

INFIDELITY: PROTECTING OUR MARRIAGES

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“We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”

The Prophet Joseph Smith once said that the plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality. He wrote that it would be “the source of more temptations, more buffetings, and more difficulties for the elders of Israel than any other” (cited in Benson, 1986).

In our day The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles declared in *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*, “God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”

We live in a world that cares very little about keeping the seventh commandment; “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” As Elder Neil A. Maxwell (1979) has pointed out, “The seventh commandment is one of the least heeded but most needed laws of God.”

The Family Proclamation goes on to explain that a husband and wife should “honor marital vows with complete fidelity.” A misconception in the world today is that infidelity involves solely the commission of sexual acts outside of marriage. However, being faithful to our spouse requires much more than avoiding adultery.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1962) taught that, “Marriage presupposes total allegiance and total fidelity.” We marry with the understanding that we will give ourselves completely to our spouse and that any divergence is sin. Infidelity is defined as the opposite of faithfulness. We show our faithfulness to God by loving him with all our

heart, might, mind, and strength (D&C 4:2). We show fidelity to our spouse in the same ways. Indeed, our spouse is the only other things besides God who we are commanded to love with all our heart. We are commanded to love our spouse with all our heart and cleave unto none else (D&C 42:22).

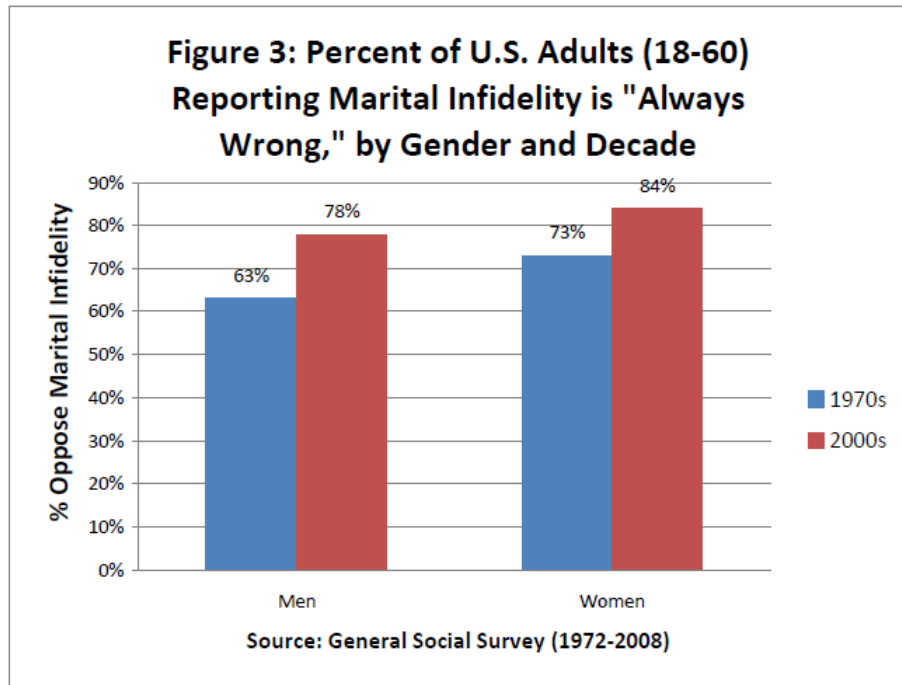
In this chapter we will discuss the incidence rates of infidelity, the different types of affairs, the impact of infidelity, and the overall causes of infidelity. We then offer suggestions on how to keep a marriage strong and make it less vulnerable to acts of infidelity. Finally, we discuss recovery and how to repair a marriage once an act of infidelity has taken place.

How Common Is Infidelity?

One might think that infidelity is rampant in our world today with many marriages experiencing infidelity. This is not surprising given the pervasive news coverage of the indiscretions of politicians and celebrities. Similarly, television shows spew an ever-present circus of affairs. Indeed it is difficult to find a television show about married people who do not have affairs.

Based on the best sources, the numbers are much lower than the media portrays. According to research from the National Marriage Project (2008), 21% of married men and 14% of married women report ever having an affair. Although these numbers represent far too many traumatized families, this research also indicates that this number has not increased over the past 20 years. In terms of the percent of married couples currently having affairs, Smith (2006) reports, “The best estimates are that about 3-4% of currently married people have a sexual partner besides their spouse in a given year” (p.

9). Another encouraging statistic is that over the past three decades, the percent of U.S. adults reporting that marital infidelity is “always wrong,” has steadily increased.



The Four Types of Affairs

There have been many books and research identifying different kinds of infidelity. However, in summary, affairs can be categorized based on the type of involvement (emotional or physical) and the level of relational attachment (attached or detached). Based on these dichotomies there appears to be four types of affairs: fantasy, visual, romantic, and sexual (see Table 1). It is important to point out that it does not take two people for infidelity to occur. Many times affairs are committed within the mind or heart of a married individual with no other participating party.

