

Making Your Marriage Safe from “Affairs”

*“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”
– The Song of Solomon 4:12*

We are living in a day when far more marriages end in divorce than those that don't. Having affairs (emotional, physical) are a common occurrence. Unfortunately, such affairs are also common among Christian couples.

What is going wrong? Are there any obvious reasons for this breakdown in the Christian marriage? Are there any practical solutions that will help prevent affairs and divorce?

The Bible provides some practical guidelines that if followed will greatly reduce “affairs” and thus greatly prevent divorce among Christians.

A Positive Affirmation

The very best way to protect your marriage from “affairs” is to be the kind of husband or wife that any spouse would desire. That is, you need to keep the home fires burning.

What this means for a husband is that he needs to maintain the romance and be sensitive to the needs of his wife. He needs to maintain her respect by being the kind of man and leader that he should be (protector and bread winner). Most of all, he needs to love her and show that love in a meaningful way every day. His thoughtfulness should be demonstrated by remembering those things that are dear to her heart (birthday, anniversary, etc.). Nothing takes the place of just showing her love and being sensitive to her needs.

What this means for the wife is that she needs to keep herself attractive, show respect for her husband and meet his sexual needs. Don't nag him but love him and show that love in meaningful ways every day. Be the kind of mother and wife that will make him proud.

Being the kind of mate you should be goes a long way in preventing affairs. However, there are other things you must be aware of if you will be successful in keeping your marriage free from “affairs.”

A Basic Premise

You can't win a battle if you don't know what the dangers are or where the dangers come from.

Strangers do not have affairs. Affairs occur between two friends of the opposite sex, who become mutually attracted to each other. What begins as mutual attraction is allowed to progress into an unhealthy emotional bond. Such a relationship merely needs the right circumstance and an affair is born.

This is not to say that you cannot have “friends” of the opposite sex, but such friendship must have its limitations, and those limitations should be well defined in your own mind, and enforced with determined firmness.

Enclosed, Sealed, Shut Up

“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed”
SS. 4:12

Every marriage should be protected by some Biblical “walls.” Notice that the inspired wise man described his spouse as an “enclosed”, “sealed” and “shut up” one. An “enclosed” garden is one that is surrounded by some kind of protective barrier, such as a “wall.”

Frankly, a “wall” is a divider and its purpose is to keep a distance between those on the inside from those on the outside. The distance is to prevent outsiders from sharing the intimacies of the bond of marriage with your spouse.

Protective Walls

The “walls” that will be suggested that you erect around your marriage are not popular but they are Biblical. In fact, such “walls” are in direct conflict with the current practices in our world and among most “Christians.”

However, you must remember that it is because of the practice of the world that this problem exists. If it is to be corrected, it will have to begin with things that are not being practiced and thus with things that are not popular.

As you read this article, please keep in mind that these suggested walls are flexible at times and you and your spouse alone must determine the degree of that flexibility. However, as a general rule, you must at all times place some degree of limitations upon your friendships with the opposite sex. This is especially true if you sense within yourself or in your “friend” more than just a friendly interest.

The Wall of Touch

*“...It is good for a man not to **touch** a woman”* – I Cor. 7:1b

The Apostle used the word “touch” for a good reason. Although the Apostle is referring to the ultimate act of marriage, it cannot occur without touching. Psychologists tell us that touching a woman breaks down her sexual resistance to a man. Hence, Paul uses the word that provides the physical stimulus toward that act.

Some men can’t seem to keep their hands off the opposite sex. Such behavior may indicate one of three things. Either this man is a “ladies man” (a potential

seducer) or he is not being emotionally and/or sexually fulfilled, or he has not been taught to show proper respect toward women.

No man should think he has the right to place his hands anywhere upon the body of a woman (e.g. hair, legs, waist, shoulders, etc.).

Ladies your lips should be reserved for your husband and your cheek for those in your immediate family. Another man has no right to kiss and hug you at any time.

There is an area for proper touching and there are occasional times for special touching.

