional attachment. It will seep out further in terms of seeking out thrills. And this toxic waste will seep out further in terms of physical attachments.

One of the great reasons to try to avoid sexual sin and lust in your life is that you come to the fearful recognition that you are just like everyone else. That sin has this extraordinarily corrosive affect on your soul. And if you would say, "No, this is out of bounds for me; this is not for me; this is not something God has given me at this time in my life; I've made other commitments. If I open myself up to this there are going to be some very long-term damaging consequences," God will protect us.

Well, in the same way that David sent a message to Joab, the Lord sent a message to David. In 2 Sam. 12.1-6 we read this:

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2Sa 12:1 The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.

2Sa 12:2 The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle,

2Sa 12:3 but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

2Sa 12:4 "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

2Sa 12:5 David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die!

2Sa 12:6 He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

By saying, "you must pay four times over," David was prophesying regarding himself. He paid four times over with the death of four of his sons. Then Nathan said to David,

SLIDE

"You are the man."

This may be the most powerful statement in the entire Old Testament. This may be one of the most heart-shattering prophesies ever delivered in all of human history. David is morally indignant. He is outraged about injustice. And God sent Nathan, the prophet, to hold up a mirror in front of David's face and say: "Look in the mirror, friend. Reserve your moral indignation for yourself."

Talk about getting caught up short. You are in the middle of declaring why something is so utterly wrong and God speaks to you and says: "And what about you? You think you aren't a racist? You don't think you cut corners? You think you are so honest? What about you?"

Then we read vv. 7-10,

SLIDE

2Sa 12:7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

2Sa 12:8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

2Sa 12:9 Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

2Sa 12:10 Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

Do you understand what Nathan, the prophet, is doing in confronting David? He is aiming right at David's heart. He told that little parable of the ewe lamb in order to tenderize David's hardened heart. Then he probes and pricks and stabs David's heart further by pointing out how much God had given him and how he could have had much more if he had only asked.

I think vv. 7-8 are some of the most convicting words in the entire Bible. Look at this with me.

SLIDE

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2Sa 12:8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

And even more, what is going on with the sin of adultery? What we are really saying is what you've given me God is not enough. Your grace is not sufficient. The blessings that have been in my life are not satisfying enough. I demand more. And so I am going to grab it.

And the Lord says: "If you wanted more, why didn't you just ask me? Why did you have to try to go behind my back? Why did you have to spit in my face in order to get the more you thought you needed? Why did you have to violate covenant? Why didn't you just ask me?"

It is like a parent who speaks with their child and says: "Did you have to steal from me? Was what I gave you not enough? If you thought you had such a desperate need, why didn't you just ask me?"

It reminds me of the words in James 4 where the apostle James says in 4.1-2,

SLIDE

Jas 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

Jas 4:2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.

What a terrible state we come to when God's grace is not enough for us. We have to violate boundaries and grab more for ourselves.

Well, Nathan finally announces the terrible consequences from David's sin. Vv. 11-12,

SLIDE

2Sa 12:11 "This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight.

2Sa 12:12 You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'

When we read David's story, we recognize that it is not only the story of David, this is our story also. Every single day we stand at a fork in the road. Sometimes we are at a fork in the road several times a day where we face choices between doing God's will and doing our will, between being satisfied with what God has given us and grabbing for more even when it violates God's Word. You and I, friends, are faced continually with the choice between good and evil and life and death. David's sin literally led to death. It led to the death of Uriah. It led to the death of the union between David and Bathsheba. It led to the death of three more of his sons.

Romans 6.23 says:

SLIDE

The wages of sin is death.

This is not to suggest that every time a person sins, they will die. But you know, there is more than one way to die. There is more than one kind of death. Our sin can lead to the death of trust between friends or family members. It can lead to the death of relationships. It can lead to the death of hopes and plans and dreams. Sin can lead to the death of our financial health. Sin can lead to the death of our physical health. Sin can certainly lead to the death of our marriages.

Well, some of us have given way to the corrosive effects of sin and sensuality. And I can guarantee you that if you've given way, the enemy has come along and put in your mind powerful lies to keep you locked into a pattern of frustration and hopelessness where you just keep running on the same track of confession, temptation, sin, guilt and confession over and over again.

One of the great lies that is put in your mind is the lie that says you can't change. It is a lie believed by us frankly and it is a lie we believe about others. I can't change. They can't change. Even committed Christians sometimes say what boils down to the denial of the gospel. What are we saying, friends? The gospel is strong enough to save us from God's judgment and save us from hell, but it is not strong enough or big enough to save us from sexual sin? Jesus Christ is too small to save my marriage? To save my son or daughter?

This lie of helplessness and hopelessness is preached daily to people who are struggling with homosexual temptation. Don't even try to overcome this temptation. That's what the world says to you. Don't even try. It's hopeless. You've got to give in. Everybody does and you will have to also. This lie of hopelessness and helplessness is said over and over again to people struggling with pornography addictions. This lie of helplessness and hopelessness is spoken continually to victims of sexual abuse. You are always going to walk around feeling stained. You will always feel ugly inside. You will always feel dark inside. You can't change.