Type of Involvement	
Relational Attachment	EMOTIONAL
	PHYSICAL

	DETACHED	Fantasy	Visual
	ATTACHED	Romantic	Sexual

Fantasy Affair

A Fantasy Affair (*emotional/detached*) is characterized by having an emotional affair with someone who has no knowledge about what is taking place, or with someone who is anonymous and would likely never be met. Examples can include flirting online or otherwise fantasizing romantically about someone other than a spouse. This violates the commandment given to Eve that her “desire” should be unto her husband (Genesis 3:16). When we let our thoughts unfaithfully imagine what life would be like with another person, infidelity has been committed. More and more this type of infidelity is being committed online through e-mails, chat rooms, or social networking sites. One survey showed that on-line sexual activities were the cause of separation and divorce in over 22% of those surveyed (Schneider & Wise, 2001, cited in Subotnik, R., 2007, p. 188.) Even though the two people may never meet face-to-face, the unfaithful spouse becomes more and more emotionally disconnected from his or her family. Many will justify their thoughts claiming their love is dead, however President Kimball (1962) taught that when love wanes or dies “it is often infidelity of thought or act which gave the lethal potion.”

Likewise this type of infidelity may occur individually, even without an accomplice. For example, one might have fantasies about life with a fictional character in a book, or even a real person who is unaware what is taking place. President Kimball

(1969a) has warned, “There must be no romantic interest, attention, dating, or flirtation of any kind with anyone” outside the bounds of marriage. “Even the thought of adultery is sinful.”

President Harold B. Lee (1974) taught that “thought is the father of an act. No man ever committed murder who did not first become angry. No one ever committed adultery without a preceding immoral thought. The thief did not steal except he first coveted that which was his neighbor's.” It is important to remember "For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he . . . (Proverbs 23:7).”

One female married college student reported this tender and powerful story:

One principle that really pricked my mind was the idea of being emotionally unfaithful. This really hit home to me. I have a certain guy friend, Jake, who has been a big influence in my life and will always be important to me. I could have married him, but chose not to. I love and cherish my husband, Chad, and don't doubt that I made the right decision in marrying him, but I have found myself still wanting that friendship with Jake from my past. I felt myself having the thoughts described in our text of, “Why can't Chad be more like Jake?” I looked forward to running into Jake on campus. I spoke to him occasionally on the computer. As I read the chapter on purity in our text, I was horrified, and tears filled my eyes when I realized that I was in those beginning stages of an emotional affair. The thought of being unfaithful to my sweetheart is disgusting to me, and yet in a way I was playing with emotional infidelity. I really loved the quote, “The grass is greener . . . on the side of the fence you water!” (Marshall, 2007). It is so true! My friendship was not bad, but what was bad was that I was putting energy into it

which should have been put into my marriage.

I made a strict commitment to myself and the Lord that I would not share my heart with anyone but my husband. I had been thinking about Jake, worrying a lot about him and I decided this was the end and I cut it out of my mind. Jake had other people and the Lord to take care of him.

I changed my usual route walking to class because I knew that sometimes walking that way I would run into Jake. I stopped talking to him on the computer. All that energy, the thoughts, the time on the computer, everything, I turned over to my husband plus more. I am again looking for little acts of service I can do to show Chad how much I do totally adore him. I am doing the things to build our relationship spiritually and to give God his place in our marriage. I want to have the greenest, most beautiful grass on the side of the fence where my husband is, and I will not let anything in to harm that.

Many times what begins as a detached affair leads to an attached affair. Smith (1975) warned, “Infidelity is a subtle process. It does not begin with adultery; it begins with thoughts and attitudes. Each step to adultery is short, and each is easily taken; but once the process starts, it is difficult to stop.” In other words, what may start off as a Fantasy or Visual Affair can evolve into more serious types of infidelity such as Romantic Affairs and Sexual Affairs, which involve other people directly.

Visual Affair/Pornography

Visual Affairs (*detached/physical*), such as pornography are perhaps the most common type of infidelity. They are categorized as “physical” because they do typically involve the viewer acting out sexually. The Lord has warned us that we should not look

upon anyone lustfully. While this includes wondering eyes, it also includes any form of sexual media. Pornography in all forms is strictly forbidden along with any Internet site, magazine, movie, and book where immodesty is portrayed.

President Kimball (1962) said, “There are those married people who permit their eyes to wander and their hearts to become vagrant, who think it is not improper to flirt a little, to share their hearts, and have desire for someone other than the wife or the husband. Many acknowledge the vice of physical adultery, but still rationalize that anything short of that heinous sin may not be condemned too harshly; however, the Lord has said many times: ‘Ye have heard that it was said by them of old times, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28.).’”

Romantic Affair

A Romantic Affair (*emotional/attached*) occurs when an individual becoming emotionally involved with a specific person other than his or her spouse. A romantic affair is characterized by a “second life” and is a result of trying to escape the monotony of everyday life (VanderVoort & Duck, 2004).

