

AFFAIR RECOVERY TIMES

JANUARY 2006

THE FOUNDER'S CORNER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THE FOUNDER'S CORNER 1**HARBORING HOPE** 2**THE BULLETIN BOARD** 2**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK** 4SPECIAL POINTS
OF INTEREST:

- Happy New Year from All of Us at the Affair Recovery Center!
- Faith and the Problem of Fear
- Introducing Alex and Nita
- Update on the Latest EMS Weekend

The Problem of Fear

It was evening and Stephanie and I were traveling back to my 20-year college reunion. Music filled the car as we laughed at times gone by. There didn't seem to be a care in the world, and there was still plenty of time to make the events of the evening and the long anticipated reunion of old friends. Then suddenly I felt the engine cut out and quickly glanced at the gauges, and noticed that the temperature gauge was pegged to the right. "So much for an uneventful trip," I thought to myself. As we begin 2006, I thought it useful to address the topic of fear. I personally love to have "idiot lights" on the instrument panel of my car. Too often I have failed to notice the warning signs indicated by the gauges on the dash only to miss the fact that my car was overheating, or that the oil pressure was low, but give me a good solid red idiot light shining up at me and I'll notice it every time. Fear actually serves as one of the "idiot lights" on our emotional dashboard. It can often be an indication that something is wrong in the way we perceive a situation. Scripture says

"God does not give us a spirit of fear, but rather a spirit of power and love and of a sound mind." So I need to recognize that there are times when fear is inconsistent with my spirit life. So what are the origins of fear?

Certainly there are times when fear serves us well—such as when it warns us of impending danger. To ignore fear when there is a threat of physical harm or ongoing abuse would be foolishness, but those are not typically the situations presented by betrayal. There are also times when fear has no basis in fact. In those cases we have a tendency to listen and respond to false emotions rather than what is true. This is especially true for couples recovering from any form of infidelity. For those recently impacted by the revelation of a betrayal, there is a tendency to be fearful when looking towards the future. So how do we respond?

In our work with couples, one of the first assignments we give to those suffering from betrayal is to have each person list out their fears for the marriage. The hurt spouse may fear their mate may do it again, or maybe they

fear that they will never be able to forgive what has been done. The unfaithful mate also has fears, such as that their mate will never recover, or that the



Founder Rick Reynolds

marriage may go back to the miserable condition it was in before the affair. Usually both spouses are able to generate a good list, but it's the nature of those lists that begins to reveal the basis of fear.

The first problem with fear deals with faith. It's not that any of us has a lack of faith, because we all have faith, rather, the problem lies in the focus of our faith. Faith is an organ of our soul, just like the eye or the ear is an organ of the body. Our eyes don't generate light—they only perceive light. Our ears don't generate sound—they only receive sound. If our eyes were to begin generating light it would certainly create a

Continued on page 3

HARBORING HOPE

In our continuing series of true stories of couples and their journey to recovery, we are proud to begin the story of Alex and Nita. Alex and Nita have been married for twelve years and have three children. Alex is a doctor and Nita is a full-time mom.

Nita's Story

Compiled by Leslie Hardie

My older brother and I grew up in the South in a Baptist family. Dad had a job that took him out on the road so he wasn't home very much. Mom struggled with serious depression for most of my upbringing. My brother sexually abused me, and then I was sexually abused by a family friend. When I told my parents about it, their response was, "Ok, we've been told, and we never want to hear about it again," and that was the end of it. It was very typical Southern Baptist, the old southern way: if something bad happens, it's shameful to talk about it. Move on with your life.

Alex and I married young. He was twenty-six and I was twenty. I was still in college and Alex was in medical school. Needless to say, he was very preoccupied and very busy. We moved around a lot so we had no family support. There weren't many friends around because we were always the new folks in town. We also had financial problems. I had my first son when we lived in Pennsylvania. Alex's career was very demanding. We just didn't have lives at all. We both brought our own baggage into the marriage. So there were a lot of extenuating circumstances.

I was very angry with Alex because he was never home. Part of me felt like he married me as part of a plan, not because of me. It was if he wanted a pretty wife and a family with kids- something that looked good on the resume. I was extremely isolated and alone. I felt like I was screaming at the top of my lungs for him to pay attention to me. I wanted for us to

make adjustments in the marriage and learn to communicate so our marriage would get better. But it seemed to be beyond repair. That's when my feelings for Alex began dying. I completely shut down emotionally with him. Borrowing on tactics I had used from the sexual abuse, I was ready to look elsewhere to get my needs met.

It was shortly after my first son was born that I met George, the person with whom had an affair. He was a musician and I was working with him. He was the only adult that I saw with any regularity. He showed a lot of interest in my new son, which is what drew me in. He was recently divorced and extremely vulnerable. His ex-wife was the one that was unavailable in his marriage. And in my marriage it was my husband who was unavailable. We had so much in common that I felt as if I had met my soul mate.

To be continued next issue



I completely shut down emotionally with him..... I was ready to look elsewhere to get my needs met.

