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“Affair Proof Your Marriage”

To be honest, I’m not real big on the title, “Affair Proof Your Marriage.” Why? There are two reasons. First, it sounds like “YOU” have the power to affair proof it. And second, the things I share in this newsletter will do far more than affair proof...they will give you a spiritually and emotionally healthy relationship with your spouse.

So, why did I use that title? Well, if you are still reading...then it worked.

A few months back, there was a hack of the Ashley Madison online service. This website was created several years ago as a way to have an anonymous affair...as if any affair is anonymous or nameless. Here is what it revealed...affairs are destructive and we are deeply broken. We? Yes, all of us are deeply broken and in need of our Father’s restoration through Jesus Christ. Before the Christian community starts throwing stones at the “adulterers” on this list, because many of us did, let’s be honest about one thing. According to Jesus, all of us are “adulterers” (see Matthew 5:27-30) and Jesus loves and restores cheaters...just like you, just like me.

Before I lay out a few things about “affair proofing,” I wanted to lay this foundation of mutual brokenness and mutual need. All of us need Jesus and all of our marriages need to grow. Instead of viewing this article as 3 steps to preventing an affair...let’s view it as creating healthy soil for a marriage to grow. Ok, I think you get my heart on this.

Men...Women...and Affairs...

There are various reasons that husbands and wives have affairs. At the core, it relates to our neediness. Many of you have heard me say, “A healthy marriage is one where we NEED each other without being NEEDY of each other.” Our neediness is what gets us in trouble. Neediness needs to be admitted and dealt with in an honest, growing relationship with God. No man or woman was ever meant to complete you or meet all of your needs. God alone fills that giant hole in your heart.

For men, though, an affair gives a false sense of validation. That’s the key word. Certainly it relates to respect, adventure, pursuit, beauty, and feeling alive. To pursue another woman and entertain the playfulness of courtship can be emotionally intoxicating...for a season. At the core, a man wants to be validated...valued and respected in a relationship. An affair is authored by the Enemy, Satan, and fueled by a man’s neediness. Whether needs are being met by a wife or not, the lure of an affair is the feeling of “being validated.” Here’s the problem...a woman cannot validate a man. She was never meant to do that. Here’s the truth...a broken woman can have great power in a broken man’s life. She can validate you on some level but she can also devalue

you. True and deep validation only comes from a Father...God alone can validate you as a son and bring you soul satisfaction. That's the core longing in an affair for a man...validation.

For a woman, the core longing is different. It is really about security. We could call it emotional connection, being fought for and pursued, feeling important, or needed. All of those come down to security. Most women do not go out looking for an affair or looking to cheat on their husbands. It is a slow fade, of sorts. Over time in a marriage, the emotional well runs dry and a woman is left feeling "on the outside," unprotected and not needed. That's certainly no reason or excuse to have an affair. But instead of tending to the emptiness, a woman can let her heart and thoughts drift. In that empty place, the longing for security lingers and leaves a woman in a dangerously, vulnerable place. That's the core longing in an affair for a woman...security.

Work, Gym and Facebook. Though we offer various types of spiritual direction/counseling, we have met with many couples over the years dealing with the effects of an affair. The three most common places for affairs that we have seen are work, gym, and Facebook. Why? Those are three easy places to hide or project a false image. Aside from time spent in these places, it is easy to pretend, pose, and be playful in a place outside your marriage. Now, I am not saying quit your job, cancel your gym membership, and banish Facebook to the outermost. It is never a behavioral fix. But it is good caution to know where you tend to hide, pose, or pretend.

4 Healthy Practices for Healthy Marriages

(this is the part where you might say "How to Affair Proof your Marriage")

1. **Know Self.** Deal with your emotional junk that you brought into marriage. All of us brought "stuff" into our marriages, which if left undealt with, could contribute to an affair. From family of origin issues to conflict to communication, each of us has a history that affects who we are today. Spend time getting under the surface and dealing with what you brought into marriage. *The only way to become selfless is to deal with self.*
2. **Healthy Boundaries.** Like we said earlier, very few people go out and pursue an affair. It begins as an innocent conversation or flirtatious text/email/message. Having healthy boundaries will protect you and your marriage. What are your boundaries for lunch or meetings with the opposite sex? What are your boundaries for sharing personal or marital struggles with the opposite sex? What are your boundaries for travel or work related events? Do you have a spiritual brother or sister who knows your struggles and will hold you accountable? Wrestle with and answer these types of questions.
3. **Community.** Don't fight this alone. The most dangerous place for a husband or wife to be is alone...alone in your hurt, alone in your pain, alone in your lack of validation, and alone in feeling insecure. You need a band of brothers...a group of soul sisters...even one person who knows you, loves you, and speaks truth into your life.
4. **Warfare.** Remind yourself daily that there is a battle and that your story has a villain. Satan would love to destroy you, your marriage, and your kids. He has a target on marriage because of how it potentially reflects God's image. Your spouse is not the enemy. The person flirting with you is not the enemy. Your parents or someone who hurt you is not the enemy. You have an enemy. Affairs flourish when we stop doing battle.

Your heart matters...your marriage matters...keep up the good fight!

Randy