The media is constantly telling us that ordinary marriage is “hopelessly boring and middle-class ” (cited in Hafen & Hafen, 1994). In the book “The Belonging Heart” Elder Bruce and Marie Hafen (1994) write that Satan would like us to believe that we should abandon our dull routines and seek out dramatic gestures of romance, even if that means looking outside our home. He wants us to believe that life’s petty responsibilities are impeding desire and love. He wants us to believe that every marriage should be like a Shakespearean love story, never asking us to imagine Romeo and Juliet dealing with

household clutter, unpaid bills, and crying children.

Research by VanderVoort and Duck (2004) confirms that there is often a “utopian edge” to an affair (p. 12). They believe that one reason this type of affair is so tempting is that it offers an escape from everyday life. It transfers a person from a life of laundry, ringing telephones and children into a life of hotels, resorts, and back rooms. Another lure of this type of affair is the belief that “everything changes yet nothing need change” (p. 6). While the affair may transport its actors out of everyday life, it assures it will be there when they return.

An adulterer might feel like he or she is empowered and reinventing his or her life. However, research by Duncombe and Mardsen (2004) suggests that those who enter affairs to escape everyday life will be disappointed over time, since everyday life has a way of catching up with us. Initially the affair can seem spontaneous, romantic, and thrilling. Over time “the exciting lover ceases to be a stranger and routine becomes the enemy of spontaneity” (p. 144).

Sexual Affair

“Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul (Proverbs 6:32).”

In contrast to the Romantic Affair, a Sexual Affair (*physical/attached*) occurs when a person engages in sexual acts outside the bonds of marriage with or without emotional attachment. In some instances visual affairs will lead a person into committing the more serious sin of a physical affair. President Kimball (1962) warned, “The adversary is subtle; he is cunning, he knows that he cannot induce good men and women immediately to do major evils so he moves slyly, whispering half truths until he has his

intended victims following him, and finally he clamps his chains upon them and fetters them tight, and then he laughs at their discomfiture and their misery.”

Satan will try to convince us that we can find happiness, joy and pleasure in infidelity. Just the opposite is true. Even though it may seem for a time that everything is wonderful, President Benson (1988) warned, “Quickly the relationship will sour. Guilt and shame set in. We become fearful that our sins will be discovered. We must sneak and hide, lie and cheat. Love begins to die. Bitterness, jealousy, anger, and even hate begin to grow.”

Impacts and Consequences of Infidelity

Regardless of the type of affair committed, the spiritual consequences are similar. Elder Richard G. Scott (1994) has warned, “Intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside of marriage because they undermine His purposes. When experienced any other way, they are against His will. They cause serious emotional and spiritual harm.”

Apart from the spiritual impacts, infidelity has other negative impacts. Infidelity is one of the leading causes of divorce (Amato & Previti , 2003), infidelity produces traumatic impacts on the spouse who was cheated on and turns one’s world upside down (Baucom, Snyder, & Gordon, 2008). The spouse often feels nauseated, repulsed, depressed, undesirable, insecure, helpless, abandoned, anxious, and even suicidal (Hall & Fincham, 2006).

Infidelity has also become a significant public health issue. With the rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases, individuals who engage in sex outside of marriage not only risk exposing themselves to STDs but also their spouse. With the constant threats of

HIV, infidelity can “literally become a matter of life and death” (Hall & Fincham, 2006, p. 155)

The Negative Impacts of Pornography

Visual Affairs result in other unique negative impacts of their own including: the objectification of people, overemphasizing the visual, overemphasizing sex, and the expectation of instant gratification (Chamberlain, Gray & Reid, 2005).

Impact One: Objectification. We are constantly being bombarded with messages that it is normal to treat people as objects. Women especially are depersonalized, sexualized, and exploited to sell products. Objects are not alive; their only job is to please us. Objects do not speak up, challenge us, or walk away. We control objects and when they do not satisfy us, we get rid of them.

When we objectify people, we falsely believe that they are there only to please and gratify us, not to challenge or disagree with us. We stop seeing their humanness and uniqueness. In turn, we begin to lose the ability to notice and respect the needs and feelings of real people in our lives.

Impact two: The Overemphasis on the Visual. The exaggeration of visual stimulation creates dysfunctions in the way males relate to women’s bodies. “When women are presented as visually perfect, compliant sex objects, real women with personalities become less appealing” (Chamberlain, Gray & Reid, 2005). Men begin to believe in a false sense of entitlement and an expectation of how all women should look. Instead of relating to real women, these men fantasize about over-idealized body types. This fantasizing causes these men to become emotionally absent and unavailable for real people, such as their own wife.

