



A Quick Reference and Lesson Guide

Affairs and Adultery

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1 Scenarios and Assessment

Scenarios/Case Studies

A. Scenario #1 – Accidental

1. Amy and Marcus had worked together for several years. Both are happily married to their respective spouses. Amy and Marcus had an opportunity at work to develop a project that they both have been passionate about and had been pushing their boss for years to let them do. To meet the deadline, long hours at work were required. When they finally saw their dream become a reality, something clicked between them, and the night of celebration ended in a one-time sexual encounter.

B. Scenario #2 – Attraction

1. Sarah has been having trouble in her marriage. Her husband does not appreciate all she does. He rarely gives her flowers, cards, or takes her on dates. Greg, a friend at church, has always thanked her for all the extra work she does. He even randomly gives her thank you cards and once brought her flowers because he observed she was having a bad week. Sarah would constantly think, “Why can’t my husband be like Greg?” Sarah started pursuing Greg until it grew into a long-term affair. Sarah felt that she was finally being loved.

C. Scenario #3 – Addiction

1. Darren was abused as a child. Darren has had trouble on and off his whole life with pornography. The main reason he is even married is because he got his girlfriend pregnant. All throughout his life, he has struggled with different addictions. He has tried several times to quit smoking, and when his struggles become overwhelming he turns to alcohol. When pornography no longer was able to satisfy him, he decided to have an affair. The affair satisfied him for a short time until another affair transpired, and this became a common occurrence.

Definitions and Key Thoughts

A. Facts

1. There are several types of affairs:
 - a) Accidental Affair - Not a real decision to cheat, not seeking affair
 - (1) The so-called one-night stand
 - (2) Tends to be short term
 - (3) Tends to have no emotional attachment or sexual attraction
 - (4) Impulsive, unplanned
 - (5) Is usually regretted
 - (6) Drugs and/or alcohol may have contributed
 - (7) If affair results in feelings of guilt, it will likely end. If affair results in excitement or if it is blamed on something or someone else, it is likely to repeat

- b) Attraction Affair - Some type of entanglement
 - (1) Tends to be long-term
 - (2) Different degrees of emotional attachment
 - (3) This can indicate a marital deficit which the spouse will seek to fulfill with another person.
 - (4) This can be an empty-nest affair.
 - (5) Affairs often have nothing to do with love; rather, a need is being fulfilled that feels like love.
 - c) Addiction
 - (1) Tends to result in multiple short-term affairs
 - (2) This is a pathological relationship.
 - (3) Often follows a pornography addiction
 - (4) It is difficult to save a marriage if any type of addiction is going on.
 - (5) Compulsive with a mindless dependence
 - d) Avoidance - Intimacy or conflict avoidance
 - (1) This can be either long- or short-term.
 - (2) This can be a mid-life affair.
 - (3) Often an escape from one's reality
 - (4) Can result from entitlement or a desire for revenge
 - (5) Can be one spouse getting out of a marriage before the other does
2. Myths about affairs
- a) Christians are exempt. (Infidelity percentages among Christians are the same as non-Christians.)
 - b) Affairs happen because the person was more attractive.
 - c) Most affairs end in a divorce.
 - d) An affair means they did not love their spouse.
 - e) Only husbands cheat on their wives.
3. High-risk people for affairs often
- a) Have a personality disorder,
 - b) Have a sexual addiction,
 - c) Had a crisis or trauma during their developmental years,
 - d) Are in an environment full of temptations,
 - e) Are in an environment needing perfection,
 - f) Have unrealistic expectations,
 - g) Have a co-dependent spouse,
 - h) Are under more stress than normal (i.e., loss of job, trauma, sickness),
 - i) Had a recent increase in earnings (for men),
 - j) Have unaccountable time,
 - k) Exhibit self-centeredness.

Assessment (Interview)

- A. Determine the dimensions of the affair—who, what, when, where, and how?
- B. The first question is always, “Is the affair over, and have you ended all contact?” (You can go no further in the questions until this is answered satisfactorily.)
- C. Do not be obsessed with a need to know every detail.

