

Recovering from an Affair Outline

(Wayne Mack)

9 Propositions for parameters:

1. Marriage is a divine institution. (Gen 2:19-25)
2. Marriage is intended to be permanent. (Mal 2:16; Mt 19:4-6; Ro 7:1-3)
3. All sex outside of marriage is sinful. (Heb 13:3; Prov 9:17-18)
4. Adultery proceeds from the heart. (Mt 5:27-30, 15:19; Jas 1:14-15)
5. Adultery is a serious offense which leads to serious consequences. (1 Cor 6:9-10; Prov 5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27)
6. Adultery may be forgiven. (Ps 32:1-5, 51:1-17 (key: *"a broken and contrite heart"*))
7. Repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation is God's will. (Prov 28:13-14; Isa 55:6-7; Col 1:13-14)
8. Divorce does not solve all the problems: It usually creates new ones.
9. A lack of repentance from a continuance in adultery is grounds for church discipline and divorce. (Mt 5:31-32, 19:3-9, 18:15-18)

I. Issues as far as the offender is concerned: (these are not excuses)

1. Complaints of unsatisfactory sexual relations.
2. Inattentive, unaffectionate mates.
3. Family history.
4. Disregard for authority & accountability.
5. Dissatisfied or bored with other areas of life. Desire for quick pleasure.
6. Sense of entitlement. "I deserve this". (As income increases, so do the possibilities).
7. Promiscuity is more prevalent: The stigma is gone. "Not a big deal."
8. Breakdown of extended family.

9. Changing attitudes of Christians regarding sexual immorality.
10. Early sexual activity in adolescence.
11. People who enjoy living on the edge: The excitement and risk.
12. People who are constantly moving from one thing to another: major life transitions.
13. Unmet desires and expectations. Believe they can never be met in the present situation. "Thrown in the towel"
14. Punishing or manipulating the other person to change.
15. Desires elevated above the level of needs: idolatry. (Dt 5:8-9)

CHRISTIANITY IS A "HEART" RELIGION!

II. Primary causes:

1. The heart.

C.f. Mt 15:19: The heart is the reservoir. If the water that comes out is bad, clean up the reservoir!

Mt 12:33-35: If you have bad fruit, the problem is with the tree. Adultery is a bad fruit.

2. Adultery is idolatry:

Idolatry is looking to other things for strength rather than God!

Col 3:5: (views the adulterer as an idolater)

Eph 5:5: (states that such a one has no place in the Kingdom of God). Also Gal 5:19-21 (*"those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God"*)

Jas 1:13-15: (the pattern of temptation, enticement, conception, and death)

Adultery is one manifestation of *"walking in the flesh."* (Gal 5:16)

*All sin boils down to “self-idolatry”: the belief that pleasing yourself is more important than pleasing God.

*Those who desire to please the Lord “*walk by the Spirit.*” (Gal 5:16a)

*Those who desire to please themselves do not do so.

III. Other biblical perspectives:

Proverbs: 202 verses, 90 of which deal with sexual immorality. Primarily Chapters 5, 6:20-35, 7.

Chapter 5: Why People Get Involved in Adultery:

1. Failure to pay attention to God’s wisdom. C.f. 5:1-2
2. Failure to seek God’s understanding. 5:1-2
3. Lack of discretion due to failure to pay attention to God’s instruction. 5:2
4. Associations with sensually oriented persons. 5:3
5. Failure to properly consider the negative consequences. 5:4-11
6. Failure to believe God’s warnings about consequences. 5:4-11
7. Failure to listen to Godly instruction. 5:12-13
8. Inattentive to instructions regarding own relationship. 5:15-18
9. Failure to appreciate your own mate. 5:19
10. Desire for something “new and different”, somewhere where “the grass is greener.” 5:20
11. Lack of God consciousness. Failure to see who God is, what God is, that He sees everything. Lack of Godly fear. 5:21
12. Failure to understand or believe the bewitching and enslaving nature of sin. 5:22-23
13. A focus on the wrong things, instead of the right ones. 5:23

*God will not allow adulterers to play the “blame game”: that it is someone or something else, or even their own current psychological condition that is at fault!

