

## BROKEN VOWS - INFIDELITY (11Sam II)

In August this year, [Time Magazine](#) featured a very interesting six-page article called “infidelity – it’s in our genes”. The article - a condensation of a new book by the evolutionary Psychologist Robert Wright - said that human beings, and in fact much of the animal Kingdom are not intrinsically monogamous. A comparison was made between primates (Apes and monkeys) and human behavioural psychology; and where similarities existed, inferences were drawn from primate behaviour. The general conclusion of the article was this:

“According to evolutionary psychology, it is ‘natural’ for both men and women... to commit adultery and to sour on a mate, to suddenly find a spouse unattractive, irritating and wholly unreasonable... it is similarly natural to find some attractive colleague superior on all counts to the sorry wreck of a spouse you’re saddled with.” It went on to say “...it is within our genes to [wander](#) because infidelity is a genetically pre-determined survival system”

Now in all fairness to the author, I need to mention that in his conclusion he concedes that what is “natural” is not necessarily “best”, because humans are behaviourally conditioned social and moral beings who don’t just live at the level of impulses. But even [so](#), I [beg to](#) disagree with the general conclusions of the article for [the following](#) reasons:

- (i) Drawing parallels between humans and primates is only so helpful. It stands in danger of ignoring the fact that man is different from the rest of the animal kingdom; because he was created “in the image of God”. [Unlike animals](#), we have the technical capacity to lead an examined life - we are self aware. We also have the capacity to make value judgements and to distinguish between good and evil; making conscious, premeditated choices.
- (ii) Secondly, even though God has given us a conscience, he recognizes our capacity to do evil, and has thus laid down clear [absolutes](#) ([parameters/strictures?](#)) as to what is right and wrong, and these stand [above](#) primate conscience and public morality.
- (iii) Thirdly - and possibly most important to the whole question of infidelity - God created marriage and ordained that it be monogamous. [This](#) requirement was not explicitly placed on any other creature. [Therefore](#) we [just](#) can’t use the chimpanzees as our role models!

[The question that begs is why would God make us different as far as marriage is concerned?](#) I believe it is because marriage was to be the one of [two kinds](#) of relationships that would [clearly depict](#) God’s [relationship to](#) his people. [The other is](#) parenthood. [It should be noted that both kinds](#) of relationships were established before the fall of man. The relationship that exists between husband and wife, or parent and child should be a mirror image of God’s own relationship with his people that is governed by [His](#) attributes. Both are born out of love, but their foundation is to be the irrevocable covenant that is established at their inception. The one is verbal, the other factual. Just as God has displayed unconditional love, faithfulness, mercy, commitment and loyalty so too, we should display them in marriage and parenthood. The bible does not say a whole deal about marriage and parenthood because the whole bible is a display of those two relationships. God [relates](#) to his people as a husband and a father.

I believe that marriage was ordained to display God’s character (as we see in Eph 5), to help humanity understand [Him](#). And one of God’s fundamental characters is [His](#) unconditional love for us and his loyalty to us. Yes, marriage and parenthood are intrinsic for us, but I don’t think you can really understand either, until you have really understood God!

Now [this does not mean](#) that everyone should marry to understand God. [Each of us is close enough to such relationships to learn the lesson](#). It is no wonder that the more a society destroys the institution of marriage and family, the more ungodly it becomes. Our modern day practice of appointing leaders irrespective of what their marriage is like is also an error. If one cannot display Godly character in this deep bond held together by a vow; they will not display it in public leadership. As one American citizen said, when asked if she would vote for a certain presidential candidate after news broke out that he was caught having an affair with one of his aides, she said

“If he is disloyal to his wife, how can I expect him to be loyal to this country?”

The marriage relationship was to be a reflection of God's character. But when sin entered the Garden of Eden, the seeds of discord and selfishness were sown, and one of the ways this is seen today is when sexual intimacy is no longer viewed as a special enactment of our covenant and loyalty to this one person; but as a means of self gratification. Infidelity has tarnished marriage today.

