

This Destructive Sin Can Bring a Lifetime of Heartache

There is a children's song that goes, "Oh be careful, little eyes, what you see/ Oh be careful, little eyes, what you see/For the Father up above is looking down with love/ So be careful, little eyes, what you see."

Its truth is as relevant for adult eyes as it is for little ones.

With all the many deceptions at his disposal, Satan is most successful at causing devastation and sorrow to mankind through sexual temptation. The widespread acceptance of sexual infidelity and promiscuity in our culture is testimony that Satan has undermined the foundation of family and fidelity to God.

From the beginning, God established sexual intimacy between a husband and wife as the framework for blessing and prospering mankind. Sadly, Satan has persuaded the minds of many that "feeling good" is a valid reason for being unfaithful or engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage. Instead of valuing love in the biblical sense; today anything goes to justify infidelity and sexual immorality. Often individuals justify infidelity and divorce on the basis of "romantic love," while considerations of agape love for children, family and God are thrown out the window.

More often than not, sexual sin has its roots in lust or emotional need. Lustful men take advantage of emotionally needy women, enticing them into relationships that have no chance of meeting their needs. The result is that at least one of the individuals is emotionally, spiritually and sometimes physically (either through abuse or sexually transmitted disease) devastated.

Satan wins again. In the Ten Commandments given by God, the seventh is "Thou shall not commit adultery." Society bought the lie that God's command against adultery and other forms of sexual immorality is somehow repressive and prudish. We could avoid so much sorrow by simply trusting God and believing that He has our best interests at heart.

The word "adulterate" in its generic sense means to "debase, corrupt or make impure." In the strictest sense of the term, adultery occurs when a married man or woman participates in a sexual encounter with someone other than the spouse. Such a union "corrupts" the individuals involved and damages the relationships with their covenant marriage partners. Although "fornication" (sex outside of marriage) is somewhat different from adultery, the biblical warning against both is equally severe. In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote:

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, and you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

God's judgment rests on all those who are guilty of these things. The good news is that the incredible grace of God is able to bring washing, justification and sanctification to all who call upon the name of Jesus and receive forgiveness and deliverance from sin.

It is also possible to commit adultery without actually being in physical contact with another person. Just as Jesus broadened the scope of what constitutes murder to include hatred and slander, He also explained the sin of adultery includes "gazing upon a another in order to lust after her or him." This idea is completely contrary to the belief system of

our society, which relies heavily upon sexual activity and pornography to sell everything from cinema tickets and automobiles to common household products. Sex is promoted everywhere as a means to increase financial prosperity.

Jesus taught that sin begins in the heart of man. It is possible to sin in the sight of God without even physically committing the act! This is a radical teaching. It is based in the knowledge of the catastrophic consequences of sin as well as the surpassing value God places on the human soul. Jesus has such high regard for each individual that He strongly opposes any action or spiritual state that places anyone in jeopardy. This radical resistance to sin is evident in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:

“You have heard that it was said by the ancients, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away. For it is profitable that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body be thrown into hell.”

Over the centuries some Christians have taken this to an extreme by actually making themselves eunuchs, like third-century Christian writer Origen, who castrated himself, which was not Jesus’ intent. But Jesus’ teaching does advocate extreme avoidance of things that lead the heart into sin, lust, or adultery.

If “looking lustfully” on a woman equals adultery, then the eye should not be allowed to linger on things that corrupt the spirit and bring us into bondage. Today, the floodgate of pornography on social media, in movies and in print makes

keeping one's gaze fixed in a healthy direction very difficult, but it is necessary for those who struggle with sexual temptation. If Satan is allowed to stimulate an inordinate sexual desire through the "eye-gate," then he can set in motion a chain of fantasy and lust that eventually brings disaster in the physical realm.

Wrecked families, distressed children, divorced couples and sexually transmitted disease, even death, are consequences of a society that refuses to acknowledge God's wisdom in setting sexual intimacy within the bounds of heterosexual marriage.

