

Drink the Water, Flee the Fire:¹

Marital Faithfulness

Prov 5 and Selected Proverbs CBC Sun a.m. 6/28/09

Topic: What conviction and tools does the book of Proverbs give to help us live in true, heartfelt faithfulness to our spouse, for as long as we both shall live?

Assertion: The conviction and tools Proverbs provides to help us live in true heartfelt faithfulness to our spouse include finding romantic and sexual satisfaction freely and exclusively with one's spouse (Prov 5:15-19) and fleeing sinful sexual desire because this fire allures (Prov 5:3), spreads (5:8-9), and burns ((5:11, 14; 7:22-23, 26-27).

Central Truth: To maintain marital fidelity find romantic and sexual satisfaction freely and exclusively in your spouse and flee sinful sexual desire. In other words, **drink the water and flee the fire.**

ENGAGE: "I hurt a lot of different folks," [SLIDE of S.C. Gov. Mark Sanford] Gov. Mark Sanford said during a news conference this past Wednesday at the statehouse in Columbia, S.C. **Mark Sanford**, the governor of South Carolina, apologized for having **an affair** in a news conference Wednesday, ending a mystery over his disappearance.

At the news conference, Mr. Sanford said his friendship with [Maria] began eight years ago and **became a romance about a year ago**. He said he had seen her three times since then. The relationship was "discovered" five months ago, he said, and **he had been trying to reconcile with his wife**. [BLANK SLIDE] Mr. Sanford strongly implied he had ended the affair. "**The one thing you really find is that you absolutely want resolution,**" he said. "And so oddly enough, I spent the last five days of my life crying in Argentina."

Trans: Today we consider a topic that may make some of you uncomfortable, the topic of **marital faithfulness**. Now there are some who may question rather we should teach publicly on this area of **marital fidelity**. Yet, we live in a day when many marriage vows don't mean very much. **God knows the weakness of our flesh and that we need this teaching and includes it in Scripture for us**. If we search our hearts many of us humbly say, "But for the grace of God there go I."

James Patterson and Peter Kim found that a shocking 53 percent of their interviewees agreed with the statement, "I will cheat on my spouse; after all, given the chance, he or she will do the same." Their research led them to conclude, "While we marry, we have lost faith in the institution of marriage. A third of married men and women confessed to us that they've had at least one affair." [James Patterson and Peter Kim, *The Day America Told the Truth*, quoted by Anthony Selvaggio in *A Proverbs Driven Life*, 153.]

William Harley concurs with these statistics when he notes that his counseling experience leads him to believe that as many as half of all married couples go through the agony of unfaithfulness and affairs. He further notes that in most marriages a couple may easily prevent this tragedy. [Cf. Harley, *His Needs, Her Needs: Building an Affair-Proof Marriage*, 50.]

¹ Cf. Anthony Selvaggio's chapter with this title in *A Proverbs Driven Life*, pp. 152-66.

What conviction and tools does God give in the book of Proverbs to help us live in true, heartfelt faithfulness to our spouse, for as long as we both shall live? [TWO SLIDES of Gov Mark Sanford and family.] What provision does God provide to help protect ourselves and our marriages and families? What instruction do we need to obey as a husband, as a wife, to protect ourselves and our marriage? [Blank SLIDE]

One man caught in the web of sensuality expressed his struggle this way: **I hated what I was doing, but I kept on.** I had the greatest desire to flee, but yet I found myself being pulled in; **my body was doing one thing and my mind was doing another.**

SET THE STAGE Biblically: No temptation [or trial] has overtaken you that is not faced by others (cf. 1 Cor 10:13). Several extended passages in the book of Proverbs address the issue of immorality. Though written nearly three thousand years ago, the truths of Proverbs are timeless. **God’s instructions on immorality, expressed in Proverbs remains our standard to live by. These instructions are set in the context of a father instructing his son.** Solomon, no doubt, was told of his own father’s failure. When King David violated the commandment against adultery, he set in motion a series of events that the royal house of Israel suffered from for generations.

God calls us to avoid immorality and be faithful in marriage both by way of command and by way of appeal. **The foolishness of adultery is addressed early and often in the book of Proverbs.** Proverbs chapter 2 encourages us to embrace wisdom, with avoidance of adultery being a major point of emphasis (cf. 2:16-19). Solomon tells us: SLIDE: “Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman, from the seductive words of the promiscuous woman” (Prov 2:16 NLT).[BLANK SLIDE]

The entire chapters of Proverbs five and seven, and half of chapter six (**sixty-five verses in all**) are devoted to warning us against adultery. God’s heart in warning us against adultery is not to threaten, but to warn us—to remind us that He is holy and that sin, even the forgiven sin of believers in Christ, can have serious consequences [cf. Selvaggio, 153].

