

Family Legacy Institute

Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

Developing A Biblical Sexual Worldview Chapter VI

The Legacies of Adultery and Grace

A Bible Study for Mature Christ-followers

~by Dr. John P. Splinter

Most of us know someone who had an affair. But if people we know have affairs, almost none of us know about it. It's a closely guarded secret, so research is extremely difficult. Here are some stats provided by research sources. Notice how they vary. University of Chicago: 25% of men; 14% of women.¹ USA Today: 24% of men; 14% of women. Dr. Peggy Vaughn: 60% of men; 40% of women.² Atwood & Schwartz: 50-60% of men; 45-55% of women.³ Dr. Bonnie Weil: 50+% of women.⁴ And one source claims that more women than men have affairs.⁵

Why people have affairs has been the subject of much research as well. Here are a few reasons given: Dissatisfaction with the marital relationship; emotional emptiness; sexual incompatibility; growing apart; anger at one's partner; compulsive behavior; sexual boredom; change in health of partner; desire for sexual variety; addictive behavior (coupled with alcoholism or drug abuse); sexual addiction.

So why does scripture teach us to keep sex within marriage? It's fair to say that the following text captures the biblical ethic regarding sex and marriage. Solomon likely coined these thoughts: ***“Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer — may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths”*** Prov 5:15-21 ~ NIV.

Solomon asked a significant question: ***“Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?”*** Let's expand that to ***“any other bosom than your own wife's.”*** Again, that's a fair interpretation of God's intent regarding sexuality. (If you wish to debate this, first read: ***Ex. 2:14; Lev. 20:10; Prov. 4:23; 6:25-35; 23:27; Mt. 5:28; Mk. 7:21*** ~ OK, you get the idea.)

This Bible study will investigate three spiritual dynamics of adultery: Power, fantasy, and attachment.

Here's a Bible story that begins this study. ***"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"* (2 Sam. 11:1 - NIV).**

Have you ever wondered just why did David choose to stay home on this campaign? Was he sick? Scripture doesn't say he was. Was he dealing with weighty matters of state? Not according to any written history of the time. Was he just getting old? No, because he later took again to the field to save his life when his son, Absalom attempted a coup. So why did David stay home? Why would this warrior let his men go off to war without his participation?

The next verse may give the reason. ***"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,"* (2 Sam 11:2).** Was David's timing accidentally impeccable that evening ~ did he just happen to arrive at the exact place on his palace walk-around that put him opposite Bathsheba's bathing area, at the exact moment of her bathing? Perhaps. But more likely this was not the first time he'd seen her. Indeed, he may have well known when to get up from his bed, and where to go in order to have a front row seat. Perhaps that's why he stayed home from the military campaign that year.

And it is entirely likely that Bathsheba knew she was being watched. After all, what woman would bathe in an area that was lighted enough that a man could easily watch her from a nearby palace walk-around? What woman, when naked on her rooftop, wouldn't lend a careful eye for fear someone might be looking at her? Why not wait for total darkness? Why not have a sponge bath inside the house? That is, unless you know you're drop dead beautiful, and you have a plan ~ to seduce the king. Beautiful women have long gravitated toward power and wealth, using their beauty to personal advantage.

In spite of the fact that David was married and already had several wives (Michael, Ahino-am, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, and Elgah)⁶ as well as a bevy of concubines, David's lust was overwhelming and he sent servants to find out who the naked lady was. They returned with information that played well to David's desires: Her name was Bathsheba, and her husband was gone ~ out on a military campaign, actually. This information was probably not "news" to David. His actions were a cover-up, for as we'll see later, David was very close to her husband, her father, and her grandfather. But it looked good for David to send a servant to find out who she was.

Now watch how the story takes a rapid nose dive: ***"Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her"* (2 Sam 11:4).** Phew! That was fast! Bingo-bango-bungo!