Or you can't recover from an affair. Your marriage can't recover. It is just over.

So many people live with the lie that Christianity does not work in the area of their sexual lives. I am here to tell you the gospel works in all of life! And if there is any area of life that is off limits to the gospel, then Jesus is not the Savior of the world. Jesus came to renew and redeem all of creation, to bring about a new creation so that everything would be cleansed from the stain of sin. There is no area of your life that cannot be penetrated by the power of the gospel. There is nothing that you have ever done or done to you that you can't be redeemed from, set free from, cleansed from, or healed from.

But you know, change is not easy. Most of us want the zap method of change. Just have someone pray for me and from that moment on I will never struggle in this area again. Occasionally that happens. Occasionally there is a miracle. But I suggest to you, particularly in the area of our sexuality, that our quest for instantaneous change is not a whole lot different than what secular people do when they go to the bookstore and look for a self-help book to immediately overcome a problem. You don't read many self-help books that are titled "15 Effort-Filled Painful Slow Ways To Change." You don't see books titled "6 Very Difficult, Very Strenuous Steps To Change Worked Out By Only The Highly Committed."

You know the word that is in almost every self-help book title, don't you? It is the word "easy." Four easy steps; four quick and easy steps. That's what we want in our lives isn't it, especially our sexual lives – easy.

A few years ago I talked with one of the men who heads up our sexual addiction recovery groups. We call them Integrity.Men and Integrity.Women. I said to him, "I'm teaching about sexual sin. What should I say?"

He said, "Rich, there are two things that I would want to say to people: 1) Change is possible. You don't have to live the way you are living. There is hope for you. And 2) Change is harder than you think. It will take more effort than you think, and it will be slower than you think. But change will happen."

We want to take care of 25 years of sin in 25 seconds.

I want to close with these two things:

1) Out in the lobby today we have some tables offering information about some of the groups that we have here in the church. If you are serious about wanting to change in the sexual area of your life, and there are hundreds of us who need to change, not ten of us. You can walk by the tables out in the lobby – Integrity.Men and Integrity.Women. Grab a brochure and pray about it.

2) There is hope for your marriage even if you or your mate has had an affair. There is hope for you. You can recover. Thousands of marriages have recovered.

Today I want to close by showing you a video of a couple in our church. Their names are Craig and Cathy Scott. They went through our Crisis Marriage Restoration Plan.

Couples that have lost their way and are considering a separation or divorce are encouraged to participate in the 10-week Crisis Marriage Restoration Plan. The CMRP is designed to create a safe zone in a relationship that is extremely conflicted. Couples should not make long term decisions without the help of a pastor, counselor, or support ministries. The CMRP offers the following resources:

- Pastoral guidance and professional counseling
- Husband and wife identify behaviors they want to see changed in their spouse
- Counselor helps them to write a restoration plan
- Pastor assigns couple to recovery groups, small groups, or soaking prayer to address behaviors that need to change
- Couples attend Begin Again following the CMRP to establish a new foundation for their relationship

"Begin Again" is our marriage restoration ministry. Begin Again is a weekend (Fri/Sat) intensive with a six-week follow-up in the home of mentors. We offer it three times per year with the next one scheduled for October 6 & 7. There is a

cost, space is limited (12 couples total – Oct. date is close to full – next one in Feb.), and an initial interview has to be completed before attendance on the weekend. Applications are available online and at the Info Counter.

Begin Again is not only for married couples that have experienced an event such as adultery or financial irresponsibility, but also for disconnected couples – those who struggle to communicate the desire of their heart to their spouse and/or struggle to resolve conflict.

VIDEO

Craig and Cathy's story has been repeated several dozen times in our Begin Again weekend. Ron Hitchcock, our Marriage and Family Life pastor, has hundreds of stories just like the Scott's. Wherever you are, whatever you've done, whatever has been done to you, there is hope for you. You can change. Your spouse can change. Your marriage can change. You can recover. You can live in God's will for your life. Let's pray.

I. America's Moral Ambivalence About Affairs

II. The Circumstance Of An Affair (2 Sam. 11.1-5)

- A. The Illusion Of Invulnerability
- B. The Problem Of Idleness And Self-Indulgence
- C. The Making Of Rationalizations For Sexual Sin

III. The Cover-Up For An Affair (2 Sam. 11.6-17)

- A. The Warning Light Of Cover-Ups (2 Sam. 11.6-11)
- B. The Convicting Words Of Non-Believers (2 Sam. 11.12, 13)
- C. The Corrosive Effect Of Sin In The Heart (2 Sam. 11.14-17)

IV. The Discovery Of An Affair (2 Sam. 12.1-11)

- A. God Holds Up A Mirror (2 Sam. 12.1-7)
- B. God Reminds Us Of His Grace (2 Sam. 12.7-10)
- C. God Warns Us Of Death (2 Sam. 12.11, 12)
- D. God Provides Us With Hope For Change