Illustration:-Of a total of 104 divorce cases sampled from our High Court records in Nairobi, 31% stated adultery as the reason for divorce.

Illustration:-A study done on married couples in the US showed that 40% of all married men, and 30% of women have been unfaithful to their spouses. And these are married men from all walks of life, Christians and non Christians.

Why is infidelity so high? It is not easy to answer that question, but there are times in our lives when we are especially vulnerable and we need to be aware and exercise special caution.

- (i) The highest occurrence tends to be at those times we are faced with longstanding emotional and communication difficulties. "Do not let the sun go down...."
- (ii) Another time is when we have climbed up the success and career ladder rapidly. Again a study in the U.S.A showed that infidelity among men who earned over \$60,000 a year was 70% higher than the average wage earners. Success seems to bring the false justification that "I deserve it, I've worked hard and it's o.k." It also develops a habit of acquisition and getting what I want at whatever cost.
- (iii) When we have vulnerable people who depend on us emotionally - as in counselling : illustration pg 24:5, Pg94:3(Pastor)
- (iv) People who travel a lot and are away from home at night.
- (v) Women at the age of 35-39, after the children become less dependent, and men in their mid life (40-46).
- (vi) A point of great vulnerability for all of us is at the office. This is so because on week days we spend twice as many hours at the office that I do at home. Those are also the times of the day when we are most energized, well groomed, at best behaviour and with members of the opposite sex who share the same career interests we do. By evening we are tired, irritable, unkempt, not feeling romantic and not in a mood for conversation. We come home to each other at our worst and it's easy for our relationship to suffer, especially since our most exciting relationships are at the office.

How do affairs happen?

One pastor who was caught in an affair was asked "How did it happen - didn't you know what you were doing?" and he admitted there was a process - what some have called the 6 steps into an affair.

#### 1. Bridge one

Is mental preparedness - entertaining the thought.... What if ... Those movies we watch on T.V., those songs we hear, the books and magazines... none of them are sexually explicit and they look innocent enough but many of them try to justify adultery as true love and they implant grey areas in our minds. We participate vicariously even though in our Christian mind we are saying "how horrible..." These implanted **thoughts** then get played back in our minds, especially during our wet dreams - that state when you are half awake, half asleep and you know what's going on but you don't want to wake up. This is the place to stop infidelity - refuse to watch those movies, don't read those books. How can I ensure I don't cross this first bridge? There are 2 ways the scriptures lay out clearly for us:

- (a) 1Cor 10:5 "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" - take captive every thought, even your dream thoughts, and make them obedient to Christ's standards. Don't become a slave to your impure thoughts.
- (b) Math 5:27-30- Deal ruthlessly with any attempt by your mind or body to fantasize about sex and adultery. Refuse to participate vicariously in any form of sexual immorality. And this isn't just for the single young people. Job, a man of possibly 50/60 years who had fathered 10 full grown children, shares how he kept himself pure in Job 31:1. He says, "I have made a covenant with my eyes, not to look lustfully at a girl" He was determined not to cross this first bridge and to remain pure.

## 2. Bridge Two

The 2<sup>nd</sup> bridge on the road to infidelity is “Emotional Adultery”. If I asked you the question “who would you marry if your spouse died today?” If a name or a face sprang to your mind in answer, then it shows you have already crossed this bridge Pg94:4. This stage is characterized by a growing awareness of a particular person. You find it physically exciting to be around them. They begin to appear in your dream. You look for reasons to have meetings or to take group photos where they appear. You look for an excuse to be around them. Nothing physical, but I call it emotional adultery because when you make love with your spouse, you try and capture a mental image of that person. The double sin here is not just what is going on in your mind, but that you have reduced your spouse to a whore - a body you are using while you fantasize with another.

