

Running the Red Lights Affair-Proofing Your Marriage

Introduction:

1. Adultery. Infidelity. Cheating. An affair. Whatever word you use to describe it, it occurs at high cost.
2. Solomon described it as follows. “As an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life” (Prov. 7:22-23).
3. But so many have confessed, “I did not intend for this to happen. I still can’t understand why I did it. It was like I was someone else.”
4. How can we avoid getting caught in the snare of adultery?
5. For the next few minutes I want to talk with you about “running the red lights” that lead to adultery and what you can do to put the brakes on before it’s too late.

Discussion:

I. The problem.

- A. According to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, “A new crisis of infidelity is emerging in which people who never intended to be unfaithful are unwittingly crossing the line from platonic friendships into romantic relationships . . .” (www.aamft.org/families/Consumer_Updates/Infidelity.asp).
- B. The statistical estimates vary.
 1. Some national surveys show that 15% of married women and 25% of married men have had sexual affairs.
 2. If homosexual couples are included in the survey the statistics sky-rocket because in this community faithfulness is generally not the norm.
 3. From what I have read, if you study heterosexual couples, draw from a large representative national sample in the United States, and define infidelity as extra marital sex it occurs in about 25% or less of such committed relationships. See J. Grohol (2013). How Common is Cheating and Infidelity Really? Psych Central. Retrieved on August 19, 2016.
- C. But if you add to the definition “emotional adultery” the statistics rise.
 1. “Emotional adultery” is when there is an emotional intimacy created beyond a mere friendship. In almost all situations there is a “flirtatious spark.” What’s the difference between a mere friendship and becoming too close emotionally? Your spouse can generally define that for you.
 2. “Emotional adultery involves an emotional connection that does not necessarily become sexual.
 3. For example, emotional adultery could consist of an internet relationship (Skype, Facetime, chatroom, other social media, email), a work relationship, church relationship or a long distance telephone relationship. These platforms create an environment for easy emotional connection without threat. Internet platforms are

characterized by anonymity, accessibility and affordability.

4. While there are many different types of infidelity (Some are sex only. Some are emotional only. Some combine emotion and sex.). Often emotional adultery has occurred prior to sexual adultery.
- D. There are all kinds of reasons given for affairs.
1. Including . . .
 - a. Dissatisfaction with the marital relationship.
 - b. Emotional emptiness.
 - c. Need for sexual variety.
 - d. Anger at partner.
 - e. No longer “in love.”
 - f. Growing apart.
 - g. Desire to make partner jealous.
 - h. “Get back” at a partner who had an affair.
 - j. Childhood experiences of diminished feelings about self are boosted by another’s flattery. Cf. Prov. 7:21.
 - k. Monogamy isn’t natural.
 2. Whatever the reason, there are generally 4 stages of development.
 - a. Development of a close emotional bond. Sharing deep thoughts and feelings to one of the opposite sex. Ex. Discussing details of your marriage and problems.
 - b. Keeping it a secret. This increases the allure and excitement. Sometimes this includes fantasizing about the other person. Do you find yourself sexually attracted to this person? Do you leave out details of your day because they include spending time with the person you are attracted to? Do you lie to your spouse about this person?
 - c. Dating. Lunch, playtime, seeing and doing things together. Justified by saying, “He/she is just a friend.” “Just a colleague.” Helping someone through an emotional time, a problem marriage, a death. Cf. Matt. 5:28; Ex. 20:17.
 - d. Sexual liaison.

II. I assume that we are all clear on what the Bible teaches about adultery (ex. Ex. 20:14, 17; Matt. 5:28; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; et.al.), but at a practical level what can we do to control ourselves? To not get caught up in the snare? What are the red lights that we run on the road to adultery?