Impact Three: The Overemphasis and Desensitization of Sex. The Savior taught that lusting after another is a form of adultery. “Lust is defined in the dictionary as the strong physical desire to have sex with somebody, usually *without associated feelings of love or affection*” (Chamberlain, Grey and Reid, 2005). When people view pornography, it is done without feelings of love, delight, generosity, consideration, sympathy and kindness. It is not possible to view pornography and experience emotions of love, delight, generosity, consideration, sympathy, and kindness. The end result is a state of numbness, isolation and loneliness.

Elder Maxwell (1979) stated, “When we lose our capacity to feel, it is because we have destroyed the taste buds of the soul. We have blunted our capacity to appreciate those refinements, that graciousness and empathy which belong to that better world towards which we are pointed.” One reason sexual immorality is so dangerous is because it is so desensitizing. Elder Maxwell (1979) pointed out “An ironical fact is that lasciviousness can move such people, who wrongly celebrate their capacity to feel, to a point where they lose their capacity to feel! They become, in the words of *three* different prophets in *three* different dispensations, “past feeling” (1 Nephi 17:45; Ephesians 4:19; Moroni 9:20). Chamberlain, Gray, and Reid (2005) write, “Love works and lasts when those involved are committed to their relationship regardless of how they are feeling at the time. The addictive pursuit of passion or feeling without the work, effort, and behaviors involved in relationships actually leads to the erosion of real feeling and desire.”

Impact Four: Instant Gratification and Instant Solutions. Over time, consumers of pornography are conditioned to believe that they are entitled to sexual

gratification at the drop of a hat. This runs counter to the Christlike attributes of persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, and kindness (Doctrine and Covenants 121:41-42) and is contrary to our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness for us. Pornography creates nothing but dependence on pornography, while in a healthy relationship there is a dependence on both God and family. When times are stressful, pornography can be seen as a "quick fix," but it allows only a temporary escape at best. Chamberlain, Gray, and Reid (2005) assert "The best sexual relationship is the result of a loving, respectful relationship carried out in the many aspects of everyday life" Thus real intimacy in real marriage takes time, patience, and sensitivity as the two endeavor to become "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Causes of Infidelity

Why Do People Have Affairs?

Many spouses who have engaged in infidelity reference dissatisfaction with their marriage as the reason for an affair. Research has shown that unfaithful women were especially more likely to attribute negative characteristics to their husband than unfaithful men did to their wives. Many of these women felt that their husbands no longer loved or valued them and that their affairs made up for something "missing" in their lives (Allan, 2004, p. 132).

There are several other factors that are correlated with one having an affair. Cultural, religious, and personal beliefs also influence our likelihood of being unfaithful. Smith (2006) reports, "Extra-marital relations are also more common among Blacks, those with lower incomes, those who attend church less frequently, those who have been separated or divorced (including those who have remarried), and those who are unhappy

with their marriage” (p. 11). Other studies indicate that those who live together before marriage and those who work around members of the opposite sex also have higher affair rates. (Treas & Giesen, 2000).

It is important to realize that dissatisfaction in marriage does not itself result in an affair. A common myth is that affairs occur *because* of a bad marriage (Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon 2007a). This belief is simply untrue. President Kimball (1962) had this in mind when he stated, “Spouses are sometimes inconsiderate, unkind, and difficult, and they must share the blame for broken homes, but this never justifies the other spouse's covetousness and unfaithfulness and infidelity.” There are many people in troubled marriages that do not commit infidelity just as there are plenty of affairs that occur even when spouses are generally satisfied with their marriages. A troubled marriage neither causes nor justifies infidelity.

Infidelity has less to do with the state of a marriage and more to do with the individual. It is often a result of a personal transformation that has taken place within an individual's very nature. Elder Bruce C. Hafen (1994) explained that, “When men or women are true to the deepest instincts of their natures, they will nurture sensitivity and kindness as part of their marital fidelity. But when their motives darken toward betrayal or a quest for power, they cast away their human kindness in ways that deny the link between true sexuality and fidelity.” Thus we can prevent affairs by changing who we are and how we act.

Preventing Marital Infidelity

Similar to most illnesses, infidelity is easier to prevent than to remedy. In addition to working to strengthen our marriages, we can prevent affairs by a) being on guard and

b) being fiercely loyal.

Boundaries: Being on Guard

A wise father recounted this story to his sons:

Once there were three men each trying to secure a job as a teamster (wagon driver). The freight company only wanted to have the very best drivers for their wagons, so they gave each potential driver a test. The test was to drive a wagon up a steep mountain road where one side of the road was a cliff. The first driver, eager to show his superior skills as a driver, drove the wagon up the road with the wheel of the wagon right on the edge of the cliff. The second driver was even more impressive; with great skill and dexterity he managed to drive the wagon up the road with half the wagon wheel teetering over the edge of the cliff! The third driver was not so talented and drove the wagon as far from the cliff as possible.

Who got the job? The third driver, of course.

With wagons as well as with marriages, the moral of the story is the same: If our cargo is truly precious (and it is), we will drive our wagon as far from the cliff as possible.