One might wonder if she *could* have resisted him ~ after all, he was king. The correct answer is, "Yes, she could have." Everyone in Israel knew that adultery was a crime. And if the king still demanded sex, she could have said no even if it cost her life. But scripture doesn't record any

resistance (as it does in the later case of the rape of Tamar). No, *both* Bathsheba's and David's intentions were consummated that evening: She had the king, and the king had the beautiful woman.

Let's now bring this home and talk about fantasy, power, and attachment. *Adultery begins with fantasy.* At some point, both parties ponder what it would be like to be sexually involved with each other. What would she look like, naked? How would he feel in her arms? Had David not lingered and fantasized, adultery and murder would not have happened. This is why Christ came down so hard on mental sex (see *Mt. 5:28*). Let's put this garment on for a moment: Who leads you toward fantasy? About what fantasies would you be embarrassed if your thoughts were somehow converted to images and played on a screen in church?

Adultery is also fueled by power. Had David been just some lower-class schmuck, it's doubtful that Bathsheba would have ever displayed her charms. She had her reasons for luring David. It wasn't just his testosterone-driven stupidity that got them into trouble with God. At the very least, she'd be one of the king's wives, and once inside the palace, with her looks and mental toughness, Bathsheba knew she'd remain #1 wife (which she did). Have you ever noticed the physical looks of the *second* wives of powerful men? And it's always a two-way street. He looks great with her on his arm; she gets to have her hands on the reins of power and wealth.

There are many strands of power in the tapestry of adultery ~ the strand of man and woman against their spouse, sometimes also called "triangulation;" the strand of secrecy; the strand of revenge; the strand of control; the strand of pride; the strand of illicit ownership; the strand of feasting upon forbidden fruit. Now let's wear this garment for a moment: To which of these strands are you most vulnerable? How might the enemy of God use the issue of power, to lure you into managing your sexual self in a way that is contrary to how God calls you. Remember, the lure of power is Satan's most elementary hook ~ to Adam and Eve he whispered, "***You will be like God....***" (*Gen. 3:5*).

Finally, always, somewhere within adultery one finds issues of attachment. Bathsheba may have thought she was getting into a quick one-time fling with the king. David might have wondered just how she'd look and feel in bed with him. And everything was neat and tidy. They'd successfully had a lover's tryst and got away with it. Until she missed her period. And the immediate next question had to do with ... the meaning of her husband.

First, he became something to be manipulated, so they attempted deception (2 Sam. 11:6-13). Unfortunately for him when deception didn't work, his meaning changed. He was now a problem to be disposed of; murder somehow made sense (2 Sam. 11:14-15). Isn't it funny how quickly sin gets ugly and things go horribly wrong? Disobedience to God, always impinges on our attachment to others. *As we are disobedient to God, those around us suffer more.* We may not see it at first, but it's there. And even if we keep it expertly hidden, it still rides us like a rented mule. Scripture is so right when it says, "***You may be sure that your sin will find you out***" (*Num. 32:23*). This isn't about being discovered; it's about the ruination of our characters.

This moment in David's and Bathsheba's life would smell so badly, and become known so widely, that one of David's own sons, Amnon would act out his wretchedness by raping one of

David's daughters, Tamar.⁷ In this moment we see how sexual sin becomes multi-generational. And because David did nothing to redress the rape, another of David's sons, Absalom, took matters into his own hands and murdered Amnon.⁸

And our actions often have wider circles than we ever dreamed. Earlier in this lesson we said that when David sent a servant to "find out" who the beautiful next door neighbor was, it was basically a cover-up. Let's look at this a little more closely. Bathsheba's husband, Uriah had been one of David's "thirty mighty men," his hand-picked warriors.⁹ But the circle gets wider. Bathsheba's daddy, Eliam, was also one of David's thirty mighty men.¹⁰ Joab, David's top military commander was David's "hit man" in this murder, and he was one of David's thirty mighty men. So also was Joab's brother, Asahel.¹¹ So it was that the army found out about David's actions, and the men were revolted by David's throwing Uriah under the bus.¹² Undoubtedly, key men in the army had contact with some of Israel's Elders, and so it was that Israel's Elders learned of David's actions and turned against him.¹³

