

Don't Do Stupid: Marriage Edition
Flirting With An Affair
Clay Weed

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

1 Corinthians 10:12 (NLT)

12 If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.

2 Samuel 11:1–4a (NLT)

1 In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites. They destroyed the Ammonite army and laid siege to the city of Rabbah. However, David stayed behind in Jerusalem.

2 Late one afternoon, after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath.

3 He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 Then David sent messengers to get her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 (NLT)

9 Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.

James 5:16 (NLT)

16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

2 Samuel 11:27b-12:13 (NLT)

Ephesians 5:1-14a (NLT)

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Do you have any funny stories or inside jokes that you share with your spouse that you're willing to share with us?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read 2 Samuel 11:1-4a.** What were the circumstances that made possible David's decision to give into temptation?
- How can we guard ourselves against these same temptations in our own lives and relationships?
- Have you ever been betrayed by someone close to you?
- **Read 2 Samuel 11:27b-12:13** What were the consequences to David and others because of his infidelity? What relevance do David's decision and its consequences have today?
- Discuss this statistic shared by Pastor Clay, "anywhere from 30-60% of all marriages face some unfaithfulness (these are the ones that actually admit it)."
- How would you counsel someone who is contemplating an affair?
- Clay laid out his "ABC's of not Doing Stupid: 1) Accountability (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**); 2) Boundaries (**Ephesians 5:1-14a**); 3) Confession (**James 5:16**). How have, or can, you establish these safeguards in your current or future relationships?
- How can we support and encourage our fellow Christian brothers and sisters who may be struggling in their marriage?
- How can we pray for and actively support those who have experienced the pain and brokenness of infidelity in their marriage?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify an accountability partner to help hold you accountable, and to be someone in whom you can confide and confess when you are struggling.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Ask Jesus to help you guard your heart against temptation and to help you to love your spouse and honor your covenant as He intends for you. Thank Jesus for forgiving you where you fall short, and for His perfect love through it all.

Question: "What is the difference between a covenant and a contract?"

Answer: On one level, the terms *covenant* and *contract* are used interchangeably. However, there are some finer distinctions between the two.

A contract is a rather modern legal construct. It is a legally binding agreement to do or not do something. It often includes penalties for a breach of contract. If the contract is breached and penalties are paid, then the payment is considered to be adequate compensation for the breach of contract. There is not necessarily any moral failing involved in the breach. If a person breaches the contract but willingly pays the penalties, this is not seen as a moral failing, because the contract assumes the possibility of a breach. As an example, if a tenant signs a one-year lease for an apartment with a \$1,000 penalty for breaking the lease early, and then the tenant wants to get out of the lease and pays the penalty, then all is well. The tenant broke the lease, and the landlord was compensated according to the contract. The landlord may not be happy about it, and the tenant may not be happy to pay the penalty, but both did what they said they would do.

A covenant is an ancient construct wherein two parties promise to do something or not do something. Because of the fallen nature of humanity, the covenant may include penalties for breaking the covenant, but, unlike a contract, it is considered immoral to break a covenant—it is a betrayal of trust. There is never a sense in which it is morally upright for a person to break a covenant, even if the covenant-breaker is willing to pay the penalties.

The difference between a contract and a covenant can be illustrated in current attitudes about marriage. Some people approach marriage as a contract between two parties. They both willingly enter into the marriage contract, and, later, if one or both of them want to exit the relationship, they simply negotiate the payments and penalties (alimony, splitting property, custody agreement for kids, etc.) and move on without any moral stigma. Some couples go into marriage with a prenuptial agreement that outlines, before the couple is even married, how the payments and property will be split in a divorce.

Biblically speaking, marriage is not a contract but a covenant between two people with God and the rest of the community as witnesses. One should not enter marriage with an eye to what will happen if or, in the case of some couples, when the marriage is dissolved. Marriage is meant to be for life, and there is always a moral component and a moral failing, by one or both parties, when a marriage fails. The breaking of the marriage covenant involves the violent separation of the “one flesh” that was created by the marriage. While the Bible does allow for divorce in certain cases (see Matthew 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:15), this is not what God intended. “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mark 10:6–9).

God is a covenant-keeping God, and Christians should be covenant-keeping people. We should honor our word and keep our promises, even when there is not an official contract in place. Every promise that a Christian makes should be considered a covenant. The command is to “simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’” (Matthew 5:37, BSB).