Often we think that affairs primarily happen when spouses do not love each other enough, when the marriage is bad, when sexual intimacy is suffering, or when a more attractive alternative comes along. But affairs are not primarily about love, sex, or attraction, they are about boundaries; where we draw the line. Dr. Shirley Glass, in her book, *Not "Just Friends": Protect Your Relationship from Infidelity and Heal the Trauma of Betrayal* (2003), points out that affairs are more about boundaries than anything else. She uses the analogy of walls and windows. In an extramarital affair, people put up walls

in their own marriage and open the window to others outside the marriage. Instead, we must know how to put up appropriate walls to protect our marriages from outside influences and open the window of love and communication within our marriage.

Consider these wisely placed walls, among others (Glass, 1999; Goddard, 2007):

Wise Walls

- Resist the desire to rescue an unhappy soul who pours their heart out to you.
- Don't share the most painful things of your soul with an attractive alternative. This develops deep levels of intimacy.
- If a conversation makes light of marriage, respond with something positive about your own marriage.
- Discuss marital issues with your spouse. Work on the problems at home. If you do need to talk to someone else about your marriage, be sure they are a friend of the marriage.
- Don't have lunch or take work breaks with same person all the time.
- When you travel with a co-worker, meet in the public rooms, not in a room with a bed.
- If an old boyfriend or girlfriend is going to be at a class reunion, make sure you bring your spouse along.
- If you value your marriage, don't do lunch alone with an old flame.
- Don't try to be cute or "flirty" with anyone other than your spouse.
- Do not allow your heart to dwell on anyone.

Newly married couples make a clear resolution to each other to always hold firm to their marriage vows. However, according to Smith (1975) many young LDS couples have a false sense of security regarding their marriage's susceptibility to an affair. One myth says, "If I have my wedding in the temple, the marriage will take care of itself." Unfortunately this is untrue. A temple marriage does not guarantee a celestial marriage, or even a pleasant one. No matter who we are, where we were married, how much we love each other, or what church calling we have, we must always be on guard against affairs.

Carlfred Broderick (1989), a noted LDS marriage and family counselor, tells the following story of when he was a young branch president in Athens, Georgia.

When I was a young branch president in Athens, Georgia, Elder Spencer W. Kimball, [who was] at that time a member of the [Quorum of the] Twelve, visited our stake as a conference visitor. About a week before the conference, each bishop and branch president got a letter inviting us to a Saturday afternoon meeting with Elder Kimball. Our Relief Society presidents were also invited to a separate meeting at the same hour. But the letter went on to say that Elder Kimball had specifically requested that the priesthood leaders and Relief Society presidents *not* travel together to the meeting unless accompanied by at least one of their spouses. Frankly, I was offended at the implication that I couldn't travel seventy miles in broad daylight with my Relief Society president...without getting into some sort of trouble. ...

At the meeting, Elder Kimball, after some opening remarks, announced that the rest of the time would be devoted to answering any questions we might have. No one raised their hands for a few moments. So, twenty-five years old and brash, I raised mine.

‘Yes, President Broderick?’

‘Elder Kimball, could you explain to us how it is that you brethren trust us enough to call us as priesthood leaders and Relief Society presidents but not enough to drive together un-chaperoned to a Church meeting?’

He looked at me mildly over his glasses. ‘Is it your thought then, President, that we just sit in Salt Lake City and make up these rules?’

I could sense that somehow I had lost the initiative in the exchange. I replied,
'Well, I guess so, more or less.'

'Oh, no,' he said gravely, 'we came to that rule only after we had lost a
few bishops and Relief Society presidents.'

'In the *Church*?' I blurted.

He just smiled sadly at me and asked for the next question (p. 18-19).

Yes, even bishops and relief society presidents and the couple who loves each
other more than anything else, must all be on guard.

"Determine that there will never be anything that will come between you
that will disrupt your marriage. Make it work. Resolve to make it work.
There is far too much of divorce, wherein hearts are broken and
sometimes lives are destroyed. *Be fiercely loyal one to another.*"
(Hinckley, 1999, p. 4, emphasis added).

Fiercely Loyal

Another myth is that if I love my spouse enough we are immune from affairs
(Smith 1975). Fidelity is a process and is measured by the degrees of loyalty, allegiance
and commitment between husband and wife. Any action that allows inappropriate
relationships to grow erodes fidelity.

Many situations in work, in society, and in church assignments will involve men
and women working closely together. All of these situations can be opportunities for
emotional involvement to develop (Treas & Giesen, 2000). The task for every married
couple is to maintain complete fidelity and loyalty to their spouse and none other.

Modern Subtlety

Today Satan attacks us with subtle and indirect means. He gets us inappropriately

close to someone who is not our spouse under the guise of missionary work, friendship, or helpfulness. He subtly builds inappropriate emotional bonds while quieting our consciences with weak rationalizations. Perhaps this is Satan's favorite ploy with those who desire goodness and are filled with compassion. The Book of Mormon describes his strategy: "And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21; Goddard, 2007, p. 83).

