

## The Causes, Consequences and Cures of Unfaithfulness

Rich Nathan

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Family Mess 2 Series

2 Samuel 11–12

### INTERACTING WITH THE SERMON

#### SYNOPSIS OF THE SERMON

According to a research study published last September by The Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 41% of couples interviewed reported to one or both spouses admitting to having an affair. In addition, the study also reported the average affair lasting 2 years based on those surveyed. This weekend, Rich continued the sermon series “Family Mess 2” by addressing “The Causes, Consequences and Cures of Unfaithfulness.” As the definition of marriage evolves in the United States; likewise, our society redefines what it considers infidelity outside of marriage. Is an emotional affair considered infidelity?/flirtatious behavior?/a long hug?/a kiss? What the world considers to be grey and seemingly more grey as societal opinion evolves, the Bible has long made black and white. Jesus makes it very clear that a man who looks “at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt 5:28).” Jesus speaks clear commands yet why is it that American Christians are not far from the societal trends when it comes to infidelity and divorce? How is it that we as followers of Jesus are missing God’s call to purity for our lives? And how can we who are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” recalibrate our moral compasses to that of Jesus so that we may live a life worthy of the calling?

Rich addressed the issue of adultery by examining the most famous act of adultery in human history: that of David and Bathsheba. Through David, we are reminded that adulterers cannot be classified—they can be rich (like David) or poor, have a fulfilling physical relationship with their spouse and even profess Jesus as their savior. Any person can commit adultery and the wisdom of Jesus reveals that sin begins with our thought life and our hearts. Significant moral compromise occurs after a person has been making compromises in their hearts, in their choices, for years before the big fall. Each time we compromise our character, we are saying that God’s grace is not enough for us, that what He has already given us is not enough. When we say that God’s grace is not enough for us we end up making big mistakes in our lives. Even with our mistakes, we have hope in the healing power of Jesus over our hearts, minds, marriages, and families because all “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” and we as a small group are a



community for the purpose of supporting and encouraging one another towards honesty, righteousness and hope.

In 5 minutes or less, briefly give a synopsis of this week's sermon. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain.

## GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

These questions can be used as ice-breakers in the beginning OR interwoven between the questions below to draw the group into the discussion.

- What are one or two things from this weekend's sermon that really stood out to you?
- Share a time when something that you were thinking repeatedly about or something you were trying to resist eventually became too much for you to handle and you inevitably acted on the thought. Maybe you did not intend to act on it but did anyway. (This could be something like not resisting chocolate that you knew was in your pantry or smoking a cigarette when you've been trying to quite).

## SCRIPTURE STUDY

**Context:** Imagine living in an area of New York City where prostitution, drunkenness, and alternative religions were a part of everyday life. In fact, that way of living has surrounded you for your entire life and you might have even participated in that type of lifestyle in the past. In the past year, however, you have undergone an extreme change in the way you live- you began following the teachings of Jesus. Subsequently, you are under extreme hostility and danger by your government and community around you. THIS is what it was like for the Thessalonian church when Paul wrote to them. Theologians William Barclay writes about the familial climate stating, "In Greece, home and family life were near to being extinct, and fidelity was completely non-existent."

Written around 50 A.D., this young group of believers received a mere 3 weeks of gospel education before Paul had to flee for his life. Paul writes to them soon after with affection for their ability to adhere to the teachings of Jesus encourages them to continue following Jesus with their whole minds, hearts, and bodies. This letter was intended to reinforce old teaching and clarify questions these new believers may still have.



## Read 1 Thessalonians 4: 1–8

1 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control your own body[a] in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister.[b] The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

- (v.1–2) Paul exhorts them "in the Lord Jesus" and reminds them of commands he gave them "through the Lord Jesus." of living "in order to please God." What is the purpose of Paul's emphasis on Jesus's words being the source of their instruction? (When Paul delivers instructions to the believers "through the Lord Jesus," what they hear is the very will of God. These are not words of mere men rather God's word and God's will are in these instructions.)
- (v.1) Paul states that the Thessalonians are already living a life that is pleasing to God and encourages them to do so "more and more." Why is it important for these young believers (and for us) to be reminded that choosing Jesus is not just a one time thing but a lifelong process?
- (v.3) Paul closely ties the word sanctification with sexuality. What does it mean to be sanctified? (Sanctification is the process of becoming holy. Bible Scholar Wayne Grudem writes, "It is also a work in which God and man cooperate, each playing distinct roles...Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.")
- (v.3–8) Paul is addressing a clear issue within the community which is their sexual behavior. What commands does he give them?
- (vs 4) According to the text, holy and honorable is the opposite of acting in passionate lust. We know that sexual desire is good because God made it but it must be based in honor toward the other person and holiness toward God. How does lust dishonor its object and disregard God?
- Easy access to tv and pornography is pulling in many men and women and making slaves out of them. What boundaries do you have set up in your life to keep you away from making mistakes?



How has it been helpful to take the steps to establishing boundaries?

- Paul mentions several incentives to fighting this battle. Name some of them. (Pleasing God; Doing the Will of God; Receiving and giving honor; Christian love that seeks the good of others).
- (v.5–8) When you give way to lustful passion, you act like people "who do not know God" when you reject these instructions you do not reject a "human being but God." What does this infer about how to fight the battle to sexual purity? (Knowing God is the path to sexual purity. If you are struggling with sexual impurity in mind or body, the immediate and long term strategy is know God more and more).
- (vs 6–7) Paul ends this passage with a serious warning but Paul does not want us to lose the hope we have been give in Jesus. Looking back on last weeks sermon and what you know about Jesus's teachings, how can we be encouraged towards personal sanctification when the process is sometimes not easy and we often fall short?

## MINISTRY APPLICATION

Below you'll see some options for ministry time with your group. We always encourage you to reserve time in your group to pray for one another and wait on the Holy Spirit.

- If there are any singles in your group, pray that they learn how to abstain from lust by honoring others and pursuing holiness towards God. This can be a difficult battle for singles especially.
- If you are a group with married couples, pray for your marriages. Pray that they would remain pure in mind, heart and action. Someone read Hebrews 13:4–7 aloud and pray that verse over your marriages.
- We were reminded by Rich's sermon that lustful thoughts and compromises of one's heart and thoughts begin long before significant moral compromise (like promiscuity or emotional/physical affairs) ever occur. Pray especially that your attendees would have discernment for learning to prevent lust before it happens. Pray that each person will become self-aware of their thought life, that they would be encouraged to choose the process of holiness, and that they would find peace in knowing they are forgiven by Jesus Christ.