1. The unfaithful spouse should share all the details that his spouse wants to know, not just what he thinks is necessary.
 2. Withholding details will cause the wounded spouse to question everything. At the same time, the wounded spouse needs to know that every detail she hears will be permanently embedded as a mental image in her thoughts.
 3. It is encouraged to process what information is required to gain the healing needed. Information should be sufficient, but not exhaustive. Enough information is needed to allow for forgiveness and healing without needless memories of the unfaithfulness in the future.
 4. *Warning:* If the wounded spouse feels that the marriage must continue for spiritual or financial reasons, the recovery will rarely happen.
- D. There needs to be a healthy focus on emotional and physical needs met by the affair that were not present in the marriage previously. This may take some time, so allow God to speak and reveal areas of special attention.
1. Some of the fear in revealing these needs would be the wounded spouse thinking that some of the guilt of the unfaithful spouse would be lifted and placed on him or her.
 2. Both parties need to bear in mind that the purpose of this discovery is to restore the marriage and not to compare who was more in the wrong.
 3. Remember both parties need to take responsibility for their own behavior.
- E. Why did it happen?
1. This might be a tough question to answer, and time may be needed to come to this realization. Not being able to answer a question might suggest that they are hiding something, when they really do not know the answer(s).
 2. Other questions that might not have immediate answers might be:
 - a) Why am I the one feeling guilty?
 - b) How can I trust you?
 - c) How can I stop thinking about the affair?
- F. Even if the affair never became sexual, when what is reserved for a spouse (physical or emotional) is given to someone else, that is considered an affair. An emotional affair can be more damaging than a physical affair and more complicated to end. Many times emotional affairs take place online.
- G. Questions for the unfaithful spouse:
1. Who was it?
 2. Who initiated it?
 3. How did you meet?
 4. When did it start? What led up to this?
 5. When did it end? How did it end? (There is a greater possibility for recovery if the affair was admitted than if they were caught.)
 6. How do I know it is really over?
 7. How many encounters were there?
 8. Where were other encounters?
 9. Does anyone else know about it?
 10. Did you ever talk about me or your family?
 11. Do they still want to be with you?
 12. How did you communicate? (work, text, phone, email, social media, etc.)
 13. Are they still trying to contact you?

14. Are you willing to be tested for a STD?
15. Are you currently attracted to anyone else?
16. Why do you want to still be with me?
17. What will you do if they contact you again?
18. Do you have any reminders of the affair? (pictures, mementos, etc.)
19. Is there anything else I have not asked that you need to tell me?

2 Critique and Counsel

Biblical Insight

- A. Sin is birthed in the mind long before it is acted out.
 1. “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).
- B. The best ways to stay faithful are:
 1. Be faithful to God's Word; there are blessings when we follow biblical principles.
 - a) “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psalms 119:9). “Cleanse his way” can be read as “stay pure.”
 - b) “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent” (Proverbs 6:27–29).
 - c) “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14–15).
 - (1) Do not ever get the attitude and think, *It never can happen to me.*”
 - (2) “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Corinthians 10:12).
 2. Guard your mind.
 - a) The Word of God warns us that what begin as thoughts eventually become actions. We must carefully guard what comes into our mind with what we watch, read, and listen to.
 - b) “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).
 3. Do not rationalize sin.
 - a) Avoid unbiblical thoughts such as, *God wants me to be happy, and this makes me so happy, or I prayed for God to take away these feelings, and since He has not, it must be His will.*
 - b) Stop justifying yourself and repent; break off the affair and begin restoration.

- c) “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me” (Psalms 51:1–3).

