

The Causes, Consequences and Cures of Unfaithfulness

Rich Nathan

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Family Mess 2 Series

2 Samuel 11-12

I have shared this story before on a few occasions, but it vividly describes what almost every married person will experience at some point in their marriage. Years ago I was teaching at Ohio State. I was sitting in my office alone with one of my female students. She happened to be a model. We were talking about her relationship with her sister. I was trying to be helpful. She began to describe the pressure she was under from her family to be successful. She then talked about the grades she was getting in my class. She was sitting on a chair right by the edge of my desk in a small office.

Without warning, this female student got up laid down on my desk and looked me in the eye and said: “Professor Nathan, I will do anything and I mean anything to get a better grade.”

Now, freeze-frame that image in your mind for just a moment. I was 28 years old, married with two young children, and a pretty female student decided unexpectedly to lie down on my desk and proposition me. “Professor Nathan, I would do anything, and I mean anything, to get a better grade. What would you do?”

I’ll tell you what I did. I stood up and said, “Well, I guess you’re going to have to study much harder.” And then I walked out of my office.

I believe that the Holy Spirit allows what I have called “moments of maybe” to come into every believer’s life. The moment of maybe is that moment where time seems to be elongated. You are standing up on the top of a ski jump and you have a clear decision – should you push off or take off your skies and walk away. If you decide to push off, to go up to your date’s apartment, to respond to the hug or the compliment, to communicate your attraction to another person, to answer the email or the text, you are going down that ski jump one way or the other. You might cartwheel down. Some of you are old enough to remember the introduction to ABC’s Wide World of Sports where they showed an unfortunate skier literally cart wheeling down a slope, crashing into the fence. And you heard the words: “The thrill of victory...” and they would show the skier, and then “The agony of defeat...”

Virtually every woman’s magazine has an article devoted to the question: “Is he cheating on you?” And then they list the signs, often subtle, where you realize that “something is different,” something is out of sync in our relationship.

As I mentioned to you, I subscribe to 7-8 women's magazine; I can barely keep track of all of them. But here are signs of cheating from a recent women's magazine:

Changes in normal patterns of behavior

Spending more time away from home, paying more attention to their appearance, dressing differently, suddenly getting in shape, being less attentive, being less (or more) interested in sex, making casual comments about new or unfamiliar interests.

Secrecy about emails, text messages, or financial transactions. The discovery that your partner is keeping a secret email account, or has another cell phone is a sure sign that they're hiding something.

We live in the age of adultery. Think about the revelation of marital unfaithfulness from some of America's top leaders just in the last couple of years. David Petraeus, our top General in Afghanistan, who resigned as the Director of the CIA after the FBI uncovered that he had an extramarital affair with his biographer. Mark Souder, who was a staunch advocate of abstinence and family values, resigned from the House of Representatives after it was revealed that he had an affair with a female staffer with whom he had made a public video extolling the benefits of sexual abstinence. Herman Cain, a presidential candidate, who was accused of sexual harassment by several women, and of having a 13-year affair with a woman named Ginger White.

And if you go back several years, of course, there is New York Governor, Elliot Spitzer, Presidential candidate, John Edwards, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Newt Gingrich, Rudy Guilliani, and Mark Sanford, the South Carolina Governor, who somehow got lost on the Appalachian Trail and ended up in Argentina with his mistress.

I won't ask for a show of hands, but how many of you have had to deal with marital unfaithfulness in your own family by your mom or dad, with a sibling, with a spouse or in your own life?

Almost no one talks about the consequences of discovering that your spouse, who you have trusted with your life and with all of your secrets has been unfaithful to you. One therapist said that the grief experienced by the victim, the devastating emotions accompanying the revelation of an affair are similar to the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Many victims find themselves unable to sleep, unable to eat, to function or to concentrate even months after the discovery of an affair. The feelings of insignificance, anxiety, anger, depression have devastating consequences for the unfaithful person's children, for themselves, and for the person with whom they've had the affair. Proverbs 16:25 says:

Proverbs 16:25 (NIV)

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Having heard so many horrible stories about infidelity over the years, I wish that this message would flash in people's minds as they face the moment of maybe:

This cannot end well

Today, as I continue in this series on Family Mess 2, we're going to examine the most famous act of adultery in all of human history, the adulterous affair of David and Bathsheba in a message that I've titled The Causes, Consequences and Cure of Unfaithfulness.

