

You Shall Not Commit Adultery

Exodus 20:14

You shall not commit adultery. Seems like sexual immorality occurs at a much high rate in our generation. Maybe; but the reality is that it is not new at all. When Kevin DeYoung was working on his PhD, he was doing research in Scotland looking at the records of Elder and Church meetings back to the 16th century. Between those records and his own pastoral experience, he estimates that 90% of issues that elders address dealt with sex and marriage. 90%. Perhaps it's not at a higher rate in our generation, but we simply have more ways to act out immorality; and it is more available, much more accepted, and even celebrated than in much of history. Though accepted and celebrated by humans, God who created sex forbids its misuse. What God forbids is what offends his holiness and destroys our soul. What God commands is what brings life, blessing, and flourishing. Let's recite the short commandment together from **Exodus 20:14** — **You shall not commit adultery.**

PRAY

Adultery violates God's commands for marriage and marital intimacy— commands rooted in creation order that apply to everyone, not just Christians. ***Why can't it be my body, my choice?*** Well, in the last year we've actually spent a good deal of time studying marriage and sexuality from Genesis, Ephesians, and currently 1 Corinthians, where we are told it's not ***my*** body, but God's, and we are glorify him in our bodies. But let's do a quick review of God's design and plan for marriage.

First, marriage was instituted by God in creation order. Genesis 1 & 2 record that God established the first marriage and family, creating them in his image, male and female, giving the gift of sex which made them one flesh, finally commanding them to be fruitful and multiply.

So God's boundaries for sex are defined. **2 people**. (Not 1, not 3, not 7); We have **complimentary sexes**: **male and female** (not 2 males or 2 females); sex is **limited to covenant marriage** (not dating, not "just having fun"). We see **procreation tied to sex**. And we have God's relational intent: **the two become one flesh: 1 + 1 = 1 in the comingling of souls. This God calls good.**

Jesus repeats this in **Matthew 19**: God created them **from the beginning male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two**

shall become one flesh'. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

That is enough information to stand in awe of God and his plans for marriage and sex. But in Ephesians 5 we see the mystery that marriage points away from itself to something of a greater magnitude: the relationship of the Son of God with his bride, the church. As Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, as he is faithful forever to his church, so marriage and all that goes with it is to accurately mirror and reflect Christ and what he has done. In light of all this, in light of how loaded up with deep meaning and relational significance marriage and sexuality is, "**You shall not commit adultery.**" This is the word of the living, eternal God.

In his book on the 10 Commandments, Kevin DeYoung expresses the magnitude of what is going on: "sex and marriage are two of God's greatest gifts. No relationship can be as intimate, sweet, life-giving, and joy filled as the marital relationship, and no experience can be as intimate and powerful within that marriage relationship as sex. So, of course, the devil is going to go after sex and marriage. We should expect confusion, misunderstanding, perversion, and pain – not because sex and marriage are bad... but precisely because they are such good gifts. God's best gifts are the ones most apt to be twisted and perverted by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

As with all God's Law, just when we think we are in good shape; just about the time we think we'll get a passing grade on one, the Lord Jesus shows us there's no possible way our sinful hearts can righteously keep any of the Commandments – not a single one. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus deals with the heart of the problem concerning our righteousness. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. **Matthew 5:27–28** — "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'" ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Anyone past puberty understands that everyone is guilty of adultery, with every lustful inclination of our hearts testifying against us. The impact of sexual sin is as wide and broad as the list of those such sin. Sexual sin is 1st a **sin against God**; (2) a sin against my own body; (3) a sin against my spouse; (4) a sin against the one with whom I engage in sexual sin; and (5) a sin against *that* person's spouse.