Faithfulness is the opposite of adultery. From the very beginning, when God created man and woman, He established the covenant of marriage so a couple would live together in a faithful, binding relationship with the intimacy being so great that they would no longer be viewed as separate, but united as one. Genesis 2:24 says:

"For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Gen. 2:24, NASB).

This union between a husband and wife is a mystical, spiritual picture of God's intentions for the relationship He plans for Himself and His bride (His people).

God's ideal for marriage is to have His people openly exhibit the mystery of Jesus' relationship with His bride, the church. God decreed that a man and woman should not come together outside of marriage because of the holy nature of the union itself. This is why marriage should never be entered into hastily or flippantly. In the eyes of the Lord, it is a sacred, binding, covenant relationship that is sealed and ratified by the shedding of blood.

When two people enter a marriage covenant, they are agreeing to be faithful to their partner in all aspects of relationship, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Many

people commit “emotional adultery” by giving their attention and emotional energy to someone other than their spouse. This is no less adultery in the eyes of God than committing the physical act and, in fact, this type of sharing may culminate in the sexual act itself.

It is Satan’s strategy to make the purity of human sexuality appear repressive and prudish, and this has brought the Christian view into ridicule in our day. This is partially due to unscriptural teaching within the church. The world would have us believe that Christians are missing out on a good thing, but the truth is, we are taking the exact steps needed to ensure that our sex lives are as fulfilling as God intended.

The Song of Solomon helps us understand that God intended for sex to be completely enjoyable. He intends for couples to experience intimacy and pleasure together without cumbersome emotional and “soul” ties. Those former sexual relationships infringe on the mental and emotional energy designed exclusively for the spouse. The ghosts of former intimate physical relationships bring unnecessary complications into the marriage but, of course, these issues can be overcome through the grace and mercy of Christ. But how much better not to have to deal with them in the first place!

Words cannot convey the pain adultery has on families. It harms the trust and intimacy vital to any marital relationship and the damage can be so severe that the marriage cannot be repaired. If adultery leads to divorce, children endure the trauma as well. Even if the offending partner genuinely repents and is restored to the marriage, it usually takes years to repair the lost trust and intimacy.

God created intimate sexual relationships to be enjoyable in the context of marriage because He knows that intimacy of this depth requires a place of security. Sexual intimacy outside this guarded alliance ultimately brings heartache and bondage.

Deviation from God's established order, even once, allows Satan just the opening he needs to destroy lives.

Many people have had sexual partners without a real understanding or knowledge of God's purpose and plan. Others may have known better but were overcome by temptation. Can the damage of past indiscretions be repaired? Yes! Spiritually speaking, God can redeem your virginity through the cross of Jesus Christ. If you've brought the "ghosts" of sexual sins to your own marriage, you can repent of the past and start fresh. Scripture teaches that the blood of Jesus not only cleanses us from sin, but it also cleanses our conscience from evil works.

If you are presently single but have had sex, ask God to forgive you of your past and by His abounding and great grace give you renewed "spiritual purity." Agree with Him that you will keep yourself pure from this point on and trust Him for the power to walk in purity.

Can you imagine the joy and blessing of God upon your wedding night as you present yourself spiritually pure to your partner? By walking in obedience and purity, you are actually empowering yourself and your marriage to levels of trust and intimacy that you would not have known if you had chosen to disobey God's commandment.

God promised to make us brand-new and pure in His sight. *Memories* of past transgressions may never completely go away, but they can be dealt with by remembering God's provision of forgiveness. The miracle of Christ and the cross is so powerfully effective that even though the memory of the sin may remain, it will seem as if it happened to someone else.

In God's love and mercy, He set laws in place to protect us and others from the destruction Satan wants to inflict. Disrespect, murder and sexual immorality all cause great harm to those who perpetrate them as well as to their victims. But living a life of honor towards one another, valuing life and

living in purity leads to blessing and peace with both God and others. {eoa}

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