It is always proper to shake the offered hand of the opposite sex. Occasionally (but not as a matter of practice) there are times to properly hug another woman or give an endearing pat upon the upper back.

It is never appropriate for another man to give you a frontal hug where your chest is pressed into his (bear hug).

A respectful hug consists in the male standing at your side and placing his arm around your shoulders, but not your waist. Such a hug should be fleeting, not a drawn out affair, or a practice every time you meet. It should be for those special occasions, that naturally call for it, and only when you initiate it.

Ladies, another man should never think that he has a right to touch you at any time. Any kind of touching should be thought of as a privilege that must be first granted by you, when you think the circumstances or occasion call for it. He may offer his hand or arm, but that does not mean you are required to accept that offer. Instead, you may choose to greet him with a verbal "hello."

I knew of a certain Pastor who began touching a female member in such endearing ways and in less than a year, he left his wife and ran off with that woman. Ladies, if you can trust any man, shouldn't it be a pastor?? But, look at the newspapers and look among your own churches and you will quickly see that such walls are needed with preachers. A preacher is still a male with male passions.

Men, as a matter of practice, learn to keep your hands to yourself and to your own wife. Ladies, keep your hands off of other men.

The Wall of Authority

"And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home..." – I Cor. 14:35

There is nothing more appealing to a man than a helpless female in need. God has provided her a husband to meet her emotional, physical and spiritual needs. By allowing another man to directly come to your aide when your husband is present is allowing that man to play husband to you, and the opportunity to make a bond with you.

Ladies, while other men are present, do not make your needs public if you can help it. Let your husband know privately what your needs are. Why? Preserve his pride from being hurt by other men who may use their expertise to take

advantage of the situation in order to impress you while gaining dominance over your husband in your presence.

Christian psychologists and marriage counselors tell us “sex begins in the kitchen.” They don’t mean that the act of sex occurs in the kitchen nor do they mean that what they are talking about is restricted to the kitchen alone. What they are referring to, is the fact that a woman’s heart is softened and her resistance is weakened by a man who comes to her aide and helps her. Most husbands realize that if they come into the kitchen and help their wives before retiring that their wives are more sexually aroused. The “kitchen” is simply the obvious place to help her as that is the place she primarily does her work. Nothing bonds a man with a woman more than simply helping her and coming to her aide.

Ladies, as a rule, don’t allow another man to help you in the kitchen or in your home – do it yourself if your husband is not available or wait until your husband is available if it is at all possible.

Likewise, don’t enter the kitchen or another man’s home and work alone with him. If he is married, work with that man’s wife. If he is a single man, divorced or separated, let your husband help him or work with your husband but not with him.

Pastors are falling like rain all over the country simply because they fail to maintain this simple Bible principle. Pastors should never put themselves in a position of the husband of another woman. God has provided the Pastor with a “wife” or older women in the congregation that can meet the needs of women if their own husband cannot (Tit. 2:3-5).

The Pastor has the right to teach the congregation as a “body”, but the husband alone has the right to teach his own wife and children on an “individual” basis.

Husbands, take up your duty to be the spiritual head of your house or suffer the consequences of another man stepping into your role. Nothing is more bonding than a man who can help a woman in spiritual things.

Ladies, a good practical protection is, never act independent from your husband in making decisions, especially those decisions that have to do with suggestions given by other men. Learn to say, “I will have to check with my husband first.” This will protect you from a lot of wrong decisions and wrong relationships, and at the same time send a clear message to would be seducers.

Ladies, as a rule, allow your mate to play the role of your husband rather than another man.

The Wall of the Home

“That they teach the younger women...to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home....” – Tit. 2:4, 5

Our world today considers a homemaker and housewife a degrading position only to be scorned and avoided. Moreover, the above scripture is not popular

among Christians today either. In fact, husbands are encouraging their wives to work in the public in order to obtain the desired standard of living.

What are the consequences of violating the above Biblical wall? (1) Children are being raised by someone else and their principles. (2) Increased tension between husband and wife as both are tired when coming home. (3) Increased divorce due to affairs at the office. (3) Frustrated and angry children who know that the dollar bill is more important than they are.

