



DC:493 My Office Affair Keeps Bothering Me, Part 1

“A year ago I had an affair with a man in the office where I work, and that led to a divorce from my husband. It was an ugly thing, with a lot of shaming from the people in my family, my church, and my workplace. Now the man I had the affair with keeps making excuses to do things with me at work. He just makes stuff up that makes no sense, just to be around me. He hangs around my desk, and I don’t know how to get rid of him without being rude. I feel like I’m stuck with what I’ve done forever.”

A year ago you were empty and alone. You did not feel unconditionally loved. That’s WHY you felt empty and alone. In that condition you would have done almost anything to eliminate those two conditions, which are intolerably painful. We simply cannot live without enough Real Love, and you were no different.

So, what did you do about it? You could have used drugs. I did that for years. You could have gone to Las Vegas and gambled away tens of thousands of dollars. Many people do. You could have become immersed in your work and become a workaholic. Lots of people do that. You could have gone shopping or binged on chocolate or done any number of things to make yourself feel better. You HAD to do something. What you DIDN’T know was that Real Love was an option. You didn’t know it even existed, so you chose from a menu of Imitation Love choices, and you chose sex. Not just sex, but all the things that go along with an affair. You also got a lot of PRAISE, because I’m sure your new boyfriend told you many wonderful and new things about yourself that your husband was NOT telling you. He told you that you were pretty and witty and intelligent and whatever. You also got a measure of POWER. This new guy was doing things FOR you that your husband wasn’t. You got EXCITEMENT. It was different and fun, and you went new places and did new things. You were probably floating for a while. An affair is quite a potent source of Imitation Love. That’s why people HAVE affairs.

And then the effects of the affair wore off, and you realized you were right back where you started, except now you had to deal with the GUILT. Bummer. So the fact is, you made a stupid decision to have the affair. But right now you’re confused. You DID make a stupid decision, but you’ve been trained to believe that just because you made a MISTAKE, just because you made a STUPID decision, that makes you a BAD person. How do I know that you believe that? Because only someone who feels like a BAD person—someone who feels WORTHLESS—would allow this man to KEEP USING her like this guy is using you in the office. Because you’ve made a mistake, you feel like this guy is ENTITLED to use you. The bottom line is, he keeps hanging around and making stuff up to waste your time because you LET HIM.

So what can you do about it? We’ll talk about that in our next session.