

Why Adultery Will Always Be a Foolish Choice

The infamous Ashley Madison website promotes its dating business by announcing: "Life is short. Have an affair." Now, it looks like the company will have a short life as well. Ashley Madison will likely go out of business after anonymous hackers last month published the names of 37 million accounts on the site for extramarital affairs.

Ashley Madison caters to people who want to secretly cheat on their spouses. Clients pay a fee using their credit cards, set up discreet profiles and chat with potential hookups—all in a supposedly "secure" environment. A special guarantee promises users they can get their \$250 back if they don't have an affair within three months. About 90-95 percent of the website's users are male, and women are allowed to post their profiles for free.

So much for cyber security. You may have thought adultery would be easier in this era of Snapchat and password protection. Think again. Millions of people have literally been caught with their pants down in this latest scandal.

When the hackers released their information on the Internet last month, the news sent shockwaves across the world as users realized they'd been busted. The list of red-faced clients include employees at the White House and the U.S. congress, law enforcement and military officials, a Justice Department attorney and Christian activist and reality TV star Josh Duggar, who appeared in TLC's *19 Kids and Counting*.

Duggar has now resigned in disgrace from his job at the Family Research Council. After the Ashley Madison scandal broke, he released a statement on Aug. 20 admitting he had been unfaithful to his wife. Research into the hacker's information

showed that Duggar, who is 27, paid \$ for two Ashley Madison subscriptions. He listed himself on the site as “attached male seeking female.”

I don’t know anyone who paid money to Ashley Madison, but I do have friends who have experienced the pain and shame of an extramarital affair. Adultery has been happening since the book of Genesis, and it never ends well. Ever since the patriarch Judah was outed for his secret affair with Tamar, or when a prophet exposed David’s affair with Bathsheba, men and women have tried unsuccessfully to hide their marital unfaithfulness.

If you have been involved in an extramarital affair, or you know someone who has, here are five painful but necessary steps you must take immediately:

1. Get brutally honest. You can hide your sin for a while, but if you don’t confess it to God and your spouse, you will be miserable—and the guilt will only intensify. Numbers 32:23 says: “Be sure your sin will find you out.” Come clean. Your spouse’s reaction may be one of anger, disgust or heart-crushing disappointment, but you can’t heal your broken soul without a full confession.

2. Break off all ties to the past. Most affairs begin as emotional connections that later lead to sex. That’s why it’s not easy for some people to end affairs cold turkey. You must be ruthless in severing all communication with the other person. No calls, no letters, no texts, no involvement whatsoever. The adulterous man described in Proverbs 7 falls into sin because he naively wanders near the house of the adulteress. It says of his foolish error: “He does not know that it will cost him his life” (Prov. 7:23).

3. Rebuild your marriage. If your spouse is willing to forgive you and start over, you must work as hard on repairing your marriage as you would if you were rebuilding your house after

an earthquake. You may come to the realization that your marriage was not built on a strong foundation to begin with. After going through a season of forgiveness and re-establishing trust, renew your marriage vows with a minister and supportive friends.

4. Recruit a support team. You can't rebuild your marriage alone. You will need a counselor, a loving pastor and Christian friends who are willing to speak the truth to you. Read good books on marriage, attend a marriage retreat and reach out for help. You may feel like hiding from others in shame, but you must resist the temptation to stay isolated.

5. Seek a personal revival. Ultimately, people wander from their spouses only after they have wandered from God. If your heart is aflame with the Holy Ghost, you will not let your eyes or your feet drift into sin. The only way you can truly repair your marriage is by surrendering your entire life to Jesus and asking Him to ignite your heart with love for Him. Begin having a daily quiet time with God, read His Word, pray with your spouse and invite him or her to join you on this journey of spiritual revival.

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