A Christian mother should be a “keeper at home” according to Titus 2:5. There is no job more important to mankind or God than molding the next generation. Also, the confines of your home may serve as a “wall” of protection against a lot of ungodliness in the working place.

However, if mom must go to work (single moms, struggling couples) you should try to find a job where you do not have to work with, report to or have continual contact with other men. To do so is to play Russian roulette.

If circumstances do not allow a woman to stay at home and/or if she finds that she must work closely with other men, then, she must learn where to draw lines in other areas in order to resist the natural processes of unhealthy bonding with these men.

For instance, she should avoid private sessions with a man, especially after hour sessions, lifts home, or lunching. She should require everything to be done in a professional manner and shown professional courtesy and respect at all times and should respond likewise. If she opens up holes in these walls she is openly inviting danger to her marriage.

However, the same is true for men. Husbands are now, more than ever being forced to work closely side by side with other women. Men can fall into this trap just as easy, if not easier, than women. Husbands, you must maintain the same walls between you and the women you work with for the sake of your marriage. You can be “friendly” without being “flirtative.”

Christian husbands need to return to insisting that the mother of their children be a “keeper at home.” The walls of the home are a protection in themselves. It is better to be financially strapped than go through an affair and lose your spouse.

The Walls of Manners

“Evil communications corrupt good manners.” – I Cor. 15:33

There are some basic manners or rules of etiquette that should be practiced in order to keep the proper distance between the opposite sexes.

For example, you should never intentionally visit the opposite sex when their spouse is not home nor should you accept an invitation to enter the house under that circumstance. If you are the lone spouse at home, don’t invite a member of the opposite sex into your house with you alone. Married persons should never allow themselves to be isolated with the opposite sex if at all possible. Why? First, it may affect your testimony, if your neighbors or friends happen to see

another man or woman coming into your home while alone. Second, it forces the bonding process and may lead to an unhealthy relationship.

Another rule of thumb to remember is that when being seated; try not to sit next to the opposite sex. Place your spouse or children between you and the opposite sex. One characteristic true of all seducers is they like to talk and placing yourself next to them forces confrontation and conversation. Communication is a key element in the affair process. The so-called “ladies man” is a talker and knows that women love to talk. It is this lack of communication skill that hinders most men from being good husbands. Women are drawn to men who love to talk and who are funny.

Last, a spouse should never try to develop a relationship with the opposite sex on an individual basis. That kind of relationship belongs exclusively to members of the same sex. Build your relationships with members of the opposite sex by including your spouse and let your spouse lead in building that relationship. Why? Because doing so may make your spouse jealous and lead to marital problems that you could have completely avoided.

The Wall of Averted Eye Contact and Limited conversation

“And it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife CAST HER EYES upon Joseph; and she said, lie with me.” – Gen. 39:7

“He WINKETH WITH HIS EYES, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers.” – Prov. 6:13

Genesis 39:7 reveals that the first indication of pursuit is with the eyes. Proverbs 6:13 identify the “ladies man” or the male charmer as one who uses his eyes.

The Bible also says that the windows of the soul are the eyes. The eyes are a powerful means of communication. The eyes can be used to give the “come on” to the opposite sex. They can be used to dominate as well as intimidate and control others.

The editor of a prominent Christian ladies magazine puts it well when she says:

“Our culture, influenced by feminism, promotes a very assertive relationship style for people who want to be perceived as ‘successful.’ Women, as well as men, are encouraged to look others ‘straight in the eye.’ We have been taught over and over again that we should be suspicious of anyone who does not ‘look us in the eye.’

The Bible has a lot to say about the eyes, that they are windows of the soul. They can reveal some things about a person’s character. As mothers, one clue that our little ones are fabricating is that they avert their eyes and start looking elsewhere. Averted eyes can be a sign that someone is being less than honest.

