

## Marital Disloyalty

By Suzan Myhre, M.S.S.W.

Marital disloyalty begins with loneliness, boredom, resentment, anger or bitterness. It can begin because one feels detached from the care of another. It can begin because a person feels detached from themselves-almost in a "funk," a "stupor," or a "fog." When a person lacks nurture, and feels unloved and uncomforted in a relationship, there is a temptation to receive these things from parties outside of the marriage. Where one turns in the midst of pain, loneliness, and confusion is of extreme importance, because the first step taken often determines the direction of those to follow.

Many marital partners do not "plan" on having regular contact with another person, nor do they ever contemplate an affair of the heart or the body as an option. Yet when presented with the opportunity to find comfort and attention from the opposite sex, there is only one choice for the married partner-TURN AWAY.

This scenario is not to be confused with brotherly or sisterly affection, kindness and fondness. In this instance, there is no physical desire or intense emotional connection being met. There is no need for sexual interplay that affirms one's physical attraction or worth. There is also no need to have deep emotional needs filled by the other. The relationship is grounded in friendship and brotherly love.

Many affairs start out in the above category but transform into significant attachment because of choices made. These choices are "yeses" that one says to another. Alone they appear harmless. However, when one adds hundreds of these interactions or "yeses" together, a person opens their heart to desiring something more from the other party. The more may be called "closeness" but always involves the violation of the marital bond. Why? Because intimate encounters are reserved only for the marital bond. Other people are not privileged to enter into this physical or emotional intimacy.

Common dangerous "yeses" may include:

1. Direct, lingering eye contact.
2. Shared smirk or smile when a comment is made about one's spouse or one's dissatisfaction in the relationship.
3. Touch of the hand, arm or leg of another can send the message "I will nurture/take care of you."
4. Frequent "coincidental" contact at a regular setting.
5. Verbal flattering or comments about looks.
6. Giving more physical or emotional attention to someone else of the opposite sex while your own spouse is present.
7. Sharing hopes, dreams, successes, or failures at a deeper level with another person of the opposite sex, rather than with your spouse.
8. Meeting alone with someone of the opposite sex with the hope of having an intimate emotional connection.

Remember that the emotional status of both parties and their ability to stay true to their commitment to their spouse will determine the path that a person takes. This is why self-awareness is key to remain under the covering of Jesus. The covering is His protection of us. He forms a wall of protection to guard all whom He holds near and dear to His heart. We must, with all of our disappointment, pain, sorrow, and confusion, run to Him to avoid the pitfalls and traps of this world.

If you find yourself wondering if you have been spending too much time with a person of the opposite sex, or you feel uncomfortable about a friend who has been showing you too much attention . . . listen. Listen to the Spirit in you speaking to you about any slightly crooked thing. Trust God with it. Invite Him to talk with you about it. Confess any part of it you know you have participated in. Experience His delight in helping you see clearly. Feel the freedom that comes with confession. Rejoice in Jesus from whom all good things come.

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