The Law is a mirror that exposes our immoral hearts. But the Law is also a teacher, a tutor—teaching us who God is, and tutoring us how to please to him. The Heidelberg Catechism is

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particularly helpful in taking apart the commandment and showing where and how to repent. For the 7th commandment, it says, **All unchastity is cursed by God.** (Lev. 18:29–30) **We must therefore detest it from the heart and live chaste and disciplined lives, both within and outside of holy marriage.** It goes on answering the next question, **Since we, body and soul, are temples of the Holy Spirit, it is God's will that we keep ourselves pure and holy. Therefore he forbids all unchaste acts, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever may entice us to unchastity.**

The Commandment doesn't just forbid immorality that I actively do, though it certainly does that. It forbids anything I do to stir up sexual desire or thoughts in myself or others that cannot be righteously satisfied by spouse. What is done in private through screens obviously falls into the category of sexual sin. Sexting. Dating apps that are little more than digital tools for facilitating adultery.

Whether married or unmarried, we are to discipline ourselves — in our actions, our thoughts, and our passions — we must discipline ourselves through the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit to embrace wholeheartedly God's commands governing our sexual actions, appetites, and affections. Failure to do so indicates an imperiled soul. The next verse **Matthew 5** after we stopped, **Matthew 5:29**— Jesus says, **If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.** Unrestrained, unrepented of, cherished sexual sin is a flashing beacon that we do not have a new heart that loves God above the most base sexual desire. This is a serious matter. It is the word of God.

Most of us know too well the dangers of our heart. Perhaps the most important part of the sermon is what follows now, and that is, how do we win this battle? Let's look at essential steps to victory.

First, look away to Christ, your victor! As we read in the Call to Worship, **Romans 7:24–25a** — **Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** You have no hope of overcoming this on your own. But Christ has defeated sin and death on our behalf. We must look away from ourselves to Christ! To those in him, there is no condemnation. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the Law of sin and death.

Confess your sin to your Mediator who paid the price of this sin. **1 John 1:9** — **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** This is

one of the first steps into life in Christ, and it is ongoing hope as we walk in his grace. If you have never made the initial step of faith into Christ, repent and believe in the Gospel — the good news that you can be free from your sin and forgiven of your damning offenses against God. Come to Christ! Turn to him in faith! He pays the penalty for sin. He sets the prisoner free. He gives a new heart that will lose you from the bondage of soul-killing sin.

Practice the presence of God. Psalm 139:7–8 — Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! Live **coram Deo**, before the face of God. Know that everything is laid bare before his sight. Pastor, do you want to make us afraid of God? Yes. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Make a covenant with your eyes. Job 31:1 — I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? Determine to defeat lust by looking away from what you know will fuel lust. **Well, there's no harm in looking. Is that true?** Don't feed the flesh. Kill it.

It is not good for man to be alone. Invest yourself in the lives of others. Spend your life wisely. **Spend it!** Don't be conservative in giving yourself away. Don't carve out large amounts of "me" time. Me time by definition is time spent feeding your selfish appetites. You fertilize the flesh when you do that. Don't be shocked when the harvest of sins of flesh is the result.

For the married, deliberately invest in your spouse. Deliberately invest in your children. Deliberately invest in other others. Though your time to invest in others may not be as significant as mine, the same principle applies. You are not built to serve yourself, but to serve others. In the one flesh union of marriage, serving others is probably best done together. A man serving a woman, or a woman serving a man— that absolutely must be done together. No exceptions. Don't be a fool.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

(Romans 13:14) Plan for obedience. Plan things that honor God. Build your schedule, your routine, your finances around doing what you know God commands and blesses. If you know there are things that lead down a sinful path, don't go down that path. Don't! You may have to be thoughtful about this and pay serious attention to what it is that gets you there. Habits and patterns may be carved so deeply that you don't realize things that lead you to sin. Redeem the time. The days are evil.

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Make war against your flesh. Big sins are made up of 100 little ones. We never wake up one morning and commit some heinous sin in a vacuum. No, we have paved the highway to the heinous sin with 1000 “harmless” ones. Harmless in our minds, hemlock to the soul.