- A. Ignoring/minimizing our emotional needs.
1. God has designed us with emotional, relational and sexual desires. We want to know and be known, to be intimate.
 2. There are emotional and relational needs that may be legitimately met through friends, family relationships and other social acquaintances. Biblical examples abound. Ruth and Naomi. David and Jonathan. Jesus, Peter, James and John and perhaps including Mary and Martha.
 3. There are emotional/relational/sexual needs that are to be met within marriage. Going outside the marriage relationship to meet needs intended to be met exclusively within the marriage is sinful and destructive.
 4. If we are not getting our needs met within the marriage people often turn to someone

outside the marriage to get those needs met. But it is like our need is unlimited. Sometimes it may be the case that one goes outside even though needs are being met in the marriage. But the tendency is greater if there is dissatisfaction in the marriage.

5. “Are you blaming me for my spouse’s adultery?” Absolutely NOT!! Everyone is responsible for their own actions! It is a common myth that only people who are living in an unhappy marriage engage in affairs. I am saying that if the two of you ignore or minimize your emotional needs you are allowing an unhealthy environment to develop. Both of you are vulnerable. Vulnerability is multiplied when needs are unmet.
 6. In order to avoid running this red light recognize and appreciate the way you are designed by God and work to meet each other’s needs.
- B. Avoiding what feels difficult.
1. When you avoid talking about deepest emotions you put your marriage at risk for infidelity.
 2. But sometimes we avoid talking about what we need and how we can meet each other’s needs because it may cause conflict, pain, grief, fear, anger. And then when our partner attempts to we dismiss, condemn, defend, do not listen and so they stop telling us.
 3. Some relationships “work” for a long time until some stressor comes along—illness, death, job loss, financial trouble, life transition and because they have not been receiving emotional comfort from one another temptation arises to fill that emotional void unlawfully. The stressor becomes the catalyst.
 4. To put the brakes on here tell your partner what you need even when it is difficult or may cause conflict, pain, grief, fear, anger. Create an environment for your partner to feel safe to do this. Don’t dismiss them. Validate their concerns.
- C. Feeling your deep emotional need being met by someone other than your spouse and not putting on the brakes.
1. You enjoy it. It pleases. It feels good.
 2. You may rationalize it by saying, “It’s just talking.”
 3. It then leads to touching.
 4. Hugging and kissing.
 5. Sex.
 6. Generally secretive. May involve lying, deceit.
 7. Negative consequences eclipsed by the need being met. Betrayal. Guilt. Violated trust. Grief. Pain. Anger. STD’s. Interrupted relationship with the Lord, spouse, children, parents, friends, church.
- D. Factors that can lead to unfaithfulness. Complicated by alcohol and drug use.
1. Looking for ego boosts outside your marriage.
 2. Resisting conflict resolution.
 3. Discounting fun and relaxation together.
 4. Increased time apart.
 5. Allowing daily stresses to sabotage your intimacy.
 6. Letting love life fizzle.
 7. Giving in to predictability.
 8. Living in denial.

9. Forgetting your commitment.

- E. Be aware of “danger zones.” Avoid them if you can. Hoover over the brakes when approaching a danger zone. Traveling together on business trips. Spending time alone with the person. Enjoying the company of that person at work too much. Internet contacts. Sharing too much personal information.

III. “I’ve gone too far. What now?”

A. Not necessary the marriage end. When Judah committed adultery (idolatry) God remembered His covenant. He was angry. He forgave. See Ezek. 16.

B. The betrayer.

1. Cut off all contact with the other party.
2. Offer sincere apology to your spouse. Repeat as needed.
3. Honestly answer all questions. Not all the X-rated details, but when, how often, where, who else knows, how it started, etc.
4. Be committed to your marriage.
5. Address your guilt.

C. The betrayed.

1. Move through the anger, hurt.
2. Evaluate any underlying marital issues.
3. Address feelings of insecurity, distrust, etc.
4. Look toward forgiveness and healing.

Conclusion:

1. In order to successfully get through this life we must face many hard realities.
2. One of those is our own vulnerability to the sin of adultery.
3. In order to be in a right relationship with God we must face our sin, as hard as it may be. We must face our temptations.
4. God forgives our unfaithfulness taking the consequence of our sin upon himself. He is the model of both faithfulness and forgiveness.