David's most trusted advisor had been a gentleman named Ahithophel.¹⁴ As it turned out, Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandpa,¹⁵ and he was so embittered by David's adultery and murder, that he waited for his moment to even the playing field. When David's son, Absalom attempted a coup against the king, Ahithophel left David's court and sided with Absalom.¹⁶ When that coup failed, Bathsheba's dear old grandpa committed suicide.¹⁷

By this time, David's top military commander, Joab so disrespected the King that he disobeyed David's direct order not to harm Absalom. When the men found Absalom, Joab personally drove three javelins into Absalom's heart,¹⁸ and then invited other men of the army to join him in desecrating the body.¹⁹

The first child born to David and Bathsheba, died. It was merciful, because had he lived, that child would have been known throughout his life as "the bastard child of Israel."

When David died and Solomon took over the throne, he went sex-crazy with 1,000 concubines. He later wrote, ***"I denied myself nothing my eyes desires; I refused my heart no pleasures."***²⁰ but this sexual hedonism resulted only in existential depression.²¹

The legacy of adultery: A quick fling; deception, murder, death of an innocent baby, fratricidal rape, a grandfather's suicide; a son's sexual hedonism. Like ripples on a pond. All of this is what God desired to save David from when he said, "Do not commit adultery." So what do you suspect God wishes to save you from when He gives the same command to you?

Bible Study:

1. Discuss what Numbers 32:23 means. Again, it's *not* about being discovered in your sin. Ultimately, what is the legacy of adultery?

2. Discuss how a godly person might apply Galatians 6:1-2, and James 5:19, to the issue of adultery in the life of a friend.
3. Read 1 Cor. 5:1-2 and 5:9-11. Discuss the adulterous relationship that was happening in that church. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians to expel these people? Would expulsion have been Paul's recommendation if the couple did not claim faith in Christ?
4. Read Eph. 2:4-5.
 - a. Does grace mean we're free to abandon God's moral law (Ex. 20:14)?
 - b. How does God apply His grace to us when we have sinned (Rom. 5:8)?
 - c. What is the spiritual role of the church? Are churches to be like policemen imposing the law upon others; or more like a parent tending the self-inflicted wounds of a son? (How does your church measure up to your answer?)
5. How does a believer go about applying God's grace, in the face of adultery? Discuss all those who needed grace in the story of David and Bathsheba – that is, discuss all those who needed God's grace when the stone of adultery was thrown into the pond of life.
6. Read Psalm 51. What do you think was God's response to David's prayer? In Ps. 51:4, why didn't David say, "Against Bathsheba, and her baby, and Uriah, and Amnon, and Tamar, and Ahithophel, and Absalom, and my whole family, and the nation of Israel I have sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight"?

References:

1. www.adulterytips.com
2. Atwood & Schwartz, 2002, Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy.
3. www.dearpeggy.com/affairs
4. www.doctorbonnie.com
5. www.moderndirections.com/fifty - this source claims that 64% of women have affairs, while only 62% of men have affairs
6. 1 Chron. 3:1-3
7. 2 Sam. 13:3-19
8. 2 Sam. 13:20-29
9. 2 Sam. 23:39
10. 2 Sam. 23:34

11. 2 Sam. 23:24
12. 2 Sam. 15:13
13. 2 Sam. 17:4
14. 2 Sam. 15:12; 16:23; 1 Chron. 27:33
15. 2 Sam. 23:34
16. 2 Sam. 16:21-17:3
17. 2 Sam. 17:23
18. 2 Sam. 18:14
19. 2 Sam. 18:15
20. Eccl. 2:10
21. Eccl. 2:17-20