2 Samuel 11:1–5 (NIV)

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. 5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

Up until modern times men did not fight wars in the Fall or Winter. In fact, the month of March was named for the Roman war god, Mars, because people would go to war beginning at the end of March. This was particularly true in Palestine where the rainy season ended in the early Spring. This was the only time the roads would be in good condition and there would be grass and fodder for the animals to eat.

I want you to consider with me

The occasion of unfaithfulness

In David's life it was when he had reached the pinnacle of success. He was comfortably ensconced in middle age. He was about 50 at this time which tells you that lust and sexual desire is not something confined to teenagers.

The myth is that unfaithfulness is a sin of the young. You've got to be in your 20's or 30's or early 40's. It is something that just happens to couples that haven't been married very long. I know of people in their 70's who are unfaithful to their spouses. Sexual brokenness and lust does not go away with age.

But David is at the pinnacle of success. He's like the executive who is at the high point of his career making money hand over fist. He has the big house, the country club

membership, the respect of the community. David had just experienced incredible success in battles. He is wealthy and secure. David, as King, might have gradually begun to live above the rules that everyone else is expected to follow.

The responsibilities and pressure of being a leader can really play with people's minds. A person slowly convinces themselves that there are privileges and freedoms that they should have because they are so valuable to the organization. At first the privileges are extended on the basis that it makes a person's life more effective, or easier. Of course, you get a private parking space. Of course, you get a \$500, \$1000, or a \$2000/night suite to stay in. Of course, you get a private bathroom, or a big expense account. Over a period of time success can lead to a sense in the heart of a leader that they are indispensable and invulnerable.

I'm fine. I'm secure. Surely, I am not a candidate for an affair. One of the things that cause me to shudder is when I hear people say something like, "It could never happen to me." If you look at someone else's sin and you shake your head and say to yourself, "You know, I don't understand that; I don't understand how someone could be led astray; this could never happen to me," friends, you are putting yourself right in the cross hairs of the enemy's gun sights.

I sometimes wonder if because of our pride and our sense of invulnerability that God withdraws his grace from us and says: "Let me see how you do on your own. I need to reveal your heart to you. I need to show you what you are like apart from my restraining grace."

Anyone is a candidate for adultery. Psychiatrist John White in his book, *Eros Defiled*, said this:

Adulterers cannot be classified. They may be old, young; cultured, crude; lusty, refined; selfish, generous; kindly, cruel, and even, if we use the term with the slightest degree of flexibility, spiritual or carnal.

Any married person can commit adultery. The conscience lashed Puritan preacher of Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is as likely a candidate as a Casanova or a Don Juan. A Jew, a Catholic, a Quaker and a Pentecostal can all be committers of adultery; a business convention and a religious revival can both be occasions for it while cars, doctors offices, homes, and church offices are all possible places for the practice of it. You cannot distinguish adulterers by class, color or creed, but by their attitudes to their behavior. Some slowly strangle their consciences and let their self-indulgence grow like fungus. Some laugh and seem to have no conscience.

And even having a good marriage is not an ultimate cure against committing adultery. Approximately 40% of affairs occur when marriage relationships appear positive or at

least neutral. One researcher said that over half of the men and a third of the women who had affairs said they were happy with their spouses and happy with their marriages.

Most women believe that if you love your spouse, you wouldn't even be interested in an affair. Therefore, if someone has an affair, it means they don't love their spouse and they do love the person they've had the affair with. But research shows that just having a happy marriage, while it is a component in a preventative strategy, is not in and of itself sufficient to keep people from being unfaithful.

The issues that drive people towards affairs are varied as people themselves. Some people are looking for more excitement. Some people have gotten bitter regarding how life has turned out for them and think they deserve a little more. Some people are going through life crises or new developmental stages. Some folks feel that they just can't communicate with their spouses. Some people are looking for intimacy. Some people are just looking for sex.

I believe every person needs to stare at themselves in the mirror and with all conviction say: People who were more moral than me, more spiritual than me, who had deeper relationships with Christ than me, have fallen sexually. It could happen to me. I am not immune. There must be a deep humble, heart-felt recognition of our own vulnerability. Otherwise, you are setting yourself up for moral failure.