Wise Counsel

- A. As devastating as an affair may be, there is hope! If the work is put in, and with God's guidance, better days in the marriage are ahead.
1. Understanding the affair progression can be helpful in the recovery process. During this time, emotions will be put to their limits. Everyone will react differently in their recovery. There is no set time frame for recovery, and it will seem at times that the marriage is worse before it becomes better.
- B. The devastation of an affair will be life-changing. There has been a serious blow to self-esteem, trust, and sense of security. Future stability will be rocked financially and emotionally. This crisis event will affect all areas of life.
- C. The devastation has many times been described as a forest burning out of control, destroying everything in its path. However, just as these fires have shown that good can come from the destruction, so can good come beyond the devastation of an affair.
1. Like the forest fire that has burned away all the choking and harmful growth that prevented the forest from prospering, the recovery from an affair can identify and address issues that have choked the life out of the marriage for some years now. Of course, an affair is never a good option.
- D. One of the first steps for the couple is to focus on their relationship with God. Working through and living in forgiveness is of utmost importance.
- E. One of the hardest things for both parties to understand and accept is that the issue that led to the affair stemmed from both parties, not just the unfaithful spouse. Until both parties identify their part in the affair, recovery cannot happen. The more a spouse identifies their part in the affair, the more control that spouse will have in the outcome of the recovery process.
1. What may have happened in an affair is that someone else has figured out one of the spouse's love languages while the other spouse has struggled to understand and learn it.
- F. Husbands tend to want to know the details of the sexual activities whereas wives want to know if the husband loved the other person and if she was brought into the home.
- G. For women, loneliness sparks a need to be accepted and loved. Often, an “emotional divorce” has taken place with her husband before an affair starts.
- H. Feelings of the unfaithful spouse can include guilt and fear. Out of exhaustion, they may leave clues to be discovered. There is often a sense of relief when the affair is exposed.
- I. Feelings of the wounded spouse may include foolishness or shame, and they will go through the different stages of grief:
1. Shock or denial – The wounded spouse is often terrified about the future.
 2. Anger – This is a healthy first response to this crisis.
 - a) Males tend to act with more rage, wanting to kill the wife's partner, believing that she was a victim and would never have chosen this on her own.

- b) Women tend to react with more anger and hurt, showing more tears and less violence.
- c) If the wounded spouse does not become angry, they can stall the recovery process. More than likely, these issues of frustration within the marriage were present before the affair.
- 3. Depression (inward anger) – This may arise from desiring guarantees but knowing there are no guarantees, or feeling like they are not progressing well enough.
- 4. Bargaining – The wounded spouse may feel that she could have prevented the affair.
- J. Another factor that the wounded spouse will need to understand is the true pain and grief that the unfaithful spouse is going through.
 - 1. There should not be a punishment phase, but there needs to be a grieving phase. The wounded spouse can find healing in the unfaithful spouse's grief, showing that there was and is great loss. The wounded spouse's hurt is universally understood and accepted, but the unfaithful spouse's hurt is just as painful and rarely understood.

3 Application and Prayer

Application

- A. A marriage cannot be restored until the unfaithfulness ends. In any addiction, the addict is the only one who can set himself free. In the same way, the unfaithful spouse is the only one who can separate from the affair.
- B. It is important to process the affair whether the marriage continues or not. If the underlying issues are not brought to light and resolved, the same issues will follow both parties in any future relationships, and the devastation will continue.
- C. Steps to recovery include:
 - 1. Daily prayer and reading from God's word,
 - 2. Ending the affair immediately with zero contact with the affair partner,
 - 3. The couple scheduling more time together,
 - 4. Establishing accountability to the wounded spouse and counselor,
 - 5. The wounded spouse learning to forgive again and again,
 - 6. Accepting full responsibility without blaming anyone or anything,
 - 7. Learning to be changeable, not defensive,
 - 8. Refusing the urge to control,
 - 9. Learning to date again,
 - 10. Refusing to bring up the affair in other arguments.
- D. Remember what brought the married couple together in the first place. Do not make the unfaithful spouse pay too large of a price for the unfaithfulness. This can crush them to the point where the relationship cannot be rebuilt. Stay accountable to the counselor, pastor, or whoever the pastor approves to guide the recovery. There is never a time when a couple is finished working on improving their marriage.

