

Children's Message

Ask the children if they can think of how they might feel if they invited a friend up north to the beach or a trip to a park.

Then ask how they might feel when it came time to go and there friend said, "My friend asked me to go to Noah's Ark and I really want to go." And they cancel your trip. What goes through you mind?

Hurt...anger...mad..."I won't ask them again"...what else?

The Bible wants us to remember to be loyal to our friends and family. King David chose to be friends with someone who was not his wife and was not loyal or a good friend to his own wife and one of his soldiers. He betrayed them. He was not a good friend.

Does God want us to be "true blue" to our friends? Yes. We should always do what is right when it comes to our friends and our family. Let us pray.

David's Folly

8 Pentecost B

Guys, what is it about a beautiful woman that turns our heads? Gals, what is it about a kind, courteous and gentle man who may or may not be handsome, that draws your hearts? Women know that men have two sets of brain cells and they are to be pitied. Perhaps that is what happened when Bathsheba was summoned by the king. However, he knew better than to have relations with another man's wife (one of his soldiers!). And Bathsheba was in the midst of purifying herself after her monthly time. Could she have avoided that situation?

David's folly – you may not have heard a sermon on this subject before. But it needs to be preached. Infidelity is the cause of many marriages that fail. The failure of trust, honesty and respect adds to what David and Bathsheba did even in a culture like theirs. Complications of pregnancy, scandal between fellow soldiers and betrayal compound the messiness of David's action. David was in the position of authority, so his guilt and shame are far worse than his lover's. The plot thickens and gets worse.

David then arranges for Uriah's murder. Does this sound like a Louis L'Amour or Danielle Steele novel? It happened and still happens. Don't let it happen to you!

Dr. Karl Menninger, famous psychiatrist and founder of the Menninger Clinic, wrote a book, entitled, "What Ever Became of Sin?" In his book published in 1973 he wrote that the concept of sin had become obsolete. Western culture had succeeded in turning in turning moral responsibility into a philosophy of permissiveness fostered by culture. He wrote that the idea of sin was considered archaic and irrational. Was he right? His book is even more relevant thirty-five years later. Since the 60's "open relations" have been quite acceptable. The concept of these activities being a sin doesn't seem to be in our radar at all.

In the series Sex and the City, Carrie Bradshaw hangs out with three other attractive, thirty-something women looking for happiness. This is not a family show so I won't go into detail. The words "casual and liberated" are enough adjectives to give you the idea. It became the example of "the new dating phenomena". The series won a Golden Globe Award for best musical or comedy television series and later became a movie; while Menninger's book did not make it into the corporate consciousness. I heard the title in seminary but it was not on our reading list.

However, Menninger's book was on the mark! Yet before his book the Bible, the all time bestseller, also made it into movies, gives us some interesting comparisons.

The Ten Commandments call it Number Seven. Sex and the City covered it in Episode Number Six - "The Cheating Curve" -- asking the burning question about whether cheating is like the proverbial tree in the forest? Does it exist if there's no one to catch you?" After all, CEOs do it. Legislators and Presidents do it. And yes, even Christians do it.

Second Samuel includes its own "episode six of sex and the city". The city is Jerusalem. The cheater is David. But there the similarities end. Carrie prowls while David prays. Carrie's sexual adventures are a lifestyle choice; David's sexual misadventure is a once-in-a-lifetime disaster. Carrie is guilt-free; David is guilt-laden. Carrie brags; David begs. Sex and the City attempts to link sexual promiscuity with social acceptability; 2 Samuel links sexual infidelity with truth and consequences.

In ancient times as well as in modern times, the urban lifestyle has had the reputation for luring otherwise wholesome souls into a life of raw corruption and manifold sin. Sex in the ancient world was inevitably paired up with the City as surely as Carrie and her friends are paired up with the cute guys at the end of the bar in any given episode.

But it's not only an urban thing. It's a human thing. And our human sin yields painful consequences no matter where it occurs. The Bible knows it and speaks of it. We know it too, if we rerun in our minds the more "colorful" episodes of our own lives. What we tell ourselves is an "innocent action"...leads to sin. One sin leads to another sin and another and another. Each time is a little easier...that's the way sin works.

The word of God in our second lesson provides some help if it's used. The apostle Paul in his prayer asks that God might grant his readers "strength in their inner being with power through His Spirit, and that Christ might dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love." He continues the prayer, "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Four times he mentions *God, Christ or Spirit*; three times Paul mentions *love*; twice he mentions *power and* once he writes of *faith*. God, the Holy Spirit, love and faith, and the power they give us are the only way to keep a marriage from becoming a Danielle Steele novel. It is a choice that both partners must make.

Whenever scripture repeats a word or phrase it usually has a message. The Bible is calling attention to something the reader should think about or do. What it says to me is that if God's love dwells in our hearts by faith we will have power to overcome temptation. Another writer of the Bible, James, once wrote, "But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it" James 1:14. The will to turn over temptation to God is where the battle begins and ends. God can give us the strength and power to endure and overcome it.

We teach that marriage is like the relationship between Christ and His church. Many of you would feel guilty about spending a lot of time at another church on Sunday! It would be "cheating" on Trinity...it would be so disloyal...so unthinkable! And yet there are people that don't feel the same about their spouse! Why is that?

The Seventh commandment names it: Adultery is sin. It is a sin against God, a sin against the person with whom we live in a covenant relationship, a sin against

the person with whom we are cheating and a sin against ourselves.

One would think that this message is not one we would need to explain to an audience of God-fearing, faith-filled followers of Christ. But in this Age of Folly, in a sex-in-the-city culture which tends to wink at sexual infidelity, even Christians can begin to believe that a covenant of unfaithfulness is no big deal. We must be ever vigilant....Marriage and Family are a big deal! AMEN.