God despises our breaking of vows, especially in marriage, because all such behavior violates His perfect faithfulness. God commands our faithfulness in marriage for our good. God wants what is best for us. **To embrace a lifestyle of sexual sin cuts ourselves off from the wholeness, truth, and fullness of joy that only life in Christ can provide.** We definitely need God’s wisdom if we are to be faithful in walking in holiness, whether married or single.

FOCUS: Now there’s more to avoiding adultery than knowing it’s wrong. God, in providing the book of Proverbs for us, does more than simply command us, “Do not commit adultery.” **What conviction and tools does the book of Proverbs give to help you and me live in true, heartfelt faithfulness to our spouse, for as long as we both shall live?**

PREVIEW: This morning we’ll going to focus on two commands that help us to remain faithful to our spouse; two methods God provides to help us maintain marital fidelity. God gives us both a **positive and a negative method** to help us be faithful in marriage.

The first component of maintaining marital fidelity involves a delightful command: DRINK THE WATER. Find romantic and marital satisfaction freely and exclusively in your spouse. In the Bible we see God is all for sexuality—within the bonds and bounds of marriage. In fact we’ll see that the fullest expression of physical intimacy within marriage serves as a safeguard against temptations to be immoral.

Secondly, we will see that as vital and absolutely necessary as it is to **drink the water**, there is more to obeying Scripture and more to protecting spouse, marriage, and self. The use of **water** as a metaphor for **holy sexual desire** is paired in Proverbs with the use of **FIRE** as a metaphor for **sinful sexual desire**. **To maintain marital fidelity we must not only drink the water, we must also flee the fire.** Flee sinful sexual desire because **moral impurity** is deadly to spiritual character and healthy marriages.

ANNOUNCE the passage: For the Scripture reading this morning please turn with me in your Bibles to **Prov 5:1-23 [p. 563]**

Trans: What instruction does God give to help husbands and wives maintain marital faithfulness? **What conviction and tools does the book of Proverbs give to help you and me live in true, heartfelt faithfulness to our spouse, for as long as we both shall live?** God gives us two methods of maintaining marital fidelity. **The first component of maintaining marital fidelity involves a delightful command: DRINK THE WATER.** Find romantic and sexual satisfaction freely and exclusively in your spouse. **Positively God encourages us:**

Drink the water: find romantic and marital satisfaction freely and exclusively in your spouse (Prov 5:15-19).

In other words establish and maintain a delight in marital intimacy. God is very clear to us in the Bible that **there's more to avoiding adultery than knowing it's wrong**. God, in providing the book of Proverbs for us, does more than simply command us, "Do not commit adultery." **The writer of Proverbs is not prudish.** Solomon encourages husbands in Proverbs 5: "Be RAVISHED with your wife's embrace." God commands: Establish and maintain a delight in marital intimacy.

Here in Prov 5 God uses some of the most explicit language in the Bible on maintaining your marriage as a defense against immorality. **Physical intimacy within marriage was designed and created by God**. God is all for sexuality—within the bonds and bounds of marriage. **The fullest expression of physical intimacy within marriage serves as a safeguard against temptations to be immoral.** As some have expressed it, **Why would I go out looking to drive a Volkswagen when I have a Cadillac at home?**

Unfortunately, it's all too easy to allow the daily pressures of life to throw a wet blanket instead of a warm, cuddly blanket over our marriage bed. The result is that some go out looking for fulfillment elsewhere. Proverbs warns us this is a great deception! **TRUE SATISFACTION is found only one place: within the faithfulness of the marriage relationship.** [Cf. D. Jeremiah, *Powerful Principles from Proverbs*, 37.]

Now Solomon uses the imagery of **a cistern and well** that store **water** to describe one's wife because **she, like water, satisfies desires**. **Note with me God's provision in marriage. Look at God's instructions to husbands in Prov 5:15-19 (NKJV):** "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. **16** Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? **17** Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you. **18** Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. **19** *As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love*" (Prov 5:15-19 NKJV).

Solomon uses the imagery of a **cistern** and **well** that store **water** to describe one's wife because **she, like water, satisfies desires**. What is private is not to be shared with strangers; it belongs in the home and in the marriage. The water from your cistern is not to be channeled to strangers or to the public.