And in today's climate where there is so much moral confusion and wearing a wedding ring does not dissuade other people from seeing you as a target of their attention, I think of the line that police sergeants on TV often say as their going through the daily assignments: "Be careful; it's dangerous out there!"

Of course, not only does this text suggest the occasion when unfaithfulness arises, we also have the rationalization of unfaithfulness.

The rationalization of unfaithfulness

In verse 2 we read:

2 Samuel 11:2 (NIV)

One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,

In the ancient Middle East when it was hot people would often bathe outside. David had a large palace and so he was able to look out over the city from his roof. Rather than turn his head away from this woman, rather than flee from immorality, it says that David sent someone to find out about her.

2 Samuel 11:3 (NIV)

...and David sent someone to find out about her.

I'm not interested in having sex with her. I just want to find out about her, maybe have a cup of coffee together. Maybe talk about theology or chariot racing. Maybe she is unmarried. And when he discovers that she is married, we read in verse 3:

2 Samuel 11:3 (NIV)

...The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

He still doesn't turn away. Rather, in verse 4 it says:

2 Samuel 11:4 (NIV)

Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her.

Yes, she's married, but I just want to talk with her. I want to spend a little time in conversation with her and get to know her better. She might have some intriguing views on world politics and military campaigns. Maybe she could give me some advice about how I could be a better husband to my wives.

Rationalization. I justify and explain a questionable behavior or a questionable decision with reasons and avoid the true explanation because the true explanation – I want what I want – is too painful for me to face. So I say I'm going through a really dry time in my own marriage right now. My husband, after all, is so preoccupied with his work. We never talk. I can't remember the last time I felt connected to him. He has no capacity, after all, for intimate conversation. He's an engineer. He is an accountant. It just feels so good to have someone in my work that I can confide in who is a great listener. We laugh together. I really look forward to our little talks every day. And I really look forward to our hugs.

I'm not looking for an affair. But my wife certainly doesn't look like the woman that I married 25 years ago. She is always angry. We can't talk about anything without getting in a fight. And after our last baby was born, it's like she totally shut down emotionally and sexually. I just feel so alive when I'm with this other person.

We aren't hurting anyone. We are two mature adults. We didn't seek this out, it just happened.

I can't tell you how many times I've had people say that to me in my office. "It just happened." Unfaithfulness does not just happen. It doesn't matter what our situation in life, no situation forces us to sin. We're never forced to sin by our circumstances. We choose to sin. It's not like you are innocently walking along a path until you fall into a

hole. People talk about “falling into an affair.” You don’t fall into an affair. You choose unfaithfulness.

“I’ve got a right to be happy.” But you don’t have a right to disobey God in your pursuit of happiness. You don’t have a right to lie, or hurt other people, or break your marital vows in your pursuit of happiness.

“But I’m a good person. I work hard; I try. I’m a devoted mom. I’m a good friend. I’ve given my family a great life and lots of financial security as a result of my hard work.” Friends, life isn’t a balancing act. Sin is sin. And it is not canceled out by the good things you do. A lie is still a lie even if you give to charity. And I say this with all affection, but you are not a good person if you are cheating on your spouse, or if you’re single and you are cheating with someone else’s spouse. Whatever else you are, you are not a good person.

“This thing is so small in the scheme of things.” Do you know, your little sin and my little sin cause Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be stripped, beaten, mocked, nailed to a cross. Your little sin and my little sin are all acts of profound ingratitude toward God our Father, who has only ever been good to us and has only ever wanted to bless us and to give us life.

We all understand rationalizations regarding the issue of sex, don’t we? The mind’s ability to rationalize sin is truly frightening, isn’t it?

- I was just going to visit him at his apartment on Friday night because I was in the neighborhood. It was all so very innocent. I just wanted to pop up and say “hi.” I don’t know how we ended up in bed.

We rationalize and we lie to ourselves.

- This relationship with this Christian leader is purely spiritual. We just encourage each other and pray for each other. Sure, every time we get together we share a long hug and embrace. But all those signs of affection and intimate sharing are not going to lead anywhere.

Can we agree together to cut through all of our rationalizations?

C.S. Lewis, the great Christian apologist and author, set out the traditional Christian understanding of sex in *Mere Christianity* when he said,

There is no getting away from it; the Christian rule is, ‘either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.’

