Affairs

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\It seems not a week goes by where we don't read the account of some high-profile pastor, politician, celebrity or local leader who has succumbed to the seduction of adultery. Add to this the reports that flow in the office, on the campus or in our neighborhoods, and it makes you just shake your head and shudder, asking, "When is this going to stop?"

In addition to the shameful example exhibited by the Christian community, consider the names of key people in our culture who have gone down the path of adultery in recent years:

* Steve Croft - *60 Minutes* journalist and TV personality
* Gen. David Petraeus - Four-star general and former head of the CIA and armed forces in Afghanistan and Iraq; resigned at the age of 60 due to an extramarital affair
* Eliot Spitzer - Former governor of New York; caught in an extramarital affair at the age of 48
* Mark Sanford - Governor of South Carolina; caught in an extramarital affair at the age of 49
* John Edwards - Former presidential candidate; admitted, at the age of 56, to having an extramarital affair that included fathering a child
* Brian Dunn - Former CEO of Best Buy; resigned at the age of 52 due to alleged personal misconduct, later revealed to be a close relationship with a female employee
* Harry Stonecipher—Former president and CEO of Boeing; resigned at the age of 69 due to an improper relationship with a Boeing executive
* Chris Kubasik—Former president of Lockheed Martin; resigned at the age of 51 due to conducting a close, personal relationship with a subordinate employee.

This is just a partial list, and only of those who got caught!

Scripture warns us that prior to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, wickedness will increase. In our sex-saturated society, all of us must be on guard against the "wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11) in the realm of moral impurity. Remember that David was not a young man when he succumbed to sexual sin. Most commentators believe his age was around 51 years old.

*First Corinthians 10:12 warns us, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (NIV).* Gordon MacDonald, former president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and author of *Magnificent Marriage* and *The Effective Father*, told us after his moral failure that he neglected to heed the counsel of Oswald Chambers, who said*, "An unguarded strength is a double weakness."*

Thank God that Gordon humbled himself, submitted to the discipline that was necessary, and for years now has been restored as an effective leader.

*The Challenge to Live Chaste in Our Culture* It doesn't matter if you're male or female, single, divorced or married. We are all living in a culture characterized by an explosion of three things:

1. the elimination of restraints and sexual taboos
2. erotic stimuli that bombards us everywhere
3. the pervasive encouragement to indulge yourself rather than the biblical standard to control yourself

Dr. Ted Roberts is trying to combat the avalanche of pornography flooding our churches with a DVD series advertised with provocative statements like "68% of Christian men view pornography" and "50% of pastors view porn regularly." He bases this on a five-year national survey conducted by Pure Desire Ministries entitled "Porn Usage in the Evangelical Church."

Paul Coelho, one of the most influential writers of our time, just released his latest book called *Adultery* dealing with this theme in our society today.

In case you haven't heard, the latest cultural trend being pushed is something called "sugar dating" where primarily younger women trade sexual companionship for money given by older, oftentimes married, wealthy men. The documentary, *Daddies Date Babies* surveys this development and explains how many millennial girls engage in this activity to get quick cash and pay off their debts!

There is a movie called *Men, Women and Children* portraying how sex is pulling at us from every side in today's digital age. *USA TODAY* reviewed it and stated: “What's happening to us in the process? With porn at the ready on 'incognito' tabs, BDSM a jarring go-to for teens and Ashley Madison ads winking over one-click affairs, where are we headed?"

In an article in *The Christian Post* entitled "The Defining Moment Between Attraction and Sexual Sin," the author confessed that "after living 19 years free from dealing with sexual attraction outside my marriage, I find myself experiencing those old familiar triggers once again. YIKES!"

Gordon McDonald relates how he once was asked by a businessman if Satan was to "blow him out of the water" how would he do it? Gordon responded, "He'd never get me in the area of morality. I'm just too strong there. It would have to be somewhere else."

It would do us all good to regularly meditate on the scripture *"So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But with the temptation will provide the way of escape to bear up under it" (1 Cor. 10:12-13).*

Wouldn't it also do us good to consider the reasons why women and men get involved in sexually inappropriate or adulterous relationships? If we identify some signposts leading to the shipwreck, hopefully we'll steer clear before it's too late. Since much of this occurs in the middle years of peoples’ lives let’s consider the following by zeroing in on men (although women go down a similar path.) Even if you’re younger, remember “to be forewarned is to be forearmed.”

*Seven Reasons Why Middle-age Men Get Involved in Sexual Immorality* 1. Heart issue where they've never really submitted totally to Jesus Christ as Lord and then gotten established in an authentic local church for ongoing nurturing and support.

2. Unhealthy fear that time is fleeting and they must "grab the gusto" and experience whatever sexual pleasure remains before it's too late.