*There are no legitimate excuses: we may sympathize, but never condone it!

*God will not allow an adulterer to make light of his sin! He takes it very seriously.

IV. Issues:

1. Disclosing or confessing: To whom?

- a. To God. 1 Jn 1:9; Isa 55:6-7
- b. Other people. (Anyone who has been hurt by it. Parents, friends, children, etc. It is not a private matter.) C.f. Mt 5:23-25

Secret sins: To God only.
Private sins: To the person affected.
Public sins: To all affected.

2. Why should it be confessed?

- a. Because other people are hurt by it.
- b. Because adulterers have broken vows of loyalty, faithfulness, and love.
- c. Vows are not a declaration of present love and present fidelity, but of future love and fidelity.
- d. Relationships are based upon trust and honesty. C.f. Eph 5:25
- e. Confession is a fruit of a genuine repentance.
- f. Often the offended party does not suspect the adultery.
- g. Adultery almost always involves a host of other, related sins:
 - a. Deception
 - b. Misuse of finances
 - c. Neglect of marital and family responsibilities
 - d. Hypocrisy
 - e. Subjecting other person to physical risk (aids, STDs, etc.)

3. How much should be confessed?

How does one honor the Eph 5:3 mandate, *“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints”*

See also c.f. 4:29 – *“let no unwholesome speech...”*

*Put brakes on the gory details...

4. How should the confession be made?

- a. Without blame-shifting: Prov 19:3: *“The foolishness of man ruins his way, and his heart rages against the LORD.”* Also Gen 3:12-13
- b. With full responsibility: Ps 51:3-4: *“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight.”*

5. The purpose for disclosing:

*To acknowledge your sin and to ask for forgiveness.

“I have sinned against Heaven and against you”

6. All relationships with third party must be broken off

“I don’t want to hurt her”

“She needs me”

“She’s given up a lot for me”

*Even reasons that sound very spiritual are unacceptable.

*Don’t allow the offender to do this alone.

*Write, or phone call is best: avoid in person.

7. Deceptive patterns

*Adulterer has become very good (or bad) at lying. Ps 51:6: *“Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being”*

*Adulterer has lied to God: professed to love God when he does not. See Jn 14:15: *“If you love Me, you will keep my commandments”*

*Adulterer has lied to himself.

*Adulterer has lied to his mate.

*Adulterer has lied to other people: Pretending to be one thing while in reality another!

8. Feelings

- a. Toward 3rd party (residual attraction, sense of loss).
- b. Towards mate (perhaps bad feelings in play).

*The biblical perspective of feelings is clear: Christians are called to live a commandment oriented life not a “feelings” oriented life.

*Feelings tend to follow desires, choices, and actions.

*Feelings are the caboose. The engine is your desires, your thoughts, and your choices. The cars in the middle are your actions.

*The caboose cannot run the train. *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (Mt 6:21)

*Your wife (husband) cannot compete with your fantasy world.

*There will (may) be a lag between making the right desires, choices and actions and when the good “feelings” come.

Scriptural Helps: Ro 12:2: *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

9. Why people backslide

- a. Guilty feelings are forgotten or subside.
- b. Fear of Hell and punishment is forgotten or subsides.
- c. Loathing of former sin no longer practiced.
- d. Heavenly mindset forgotten or no longer priority.

*When these things are no longer foremost in the offender’s consciousness there is an inevitable return to the former ways.

Scriptural Helps: Ezek 14:6: *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations.”’*

*A genuine repentance is one that is needed: not a coerced one.