At a conference in Chicago that I attended, N.T. Wright, the great New Testament scholar, noted that the early church was known for two things: they believed in the resurrection, and they didn't sleep around. Both are tied to the Christian view of the body. The body – not just the soul as in Greek philosophy – is the arena of God's redemptive activity.

The Christian church is often criticized for only caring about sexual ethics. Well, that is not completely true, but it is also not completely false. There is a good reason why sex is such a big deal for Christians. It's a big deal for God!

C.S. Lewis accurately summed up the Bible's basic rule concerning sex. The only proper context for sex is between a man and a woman in marriage. Everything else is forbidden. And this offends every single one of us. Gay people are offended because they say, "Why can't we enjoy sex outside of heterosexual marriage?" Single people are offended because they say, "Why can't we enjoy sex with someone we love just because we're not married?" Married people are offended because they say, "You mean, I can only have sex with this one other human being for the rest of my life – even if we don't get along, even if we are separated, even if we have huge problems - and I have to swear off every other person?" No one likes the biblical standard. There it is, God calling us and inviting us to share his holiness.

Let's read on in 2 Samuel 11:4-5,

2 Samuel 11:4–5 (NIV)

Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

It means simply that she had just gotten over her period, so had not conceived that when David slept with her. Her husband was out in the field. She conceived because of her intercourse with David.

In the rest of 2 Samuel 11 David hatched a three-phase scheme to cover up his sin. He tries to get Uriah, Bathsheba's husband to come home from the battlefield and sleep with Bathsheba. That way, Uriah would be deceived and believe that the child that Bathsheba was carrying was his. But that plan doesn't work.

Friends, let me just say this. If you are at all involved in having to cover your tracks, that is a really good sign that you are out of the will of God and doing what you ought not to be doing. The person who is in the will of God does not have to cover their tracks. A person who is in the will of God does not have to go through their computer's history and delete certain items. A person who is in the will of God does not have to delete text messages from their cell phones, or hide certain financial transactions, or pretend to be

where they aren't, or have someone else providing them with an alibi, or get their friends to lie for them. If you are involved in some sort of cover up, you are almost by definition in sin and outside the will of God.

And you know, friend, that you have a serious problem, maybe an addiction, if you are covering it up. People who have eating disorders are always involved in cover ups. You have to hide your binging and purging. Alcoholics always cover up their drinking. You drink vodka because others can't smell it on your breath, or you drink when no one is around or use a sports bottle to drink from, or find creative places in your home to hide the bottle. You have to lie about what you are eating. Those who are involved in cutting themselves cover their scars with clothes. Those who are involved in gambling cover their financial losses. Those who find their comfort by shopping cover their debts by playing financial shell games with credit cards, hiding credit card statements.

If you are involved in a cover up of any kind, guaranteed you are outside the will of God.

Let me state this as plainly as I can. Secrecy is always involved in marital unfaithfulness. If you are unwilling to have your spouse investigate every area of your life without exception, if you are unwilling to show your spouse your texts, your emails, to have her listen to your voice mails, if you have secret email accounts, or another cell phone; if you are unwilling to account for all of your time that's a flashing red light that you are hiding a double life. One of the most common smoke screens I've seen by unfaithful spouses is to express shock that their spouse would be so distrusting as to ask questions about their secret second life. They try to make it seem as if questions are an affront to their dignity, a sign of incredible disrespect. They figure the best defense is a good offense. And so they try to make their spouse feel guilty about asking too many questions.

So many unfaithful people are crazy-making spouses. I'm a firm believer that every spouse ought to do as much snooping as they want to do. Nothing should be kept secret in a marriage. And no question should be left unanswered. If a spouse objects to being question, what are you hiding? Marlene has a right to know about all of my financial transactions, and I have a right to know about hers. She has a right to know where I go and how I'm spending my time. And the same is true in reverse. As much as possible, we ought to be able to live before our spouse the way that Adam and Eve lived, naked and unashamed, no cover-ups, no hiding.

And if that seems to you to be an unrealistic idea, I would say it is unrealistic, in our own flesh, by our own strength. But it is not unrealistic, if Christ is at work in both of your lives. If you're both claiming to be followers of Christ, then total transparency is what you ought to be aiming at.

