

submissive. It's hard to imagine such wickedness, but it really happened.

Abraham put Sarah in a similar situation. God graciously prevented sin from occurring, but the marital enemy of infidelity was attacking. **Infidelity always begins long before an affair.**

a. Infidelity begins with unclean thoughts.

- 1) Indulging in lust is mental infidelity – in the mind. (Matthew 5:28) *"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."*
- 2) Lustful dreaming about someone other than your spouse is sinful. (Matthew 15:19) *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:"*

b. Infidelity begins with unmet needs.

- 1) A wife's most common needs are for love, leadership, affection, communication, esteem, and security.
- 2) A husband's most common needs are for respect, appreciation, and sexual fulfilment.
- 3) When you fail to meet your spouse's needs, there is a temptation to find someone else to meet the need, causing emotional infidelity or worse.

c. Infidelity begins with foolish choices.

- 1) To go to tempting places, have **unprotected Internet**, be around a flirt, or have intimate conversations with the opposite gender is very foolish. The Bible warn, (Romans 13:14) *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."*
- 2) Joseph fled and escaped – David lingered and fell. Choose to flee (2Ti 2:22).

Conclusion: The devil is actively seeking to ruin your marriage. **Is selfishness, dishonesty, or infidelity attacking your marriage from the inside like termites?** If so, do not ignore it. These enemies are very dangerous. You must destroy them! Divorce is NEVER God's answer!

If you need help, humble yourself and admit it. Seeking help is wise. Stubbornly refusing to seek help is foolish.

Song: Yield Not to Temptation - **364**

Termites in a Marriage

18 July 2021 PM – Genesis 20 – Gen2021 – Scott Childs

Introduction: Tiny termites are capable of eating their way into the centre of a living tree. They may be unseen from the outside. The tree may continue to look healthy for quite some time, but eventually the termites will kill the tree and bring it to the ground in a crash.

If you are married, your marriage is like a big gum tree. It will withstand many outward storms of life, but if you get careless, unseen "marital termites" will ruin your marriage from the inside out.

Transition: As we study Genesis 20, we see that Abraham and Sarah's marriage was in danger. Three kinds of "marital termites" were eating away at the core of their marriage. Every married couple must exterminate these three invaders before they do their destructive work.

1. The First Marital Termite is Selfishness

Abraham selfishly lied to protect himself while endangering Sarah (v.2). Selfishness is a dangerous "termite". It will undermine our relationship with Christ. (Luke 9:23) *"And he [Jesus] said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."* Selfishness also ruins our biblical duty to put others first. (Philippians 2:4) *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."* Selflessly, we are to live for God and live for others.

Having told the same lie while in Egypt more than 20 years earlier, Abraham should have learned. **"If we do not learn from history, we are bound to repeat it."** Again, Abraham allowed the termite of selfishness to attack his love for Sarah in two ways.

a. Selfishness attacked his duty to sacrifice for her.

- 1) Love is **giving** sacrificially. *"Love is the sacrificial giving of one's self to meet the needs of another, expecting nothing in return."* That means, to love, we must sacrifice our own desires to meet the needs of others. Love is not a fuzzy feeling; it is an action. It is denying self to give, not to get. To truly love your spouse, you must seek to understand your spouse's needs, then deny yourself to give whatever is needed to meet those needs. Love is not just hugs and kisses. Biblical love is not self-centred.

- 2) Sacrificial love is **not an option** for husbands. God commands in Ephesians 5:25 "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*" How did Christ love? He loved enough to leave heaven, become a man, suffer abuse, endure the horrors of bearing man's filthy sins and dying on the cross for them, and then offer them forgiveness and eternal life. His love is all about meeting our greatest need.
- 3) God also expects wives to sacrifice unselfishly by submissively respecting their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22) "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*"

b. Selfishness attacked his duty to meet Sarah's needs.

- 1) Abraham had a duty to meet the **general needs** of his wife. Cleaving to her in marriage placed the responsibility of her care on his shoulders. (Genesis 2:24) "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*" He also had other duties. Turn with me to Ephesians 5:26-29. To love like Christ, every husband must strive to make his wife a better and more holy woman.
- 2) Abraham neglected her **emotional needs**. Imagine how Sarah felt when Abraham allowed her to be taken into another man's harem. Abraham left her feeling alone and unloved. Husbands, if we are not careful, we too will neglect the emotional needs of our wives.
- 3) He neglected her **security needs**. As every wife, Sarah needed security and protection. Abraham let her down when she needed him most. Men, are you providing a secure, protected environment for your wives? (1Pe 3:7)
- 4) Selfishness by either spouse will burrow into your marriage like hungry termites.

2. The Second Marital Termite is Dishonesty

In addition to being selfish, Abraham had been dishonest. When confronted, he tried to justify his dishonesty (v.11-13). Sarah knew the truth. How did his dishonesty make her feel? What did

this do for her trust in him? His dishonesty made it more difficult for her to respect him.

a. Dishonesty undermines trustworthiness.

- 1) Many couples are dishonest about their **feelings**. Hiding one's feelings through dishonesty is very harmful to a marriage. If you are hurt, talk about it. If you are happy, share it. Readily discuss your feelings. If you hide your feelings to save an argument, you are not getting to the root problem and are letting in the termites.
- 2) Couples may be dishonest about their **failures**. We all fail. Admitting when you do wrong is difficult, but a humble confession will strengthen your marriage. Be quick to say, "*I was wrong, will you please forgive me*".
- 3) Couples may be dishonest about their **finances**. Instead of telling the truth about how you spent the money, you tell a lie. Instead of discussing financial decisions, you offer vague or untrue excuses. If you and your spouse have conflicting financial desires, ask God to change your financial desires so that you may live in harmony and within your budget. If we truly live life to please God and to serve others, these issues will melt away.

b. Dishonesty undermines respect.

- 1) How could Sarah respect her husband if he lied to protect himself and allowed Abimelech to take her to his house?
- 2) Husbands need respect just as much as wives need love, but his dishonesty can make that very difficult for her. *When husbands are dishonest in business, in taxes, in tithing, in obeying speed laws or in their spiritual lives they are making it difficult for their wives to respect them.*

3. The Third Marital Termite is Infidelity

When Abraham allowed Sarah to go to Abimelech's house to become his wife, he was not only permitting but also promoting infidelity (unfaithfulness) by his refusal to tell the truth.

Marriage counsellor Walter Fremont in a lecture on marriage tells of two men who agreed to swap wives. One wife refused, and the man came to Dr Fremont for counsel because his wife was not