But averted eyes can also be a sign of godly chastity in Christian women....Averted eyes are often a woman's way of letting a man know she is absolutely not interested in pursuing a relationship." – Cheryl Lindsey, **Gentle Spirit**. Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 46-47

Everyone is acquainted with flirtative eyes or the eyes of a man chaser. Everyone knows by experience that when someone is trying to dominate or subdue you that constant and direct eye contact is a basic means used. The brazen stare is a signal or indicator of pursuit.

Ladies, learn to practice eye diversion with men whom you instinctively sense are pursuing you. Furthermore, do not make prolonged eye contact and thereby allow men to perceive you are encouraging them. Make the initial eye contact when conversing with the opposite sex but learn to divert your gaze intermittingly.

Of course the exception to this rule is when moral integrity is in question or when you come to the defense of someone, then, constant eye contact reinforces the earnestness that is necessary in that circumstance.

Men should practice diversion of the eyes and avoid prolonged eye contact with the opposite sex, especially when they sense they are being pursued. Also, because of the lack of clothing on women today, men are tempted to turn and take a prolonged look at what they should not:

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."
Proverbs 4:25

The Wall of Modest Dress

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel...which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." – I Tim. 2:9, 10

What does it mean to be "modest"? One lady Bible translator for the Wickliffe Bible Translators from Cameroun and Chad Africa says,

*"Modesty includes clothing, but it is more than that! I have seen African women and marriageable girls who [by American standards would be considered very immodest] who were nonetheless 'modest.' The concept includes posture, demeanor, manners....Every culture contrasts sitting, walking and moving which are 'turn ons' and ways which are 'modest.' Every culture contrasts 'flirty' eye contact with 'modest' eye contact. Modesty includes lowered eyes when being introduced to a man, not the brazen directness of 'dare me.'" – Marian Hungerford, **Gentle Spirit**, Ibid. p. 46*

It is very true that a woman can be modestly dressed but act very immodest with her body language.

Ladies, nothing appeals to men more than the lack of clothing or the tightness of it. Why? Men are sexually aroused primarily by what they see, and

then by what they touch. It is this twofold access to the male mind that activates the sexual imagination of the male. Hence, the actions and the attire of a woman tell a man what you are seeking. The kind of clothing you choose to wear has its own language and communicates to others what you are seeking.

Improper dress or body language can be the cause of men around you committing adultery in their mind and seeking a way to commit it in reality with you. It can also be an embarrassment for godly men around you.

God intended the feminine figure to be concealed rather than revealed. The revealing of the feminine body should be behind closed bedroom doors rather than out in the public.

If you do not want men attempting to bond with you then dress and act modestly. If you do not dress and act modestly then you are like a flashing neon sign saying, "Come and get me."

Unfortunately, there are some ungodly husbands who desire their wives to dress immodest simply to show off what they got in order to boost their own ego. What they do not realize is that there is always some man out there who just may be able to get what they got if they show it off.

Recognizing the Danger Zone

A married person need not live in constant anxiety or skepticism when in the presence of the opposite sex, but they must know the danger signals and they must maintain some kind of practical "walls" to discourage would be pursuers.

Many times the pursuer is acting by instinct rather than by conscious intent. It is human nature to be attracted to the opposite sex and to pursue what you are attracted to. There is nothing wrong in appreciating beauty, as long as that appreciation does not develop into lust and pursuit.

However, this kind of pursuit (instinctive, intentional) is more prevalent among certain types. People who are not being sexually or emotionally fulfilled are usually LOOKING for that fulfillment. Whenever you are dealing on a continual basis with single, divorced, separated or unhappily married persons of the opposite sex, you should always have your "walls" firmly in place and exercise caution.

Moreover, women who have been raised in all "male" families and have had good relationships with their dads and brothers are also prone to be too trusting and too friendly to all males in general. This type of spouse is more prone to make unhealthy bonds with male friends. This "extra" friendliness comes across to most males as "interest" or even "flirtation" even though she may not even intend it to be taken that way.