- E. It is not unusual for the desire to divorce to come up in the mind of the wounded spouse immediately. It seems like starting over is much less work than working through all the pain. Though the Bible gives the option of divorcing an unfaithful spouse, it is not a command to divorce them. God understands that in some cases of adultery the wounded spouse must make a new start to recover emotionally and spiritually.
- F. Both spouses must want to save the marriage, or all efforts would be fruitless.

Prayer

A. Address in prayer the struggles that have been addressed in the meeting.

1. *“Lord, help me believe that we can be whole again. We bring our grief to You and reaffirm our commitment to faithfulness. Faithfulness to you, and faithfulness to my spouse. We cannot change the past, but we choose to walk hand in hand with You in the future. Help us to hold your hand when our eyes are blinded by tears. Lead me into a deeper love for the one I married, and into a greater marriage than I have ever known. God, You know exactly what we are facing, and You know how to comfort and restore us. I pray that You give us Your grace, mercy, and continued forgiveness that we may find healing. I pray that trust can be built again, that our marriage can be restored, and that our family would become stronger in Jesus’ name!”*

4 Recommended Resources

Bell, J., Jr., Weintraub, P., & Clark, S. R. (2003). *Christian family guide to surviving divorce*. Indianapolis, IN: Penguin Group.

Carder, D., & Jaenicke, D. (2001). *Torn asunder: Recovering from an extramarital affair*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Clinton, T., Hart, A. & Ohlschlanger, G. (2005). *Caring for people God's way: Personal and emotional issues, addictions, grief and trauma*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Cloud, H., & Townsend, J. (1992). *Boundaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Cloud, H., & Townsend, J. (1999). *Boundaries in Marriage*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Cloud, H., & Townsend, J. (2011). *Beyond boundaries: Learning to trust again in relationships*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Harley, W., Jr. (1988). *Marriage insurance: Building a divorce-proof marriage*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.

- Harley, W. Jr.. (2001) *His needs her needs: Building an affair-proof marriage*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell Co.
- Hunt, J. (2005). *Hope for the Heart: Biblical Counseling Keys: 101 Topics Collections*. Dallas, TX: PC Study Bible.
- Minirth, F., Meier, P., & Artenburn, S. (1995). *The complete life encyclopedia*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.
- Weeks, G. R., & Hof, L. (1995). *Integrative solutions: Treating common problems in couples therapy*. New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel, Inc.

5 Taking it to the Church

“Affairs and Adultery”

Focus Verse

“Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).

Lesson Text

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

Many couples start their marriages with big dreams but end up in despair. They know that God designed marriage. Yet many couples are not fulfilling God’s purpose for their marital lives. There is an outbreak of immorality attacking the home with exceptionally destructive consequences, and the church is not exempt. Sexual sin destroyed Israel, and it can also bring destruction in our churches! Nothing tears up a family like adultery. We are to give honor to our marriage and remain faithful to our spouse.

I. Satan always tries to distort what God created.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Corinthians 6:9–10).

- God is concerned with the sacredness of marriage. Satan wants to redefine every definition that God has established.
- Once a spouse has been unfaithful, if they do not come directly to God for help, their actions become foolish when dealing with their sin.

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Corinthians 2:14).

- There is no time for self-righteousness when it comes to unfaithfulness. Too often we become fearless towards God when He is dealing with sin in our life.

“There were they in great fear, where no fear was” (Psalm 53:5).

- Having no fear can create more damage in your lives. Having no fear of sin leads to reckless living. Having no fear of God has disastrous effects in our lives.
- Fear of the Lord restrains people from acting out sinful desires. But when God is not ruling in someone’s life, there is chaos.

“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6).

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:1–5).

- Ephesians 5 shows why the enemy is seeking to destroy marriages in our society today. Satan hates that marriages are an example of Jesus’ faithfulness to the church.
- Protecting our marriages requires that we imitate God, not what we see on social media or from Hollywood! We need to follow God’s word and not secular advice! Paul warned us not to allow ourselves to be deceived by the empty words of our fallen society and its view of what is permissible in a marriage.
- The unfaithful spouse did not mean for their actions to damage their marriage just like David did not set out to bring shame on God when he committed adultery.