3. Sensing a lessening of physical attractiveness for their spouse and possible floating bitterness that she is "letting herself go," thinking it's alright to be attracted to and involved with other available women.

4. Because a spouse is disinterested in sexual activity, maybe experiencing menopause, thinking God understands and "gives a pass" to engage in extramarital sexual behavior.

5. As children have grown and left for college or marriage, there's simply more time for other pursuits which can include exploring new realms of sexual relationship.

6. Greater financial prosperity enables discretionary income to be tapped for recreation, hobbies, gadgets and, why not some sexual pursuits?

7. Whereas resolving relational conflicts quickly was once a priority, now laziness and selfishness rules, allowing the marriage to drift and a gulf to widen - a setup for Satan's alternative.

The subtlety of sexual sin was seen in the entrapment of David with Bathsheba. We must be on guard for *external* danger signals in relating to the opposite sex (growing dependence on someone; receiving affirmation and praise; listening to complaints about loneliness; receiving gifts; enjoying physical contact...) as well as *internal* danger signals (regularly thinking about a person; comparing the person to my spouse; finding excuses to be around the individual; having sexual fantasies about the person; scheming ways to be alone with them; sharing marital problems with them; exploring Facebook contacts; keeping "articles of affection" from an old flame...).

In these challenging times, it is critical to be aggressive in putting to death fleshly impulses and guarding our minds. May we discern any subtle signs of attraction and seduction and radically avoid associations where we might be drawn into temptation.

No matter what our age, let's resolve to be aggressive in avoiding temptation and attacking sin when it first rears its ugly head! *"I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back ‘till they were destroyed. I crushed them so that they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet" (Ps. 18:37-38).*

Personally, I have been married faithfully for 46 years, and my wife’s parents had been married 69 years. Among 63 family members (children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren), there has been only 1 divorce. Thanks be to God!

I have learned a lot from those who surround me. Besides their wonderful example, I've also had a healthy dose of the fear of God instilled in me. And to keep that healthy fear of God ever present, I engage in a regular spiritual discipline that I've passed on to multitudes in my more than 50 years of full-time ministry and pass on to you below.

*The 25 Consequences of an Adulterous Relationship* I keep handy a list of what can happen to an individual who stupidly yields to adultery. I read through this slowly and prayerfully on a somewhat regular basis. I make copies and pass it along to others. I'd like to share it with you and pray you do likewise. I credit Randy Alcorn and Alan Hlavka as the two Christian leaders who formulated most of this list decades ago.

The Bible and my conscience strongly warn me about going down the path to adultery. Whenever I feel particularly vulnerable to sexual temptation or sense I'm being deceived, I will review what effects my action can have:

1. Grieving the God who created and redeemed me
2. Causing the sacred Name of my Lord Jesus to be mocked and ridiculed
3. Having to look Jesus, the righteous Judge, in the face on Judgment Day to give an account for my actions
4. Following in the tragic footsteps of those whose immorality forfeited their position and reputation
5. Inflicting untold hurt on my wife, my best friend and loyal companion
6. Losing my wife's respect, trust and confidence
7. Hurting my beloved children and possibly disillusioning them to Christianity for life.
8. Destroying my example and credibility with my children and probably nullifying both present and future efforts to teach them to obey God
9. Perhaps losing my wife and my children forever through a divorce and relocation
10. Causing a potential of lifetime shame to my wider family name
11. Losing self-respect and a clean conscience
12. Forming memories and flashbacks that could haunt me for the rest of my life as well as hinder future intimacy with my wife
13. Wasting years of career training and experience should I forfeit my job
14. Forfeiting the effect of years of witnessing to others and reinforcing their distrust for Christians
15. Undermining the faithful example and hard work of other Christians in the

Christian community

1. Bringing great pleasure to Satan, the enemy of God and all that is good
2. Risking very real physical harm from a jealous boyfriend or spouse
3. Heaping judgment and endless difficulty on the person with whom I committed adultery
4. Bearing potential physical consequences of STDs like gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, herpes and AIDS; infecting my wife and causing sterility, deformity or even death
5. Possibly causing pregnancy, with the personal and financial implications, including a lifelong reminder of my sin
6. Heaven forbid if the unborn baby was aborted and I was haunted by this fact all the days of my life
7. Living with debilitating fear and guilt, maybe even blackmail, until the sin was exposed
8. Invoking shame and lifelong embarrassment on myself
9. Experiencing long-standing mental and emotional distress plus sexual baggage, sleeplessness, depression, migraines, obesity, etc.
10. Long-standing financial repercussions

Let's resolve that we will not only consider these very real consequences on a regular basis but will take seriously what it means to be involved in a covenant marriage as Christians.

Here's the deal, as God says it best:

*"As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 4:1-8).*