



# *The Family Friend*

*A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.*

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## ***Rationalizing Infidelity***

by Norman and Ann Bales

O. K. I'll just go ahead and admit it. Sometimes I watch CSI. For those who might be uninitiated to those abbreviations, it stands for Crime Scene Investigators, and can usually be viewed on Mondays (CSI: Miami), Wednesdays, (CSI: New York), and Thursdays (which is CSI followed by a colon with no reference to place. However, the location is Las Vegas.) What does that have to do with rationalization in marriage?

The February 27, 2006 episode was titled "Deviant." The plot was built around trying to find the murderer of a child molester. As in most of these stories, there was no lack of plausible suspects. In case you might see it in rerun some day, I won't spoil the outcome for you. Here's the way the plot unfolded: A convicted felon named Philip is living in his brother's home. Somebody stabs him while he is stalking a child in a park. It's hard to build up any sympathy for Philip. He's a deviant without any substantial chance of rehabilitation. If he's out of the way, the whole neighborhood is

safer. Everyone involved, including the actual murderer, believe families are safer with Philip dead. As a matter of fact, when the crime is actually solved, even members of the CSI team disagree over whether the murderer really deserves to be severely punished.

But that's just a "cops and robbers show." Right? It occurs to me that scriptwriters did a good job of showing us just how rationalization often works in the human mind.

We learn the value of defense mechanisms early in life. A child is caught with a hand in the cookie jar, and protests, "I really didn't mean to do it." Never mind the fact that in order to reach the cookie jar, it was necessary for the child to move a chair all the way from the dining table to the kitchen cabinet. After a couple of failed attempts, the child realized the lid of the cookie jar remained just out of reach. The obvious solution was to climb on top of the cabinet. At the precise moment the lid was being removed from the jar, the child froze after hearing an adult

voice roar, "What on earth do you think you're doing?" The child may also plead, "But I was real hungry." The child is hoping that a denial of intent might prevent expected consequences. At the very least, it might produce enough sympathy to minimize the punishment, which is exactly what some people thought about Philip's killer.

But it's not just the children who do it. We fine-tune our rationalizing skills when we become adults. Some people do it well enough to convince others that they were doing the right thing, when their behavior was actually one hundred and eighty degrees from the morally correct thing to do.

Let's take the issue of infidelity. From earliest Sunday school days, Christians have known that it's wrong to cheat on one's spouse. If you had the blessing of being spiritually trained in a Christian environment where discussions of sexual ethics were openly discussed, you've probably run across this text. "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4).

The statement is clear enough and really cannot be manipulated by exegetical gymnastics. So why do people of

faith go ahead and do it anyway? Here are some of the defense mechanisms that people use.

♦ *Future Expectations.* "I know it's wrong, but I'll repent and get forgiveness later on."

♦ *Attempted Manipulation of Deity.* "God knows I'm not happy with my spouse. He wants me to be happy, and God is a God of love, so it's permissible."

♦ *Placing the Responsibility on God.* "God brought this person into my life. The body chemistry between the two of us was so strong, it had to be God's will."

♦ *Minimizing the Offense.* "Our sin was no worse than the sin of the Christian who misses church on Sunday to play golf. If there's enough grace to forgive the Sunday golfer, there's enough grace to forgive me. After all sin is sin."

♦ *Denial of Intent.* "I didn't really intend to hurt anybody else. The only person it hurts is me."

There are others. It's not my purpose to answer each one of them in this essay. However when you look at all five defense mechanism on the same page, any thinking person would recognize them as rationalizations - rationalizations that will not stand the test of either scripture or common sense.

While we can easily pick out the defects in the rationalizations of others, it's not quite so easy when it comes to our own defense mechanisms.

The power of the human mind to rationalize behavior is enormous, and if you're a good con man you can make other people believe your pitch. But here's where you're going to end up. Any rationalization that enables people to justify immoral behavior is wrong and immoral actions produce negative consequences. Circumstances may have been complex. The CSI story certainly pulls your feelings in opposite directions. We may be inwardly conflicted over the choices we are forced to make, but there is absolute right and wrong. There's no gray here. Certainly the blood of Christ has the power to save all human transgressions, but the fact remains that infidelity is wrong - period. "...whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge." That's Hebrews 13:4 in traditional King James language in case you forgot it. When you start out with that premise firmly entrenched in your value system, you will be less likely to give in when temptation raises its ugly head.

The angels of heaven rejoice when sinners repent, and that includes the sin of adultery, but life is much more satisfying when we behave in a responsible way, and avoid the entanglements of infidelity.

—from *All About Families*,  
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## Coming Clean

by Steve Higginbotham

Have you ever noticed how quick we are to blame others for our inappropriate and sinful ac-

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tions? Adam blamed Eve, the he blamed God. Eve blamed the Serpent. King Saul blamed the people. The Israelites frequently blamed God. And the blame continues.

And then there are our own excuses. Have we ever attempted to excuse our actions by saying the following words?

- ♦ It was his fault...
- ♦ He had it coming...
- ♦ I couldn't help myself...
- ♦ I had to do something...
- ♦ He made me...
- ♦ I never would have done it, but...
- ♦ If they didn't like what I did, they shouldn't have...
- ♦ I'm not to blame for...
- ♦ At least I didn't...
- ♦ What else could I do...
- ♦ I had no choice...

All of these statements are frequently heard and all of them are attempts at shirking responsibility, and avoiding a humble confession of wrongdoing.

Next time you make a mistake, may the first and last words that come from your mouth simply be, "I have sinned," as was spoken by the "man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 12:13).

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