

So, Your Name is on the Ashley Madison List

By now we've all heard about the Ashley Madison list. No, it's not the Dean's list. That website is one of the most blatant attacks on marriage, offering "guaranteed affairs or your money back" because "life is short you should have an affair."

I soon realized Josh Duggar was not the only one on this scandalous list. It wasn't long before you could search the millions of names for those in your own city. I've never read the list, searched for names, and don't plan on it.

Soon, my phone began to "blow up." "Pastor, did you hear about him being on the list? I can't believe they were on it. I wonder if their spouse knows?" After receiving four or five phone calls and texts about people I knew personally I got sick to my stomach and began to pray for forgiveness, repentance, and restoration.

I asked the Lord to help me be available to help those caught in sin and gently restore them to Him and to their spouses. Then, the unthinkable happened. I got a phone call about a pastor friend on the list (don't ask because I won't tell you who it is). My heart sank. I reached out in attempts to pray and say I love them and am available to help them through this sin and hurt but still haven't gotten a call back. I'm not giving up.

Gossip has been great but the hurt has been greater. The people who contacted me were sincerely compassionate and looking for advice on how to help. The only thing I knew to do was turn to the Scripture. Galatians 6:1-2 says, "Brothers, if a man is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, watching yourselves, lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's

burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

The responsibility of Christians is to gently and lovingly restore people who are caught in sin to Christ. I’ve had some on the list call me seeking help. I’ve reached out to some I heard about. I’ve heard reports of people attempting and committing suicide.

Please don’t cause more pain to those who are already in pain. That is not the solution. Hurting people need others to come alongside them and offer hope that it can get better when it seems it can’t get any worse. That hope is found in Christ who forgives all of our sins and can restore us to God and our spouses.

What if you are the one whose name is on the list? Now is the time to come clean. Your sins have found you out (Numbers 32:23). Expose the deeds of darkness to the healing light of Christ (Ephesians 5:11-14). Don’t run, hide, or seek to cover up. It will be painful but you can work through it with the love, grace, forgiveness, and mercy that come from Jesus.

You can be free, forgiven, and restored. You can be passionately in love and fulfilled with one spouse for the rest of your life. Get Biblical counseling, hopefully with your spouse. What if this has been done to you? Pray. Ask the Lord to give you a desire to reconcile and a heart of forgiveness—the same forgiveness He’s offered you for your sin (Ephesians 4:32). Be willing to patiently work through this with your spouse as they repent (prove themselves to be healed and godly sorrowful in this sin).

What if you know someone on the list? Don’t enter into gossip or judgment. Pray for wisdom on how to help and be available.

Lord, I pray for hope, forgiveness, true repentance, and restoration that come from your Holy Spirit who alone can make two become one and tear down the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14).

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