If you are this type of lady, you need to learn to be more reserved with men, particularly with men who are looking for a relationship or fulfillment with the opposite sex. Such a lady will find it difficult to practice such "walls" as they have never been part of her younger life because she has never needed such because she has come from a loving and respectful dominant male family who love her and seek to protect her.

Another clear clue that you have entered a danger zone is when a person of the opposite sex is trying to fulfill your role with your spouse. A very clear sign that an unhealthy bond is in progress is when that “friend” of your spouse attempts to replace you. That is, when that “friend” attempts to fill the roles that belong to your spouse to fulfill. In other words, that “friend” has stepped between you and your spouse and is competing for prominence or “authority” in your marriage.

Another clear clue that you are in a danger zone is when your “friend” of the opposite sex habitually focuses attention on you while ignoring or shutting out your spouse in a conversation or action with you.

What is Unhealthy Bonding?

What is the difference between a “healthy” and “unhealthy” bond with members of the opposite sex?

To “bond” means to become “one.” People of the opposite sex can bond in many different ways. For example, two can bond “intellectually” or “spiritually” (religious oneness). This kind of bonding is what produces “kindred spirits.” Within proper limitations there is nothing wrong with this kind of bonding. You can be friendly without being flirtative. You can share common ideology without sharing intimacies. The thing to remember is that proper intellectual or religious bonding will always respect and encourage the maintenance of those “walls” that protect the marriage bond. Improper bonding will always attack those protective walls.

There is also an area of “emotional” bonding that is common between friends. This consists of mutual concern for the others well being and happiness. Paul refers to this area in I Corinthians 12:25-26 where we are to “rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Proper emotional bonding between members of the opposite sex will respect and encourage the maintenance of those “walls” that protect the bond of marriage.

However, unhealthy bonding is when a relationship is allowed to develop to the extent that these “walls” or boundaries are being violated and another person is allowed to cross over into the “intimacies” reserved solely for the marriage bond.

The marriage “bond” consists of areas of “intimacy” that should exist only between you and your spouse. This does not only include “sexual” intimacies but areas of “knowledge” between each other and about each other. It includes those areas of “trust” that should not be shared with anyone else. It includes those rights reserved and protected by the Biblical “walls” we have shared thus far.

The question is asked quite often, “what about Christian friends of the opposite sex? Can’t you allow yourself to relax those protective ‘walls’ when you are around a Christian ‘brother’ or ‘sister’? What about brotherly ‘love’?”

Remember the danger zone is never with absolute strangers as such advances generally scare you more than tempt you. The danger zone is

ALWAYS with those you have 'bonded' with in some degree. True brotherly "love" will not only respect such "walls" but also encourage them. Furthermore, the Christian has an old depraved nature that needs such restraints. Failure to recognize danger in this area is the reason why so many Pastors run off or have affairs with their church members. Christian friends of the opposite sex that do not practice such "walls" of separation and/or encourage you not to practice such "walls" of separation are to be viewed as suspect and dangerous to your marriage.

How Do You Know Your Walls are not High enough?

A married couple must be able to recognize and know the danger signals that alert them to those who are trying to invade those protective walls. Couples must work together to maintain these walls and keep would be invaders outside those walls.

A rule of thumb is that the husband knows men better than his wife, and the wife knows women better than her husband. Many times the wife can detect when another woman is pursuing her husband better than the husband, because she is a woman and knows women. The same is true in reverse. Because it is flattering to be admired by the opposite sex, each spouse must watch out for the other and remind them, that to some degree, they must keep their walls in place in dealing with the opposite sex.

Hence, learn to trust each other's instincts and alert each other whether the danger is real or imagined rather than accusing your spouse of being over jealous.

What about being over Jealous?

God expressed His own concern and care of Israel as a "jealous" husband.

Zechariah 8:2 *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.*

No one should be allowed to assume your role or position with your spouse. There is something wrong with you if you are not jealous when another person attempts to usurp your role with your spouse. Such jealousy is a natural attribute of true love. True love is jealous of those actions and attitudes that rightfully belong to your marriage bond.