“He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will” (Acts 13:22).

- David loved God, probably as much as anybody. He was the apple of God's eye, a man after God's heart, yet he fell victim to sexual temptation when he chose to relax when he should have been out on the battlefield.

- Some of David's life circumstances made him vulnerable to adultery:
 - David should have been on the battlefield with those to whom he was accountable: his men, the priest, and the prophets.
 - David should have been as close to the presence of God as he could, which would have been with the Ark of the Covenant, out on the battlefield.
 - David should have been as far away from temptations as possible.
 - David had a troubled marriage.
 - David had experienced some drastic life changes. He had found out he could not rebuild the Temple, and his best friend had died.
- David handed down his lack of guarding himself from the temptation of women to his children.
 - Solomon was the wisest man in his day; he was anointed by God to lead the mightiest kingdom on earth, yet he threw it all away, in part because of his desire for women.
- Spiritual restoration is always available, but there are always damaging side effects that come with unfaithfulness.
- When someone experiences physical or emotional trauma, they rarely recover to 100 percent of their former condition, despite receiving the best available medicine, treatment, or rehabilitation.
 - It is critical that we understand the importance of faithfulness in our marriages!

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14).

Remember your acts are acts toward God and not just toward humans.

II. One of the toughest struggles the wounded spouse will have is forgiving the unfaithfulness.

- Often it is not that the wounded spouse cannot forgive, it is that they think they should not have to. Why should the unfaithful spouse be allowed to get off free of blame?
- Some of the struggle to forgive is the fear that the unfaithful spouse will think the affair was no big deal and will not be deterred from more unfaithfulness. Forgiveness may feel like we are giving the unfaithful spouse permission to hurt us again or even more deeply.
- God does not exempt us from forgiveness just because it's difficult or because we were treated unfairly.

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (Matthew 5:39–41).

- Remember forgiveness is not denying the pain or letting your spouse off the hook; it is recognizing the pain and desiring a healing.

- The misunderstanding about forgiveness is that it is not simply overlooking their sin. No, forgiveness requires acknowledging the sin, yet forgiveness releases the unfaithful spouse to begin the process of healing and recovery.
- Too often the wounded spouse mistakenly believes that there's some payment they can extract from their spouse that will compensate for their loss. What payment could ever compensate for your marriage being devastated by infidelity?
- Unforgiveness is a poison that poisons the heart with bitterness, distorting one's whole perspective on life. Our choice is to get bitter or get better!
- God's word teaches us that there is a relation between giving and receiving forgiveness.
- We may have a right to compensation, but we have a higher obligation to forgive, knowing that we have been forgiven so much.

III. It takes two working together to make a good marriage.

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Ephesians 5:33).

- Paul encourages the husband to take the lead in creating a great marriage.
 - The husband's responsibility is to love his wife (not the wife of another or another woman).
 - The wife's responsibility is to respect his leadership (not that of another man).
- Some men are afraid to lead in the marriage. Sometimes a wife can be too overbearing or a husband too passive. Husbands, it is your job to lead.
- Protect and value each other, date each other, show public affection, smile and look at each other when you talk, do not act like your own ideas are better, give your spouse non-sexual affection, hold hands in public, pray for each other especially at times when you can hear each other, accept each other, and complement each other at least once a day.
- Raise the kids and take care of the home together; also provide some time away with each of your friends. Be grateful for, affirm, and admire each other.
- Men, even if your wife falls short, your calling is still to love her as Christ loved the church.
- What do you want your marriage to become? Start living to that end.

Conclusion

- If you are struggling with unfaithfulness today, there is a way back to Calvary. There is hope. You can come to Jesus and be washed white as snow. Adultery does not have to kill your marriage.
- If you have been hurt by unfaithfulness, you must learn to forgive even through the pain. Just remember the Word says, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (I Peter 5:7).
- A successful marriage happens when both spouses know how to forgive.