You cannot be too accountable to your spouse. You cannot be too accountable to some trusted brothers or sisters. We swim in a cesspool. If it was a crystal-clear purified ocean, we would have to work to find toxins. But the culture in which we swim is filthy and putrid. It gets in the eyes and in the mouth. We must be on guard in a way that we did not anticipate. Confession of sin at the front end will help not to ever have to deal with it at the life-destroying backend.

If you are never alone with a woman who is not your wife or a family member, you will never commit adultery, and no one will be able to accuse you of doing so. It's not hard to understand.

Psalm 119:9 — How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. Memorize, recite, and meditate on Scripture. If you are meditating on what someone's face or body looks like, that is folly that leads to destruction. If you are memorizing and meditating on the goodness and beauty of God, that is wisdom that leads to life. Think on godly things; speak these things in conversations. Use scripture in encounters with others. It will shape the your mind.

Be where you are supposed to be with whom you are supposed to be. 2 Samuel 11 describes King David simply not being where he should have been, and adultery was the outcome. Proverbs 4 & 5 warn about situational awareness — the enemy of your soul will eventually use one of his oldest deadly schemes if you bumble your way into it. You will be no match at all for a seductive woman who tells you how nice you look, how manly, how she feels when she sees you, how much she needs you. You should never be on that street. If you are never alone with a woman who is not your wife or close family member, you will not only never commit adultery, and no one will accuse you of it.

Flee from sexual immorality. — 1 Corinthians 6:18 Reject the ridiculous lie and run!

Reject the ridiculous lie that you can manage sinful temptation. Better men, better women than you have fallen to their death. Dr. Sam Renihan, one of our brightest reformed Baptist minds, confessed to an affair this week. How many others have done so in the last 5 years? Not one of them woke up on a day and said today I am going to destroy my life, my family, my reputation, and bring shame on my Lord and his kingdom by plunging headlong into sin. Every single one of them failed 1 inch at a

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time as they crept closer to sin, thinking they could manage it. You cannot. It will destroy you. Reject that ridiculous lie and run. Flea immorality, Joseph.

Statistics suggest that I am talking to those who are not only flirting with behaviors that will **lead** to adultery, but are actually in the grip of them. There is addiction. What you need to do will be radical and probably even painful. And it will save your life. And if you won't act to repent, the likelihood is you will make shipwreck out of your life before it's over. Reject the ridiculous lie that you can manage sin and run for your life. Do it now. Ask for help. If you're still at home under your parents roof, ask your dad to help you. If you are on your own, talk to the elders and the brothers. We will help you.

To the married: Embrace and revel in the gift marital intimacy as we studied in 1 Corinthians 7. "Tender, well-regulated domestic affection is the best defense against the vagrant desires of unlawful passions. — Charles Bridges, early 19 the Century English pastor

Proverbs 6:20–29 — Fathers, prepare your children for the fierce battle that the world will engage from without, and the fierce battle the flesh will engage from within.

Behind the scenes in your marriage, don't under estimate that the sinful is working. It is making war against love and covenant commitment. That battle un-joined will ultimately lead to infidelity in some form or fashion. Make war on the sinful nature, one small battle of love and self-denial at a time. Attempting to win the whole war in some big decisive battle when lust has been fed and strengthened through a thousand small concessions that you thought were of little consequence — that strategy will destroy you.

What is the hope for adulterers? For those in Christ Jesus: no condemnation. Christ has borne away the sin of adultery. To the woman caught in adultery, Jesus finally said, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

Heidelberg says we must detest the sin of adultery from the heart. But as we have already seen, our heart is actually the factory of lustful thoughts. What hope is there for a lustful, rebellious heart that craves more sexual immorality, not less? The Prophet Ezekiel speaks directly to this and promises several times that God “will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:26–27) Ask God to give you a new heart. Today is the day of salvation. He makes all things new for those who come to him in faith and repentance. He cuts away the sinfully dead heart and gives a living heart that will love God, and long to be done with sin.