Two young, recently married LDS men were hired as social workers at a mental health agency. In their positions, Ross and Devin were often teamed up with a female case worker when making home visits to some clients. Ross and his wife had decided early on in their marriage that it was generally a bad idea to travel alone in a car with someone of the opposite sex and that this should be avoided whenever possible. Ross struggled to find explanations for not wanting to ride in the same car as the co-worker on these appointments. After all, how do you say, "Um, I don't want to ride together because we might end up having an affair"? Ross awkwardly found excuses to drive his own car whenever possible. Devin was also in the same situation but felt like riding together in the same car as the female co-workers was just part of the job. He felt that this was all professional and he loved his wife deeply and was therefore safe.

After several months, Devin approached Ross in private, hung his head and said, "I don't want you to think badly of me, but I think I'm falling in love with Savannah." Savannah was one of the co-workers who was many years older than Devin and was a single, divorced mother.

How does a happily-married, faithful priesthood holder fall in love with a divorced single mother many years his senior? It happens the same way that we fall in love with our spouse in the first place. We spend time together, we share our hopes and dreams

together, and we discuss our problems and disappointments together. All of these things build emotional intimacy, and emotional intimacy forms part of the foundation of a loving relationship.

In the end, Devin was able to save his marriage after months of pain for both him and his wife and after years of rebuilding trust. So, what is worse? Ross's awkward moments? Or Devin's months and years of pain and problems?

If our cargo is truly precious, it is best to drive our wagon as far away from the edge as possible.

Controlling Thoughts. In Doctrine and Covenants 121:45 we are counseled to “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.”

President Kimball (1969b) counseled that when a couple is faithful to each other “eyes will never wander and thoughts will never stray toward extra-marital romance. In a very literal sense, husband and wife will keep themselves for each other only, in mind and body and spirit.”

Elder Maxwell (1979), while discussing temptation stated, “Temptation expands so as to fill the time and space available to it. Keep anxiously engaged in good things, for idleness has a way of wrongly insisting, again and again, that it is ourselves we must think of pleasing.”

On that same note President Benson (1988) counseled, “Control your thoughts. Always pray for the power to resist temptation. If you are married, avoid flirtations of any kind. If you are married, avoid being alone with members of the opposite sex whenever possible.” The admonition to avoid being alone with members of the opposite sex might seem overly cautious to some, but it does have its merit. Brent A. Barlow

(1986) related a story from his time as a boy scout. “I remember when I was a Boy Scout in Troop #561. Scoutmaster Mariel Hansen used to tell us that if we wanted to avoid fire, we should keep our flint in one pocket and our steel in the other. We followed his advice, and I can't remember any of us ever getting burned. There is a message there somewhere for men and women in today's work force.”

The Key: Putting our Spouse First. All of our relationships with others will be considered secondary when our spouse is foremost in our lives. We all know the commandment "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else" (D&C 42:22). However what most of us fail to realize is that this allows for no sharing, dividing, nor depriving. President Kimball (1962) related “The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes preeminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse” (emphasis added).

If we can accomplish this, it is very unlikely our marriage will ever be susceptible to an affair.

Repairing Marriage after Infidelity

Eventually all affairs will end in heartache, sadness, remorse, loss of self-respect and loss of the Spirit. These are consequence of breaking the laws of God, President Benson (1988) warned that a person could not indulge in a promiscuous relationship without suffering these ill effects as a result.

Although most spouses see infidelity as the nail in the coffin and a sure sign of the death of a marriage, research has shown that this is typically not the case. In their book

Getting Past the Affair, Snyder, Baucom, and Gordon (2007a) explain that the majority of couples, about 70%, stay together, despite one of them having an affair, and attempt to work it out. Surprisingly, nearly half of those who choose to stay together end up building a relationship that is stronger than before the affair.

How then are such marriages repaired? Is there life and hope after such trauma? Many counselors suggest various steps. In the end, there are five important steps that are necessary to successfully moving on after an affair. These include: Rebuilding Trust, Gaining Perspective, Repentance and Forgiveness, Overcoming Addiction, and Making the Choice to Stay Together.

Step 1 - Begin to Rebuild Trust

Becoming Accountable. Even if others do not know your actions, the first step to rebuilding trust is to become accountable. Accountability means being responsible for your actions. The first step to achieving this important step is reaching out to your ecclesiastical leader and spouse. This step breaks the secrecy that has been taking place and helps relieve the feeling of being an imposter.

Elder Richard G. Scott (1995) related that cover-ups will never solve the problem nor save us from the spiritual consequences of our actions. Our Heavenly Father sees every act. The adversary only persuades us to procrastinate repentance so we will suffer these consequences longer or so he can make public our most embarrassing acts at the most harmful time. Taking comfort in the fact that transgressions are not known by others is like “an ostrich with his head buried in the sand. He sees only darkness and feels comfortably hidden. In reality he is ridiculously conspicuous.”