The Hollywood version of "trust" without accountability or responsibility is not what true love is all about. The Hollywood idea is that you just "trust" your spouse in any and all situations if you really love them. There is a certain aspect of "trust" necessary for any good relationship. However, many times it is not a matter of "trust" but rather a matter of ignorance or irresponsible behavior that needs to be pointed out and corrected. A spouse that always responds irritably

by complaining about “trust” and yet never stops to examine whether or not certain boundaries are being crossed is simply looking for a way to do what they like rather than what is right.

Jealousy is usually caused not invented. The general rule is that if your spouse is jealous it is because you are behaving in such a way toward the opposite sex that would cause it.

You should never act in such a way that would make your spouse insecure or unnecessarily jealous. If you are acting in such a way you should stop it and change the way you act toward the opposite sex.

How do you deal with Intruders?

“Intruders” are those who try to attack and tear down those walls that are meant to protect your marriage from affairs. Often such intruders are acting on instinct rather than conscious intent to make a conquest. However, one way or the other you must work together to make them conscious of their actions and resist them.

One sure way of resisting such attempts is to determine not to allow those walls to be torn down. Ultimately no one can tear those walls down unless you allow them. Besides maintaining those walls, the next best response is to include your spouse and openly show affection and commitment to your spouse. Many times that is all you need to do to discourage would be intruders.

However, there are those that are determined to make a conquest. Sometimes your only alternative is simply to remove yourself from the danger zone. Walk out of the room, leave the place. It is neither rude nor unkind to cut off a conversation or walk away from a person who is determined to disrespect your principles.

The two greatest weapons that intruders use are “humor” and “playfulness.” Why? Because these two weapons give the intruder the greater advantage. The intruder can pursue you openly this way, and if you get mad or defensive they can just say they were only joking. Moreover, it is far more difficult to put off an intruder when they come at you with humor and playfulness. Most people are too timid to make a public spectacle of themselves in their own defense. The best defense to this kind of pursuit is simply to get up and leave the room or place. You may excuse yourself by having to go to the Ladies room or to check on children or simply without a word.

If you sense that a certain person of the opposite sex is a pursuer beware of initial greetings and departures. Some feel comfortable in taking complete advantage at such times. Instead of a hug, you may want to simply offer your hand or just merely say hello or goodbye. Be prepared for some to make you feel less than “Christian” or “family” if you don’t allow them to give you a big bear hug and/or kiss. This type will come at you with a big smile and wide open arms. The best responses are firmly stick out your hand and say “a handshake will do just fine, thank you” while raising your other hand in a stop position. This may displease them and they may show and say it openly, but just do it anyway until they get the message. Remember true friendship depends upon mutual respect

not touch. If they insist to grab you, then they are not respecting your desires and then that raised hand to stop them should be used to stop them.

Conclusion

Remember, when you said, “I do” to your spouse you also at the same time said “I don’t” to all others of the opposite sex.

There must be a difference between your relationship with your spouse and your relationship with others of the opposite sex. You may not agree with everything I have said in this article. However, you must define certain lines that cannot be crossed over in your relationships with the opposite sex or you will surely pay the consequences sooner or later.

Every affair is the result of not practicing or maintaining one or more of these suggested walls. Most teenage pregnancies are a result of failure to know and implement such walls. Parents are failing to teach their children these protective walls and the consequences are very evident.

Don’t allow yourself to be intimidated by anyone who says you must be an overprotective or jealous spouse, as God Himself is a jealous God.

“For I AM JEALOUS over you with a GODLY JEALOUSLY; for I have espoused you to ONE husband.” – 2 Cor. 11:2

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was JEALOUS for Zion with GREAT JEALOUSLY, and I was JEALOUS for her with great fury.” – Zech. 8:2

Better to have a godly jealousy for each other and protect your marriage than to watch it be destroyed simply because you’re too proud to be “jealous.” Godly jealousy guards the marriage bond from intruders.

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– The Song of Solomon 4:12*