## 3. Bridge Three

Developing Affection - This third bridge involves meeting together privately - for business purposes, there’s still no actual sexual involvement but you both look for excuses to be alone together - business lunches, a kind gesture like dropping the person home through the thick slow traffic jam, (2) A second sign is that you begin confiding in one another, intimate things about struggles at home, or old secrets. (3) A 3<sup>rd</sup> sign is you begin touching one another affectionately - no, no, no, nothing sexual.... Just an affectionate hug, or a long handshake, tickling one another and other foolish games like that

## 4. Bridge Four

The 4<sup>th</sup> bridge is when you become sexually involved. But there is still one final stage

## 5. Bridge 5

Rationalization - there is no more pretending here, you know full well you are committing adultery but instead of reporting and stopping, you rationalize. Listen to some of the ways Christians have tried to rationalize

- Just one more time, it won’t happen again
- God knows I need this
- Well, so and so is doing it
- If only God would give me the strength to stop
- God will forgive us
- We’ve prayed about this and God has given us peace
- God is still blessing our ministry so it must be alright

“God will forgive us.” I call this last one spitting in Gods face because it cheapens His grace and mocks His holiness. Many of us here have played the game of crossing one or 2 bridges and going back. Some of us have crossed all 5 and feel we are in bondage, helpless to go back. How can we break out? How can we also ensure we don’t cross these bridges at all?

**STEP 1:- James 5:16 - Confess to someone - “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”** Confess to the Lord and to a mature Christian brother or sister. Go even to an elder or to a pastor and confess the sin. There are some sins where victory is only found when we confess to each other, and I believe this is one of them!

**STEP 2:- Ask your confidant to help you set godly boundaries and to hold you accountable to them. I love the words of the Psalmist in Ps 16: 5, 6 “Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.”**

God can secure your lot in this area of purity, but do you know where your boundary lines or his boundary lines fall? Ask your friend to help you identify them, and hold you accountable. **Pg. 122:2/ pg. 147-6 boundaries**

Incidentally, if you already are in an adulterous relationship, one of the boundaries is that it is wrong and evil in God’s sight; and your justification for it is meaningless and void. A second boundary is that it **MUST** stop today! There is nothing like “easing” out of an adulterous relationship. You may literally have to cut off an arm to stop. Quit your job, ask for a transfer, disconnect your phone, burn the letters without opening them... It is deep and painful surgery for a deep sin.

**STEP 3:-** Give everything you have to build your marriage up. They say “if the grass is greener on the other side, then start watering yours.” It will take hard work. There may be a lot of painful forgiving and ego swallowing to do, but start.

**STEP 4:-** Make and keep your covenants. To the married - you are already under a vow of purity to your spouses and to God

- Rings
- Anniversary
- But we can make new covenants for purity like Job did, and share these with the person who holds us accountable.

To the unmarried - we are all the bride of Christ. With this in mind, God put it very well in Isaiah 54:5 **“For your maker is your husband - the Lord Almighty is his name.”** And you too must remain pure for your ‘husband’. Make a vow of purity for your husband now. I would advocate that you to go to a gold shop and pay the price of getting a ring that will symbolise the vow of purity. Wear it until the day the Lord marries you to one of his sons or daughters. This will be a sign of your covenant to remain pure.

# WIFE ABUSE

(PS. 55:4-8, 12-14, 20-21)

Introduction - Testimony on tape

The history of abuse

Wife abuse is not a modern or recent crime. Throughout history, male violence towards women and children has been socially and sometimes legally endorsed. For example

Medieval Society viewed women as people in need of strict control - One manual from medieval times instructed:

“The female is an empty thing, easily swayed: She runs great risks when she is away from her husband. Therefore, keep females in the house, keep them so close to you as you can, and come home often to keep an eye on your affairs and to keep them in fear and trembling....”

Another manual by a friar instructed that if a husband’s verbal instruction did not work, then he should “take up a stick and beat her, not in rage, but out of charity and concern for her soul, so that the beating will rebound to your merit and her good.”

In later centuries things did begin to improve. We all talk about the “rule of thumb”. The phrase originally came from a section regulating wife beating in the British common Law. Whereas before a man was allowed by law to beat his wife with any reasonable instrument, the new law regulated that a ‘reasonable instrument’ could only be a rod not thicker than this thumb.