Disclosing improper behaviors may be the hardest thing you are ever required to do, and it will not be painless. However, Chamberlain, Gray, and Reid (2005) remind us that past actions are causing the pain, not the confession. Delaying is a selfish act meant only to protect the offending spouse from their spouse's reaction and other impending consequences. It will not make things any easier. The offending spouse must have faith that disclosure will change their life for the better, finally relieving them of the burden they carry. These authors also remind us that after a disclosure, one may need to give their spouse time to deal with his or her emotions. This is a part of taking responsibility for the pain the offending spouse has caused. This time is best spent focusing on personal behaviors and what changes need to be made.

Establishing Boundaries. After full disclosure, the next step of rebuilding trust involves setting boundaries. Snyder, Baucom, and Gordon (2007b) suggest that a couple begin by discussing how often, and what aspects of the affair they will talk about. They will also need to set clear boundaries on interactions with the outside offender, since trust is seldom regained quickly when any contact continues.

Trust is an essential ingredient in marriage because it provides stability. However, trust is different than certainty. After a betrayal, the offended spouse needs to decide if he or she is willing to work towards rebuilding a relationship of mutual trust. This inevitably involves some risk of being hurt again, but holding on to hurt will not eliminate that risk. One must be willing to allow some risks and uncertainty.

In the case of pornography, trust will require time for the husband or wife to change and grow. It requires a track record and a pattern of consistent trustworthiness. What was once considered an innocent and "safe" behavior, such as surfing the Internet alone, may

no longer be acceptable until trust has been regained.

The Trust Bank Account. According to Snyder, Baucom, and Gordon (2007a), trust is often one of the last things to return after an affair. Most couples enter marriage with high levels of trust. Once an affair has occurred, that same level of trust is hard to recover. Rebuilding trust takes time, and progress typically is only made in small steps.

In this way trust is much like a bank account. At the beginning of a marriage the trust bank account is full. However, an act of infidelity will wipe out the trust bank account and leave a gaping deficit. The bank account will need to be re-built by making small deposits, repeated often throughout the years.

The partner that has wiped the account clean can best make deposits through actions such as eliminating secrecy, honoring relationship boundaries, and keeping agreements they have made with their spouse about specific issues in their relationship (Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon 2007a).

It is not uncommon for the offending spouse who is trying to rebuild trust in the relationship to feel frustrated at the slow pace of progress, causing them to become frustrated at their partner for not “trusting” them when they have been doing so good at making deposits. The offending spouse forgets that their efforts of repayment have only brought the account out of the red and that time is still needed to build a positive reserve. It will be a slow process but one that is necessary if the marriage is to succeed.

Step 2 - Gain a Better Perspective

After rebuilding trust, the next step is for both partners to understand how the affair came about. Explore aspects of the marriage that made it more susceptible to an affair. Possible factors might have included high amounts of conflict, lack of emotional

connectedness, lack of physical intimacy, high amounts of stress, and other outside influences. Once again, it is important to remember that “reasons” do not constitute “excuses” (Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon, 2007b, p. 112) There is no justification for an affair, but examining the relationship will help the couple locate factors that made their marriage more vulnerable to an affair. A couple should then regain a “big picture” view of their partner and their relationship, not just focusing on the affair.

Gaining a better perspective also includes realizing that one person is not responsible for the sins of another. For example, Satan will try to make an innocent wife believe that if she was more attractive or more alluring, that her husband would not view “perfect” images of other women on the internet or have committed a sexual affair. This is simply untrue. If a man’s satisfaction with a wife just depended on attractiveness, men married to supermodels and movie stars would be the most faithful husbands (Snyder, Baucom, & Reid, 2007).

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob rebuked husbands guilty of sexual transgression (Jacob 2:31-33). Jacob did not tell the wives to be more attractive, desirable, loving, or sexually available (Chamberlain, Gray, & Reid, 2005).

Finally, during this step Snyder, Baucom, and Gordon (2007a) advise couples to refrain from making big decisions about the marriage, since right after an affair has occurred can be a very stressful time full of turmoil and conflict. Davidson (1999) points out that the adversary does not want the couple to succeed in healing and forgiving and will fight every effort by the couple to stay together. During this time faith will be needed to overcome the seeds of doubt the adversary will plant. However, the emotions experienced during this time are often not an accurate sample of what the marriage was

like before the affair or could be like over time if the couple decides to work through the challenge.

Step 3 - Repentance and Forgiveness

Sins of sexual impurity, although very serious, are forgivable. The first part of repentance involves determining how serious the Lord finds our transgression. President Kimball (1969a) reminds us that “The Lord apparently rates adultery close to premeditated murder, for he said: ‘And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife; nor seek thy neighbor's life (D&C 19:25).’”

