

Dave Carder's *Anatomy of an Affair* is a practical and accessible look into the patterns and emotional dynamics that can lead someone to committing adultery. Carder explains how affairs rarely occur by a dramatic downfall of character or sudden temptations, but rather with consistent "windows of vulnerability." These are seasons of life with dry spirituality, loneliness, and exhaustion that bring one's guard down to temptation. Carder then asserts that affairs are not random acts of sin but rather led-up-to over longer periods of time. Genesis 4:7 states, "sin is crouching at your door."

The Bible is full of examples of human weakness. Carder uses the patterns given in the Scriptures to address the types of sin that can lead to adultery, specifically an affair. The human heart is malleable. Habits, cycles, and routines shape, or catechize it. When one catechizes his heart towards Christ, he will love Christ more by the Spirit's power. James 4:8 states, "come near to God and He will come near to you." Carder explores the psychological realities that parallel this truth. He emphasizes the need for health rooted in consistent spiritual disciplines. When these are lacking, one's Ephesians 5 defenses are taken down by sin and the evil spiritual forces of Satan. During these seasons of windows of vulnerability, one is more open to emotional connection outside of their own marriage, with or without knowledge of it.

Carder explores what these windows of vulnerability entail. He lists major life transitions, identity crises, internal stress, loneliness, loss, spiritual dryness, and being in unhealthy environments. One thing in particular that stuck out to me was how close this framework is to Genesis 4:7 and Scripture's descriptions of temptation. Windows of

vulnerability appear throughout Scripture. The story of David and Bathsheba comes to mind, as David allowed windows of vulnerability into his life by not being in battle, staying comfortably in the castle, and lacking accountability. He slept with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah. I have to imagine he did not make intentional decisions weeks before this to commit adultery and murder someone but rather allowed himself to get to that point by moving down a slippery slope.

Carder's book is excellent at pointing out that sin grows in the cracks created by fatigue and emotional drift. It is pure wisdom to realize that numerous of what are considered "little" sins (by no means is any sin little in God's eyes) add up to the "big" ones, like adultery and murder. Carder emphasizes that windows of vulnerability are common and *will* happen. They are a part of the human experience. God works powerfully through our weaknesses, so it is not our weakness itself that is sin but rather falling into the lie that we are not weak and are strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9 describes this point explicitly as it says that "God's power is made *perfect* through our weakness."

The most poignant theme in this book was that the most vulnerable people are not who we might think from simple appearances. Those who think they are strong are really setting themselves up for temptation and lack of accountability. The humble man who admits his weakness is more on guard and protected from himself. Carder continually emphasizes that the "good, moral, faithful people" often fall from grace because they underestimate how open their window of vulnerability is. Proverbs 16:18 states, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Therefore, Carder argues that spiritual arrogance is itself a window of vulnerability.

Carder's insights helped me examine my own windows of vulnerability. As someone pursuing medicine and ministry, both fields of late nights, emotional and relational fatigue, and high-stress environments, I realized how likely I have and will continue to enter these windows of vulnerability regularly. Both medicine and ministry are environments where emotional sharing is common and superficially may resemble intimacy. Carder warns that this is a classic red flag for potential windows of vulnerability. I have been able to develop questions to refer to in these difficult and straining times. They involved testing what my current state of mood, energy, marital contentedness, and spiritual nourishment. In ministry, I will seek to declare beforehand the boundaries I will have with people and follow them ultra-strictly. I will also regularly test the baggage I am carrying that should be laid on Christ's cross. I will seek to not forsake His peace in ministry.

I plan to seek more information on Carder's view of the boundaries and overlap of sin and psychology, as I was left a little underwhelmed on his treatment of sin, which may simply be beyond the purpose of this book. The whole book is anti-sin and seeks to mortify adultery, but I would have loved to read a chapter on the after-effects of an affair or how to get out of an affair the correct way. Other than this, I had very few qualms with the book.

I am seeking to anticipate seasons when emotional connection between my wife and me must be reinforced. I am planning to take Carder's advice and recognize and name my own windows of vulnerability to my wife, be attentive to her windows of vulnerability, protect our time together, make sure fatigue, loneliness, and resentment

never go unspoken, and treat spiritual dryness as a relational danger, not a private struggle.