Today in many countries, wife beating is considered a crime and is outlawed, but even then [A 19983](#) Time magazine report on wife beating said that in the United States alone,

“Nearly 6,000,000 wives will be abused by their husbands in one year. Some 2000 women are beaten to death each year and wife battery is the single major cause of injury to women, more significant than accidents, rapes or muggings,”

Why does it happen?

- (i) Intrinsic worth of a woman in our patriarchal society – it’s a man’s world and has always been a man’s world. **No doubt a woman has a special place in society especially.**
- (ii) The 2<sup>nd</sup> is because this is the way we have been led to believe we should solve conflicts in the family. Our male **oriented** society abhors it. (illustration - Nation article Oct 7, 94)
- (iii) A 3<sup>rd</sup> reason is that this is a generation sin. It’s not exactly understood why but this sin seems to be transmitted from one generation to the next. Boys who grew up in abusive homes will in turn tend to abuse their spouses while women who are abused more often than not come from abusive families themselves.

Abuse & Gods word.

But no matter what society allows or thinks, wife abuse is wrong and evil.

Illustration - lady washing clothes.

- a. God greatly values human life. Society teaches us to attach value to human life on the basis of gender, colour, intellect, productivity or race, but not scripture. Scripture teaches us to value human life because all men and women are created in Gods image; and Christ died for all. For that reason alone we must stand against any form of human life abuse be it human rights issues, slavery, injustice, abortion, caste systems, poverty or wife abuse because they are an affront on Gods beautiful creation.
1. Now, one may argue that man is of greater value than woman because he was created first. The problem with that argument is that the apes and the pigs were also created before man; it could also be argued that God saved the best for the last and that woman is the perfection of a faulty prototype - man. The order of creation does not change the fact of intrinsic worth.

2. A second argument to excuse wife abuse may be that she was created as a “helper...”
3. A 3<sup>rd</sup> argument is that wife abuse is a result of the curse placed on mankind in Gen3:16 “Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you...”
  - (i) Toil to make the land productive - but over the ages there have been great technological advancements and all forms of machines have been manufactured to ease the task of farming.
  - (ii) There have also been great medical advances to help in the process of childbirth and to reduce the risk and pain faced in that process. None of us would advocate the reversal of progress in these 2 frontiers - the individual and medical frontier. In the same way, especially as Christians, we must be at the forefront of advancing the societal frontier by redefining **race relating** the meaning of “rule over you” in husband/wife relationships as Paul does in Eph.5.

How and why?

Illustration - Claire' story

There is a pattern to abuse. In fact it is such a clearly observed pattern that psychologists talk of 4 phases of abuse:

Phase 1: The first is the tension building stage. What triggers it is not clear. Sometimes it might be things the wife does. Often times it has nothing to do with the wife. One of the sad facts of wife abuse is “victim blame”. “If only I cooked better food, then the abuse would stop”, “If only I dressed better...” Soon she begins to feel their marriage has failed because of her. Sadly, when she shares with others, the first question they ask is “what did you do to trigger the abuse? It must be something you did you are to blame.” But in truth very little the wife does changes the abuse because the power to control lies not with the wife but with the husband.

Phase2: The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase is the violence itself - it may range in its severity from a slap to severe physical and psychological damage. Often times this violence seems irrational but it is not. The violence many husbands subject their wives to is calculated. In a free fight, most men go for the face but not in wife abuse. The most frequent area of damage lay between the neck and knees in wife abuse - those areas that can be hidden from public view.

Phase 3&4 is when after the violent outburst the husband seems to come to his senses and is very remorseful, very sorry, very loving and tender; dresses up the wounds; weeps real tears of remorse and promises it will never happen again. He just doesn't know what happened. The one thing men will plead for in this 4<sup>th</sup> phase is that the wife should not reveal what has happened, that she keeps it a secret because it will never happen again. They may also plead for forgiveness.

