

"FAMILY ~ Establishing healthy boundaries" 8.22.10

There's no easy way to enter today's message. The Book of Hosea is the most pain-filled love story in the entire Bible.

It is considered a living parable: God actually commanded Hosea to marry a woman that would be unfaithful to him.

Hosea 1: 2 – 3 or p. 679 in pew Bible

Unimaginable: God told Hosea before he took his sacred marriage vows that his new wife would be unfaithful to him.

Hosea's new life & marriage rolled out exactly like God had explained. Gomer was unfaithful & gave birth to children who were fathered by other men.

Hosea loved God so much that he obeyed & married Gomer: her adultery & unfaithfulness became a LIVING-PROPHETIC example to Israel.

The Book of Hosea is a very real + tragic + love story from beginning to end: it's a picture of how God pursues us at our very worst.

God never gives up on us. God comes after us, when we have completely forsaken & been unfaithful to Him.

The pain-filled loved story of Hosea's marriage to Gomer stirs some deep emotions for those of you that have experienced unfaithfulness in your marriage.

In the life-cycle of a family, there is perhaps no greater tragedy than the violation of sacred vows.

I am concerned about those who think they don't need this message today. Too many counseling sessions begin w/..."I never thought I could do such a thing." In the vast sea of sexual sin ~ the proverbs instructions ring true: "Pride goes before destruction & haughtiness before a fall." Proverbs 16:18

I am also concerned about those who think this message has come too late, because they've already blown it.

I Corinthians 6: 9 – 11 or p. 873 in pew Bible

My opinion church is the very best place in the world for adulterers to be; It always that been that way.

IF you are guilty of adultery: you may sit right down with the greedy ~ the abusive ~ the swindlers ~ & the rest of us sinners who desperately need the blood of Jesus, so that we can stand justified before God.

NO need for STONE THROWING @ WRCC ~ we attempt to be an authentic gathering of people who openly admit our desperate need for God's Spirit to live holy lives: WE ARE all sinners saved by God's grace alone!

Today's msg is for everyone in this room: don't be lulled into thinking you could ever do such a thing ~ pride is so dangerous:

Let's use a series of questions to identify where you might be:

I. 1st question = Are you at risk for an affair?

A. Stats on infidelity:

- More than 90% of divorces in long standing marriages involve infidelities some time in their marriage.
- 80% of those who divorce during an affair regret their decision.
- Over 75% who marry partners in an affair eventually divorce Christianity Today” found 65% of men & 55% of women will have an affair by age 40!
- Truth about affairs – marital infidelity is that they die for the same reason as marriage = lack of intimacy

B. Hope for struggling marriages:

- Secular research has proven that couples who are struggling in their marriage (5) years later have a higher degree of fulfillment and happiness if they stayed in the marriage than those who divorce & marry someone else: don't give up hope!

II. 2nd question = Are you familiar with the danger signs of an affair?

A. 1st ~ Your relationship with your spouse is last on your to-do list.

- Is your calendar full maybe with good things: Life in general, i.e. dinner engagements? sporting events? volunteering @ church?
- I understand a full adult life entails balancing multiple relationships & responsibilities. My question is: how are you more likely to spend your down-time: on Face book more than face-to face w/your hubby, or on the flip side. Men are you more interested in the sports page than how your wife's day has been; time to Rethink your priorities.

B. 2nd ~ You don't really argue anymore = going numb is a dangerous sign.

- Healthy disagreements – love spats are not all bad. The (2) of you are different people w/different upbringings, life experiences, interests, & pet peeves.
- Every intimate relationship will have its moments of conflict. The danger comes in when one of you gets beaten down so badly emotionally that you just go limp. You go along with where to eat out, how to spend weekends, just doesn't matter.
- Not engaging is a surprising danger sign of being vulnerable to an affair!

C. 3rd ~ Just maybe you simply resist conflict resolution ☺

- Every couple runs into communication rough spots.
- Important not to build walls between you and your spouse: never too late.
- I've done couples counseling = “not going back, it's useless...”

Unresolved conflict leads to isolation and leaves you vulnerable to fleeing your marriage = why we offer marriage courses.

D. 4th ~ Increasing the time you spend apart is a critical indicator ☹

- The demands of work, business travel – ill children – or differing interests and hobbies are common issues that can keep couples apart.
- The more time you spend away from your spouse, the greater temptation to drift in your relationship.

- E. 5th ~ Family History of Infidelity: infidelity runs in family trees; Dave Carder writes in Close Calls p.42

“Modeling is the most powerful behavioral determinant known to man. Even though the child may be too young to understand the dynamic going on in the family when adultery occurs, they nevertheless feel the tension, pain, and hostility that exists between the parents. It might be this marital atmosphere that creates an injury in a child that later surfaces in adulthood and makes the individual vulnerable to inappropriate affection offered in a close call by someone outside the marriage.”

- III. 3rd question ~ Just maybe you are considering crossing that line today, what should you do immediately?

- A. Advice from Brad Johnson (mega-church pastor) who fell to adultery:

Confess your struggle to a Christian friend of the same sex.

- Immediately enter into a relationship with a reputable Christian therapist & take every radical step necessary to be as far away from any temptation that is possible
- Be honest with yourself: with your struggles, with your needs, with your fears, with your pain.

Deal with the issues that have haunted you most likely for years; don't buy the lie that it's safe & harmless. Know you are capable of crossing any line.

- B. It can happen to you ~ not a game: The consequences are devastating!

Haunting question Rick Warren asked Brad Johnson: “How would your life be different if you had, at the point of realizing you could & might cross that line, done what was necessary to walk away from the relationship?”

INSERT Brad's answer

So how does Hosea & Gomer's story conclude?

- IV. Hosea's wife is REDEEMED!

- A. (R) Hosea 3: 1

1. Here we see Hosea & Gomer for the last time. She has now run off with another man, so obviously Hosea is now free of this unfaithful situation? Now he can get a divorce. She has left him for another man, path is clear, RIGHT?
2. WRONG! God would not give up on Israel & He aims for Hosea to symbolize His undying love to His wife of adultery.

- B. (R) Hosea 3: 2 – 3

- Unimaginable as you think of what God asked Hosea to do here: you get a small glimpse into what God's love for us in our most wicked state is like.
- Hosea wife had been faithless all along – now she's gone off with another man.
 - By O.T. law Hosea could have had her stoned to death: just like you & me who stand condemned by the law.

- Isaiah 64: 6 explains, "We are all infected & impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags."

C. Instead of condemnation in v. 1 God commands,

"Go & love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover."

D. Loving would be hard enough but that's not all Hosea had to do:

- Hosea had to pay his wife's boyfriend-significant other to get her back; if this is not an emotional impossibility, Hosea couldn't afford the price!
 - IF he could have Hosea would have paid completely in cash, but he couldn't. So he paid half in cash & half in barley & wine.
 - The total price of buying back his wife was the that of a female slave Ex 21: 32

God says to Hosea, "Get her back, whatever it cost, get her back."

The most unexpected picture of God's love in the entire O.T.

He loves us in just this way = going after us at our very worst, when we were worth the effort, He came after you & me.

(R) Romans 5: 6 – 11 or p. 860

Take a moment & consider how much God loves you just as you are tell God thank you for His unconditional love!