12 STEPS FOR REBUILDING:

1. To rebuild, people must choose to rebuild

c.f. Jn 5:6 *“Do you wish to get well?”*

2. The counselor must encourage a true biblical hope

c.f. Heb 6:18-19: *“so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an ANCOR OF THE SOUL, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.”*

3. Understand the biblical directives for marriage

*God’s regulations were planned for our happiness.

*Have confidence in God’s wisdom. A fundamental human delusion is *“If I keep His commandments I will not be happy.”*

*There is pleasure in disobedience, but not true happiness.

*In every marriage that ends, either 1 or both parties don’t know or aren’t willing to follow God’s directions.

*God is FOR marriage and has given us directions.

*c.f. Gen 2:18-25: Premarital instruction.

*c.f. Ps 127 & 128: The “Home” Psalms & “Family” Psalms.

*Proverbs; S of S; Mt 19; 1 Cor 9; 13;

4. Each person should specifically identify his sins or failures

*Adultery is a symptom of a lot of other things wrong in the adulterer’s life.

*Do not just focus upon the adulterer.

*Do not break a bruised reed: Timing and manner are very important.

*C.f. Prov 15:2: *"The tongue of the wise..."* Prov 15:23: *"How delightful is a timely word..."*

*Also: Mt 7:2-6; 18:15-17; 5:23-26: If a brother thinks you have done something wrong, YOU go to him. In any case it is YOUR move. Phil 4:2-3.

5. Accept responsibility for your sin, confess and seek forgiveness from the other person

*Stop whining: Get busy and take out the trash!

*Confession: Say the same things about your sins as God does. See them as He does!

*Do it because it is what God wants you to do: Do not make bargains.

*Please forgive me PERIOD (no excuses!).

THE SEVEN 'A's OF CONFESSION

1. ADDRESS everyone that is involved.
2. AVOID "ifs", "buts", "maybes" & "whens".
3. ADMIT specifics: Not generalities.
4. ACKNOWLEDGE your sorrow over hurting and offending the other person. Display a heart that is broken.
5. ACCEPT the consequences. Forgiveness does not mean that you are absolved of all the consequences of your sin (i.e. STD's). Ps 51: *"LORD, you are justified when You judge..."*
6. ALTER your attitudes and your behavior.
7. ASK for forgiveness.

6. How to grant biblical forgiveness

*Unconditional forgiveness is not biblical.

*Forgive as God forgives: Not minimizing or excusing what the other person has done.

*Forgiveness is not a feeling.

*Forgiveness is not forgetting.

*Our forgiveness is conditional: God's forgiveness is conditional. "Repent or perish."

*I must not forgive someone else unless they have repented. One is not obligated to forgive an unrepentant sinner. BUT: One is always to be ready to forgive.

*Forgiveness is frequently costly.

*Forgive for Christ's sake: Not because the other person deserves it. Because we ourselves know forgiveness, we too must forgive. C.f. Mt 18:21.

*Forgiveness is a promise, not a feeling. It is a promise to not bring the other person's sin up against him again. If you honor the promise long enough, eventually your feelings will change.

*Forgiveness leads to reconciliation and restoration. This is what God's forgiveness does: it leads us to reconciliation and restoration.

*You have not truly forgiven if you are unwilling to seek reconciliation and restoration.

7. Plan ahead to do right

*Make specific plans on how you are going to change. Keep a journal.

*c.f. Ro 12:17

8. Commit yourselves to a command-oriented way of life: not a feeling-oriented one

*c.f. Mt 6:33; 2 Cor 5:9-14; Heb 5:14

9. Help them to practice good communication

*This is the nerve center and heart-throb of a good marriage relationship.

10. Make the changes for the right reason: the pleasing of God

11. Practice your new disciplines until they become habits

*c.f. Heb 5:14: Our faculties are trained by reason of practice. 1 Ti 4:7: We train ourselves for the purpose of godliness.

12. Seek godly counsel

*Think of yourself as a race car driver: you need a pit crew.

*Get a good coach.