

**Life, Love and Family Daily Fact Sheet**  
**Dr. Tim Clinton**

*“Infidelity”*

- **4 Steps for Healing After Adultery** (Clinton & Trent, 2009):
  - **Set Boundaries**—allow time to work through the negative feelings of betrayal and rejection by setting appropriate physical and emotional boundaries. Reestablishing trust takes time and space.
  - **Rebuild Trust**—rebuild some level of trust in each other by telling one another the truth and by being honest and accountable. It is vital for each spouse to keep his or her word. If one spouse promises to do something, he or she needs to follow through and do it. Trust can be rebuilt by using gestures of affection and nonsexual touch to express care and affirmation, if permission is given by both spouses to engage in such behavior.
  - **Understand the Causes**—understanding what caused the infidelity in the marriage will require a thoughtful, sometimes long look at the marital pattern that has developed, as well as what each person has contributed to the marital breakdown. Each spouse should focus on his or her own issues as opposed to criticizing and blaming the other person for the problem of infidelity (and this should happen after the unfaithful spouse has sat and truly heard the nonoffending spouse express his or her devastation and grief over what has happened, and owned the wrongdoing to some degree).
  - **Take Time for Restoration**—the restoration process involves identifying and reestablishing what was good about the marriage before the adultery. Learn to recognize these and implement new skills and behaviors to strengthen your relationship.
- **Restoration and Forgiveness** (Clinton & Hawkins, 2009):
  - Healing is possible after infidelity. Increasing numbers of couples are braving the path of forgiveness and the restoration of their marriages.
  - Forgiveness occurs when the cold feelings of unforgiveness are changed to warm, loving, compassionate, caring, and altruistic emotions because of a heartfelt transformation. There are many reasons to forgive, including:
    - Forgiveness sets you free to move on with your life.
    - It refuses to let the person who hurt you have any power over your life.
    - It opens up your relationship with God (see Matt. 5:43-48).
    - It keeps you from becoming bitter and thus protects those around you.
    - Unforgiveness doesn't hurt the perpetrator at all; it only hurts you.
    - Scripture commands us to be forgiving (Matt 18:21-35).
- **Quotes:**
  - *“The best way to ensure your marriage is to maintain your friendship. A lot of times, what men miss most is the time that they spend just hanging out with their wives. That’s*

*why so many affairs begin as friendships—it's that intimacy a man is looking for.*—Scott Stanley

- *"Where there's marriage without love, there will be love without marriage."*—Benjamin Franklin
- *"When adultery walks in, everything worth having walks out."*—Woodrow Kroll
- *"Human power alone is not sufficient to reach full forgiveness. There is an element of forgiveness that is divine. It cannot be reached without God."*—Frank Minirth
- *"There is a difference between mental forgiveness and gut forgiveness. For example, when a person has had an affair, frequently the wronged spouse will choose to forgive with the head right away, but it will take the gut months to catch up."*—Charles Stanley

- **Key Thoughts:**

- First time affairs often come out of a two-year experience prior to the onset of the affair where there was severe, unusual, and sustained stress. First time affairs are almost universally about comfort and distraction from the experience a person is living in.
- Anxiety and depression drive attraction.
- Adultery occurs when a person has a sexual relationship with someone other than his or her spouse. This relationship may or may not include an emotional connection (Clinton & Trent, 2009).
- Adultery may also be an emotional affair. Less understood, an emotional affair can be even more threatening to a marriage than physical adultery. It occurs when a husband or wife turns to someone outside the marriage for primary emotional sustenance and support.
- Tragically, infidelity in marriage is becoming increasingly common. Christians are just as likely to be tempted to marital unfaithfulness as non-Christians. Women are nearly as likely to have an affair as men.
- Poor communication, unresolved conflict, and/or unrealistic expectations leading to marital dissatisfaction are key reasons for extramarital affairs. Any perceived need that goes unfulfilled in marriage will seek its fulfillment elsewhere. Regardless of the reason for the infidelity, the decision to cheat on a spouse and acting on that decision are the heart of the matter.
- Spouses may become involved in affairs because they are exposed to situations for which they are unprepared or have not set wise boundaries.
- Most affairs begin gradually as well-meaning friendships. The people involved are unaware of how the relationship is changing until significant, risky behavior occurs.
- Many adulterers think they are looking for love when in fact they are seeking to feel better about themselves.

- **Verses:**

- *“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”—Psalm 147:3*
- *“You shall not commit adultery.”—Exodus 20:14*
- *“The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; He who would destroy himself does it.”—Proverbs 6:32*
- *“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’”—Jeremiah 29:11*
- *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”—John 10:10*
- *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”—Matthew 11:28*
- *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”—Joshua 1:9*
- *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”—Ephesians 1:7*

#### **Endnotes**

Clinton, T. & Hawkins, R. (2009). The quick-reference guide to biblical counseling. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Clinton, T. & Trent, J. (2009). The quick-reference guide to marriage & family counseling. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.