

## Ashley Madison's World

A prominent billboard in downtown Dallas used to relay the following message: "Life is short; have an affair." If that seems shocking to you, that's because the site itself is shocking. Ashley Madison, one of the largest internet "relationship" sites on the Internet, provides a platform for married people to meet other married people for the sole purpose of committing adultery with someone else's spouse. You would think this type of service would be more of a "black hat" type of operation, not wanting too much exposure, but there the billboard sat, making no bones about what the site is and what it helps facilitate.

About three weeks ago, in one of the many cyber-hacks that are hitting this country right now, a group called The Impact Team claims to have breached Ashley Madison's website, posting credit card information, profile pictures, names (and other things that we can't mention here) online for the entire world to see. The Impact Team has threatened to release even more information unless the site and its subsidiaries are taken down, stating: "Shutting down AM (Ashley Madison) ... will cost you, but non-compliance will cost you more." I'm not one to congratulate hacker activism and outright crime, but getting rid of sites like Ashley Madison would not necessarily be a bad thing.

So what are the stakes for an organization like Ashley Madison, and how many people would it affect? The results are even more astounding than the fact that such a site exists in the first place. The Impact Team claims that it has secured the entirety of Ashley Madison's customer database, a number that reaches just shy of 37 million people in 46 different countries.

You read that right: 37 million people worldwide have registered their personal names, credit card information, and a host of other things, solely for the purpose of deliberately cheating on their spouses. No wonder the divorce rate in this country is skyrocketing!

We don't have to communicate here God's feelings about fornication; nearly every letter of Paul's has some kind of mention of the sin of sexual immorality (Romans 1:22-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 12:21). Nor do we have to discuss what the Bible says about adultery. The commandments in the New Testament are just as numerous as the ones about fornication, but Solomon's discourse on the dangers of such in Proverbs 7 are scary enough.

What should be in full view though is the blatant adultery our world has been committing against God, of which the fact that 1 out of every 189 people have signed up for a cheating website is just one indicator of.

In speaking to the nation of Israel about their utter lawlessness and the impending destruction, Jeremiah would remark: "The land is full of adulterers, the land mourns because of the curse. The pastures of the wilderness have dried up. Their course is also evil, and their might is not right" (Jeremiah 23:10). We know what happened to them as a result of their abominations, and what will happen to us if we continue in ours.

The unfortunate thing about the Ashley Madison scandal is that it is so common, and that our land is so polluted with immorality that apparently everyone has “forgotten how to blush” (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12). But just because sin is commonplace does not make it any less dangerous; in fact, the opposite is true, in that our complacency with it lulls us into a false sense of security. May we always pray that our eyes will be opened to the reality of the dangerous world that we live in.

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