So David has Uriah, a good man, sent into battle where Uriah is killed in order to take Uriah's wife for himself and cover David's adultery.

Well, here is the conclusion of the cover-up in 2 Samuel 11:25-27.

2 Samuel 11:25–27 (NIV)

David told the messenger, “Say this to Joab: ‘Don’t let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.’ Say this to encourage Joab.” When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

The same Hebrew word is used in both vv. 25 and 27. David says to his General, Joab, in v. 25: Don’t let this thing displease you. And in v. 27, “But the thing David had done displeased God.” Despite all of our rationalizations and our attempts to make something disgusting OK in our own sight, and despite all of our cover-ups and our attempts to make ourselves look OK in other people’s eyes, God sees. It doesn’t matter how we appear in our own eyes. And it doesn’t matter how we appear in the sight of others. All that we do is done in the sight of God.

The causes of unfaithfulness

You say, “How did David get to this place from being a person who was really devoted to God to becoming a man who in his obsession to cover up his sin hatched a plan to kill another good man?”

See, I believe that what occurs in people’s lives when you see significant moral compromise is that the person has been making compromises in their hearts, in their choices, for years before the big fall. You simply cannot live forever with a divided heart. Jesus said either we serve one master (he was talking about money there) or we serve another master (namely, God). But you can’t serve two masters in your heart. Many of us believe we can carry around lust in our hearts on a continual basis and think that it won’t grow or have a corrosive effect.

I’ve often pictured lust in my life as being like toxic waste from a nuclear power plant. There is this little storage tank in the secret place of my soul. The enemy comes along and lies to me and says, “This nuclear waste of lust will remain safely incased in your heart. After all, Rich, it glows and it provides a certain amount of comfort and warmth and thrill inside. You can have this secret little internal life going on in your heart. And you can tap into it and it will give everything a nice warm glow.”

The problem with toxic waste is this: it doesn’t remain forever safely in the container of your heart. It starts eating through the walls. It starts breaking down your will. And if it is not cleaned out after a certain period of time, it will leak out. It will seep out in terms

of an emotional attachment. It will seep out further in terms of seeking out thrills. And this toxic waste will seep out further in terms of physical attachments.

Well, in the same way that David sent a message to Joab, the Lord sent a message to David. In 2 Samuel 12:1-6 we read this:

2 Samuel 12:1–6 (NIV)

The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. “Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.” David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

By saying, “you must pay four times over,” David was prophesying regarding himself. He paid four times over with the death of four of his sons. Then Nathan said to David,

“You are the man.”

This may be the most powerful statement in the entire Old Testament. This may be one of the most heart-shattering prophesies ever delivered in all of human history. David is morally indignant. He is outraged about injustice. And God sent Nathan, the prophet, to hold up a mirror in front of David’s face and say: “Look in the mirror, friend. Reserve your moral indignation for yourself.”

Talk about getting caught up short. You are in the middle of declaring why something is so utterly wrong and God speaks to you and says: “And what about you? You think you aren’t a racist? You don’t think you cut corners? You think you don’t gossip, or judge people unfairly? What about you?”

I think verses 7-8 are some of the most convicting words in the entire Bible. Look at this with me.

2 Samuel 12:7–8 (NIV)

Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms.

I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

Here is the ultimate cause of the sin of unfaithfulness! What we are really saying is what you've given me God is not enough. Your grace is not sufficient. The blessings that have been in my life are not satisfying enough. I demand more. And so I am going to grab it.

And the Lord says: "If you wanted more, why didn't you just ask me? Why did you have to try to go behind my back? Why did you have to spit in my face in order to get the more you thought you needed? Why did you have to violate covenant? Why didn't you just ask me?"

It is like a parent who speaks with their child and says: "Did you have to steal from me? Was what I gave you not enough? If you thought you had such a desperate need, why didn't you just ask me?"

It reminds me of the words in James 4 where the apostle James says in 4:1-2:

James 4:1-2 (NIV)

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.

This is the ultimate cause of unfaithfulness - God's grace is not enough for us. We have to violate boundaries and grab more for ourselves.

Well, Nathan finally announces the terrible consequences of David's sin.