APPL: From a practical viewpoint then this means **do all you can to be fully satisfied in and by your spouse**. Pursue faithfulness in marriage through the enjoyment of holy sexual desire with your spouse. God says, "In a faithful marriage lays your greatest hope for true physical intimacy and fulfillment. The way to full satisfaction in this area is within the free, open, joyful channel of the marital relationship." Husbands, God encourages you: "Find consistent physical pleasure and satisfaction in your wife's body and consistent emotional attraction to her love, expressed physically." (Cf. also Col 3:19.)

Reit: How can you be faithful in marriage? God instructs and encourages married couples: "Quench your thirst by means of one another. Find exclusive satisfaction in God's gift of your spouse."

God goes on to warn each of us as husbands: "If you are not captivated [Heb. *sagah*] by your spouse you will become *captivated* with a stranger in sinful acts, then your own iniquities will *captivate* you; and you will be led to ruin (cf. Prov 5:20-23).

Trans: Note God appeals in **Prov 5:20 (NKJV)**: "*For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress?*" **God says: Why look elsewhere** when my plan for your fulfillment physically is found in the person of your very own spouse?

So God's command "Do not commit adultery," is joined to a positive point (Enjoy physical intimacy within marriage). Because as a husband or wife you only have one legitimate form of sexual fulfillment, make sure you employ it. If you and I intend to take seriously the prohibitions against immorality, which we must, then we must take seriously God's positive teaching in this area.

APPL: William Harley in his book, *His Needs, Her Needs* writes in this regards: "When a man chooses a wife, he promises to remain faithful to her for life. This means that he believes his wife will be his only [intimate] partner "until death do us part." He makes this commitment because he trusts her to be as ... interested in him [physically] as he is in her. He trusts her to be ... available to him whenever he needs to make love and to meet all his **sexual** needs, just as she trusts him to meet her **emotional** needs.

"Unfortunately in many marriages the man finds that putting his trust in this woman has turned into one of the biggest mistakes of his life. He has agreed to limit his sexual experience to a wife who is unwilling to meet that vital need. He finds himself up the proverbial creek without a paddle." [Harley, *His Needs, Her Needs*, 49-50.]

Now if satisfying our thirst within the marriage relationship is how we are to maintain marital fidelity, **as a spouse you must not turn off the spigot. Husbands**, recognize your God-given responsibility to serve your wife. **Wives**, recognize your God-given responsibility to serve your husband (cf. 1 Cor 7:1-5). For both, meet your spouse's needs as you would want your spouse to meet your need. **For husbands**, this means it's important you understand your wife's need for **affection** as part of the sexual process, just as it's important for you as a wife to understand your husband's need for you to join him in the experience of lovemaking. For both of you, **your**

commitment, watched closely and renewed regularly, to the proper channeling of one another's sexual energies is a cornerstone element of a lifelong, faithful, satisfying, God-glorifying marriage.

Reit/Trans: What instruction does God give to help husbands and wives maintain marital faithfulness? **The first component of maintaining marital fidelity within marriage involves a delightful command: Drink the water.** Now as vital and absolutely necessary as it is to drink the water, there is more to obeying Scripture and more to protecting spouse, marriage, and self. The use of WATER as a metaphor for holy sexual desire is paired in Proverbs with the use of FIRE as a metaphor for sinful sexual desire. **To maintain marital fidelity we must not only drink the water, we must also flee the fire.** The second component of maintaining marital faithfulness involves a **warning: FLEE THE FIRE.** Why must we flee the fire? We must flee sinful sexual desire because this fire **allures**, this fire **spreads**, and this fire **destroys**. Sinful sexual desire is not a campfire that warms rather it is a forest fire that destroys.

Flee the fire: flee sinful sexual desire because this fire allures (Prov 5:3), spreads (5:8-9), and burns (5:11, 14; 7:22-23, 26-27).

Now if we are going to flee the fire we must **listen to God's counsel and heed His instruction** in this area of our lives. The pleas of the father to the son in Proverbs to listen to his counsel and heed his advice are a picture of God's pleading with us to obey His Word. The father tells the son that **wisdom** will keep him from giving in to the temptress. It is the father's words, spoken over and over to the son (5:1-2; 7:1-5), which are a picture of God's words to us. **Look at Prov 5:1-2 (NKJV):** *"My son, pay attention to my wisdom; Lend your ear [i.e., pay close attention] to my understanding, 2 That you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge"* (Prov 5:1-2 NKJV).

