

Drama Files: Shattered Ministry

In polishing their ministry, their businesses, their school, their community, this successful couple missed a spot.

Alvin and Ava co-pastored a vibrant and highly successful church ministry. Family and friends loved and respected them. Their commitment resulted in 27 years of marriage and four children.

The family had several other business, such as schools, building and construction companies, and their church. Yet, with their avid attention to the details of creating these successful ventures, they shortchanged each other.



Hard to Reach

When Ava could not reach Alvin on his cell phone one afternoon, she contacted her children. They had not heard from their father all that day. Later that evening Alvin came home and told Ava his phone was not working. He needed to get that checked, she said, this problem had occurred several other times

over the past few months.

A few months later as they grocery shopped together, Ava and Alvin ran into a female church member. Ava spoke to the woman, but her husband never acknowledged her and the woman never spoke to her Pastor. "Strange," Ava thought. Why would a church member not even acknowledge her pastor? When they finished shopping they went to their car and Ava confronted her husband.

"Something was not right about the two of you not greeting one another. Did you have an affair with that woman?"

"I would never would do that" Alvin replied.

"Why did you not speak to her?" asked Ava.

"You both were talking and I was getting the bags," her husband explained.

Courage to Confront

Ava had no peace, and the during the next few months their marriage became strained because she was convinced that something was going on behind her back. Ava broke down and finally called the woman who then admitted the whole thing.

"He felt so ashamed and ended the affair soon after," the woman told her. "I told him that I would never speak on the matter because I knew he loved his family and his work for the Lord."

"You're a coward," Ava went in on her husband that night. And, yes, Alvin who confirmed the sad fact, was indeed now very fearful for his family.

Shortly thereafter, the couple started marital counseling to discuss the direction for their marriage. Ava's anger, and embarrassment just would not subside. Every time she attended church, she felt as if everyone knew but her. By our fifth session she said she wanted a divorce.

"What about our family and the church?" Alvin pleaded.

Ava turned to him "Did you think about all you had to lose when you committed adultery?"

You Better Think

Alvin acknowledged his weakness. He had allowed himself to begin an emotional affair because Ava was always so busy. He felt neglected. Ava, too, remembered feeling neglected due to his schedule. Likewise, she remembered her own opportunities to fall into temptation. But, she insisted, she would never have considered it. Her God and family were more important than a brief sexual fling.

Of course, the fatal consequence of adultery is broken trust and loss of closeness. Many affairs begin with an emotional interest or contact. On the other hand, too many times individuals are lured into affairs for the opposite reason. They see the opportunity to be disconnected and free from their spouses. It's important to identify and recognize the missing components in the relationship, before it's too late and may cost you everything.

New Path

As their marriage therapist I spent hours trying to help Ava and Alvin recognize their individual concerns and the turmoil within the marriage. It was just too late. So, within a few months, a tremendous marriage, family, and ministry had been shattered by one selfish act.

Alvin shared with Ava on their last session together that it was never his intention to destroy his family and hurt her. He asked once again for her forgiveness.

"I forgave you in the supermarket, even when you lied and denied it several

times to me," Ava said bravely. "God has given me peace, and I hope you can someday find peace in your life."

Ava hugged him, walked out, and left Alvin in my office where he cried.

I prayed with him, but, I reminded Alvin it will be a long hard journey ahead for both of them and their children. His focus would now center on his ability to forgive himself and recommitment to his relationship with God and his children.

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*The names have been changed to protect the innocent.