The consequences of unfaithfulness

2 Samuel 12:11-12 (NIV)

"This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.' "

When we read David's story, we recognize that it is not only the story of David, this is our story also. Every single day we stand at a fork in the road. Sometimes we are at a fork in the road several times a day where we face choices between doing God's will and doing our will, between being satisfied with what God has given us and grabbing for more even when it violates God's Word. You and I, friends, are faced continually with the choice between good and evil and life and death. David's sin literally led to death.

It led to the death of Uriah. It led to the death of the child born from the adulterous affair between David and Bathsheba. It led to the death of three more of his sons. David says in v. 6 that the man who took the lamb should pay four times over. David did with the death of his four sons. It led to the permanent hostility of Bathsheba's grandfather, Ahithophel, who became a lifelong enemy of David. It led to David nearly losing his whole kingdom.

Say this to your neighbor: "An affair can't end well." The result will be sowing deep mistrust in your marriage, injuring the person that you swore you would be faithful to, possible retaliation from your spouse, possible retaliation from those around you, guilt. If you want to save your marriage, the end result will be severing your relationship with somebody you've gotten attached to, injury to this other person. Hurt to your children and to your friends.

I want to close with this word of hope. What is the cure for unfaithfulness?

The cures of unfaithfulness

Marital unfaithfulness is a dreadful thing. But in Christ even dreadful, awful things can be healed. The majority of Christian marriages that have been marred by marital infidelity recover, but we need honesty. The offending partner needs to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth concerning the affair. The offending person must cut off all contact with the person with whom they've had an affair. If it means leaving a job, you leave your job. If it means leaving your neighborhood, or the state, then you do that. There can't be any inquiries, any emails, any secret texting – all contact must be cut off entirely. People do not recover from affairs while contact remains.

We need help. Marriages typically can't recover on their own. Of course, a great Christian counselor can be of help. And we have an extraordinary program here for those who wonder whether their marriages can be healed. We have a program with our Marriage and Family Ministry called Begin Again. Begin Again is a program where couples are paired with other couples who have been through difficult marriages themselves for mentoring. To find out more about Begin Again, contact Rebekah Mongeau in Marriage and Family Ministry at

Rebekah.mongeau@vineyardcolumbus.org.

Scores of couples have gone through our Begin Again program with significant hurt and accumulated grievances, adultery and abuse and have been healed.

But the ultimate cure, the ultimate healing for infidelity is found in the cross of Christ.

I wonder if you know anyone who has stumbled somewhere along the line in their marriage. Sometimes we forget in the church world that Jesus is way more tender towards people who stumble than we are.

Some years ago I went to a Jesuit retreat center for a five-day silent retreat as I was exploring Ignatian spirituality. And at this Jesuit retreat center, as at many Catholic retreat centers, they had the Stations of the Cross. But if you've ever prayed through the fourteen Stations of the Cross, beginning with Jesus' condemnation to death and ending with Jesus being laid in the tomb, you will discover that in Catholic tradition there are three stumblings of Jesus. Jesus stumbled the first time, then at Station #7, he falls a second time and in Station #9, he falls a third time.

And as I knelt by these stations and came to the three stations of Jesus falling, I was stuck at the deepest core of my being in a way that I've never been struck before, by the willingness of Christ to identify with those people who have fallen. The people that I had written off, the people who I was angry with for violating my trust and violating the trust of their churches and their ministries, and bringing scandal to the gospel, I was struck that Jesus allowed himself to be publicly humiliated, stripped – not privately, but in public; he was willing to lose all his reputation, to have people point at him, to become a scandal and to identify with everyone who have sinned and fallen and became a scandal.

And so at one of the stations I found myself kneeling and weeping for all the many men and women who I knew who had disqualified themselves from ministry through public sin. I thought about the mercy of our Savior. He didn't just die for respectable sins, or sins that don't cause great harm to the gospel. He died for all sins. And he died for all sinners. So we always have to hold out hope for people that they might be restored in their relationship to Christ and their relationship with their spouses. The good news is, there is hope for everyone – no matter what – because of the grace and tenderness of Christ.

The Causes, Consequences and Cures of Unfaithfulness

Rich Nathan
April 28, 2013
Family Mess 2 Series
2 Samuel 11-12

- I. The occasion of unfaithfulness
- II. The rationalization of unfaithfulness
- III. The causes of unfaithfulness
- IV. The consequences of unfaithfulness
- V. The cures of unfaithfulness