The abused wife's emotions by now are completely ravaged by the violence. She might be desperate for affirmation and a sense of security, and so she grabs onto her husband's promise that things will change, and that he did not do it on purpose. It was the beer, or his friends, or the stress at work that caused the outburst. In her desperate need for affirmation, she forgives easily and promises to remain silent about the incident; but in so doing she has made her situation worse - for she has now isolated herself by keeping quiet, and she has also reinforced her husband's habit of violence. The more a couple goes round that circle of abuse, the more the wife isolates herself and the more likely the abuse is to recur. Two other things happen each time a couple goes round this cycle of abuse.

- (a) Her self esteem goes down. Every time she is abused, her husband verbally attacks her telling her she is stupid, worthless, incompetent, a bad wife, hopeless cuss and poor mother. This emotional abuse can be worse than the physical abuse because it is self-fulfilling; the woman believes it and concludes that she doesn't deserve anything better.
- (b) Secondly she becomes totally emotionally dependent on her husband. Her whole life revolves around trying to please him. If he smiles at her she has a sense of worth; if he frowns she goes into depression. She loses her sense of judgement to objectivity. She has no time for friends; she cannot tell when she is in danger. All these add up to **dipping** her in the abusive relationship.

People ask - why does a woman stay in an abusive relationship? Why doesn't she just leave? She remains because of the reasons given above:

- her unrealistic hope of change
- her low self esteem
- her growing emotional dependence and one other reasons (illustration - tests on laboratory animals with random punishment)
- conditioned helplessness

Other reasons why a woman remains in an abusive relationship is because she has no where safe to go

- she doesn't want her marriage to be seen as a failure
- she is economically dependant on the husband especially if she has children
- The husband may have threatened her life or the children's if she ever leaves or tells anyone.

Myth - (Phases) - Some enjoy abuse - Breaking the cycle

But the cycle of abuse can be and must be broken. The longer a woman remains in an abusive relationship, the more likely it is to recur and the more severe it will be. Breaking the cycle presents some difficult choices but remaining in it may result in severe physical or psychological damage, with much worse consequences.

Men - For men who abuse, you need to get off this cycle during the tension build-up stage. Ask a Christian brother to help you in learning to deal with your emotions and frustrations. Learn good patterns of conflict resolution, learn correct ways to express and manage your anger. Learn the signs before the violence, and leave the house or call a friend for help.

Women - For the women, you can get off the cycle in several ways. If violence occurs 3 or 4 times, it is an indication that this is a habit and will repeat itself.....

- (i) Do not remain silent - tell 2 or 3 others - your best couple, your best friend, your pastor; but don't remain silent. Tell your husband you have told others, and that it is no longer a secret.
- (ii) Don't allow yourself to be isolated. Some abusive men are extremely suspicious and jealous of all relationships. But don't allow yourself to be isolated because contact and talk with others will help keep your perspective right and avoid your becoming totally dependant on the one who abuses you for emotional affirmation and sense of worth. For he can destroy you.
- (iii) Show touch love! Love is doing the best for the loved one, and in this case the best is not to reinforce his habit of abuse but to break it. When remorse is expressed don't grant cheap grace. Help him face the consequences of his action. Don't cover up at his or your place of work. Don't cover up for him in front of his friends. If you do, you are reinforcing his habit of abuse and it will occur again. Instead insist on seeing a counsellor, insist that he see a psychologist - help him get help but don't cover up for him
- (iv) As a last alternative, the fourth way to break the cycle of abuse is leave the abusive situation. I am not talking about divorce but about separation. Separation has problems and I wish to look at these next Sunday - but if you are in a continued high risk situation, then think of the safety of the children, or the preservation of your own life. Separation has its problems as related to wife abuse. If you threaten to leave and then you don't, or if you leave and then come back after a few days without your husband having dealt with the problem, then its been shown in many cases that the frequency and severity of abuse becomes worse possibly because the husband realises you can't call your threat and he has more power over you than he had realised.

## CONCLUSION

As a final word I say this - God does not advocate abusive relationships. If you work at breaking that cycle of abuse, protecting innocent lives, helping your husband or friend grow in their interpersonal skills and conflict management, then you are doing the best for the loved one and God is with you. The choices will be tough, but you must act.