Pay careful attention to God's wisdom and understanding in His Word to help safeguard discretion within you. Discretion is the ability to give wise, careful consideration and planning in what you do. By retaining this ability the temptation to go your own way is lessened.

What can you do to help you flee sinful sexual desire? **Let the Word of God be your constant companion.** Saturate your mind daily with the admonitions and commands of Scripture. David proclaims: [SLIDE] "How can a young person maintain a pure life? By guarding it according to your instructions!" (Ps 119:9 NET). [BLANK SLIDE] **Trans:** Now why must we flee sinful sexual desire? **FLEE sinful sexual desire because this fire ALLURES (Prov 5:3).**

I appreciate what **Anthony Selvaggio** says here when he notes: We do a disservice to ourselves, our church, and our children when we pretend that infidelity is not alluring. We must speak honestly of the sometimes strong attractions of illicit sexual intimacy. **God affirms in the Bible that sexual temptation can be powerful.**

Notice how Solomon brings out the allurements of **sinful** sexual desire in **Prov 5:3 (NKJV):** "For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil" (Prov 5:2 NKJV). Solomon describes the "lips" of the immoral woman as dripping honey. "Lips" is used as a figure of speech [metonymy of cause], referring to the words of immoral woman. **The seductive words of an immoral woman, like dripping honey and olive oil, are flattering and smooth** [cf. NET notes on Prov 5:3.]

ILL: Chuck Swindoll tells of an interesting experience he had back in January, 1990. He had been invited to speak in New Orleans at the Super Bowl breakfast sponsored by **Athletes in Action**. En route from Los Angeles to New Orleans, Chuck had to change planes in another city. The connecting flight was packed, naturally, and there was a festive spirit on board since everyone was headed for Super Bowl XXIV. Chuck noticed **an empty seat behind his...** the only empty seat on the plane. Only minutes before they backed away from the terminal, one final passenger hurried on board. Her plane had been late in arriving, making it questionable if she could make her New Orleans connection. She did. As she hurried on, a bit harried, **she immediately broke into a broad smile as her eyes met those of the man sitting next to the seat she would occupy.** She didn't simply sit down—she fell into his arms as they kissed, giggled, and embraced for the next ten minutes.

Swindoll's immediate thought was, Now there's a happily married couple. How wrong he was. They were both married...but not to each other. Swindoll continues: "Because they sat right behind me, I got the full scoop. I must confess to some eavesdropping. **Their carefully arranged plan was to secretly meet on the plane, then spend the weekend together in New Orleans.** Their conversation, mixed with frequent kisses, included all kinds of comments about the fun they had in front of them, the intimate ecstasy of being together for a couple of nights, along with attending the Super Bowl. Both laughed and joked as they talked about how each other's mate knew nothing of it. **I might add here that neither made any mention of the possible consequences—the loss of reputation, of the depression that was sure to follow, the possibility of unexpected pregnancy, the embarrassing humiliation when their mates (not if, but when) would find out.** Why, of course not! This couple was on fire! Their full focus turned to the delightful time they would have together. They just couldn't talk about anything else.

"All the while," Swindoll says, "I'm sitting there in front of them, **working on a chapter on sexual temptation,** thirty-six inches behind me is **a living illustration of lust in action.** There flashed through my mind these words Solomon once wrote: "**Stolen waters are sweet.**" No doubt about it. **Unbridled, blinding lust is running over with the sweet ecstasy of sensual pleasure—at least for a weekend.** Laughter, creativity, and excitement abound in such sexual escapades. **It is not until later that the fog lifts and reality returns with its Monday-morning depression.**" [Swindoll, *Sanctity of Life*, quoted in *Tardy Oxcart*, 17-18.]

Trans: Why **FLEE** sinful sexual desire? Not only does the fire of sinful sexual desire **allure** also this fire **spreads. FLEE sinful sexual desire because this fire SPREADS (Prov 5:8-9).**

If Jesus referred to the day in which he lived as a wicked and adulterous generation, how much more true is that today. Very few of us know what it is like to live a day free from the presence of immorality. It is broadcast into our homes on television. It fills our movie screens. It is in song lyrics and used to get ratings on radio and television talk shows. Our politicians & leaders are involved in it. Even Christians practice it—& often defend their immoral actions. **Immorality is so ever-present in our culture that we become numb to its impact.** We stop recognizing how we tolerate it and how our own thoughts and actions are colored by it. [Jeremiah, 32.]

