

### **“Life is short – and so is the seventh commandment”**

One of the things that never ceases to amaze me is sinful man’s ability to make what is sinful and destructive into something that is OK. Over recent weeks we have heard about a website that was ‘hacked’ and as a result, 37 million names have been leaked to the public.

The website is called “Ashley Maddison” which seems innocent enough, being named after two popular female names. However, this website is nothing but innocent. Although it is classed as an online dating service and social net working service, its target market are people who are already married or are in a relationship. The slogan “Life is Short - Have an affair” clearly makes people aware of its intentions. Yet despite that, 37 million people have signed up, amongst them, 460,000 Australians.

Rev. Dr. Albert Mohler writes in his blog that initially “Many people saw Ashley Madison as a joke. No one is laughing now.” As a result, a number of prominent people, including actors, government officials and even prominent Christian leaders have had to confess to their error of judgment. They only do so, because they have been ‘found out’, albeit through an illegal activity of hacking. What’s worse is that a number of people have already committed suicide as a result.

Mind you, it needs to be said that not everyone on that website committed adultery, but why would you subscribe to a website that has the real potential to lead you to that sin that causes so much brokenness in families all over the world.

Unfortunately, there are some people now who are suggesting that there is nothing wrong with the website or what it promotes, but the problem is with the hacking of this website. Of course we should be alarmed at the fact that ‘hackers’ could get into the systems of this website and publish all these names. They will need to be brought to justice. It certainly is an invasion of privacy.

However, surely the seventh Commandment is still relevant, namely, “You shall not commit adultery.” Laurie Penny on the ABC program, Q&A, say that “monogamy isn’t working for many people and that a great many people are using technology to get around it.” The founder of the website, Noel Biderman said a similar thing already back in 2011.

Indeed, it seems that 37 million people privately agreed and were at the very least trying to arrange contact with a third party through the website. As a direct result, many millions of people, including husbands, wives, children will now have to deal with a cheating spouse, parent, grand parent or sibling.

How do we respond to this? First, we don’t forget to take the log out of our own eye (Mat 7:5). Jesus warns that even if we look at someone lustfully we have broken the seventh commandment (Mat 5:28). Second, we don’t sweep it under the carpet or suggest that it isn’t so bad. It is bad and it clearly goes against God’s good law. As Rev. Dr Albert Mohler writes, “Life is indeed short, and so is the Seventh Commandment: “You shall not commit adultery.” There is no way around it and we shouldn’t invent ways of getting around it.

It is without doubt that Christians who have been caught up should confess and repent. This doesn’t mean that there will not be consequences to their actions. There will be. Nor does it mean that Christ’s name will not be held in disrepute. It will and that should sadden us deeply.

Yet having said that, it is only the gospel and the forgiveness that we have in Christ that can bring healing and restoration to Christian and non-Christians alike. To that end, may we as individuals and as churches bring that hope to all who have to pick up the pieces of their broken lives. Let us continue to show compassion and care for those who are hurting as a result of this sin.

Finally, before we think we’re off of the hook, Scripture reminds us that on the last day, all the books will be opened, including our books and our email addresses and indeed everything we have ever said, done, or thought. Thankfully, if we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, that database and all its nasties will have been erased. That’s not a license to sin more, but in thankfulness to be more obedient, also to the seventh commandment and flee from the sin that seems to entangle so many. JZ.