THE BULLETIN BOARD



The next EMS (Emergency Marital Services) weekend is scheduled for January 20-22. Call us or log on for more information, to register, or to request a brochure. Weekend lodging information is available.

The professionals at the Affair Recovery Center offer numerous seminars for groups and organizations. Call us or visit us online for a list of lengths and topics. We can also tailor a seminar or retreat to your needs.

THE FOUNDER'S CORNER (CONTINUED)

problem, and the same applies if our ears began to generate sound. In fact, many already suffer from the effects of ringing ears. In the same way faith doesn't generate the work of God, it only perceives the work of God. To believe that my faith is what causes God to act is arrogant to say the least! Instead, it's my faith that perceives the hand of God at work in my life. The problem comes when I focus the "eyes of my faith" on an object that is unstable. For instance, if I focus my faith on my ability to get it right then I'll experience fear. If I focus my faith on my mate's ability to perform the way I need, or to be what I need, then I'll experience fear. If I focus the eyes of my faith on my children, then I've just focused on something that can scare me to death. The only way to find true peace is to focus my faith on something unchangeable, unmovable and solid. In my life, that would be God. If I focus my faith on my mate's ability to have just the right response at the point of crisis, then I'll experience fear. If my focus is on my ability to get it right for my spouse then I'll experience fear. To put my faith in something human to come through for me will only result in fear. Even the best of us are way too unpredictable. It's only when I get the eyes of my faith off of myself, or others,

and onto God that I will begin to experience peace.

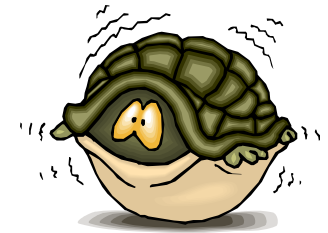
The second problem with fear deals with the future. Not only is fear an indicator of misplaced faith, it also reveals a problem with my focus in time. We don't fear past situations because we know the outcome, we only fear circumstances in the future. Typically I find that I have more than enough grace to be at peace in the present, but if I focus on what may or may not happen in the future, then the net consequence will be fear. After the revelation of a betrayal, it's normal to want to look into the future in our attempt to decide whether or not to continue in the relationship. The problem is, of course, that you can never tell the end of the story by the beginning. I wouldn't assume that anyone in the type of crisis created by a betrayal would have the strength to walk that difficult road for the next twelve months, but what we've witnessed time after time is God's willingness to give us enough grace for the day. In Matthew 6, Jesus instructed his disciples not to worry about tomorrow, because today had enough trouble of its own without adding those of the future to it. Instead, they were instructed to "Seek first His kingdom..." As Jesus taught His followers, focusing on

tomorrow will only bring fear, and instead, we should just rely on God to help us make it through today.

All of us at the Affair Recovery Center encourage you to take the advice of our Savior and to use fear as an "idiot light" on your emotional dashboard. When experiencing fear, try to evaluate the focus of your faith. Place your faith in something stable rather than unstable, and instead experience the peace that comes from knowing God's ability to take the worst thing that has ever happened and make it the best. Question whether or not you are living in today and seeking God's direction or if you are jumping time and attempting to live in a time zone (the future) where you can never experience the grace of God. You will have about as much chance to take a breath of air for tomorrow as you will have in experiencing the grace of God in tomorrow, so why expend the effort in needless worry?

In this new year, all of us at the Affair Recovery Center pray that you will find the grace necessary to recover from this tragedy in your life. May God's Peace and Blessing be upon you and your families.

Rick



To believe that my faith is what causes God to act is arrogant to say the least! Instead, it's my faith that perceives the hand of God at work in my life.

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Affair Recovery

A C O M M U N I T Y O F H O P E A N D H E A L I N G

Affair Recovery Center is a community of counseling professionals and couples. Our professional counselors are dedicated to the restoration of marriages crippled by infidelity. Our organization includes numerous couples who have experienced the abundant blessings of reconciliation and renewal.

Our mission is to offer hope, support, and recovery for couples and individuals who have suffered the pain resulting from infidelity, betrayal, or sexual addiction.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As 2005 fades in the rear-view mirror, I cannot help but contemplate what a busy year it was for us at the Affair Recovery Center, and 2006 promises to be even more active.

Working as we do with so many individuals in pain and crisis, we often hear firsthand how difficult the holiday season can be for an individual or family in crisis, and some even breathe a sigh of relief when New Year's

Day arrives, for in some ways it signals that something old is fading and something new is coming, and as Rick pointed out, we must be very careful not to look ahead in a spirit of fear, but rather hopefulness by focusing on God TODAY.

While the first day of January is not really very different from the last day of December, to many who have experienced betrayal, the new year can

be a symbol of a new start, and thus, a symbol of hope, because our God is a god of new beginnings and is able to transform broken lives and broken hearts.

For all of you in our community, I invite you to pray for those who are in despair this new year. If you are in crisis yourself, I pray for you that God will reveal His works in your life in a miraculous way. Happy New Year!



Dr. John Mark Haney