What can we do to help protect ourselves from sinful sexual desire? Knowing the deceitfulness of our own heart, Solomon instructs us: **STAY FAR AWAY from the source of temptation.** Speaking about the temptress note Solomon's instruction to us in **Prov 5:8-9 (NKJV): "Remove**

your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, **9 Lest** you give your honor to others, and your years to the cruel *one*” (Prov 5:8-9 NKJV).

Don’t see how close you can get to the fire without being burned. **Once encountered and indulged, sexual temptation can spread through our lives like a wildfire.** When we refuse to stay away from the source of temptation we are setting ourselves up for moral failure. As our conscience is defiled each progressive step becomes easier. We go from being merely “near the door of her house,” to giving the best years of our life to the cruel taskmaster of lust. **This fire spreads by consuming and ruining the life of those who refuse to stay away from the source of temptation.** Lust destroys what it envelopes.

Trans: Flee sinful sexual desire because it allures. Flee sexual sinful desire because this fire spreads. And: **FLEE sinful sexual desire because this fire DESTROYS (Prov 5:11, 14).**

When Solomon depicts the allure of marital infidelity, he does so to warn us that **this allurements to immorality leads to ruin.** Behind the façade of the adulteress lies what is sinister and deadly. The father in Proverbs 5, after describing the appeal of the immoral woman, tells us that beyond her honeyed lips, lies what is harmful and destructive for life. What looks so sweet turns out badly. **Look at vv. 4-5 [of Prov 5 NKJV]:** “*But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. 5 Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell [or the grave, Heb. sheol]*” (Prov 5:4-5 NKJV).

There is no movement toward immorality without damage. The destructiveness brought on through the immoral woman is likened to the effects of a sharp two-edged sword [lit. in Hebrew: “like a sword of (two) mouths]. Just as a double-edged sword devours/cuts either way, so immorality destroys a person. Unrestrained self-indulgent immoral behavior often leads to a ruined life with deadly consequences.

Temptation always includes hopeful promises; otherwise, we would never take the devil’s bait. For a time, it seems like these promises have been fulfilled, and we may bask in the sunshine of pleasant experiences and false assurances. This is what family counselor **J. Allan Petersen** calls, “the myth of the greener grass.” People who commit sexual sins think their problems are solved (“She understands me so much better than my wife does!”). People who commit sexual sins think that life will get better and better. **But disobedience to God’s laws always brings sad consequences.** Sinners eventually pay dearly for their brief moments of pleasure. [Cf. Wiersebe, *Be Skillful*, on Prov 5:7-14].

Lack of discipline and control in the area of sexual gratification is destructive. **Look at Prov 5:20-23 (NKJV):** “For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress? **21** For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his paths. **22** His own iniquities entrap the wicked *man*, and he is caught in the cords of his sin. [In other words: The lack of discipline and control in the area of sexual gratification is destructive. The one who plays with this kind of sin will become ensnared by it and led to ruin.] **23** He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray” (Prov 5:20-23 NKJV).

Again God warns here: If you are not captivated by your wife you will become *captivated* with a stranger in sinful acts, then your own iniquities will *captivate* you; and you will be led to ruin (cf. Prov 5:20-23).

What we do is in front of the Lord's eyes. God examines our actions. **Nothing escapes God's notice. The lack of discipline and control in the area of sexual gratification brings destruction into our lives.**

Then in v. 23 Solomon issues this warning to the young man, who rather than being captivated by his wife, is captivated with a stranger. "He will die because there was no discipline; because of the greatness of his folly he will reel (Prov 5:23 NET). **The lack of discipline and control in the area of sexual gratification destroys what wisdom builds and leads to destruction if it is not corrected.**

ILL: And in case you need a reminder that God is serious about fidelity, I ask you to **consider this true story.** It could save you from some tragedy that could be just around the corner. The names are fictitious, but the story is true. **Clara and Chester's** twenty-eight-year-old marriage was a good one. Not the most idyllic, but good. By now they had three grown children who loved them dearly. They were also blessed with sufficient financial security to allow them room to dream about a retirement home, so they began looking for one. A widower we'll call Sam was selling his place. They liked it a lot and they returned home to talk and to make their plans. Months passed.

Last fall Clara told Chester she wanted a divorce. He went numb. After all these years, why? How could she deceive him? How could she have been nursing such a scheme while they were looking at a retirement home? She said she hadn't been...not for that long. Actually, this was a recent decision now that she had found another man. Who? Clara admitted it was Sam, the owner of the house they were considering. She had inadvertently run into him several weeks after they had discussed the sale. They had a cup of coffee together; later the next week they went out to dinner. For several weeks they had been seeing each other privately and were now sexually involved. Since they were now "in love," there was no turning back. Not even the kids, who hated the idea, could dissuade their mother.