Studying and pondering the Lord’s commandments concerning the sin of infidelity after it has been committed will bring feelings of sorrow and remorse. Although painful, these are necessary and will help develop a sincere desire for change and repentance (Scott, 1995).

Finding Forgiveness. “He that has committed adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsaketh it, and doeth it no more, thou shalt forgive” (D&C 42:25).

Sometimes when we realize the seriousness of our sins, we tend to wonder if the Lord will ever be able to forgive us. Although it may seem impossible, President Kimball (1982) stated, “In the matter of sexual sin and adultery...repentance can bring forgiveness if that repentance is sufficiently all-out and total.”

Confession. One of the greatest resources members of the church have is the ability to receive priesthood help after a transgression. Davidson (1999) points out that Satan wants nothing more than for the transgressor to be cut off from the love and concern of priesthood leaders. This enables the adversary to continue the work of destruction that has already begun.

Forsaking Sin. Forsaking a habit is not an easy thing to do, but it is possible.

Elder Scott (1990) outlined the process by explaining:

Decide to stop what you are doing that is wrong. Then search out everything in your life that feeds the habit, such as negative thoughts, unwholesome environment, and your companions in mischief. Systematically eliminate or overcome everything that contributes to that negative part of your life. Then stop the negative things permanently. Recognize that you'll go through two transition periods. The first is the most difficult. You are caging the tiger that has controlled your life. It will shake the bars, growl, threaten, and cause you some disturbance. But I promise you that this period will pass. How long it takes will depend upon the severity of your transgression, the strength of your determination, and the help you seek from the Lord. But remember, as you stand firm, it will pass.

The second period is not as intense. It is like being on "battle alert" so that you can fend off any enemy attack. That too will pass, and you will feel more and have increased control of your life. You will become free.

Forgiving an Unfaithful Spouse. Forgiving an unfaithful spouse can be one of the most difficult tasks in the healing process, yet it is also one of the most necessary.

According to Snyder, Baucom, and Gordon (2007a), when the injured partner decides to forgive their spouse, they are choosing not to let feelings of hurt and anger dominate their lives. Furthermore, they give up the right to continue punishing their partner and demanding further restitution.

Although it is difficult and seems unfair, forgiveness is the only way the injured spouse can find healing and peace. Snyder, Baucom, and Gordon (2007a) explain that

being the injured partner up to this point has permitted the person “to claim the moral high ground by having been wronged.” Forgiveness is difficult because it requires letting go of the role of victim and the benefits that go with it. But while vengeance may feel satisfying in the short run, it will keep you stuck in the past.

These authors (Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon, 2007a) also point out that forgiving does not mean you condone the behavior or are no longer hurt by what happened. Forgiveness, as defined by Dr. Sidney Simon (as cited by Faust, 2007) means freeing up and putting to better use the energy once consumed by holding grudges, harboring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds. It is rediscovering the strengths we always had and relocating our limitless capacity to understand and accept other people and ourselves.”

Step 4 - Overcoming Addiction

When infidelity has occurred as a result on an addiction, overcoming that addiction is an important step to repairing the marriage. Addiction does not make a person “bad.” A husband who views pornography can be a great person, but one who has contracted a serious illness (Chamberlain, Gray, & Reid, 2005).

When infidelity has occurred in the form of a visual affair, such as pornography, it is important to realize that it is not simply a bad habit, but more similar to an illness.

Overcoming an addiction is a process that requires a great change to take place. Even a strong desire to stop and long periods of abstinence are not a sign the addiction is gone. It is similar to trying to kill a dandelion plant by mowing off the top. As long as the roots are still present, the addiction is guaranteed to resurface (Chamberlin, Gray & Reid, 2005).

Step 5 - Making the Choice to Stay Together

The final step in the recovery process is for both spouses to decide whether to continue the marriage. The good news is that 60-75% of those married couples, where one spouse had an affair, remain married. The better news is that half of these couples emerge from the wreckage of the affair with an even stronger marriage than before (Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon 2007a).

When the choice is made to stay together, Snyder, Baucom, and Gordon (2007a) emphasize that this means the choice is also being made to commit to, strengthen, and maintain the relationship. They offer these suggestions to moving on together as a couple.

- *Healing the Past*—Discussing and acknowledging hard feelings to each other in a caring way may be the most critical steps toward moving beyond deep hurt from the affair.
- *Strengthening the Present*—Instead of trying to get back to where you were, focus on making the most of where you are. Efforts should be made at reducing conflict and creating opportunities for intimacy and joy. It also means continuing in efforts of a secure and loving relationship even when you do not feel like it.
- *Enriching the Future*—Couples should talk about their dreams of how they would like to move forward together and what they are willing to do to make those dreams a reality. This will help you remain emotionally connected and help prevent the problem of remaining together physically but emotionally apart.

Through hard work, couples can and do rebuild their lives through building trust, gaining an understanding of the affair, repenting and forgiving, overcoming any addictions, and by making the courageous choice to stay together.

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