On the day Clara was to leave, Chester walked through the kitchen toward the garage. Realizing Clara would be gone when he returned, he hesitated, "Well, hon, I guess this is the last time..." and his voice dissolved as he broke into sobs. She felt awkward, so she hurriedly got her things together, backed out of the driveway, and never looked back. She drove north to meet Sam. Less than two weeks after she moved in with her new lover, Sam was seized with a heart attack and lingered a few hours. The following morning Sam died.

When it comes to morality, God is serious...as serious as a heart attack.

If God moved that swiftly in every case, most folks I know would think again before they started an affair. If God moved now like He did in the days of Ananias & Sapphira I wonder if you'd have to put in a morgue in every church. [Swindoll, *Sanctity of Life, Tardy Oxcart*, 18-19]

"The Bible gives us many examples of those who were burned by the fire of sinful sexual desire. Think of **Samson and Delilah**, with Samson burned by the sapping of his strength and the suffering of Israel as a result of his downfall. Due to his many foreign wives, **Solomon** was burned by being enticed into idolatry. And following his adultery with Bathsheba, **David's** rule diminished greatly in glory and his family life was marred by sexual abuse, death, and personal and political betrayal." [Selvaggio, 161.]

Concl [cf. Selvaggio, 165-66]: Some, as you were reminded of these warnings, **have begun to feel a burden of guilt, sin, or pain.** Perhaps you struggle with a fixation that is trying to take

hold in your life. You know you have been allowing the fire of temptation to spread. Perhaps you have acted on your temptation, even to the point of actual adultery. Maybe your self-indulgence has all gone much farther than at one time you could have possibly imagined. You simply don't know what to do. **None of us is immune to the danger of sexual sin.** Every one of us has committed some form of it, particularly as defined by Jesus. If your heart is heavy because you have been sexually unfaithful in the past, I pray you will be encouraged. Whatever your situation, no matter how far gone, no matter how shameful or shocking, **in Christ there is hope, forgiveness, & mercy.**

It's true—you can't undo what's already been done. But you can be forgiven. You can be forgiven by God as you come to Him in repentance. Even David, a man after God's own heart, committed adultery. While David had to pay steep earthly costs for his transgression, Psalm 51 reminds us that, after confessing and repenting of his sin, he experienced God's forgiveness. God created a new heart in David and he can do the same for you. **God can strengthen and help you rebuild a life of faithfulness and integrity.**

On the other hand, maybe you are the faithful spouse who has suffered awful pain from an adulterous husband or wife. In either case there is much to be learned from an event recounted in John, chapter 8.

One day a group of powerful men brought before Jesus a woman who had been caught in adultery (John 8:3-11). "The experts in the law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught committing adultery. They made her stand in front of them ^{8:4} and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. ^{8:5} In the law *Moses commanded us to stone to death* such women. What then do you say?" ^{8:6} (Now they were asking this in an attempt to trap him, so that they could bring charges against him.) Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger. [Jesus may have been writing counteraccusations against each of them, highlighting their sins.] ^{8:7} When they persisted in asking him, [Jesus] stood up straight and replied, **"Whoever among you is guiltless may be the first to throw a stone at her."** Jesus understood what was in the hearts and minds of men. He understood that we all struggle with sin, and that sexual sin in one's thought life can be a common occurrence. Indeed, not one man was willing to throw a stone, and gradually starting with the older ones they began to drift away one at a time. If you have been unfaithful in marriage, mentally or physically, see yourself as that adulterous woman. For when all her accusers had gone, something remarkable happened. Jesus turned to her, forgave her, and presented her with this command, **"Go, and from now on do not sin any more"** (John 8:11b NET).

If it is your spouse who has been unfaithful, see yourself as those who accused the adulterer. Certainly, there is no question you have suffered and been betrayed. But recognize this also: each of us is capable of any sin if we are put in the right circumstances. Even you (cf. 1 Cor 10:12). Moreover, each of us has sinful tendencies in particular areas. It can be very hard to understand the power of one person's temptations if you also are not weak in those areas. Yes, your spouse has failed horribly, but this gives you no right to cast a stone or to insist on condemnation. Christ has forgiven you for countless sins against His holiness, and kept on loving you freely and fully. You likewise have grace from God to forgive your spouse, and to love him or her with the love that comes from your Savior, who suffered on the cross for you, your Christian spouse, and all who would believe.