

Sermon Series: *The Ten Commandments*

The Seventh Commandment: You Shall Not Commit Adultery

Exodus 20:14

“You shall not commit adultery.”

MEMORIZATION

- The First Commandment: You shall have no other gods before Me.
- The Second Commandment: You shall not make a carved image.
- The Third Commandment: You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
- The Fourth Commandment: Remember the sabbath to keep it holy.
- The Fifth Commandment: Honor your father and mother.
- The Sixth Commandment: You shall not murder.
- The Seventh Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

I have three goals in this sermon. First, I pray that we will see the sin of committing adultery against spouse as equal to treachery (i.e. marital treason) and whoredom (i.e. seeking sexual fulfillment in a prostitute). Second, that we will see the sin of spiritual adultery against God the Father as infinitely worse than physical adultery. And, third, that we will be convinced that having an intimate, personal relationship with Creator God who made you is far more satisfying than then best sex that can be found on this planet.

Pray - some may have been hurt by this in the past. Some have committed this sin. Some may be thinking about it. Let us see this sin as You see this sin. Let us call a sin a sin, but also let us know your amazing grace that overcame the power of the strongest temptation through the victorious life, death, and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus. Keep this sermon from opening doors that need to remain closed or reopening old wounds that have healed.

However, if there are hidden rooms in our hearts that need to be brought out in the light of your glory, then do not allow the enemy to keep those doors shut. Open our hearts to the power of your purging, healing, forgiving love.

Father, please keep me from causing any harm. Keep me from be used by the enemy. Please use this time to be a blessing to the spiritual health of your people. Come Holy Spirit and help me now. Help me for the sake of your great name and for the good of your hurting children. In your holy name, Jesus, we pray.

No Adultery

This seventh commandment contains only two words in the Hebrew, *lo tinap*, which means “no adultery.” Noah Wester, in his 1828 dictionary, defined adultery as the “violation of the marriage

bed; any unfaithfulness of a married person to the marriage bed.”¹ Adultery refers to any sexual relationship between a married person and anyone other than that person’s spouse.

This is completely understandable because when we marry we promise to reserve our selves only for our spouse. The most basic understanding of marriage is that the sexual relationship is to be exclusively between the bride and groom, husband and the wife. This is the faithfulness that we pledge to one another on the day of the wedding. This is what I promised to my wife in 1996.

“Todd do you take Alisa to be your wife, to live with in holy marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; forsaking all others will you be faithful to her alone as long as you both shall live? If so, say, ‘I do.’”

When we marry, we make public promises in the name of God that we will “forsake all others” and be faithful to spouse alone, which means we promise that we will seek sexual fulfillment **only** in the one to whom those promises are given. This promised faithfulness includes more than then sexual relationship, but this specific aspect of the martial relationship is particularly in view in the seventh commandment - marital fidelity.

The Flaming Quote

I remind you once again, that these words of this seventh command (as is true of all ten of these commands) come from the very mouth of God Himself. This is not Moses writing His own opinion. This is Moses recording the very words of Yahweh, the Creator of all that can be seen, and the One who redeemed Israel from house of slavery, the iron furnace of Egypt. These words are the words of God. To receive these words is to receive God Himself. To reject these words is to reject God Himself.

God Has An Opinion About Your Sex Life

In this seventh command we discover that God, the One and only God, has an opinion about our sex lives. *Adultery is forbidden.* God is putting up a fence to protect the purity of the right kind of sexual relations. God is not forbidding sex. He is forbidding the abuse of it. He is forbidding all hurtful intrusion upon the rightful expression of sexual delight.

This command implies that sex is to be enjoyed from within the covenant promises of marital faithfulness. God created sex and now He sets out to guard sex from any other context than the one for which He created it. God created man and woman and He ordained that the most intimate experience between man and woman was to be enjoyed from within the context of marriage covenant.

The Command Restated Positively

All other expressions of sexual relations outside marriage are forbidden. This command limits sexual union to husband and wife alone. We could state this command positively, “*You shall have sex with only your spouse.*” Conversely, if you are not married, you may not have sex with anyone.

Remember that the first four commandments regulated our relationship with God while the last six regulate our relationships with each other. The most intimate relationship we enjoy is the sexual union of husband and wife. God aims to guard this marital union.

¹ Source: www.1828-dictionary.com/d/word/adultery accessed 14 August 2010.

God Blesses Sex Between Husband & Wife

This command is the fence that protects the purity of the kind of sexual expression that God blesses. You do know that God blesses sex don't you? Remember back in Genesis when God created Adam and Eve? He said to them,

Genesis 2:18

Then the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.

Genesis 2:21-22

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

This was the first occasion of a Father giving away the bride...

Genesis 2:23-25

23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Then Genesis 1:28 tells us that after Eve was created God said to the both of them,

Genesis 1:28

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

God has blessed the sexual union between husband and wife and this is the only sexual union which has His blessing. All other contrary expressions of sexuality, including homosexuality, are condemned by God carrying His curse and falling under the heavy hand of His discipline. John Calvin said it this way,

"The Lord made the requisite provision for us in this respect by the institution of marriage, which, entered into under his authority, he has also sanctified with his blessing. Hence, it is evident, that any mode of cohabitation different from marriage is cursed in his sight, and that the conjugal relation was ordained as a necessary means of preventing us from giving way to unbridled lust. Let us beware, therefore, of yielding to indulgence, seeing we are assured that the curse of God lies on every man and woman cohabiting without marriage."²

God is not against sex. He created it. He made sex and therefore, only He has the right, wisdom, and the authority to give us instruction on the best use of this wonderful experience. When God created sex He had a purpose for it. Since He is the creator of sex only He can rightly guide us in its proper expression.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), Ex 20:12–17.

God Made Sex So Have Much of It?

“Ah ha!” some might say, “Since God created sex and sex is good so lets all have sex and have as much as we want! Right? Well, no. Of course not. God made water and water is good but too much of it will kill you. God made fire and it is good to be warmed by it but too much of it will burn you. God made light and light is good but too much of it will blind you. God made food and food is good but too much of it will make you ill and unfit. There are many wonderful and helpful things in God’s beautiful creation but those things used in the wrong context and to an improper extreme can be deadly and destructive.

The Cry of a Wicked Generation: If You Want to be Happy, Have Sex

“Have sex and have it all the time,” was the cry of a previous generation and it still resounds to this day. Many say this. Sex is great so everybody should have sex. Sex is the way to personal fulfillment and self actualization. Sex is the means to happiness, so if you want to be happy have sex. This has been the prevailing cultural attitude since the “swinging sixties.”

Provincetown Elementary Schools & Condoms

Our culture has so promoted this message that our children have listen and believed it and acted upon it. This debauchery has gone so far that now we freely hand out condoms to elementary aged school children because, in the words of Beth Singer, Superintendent of Provincetown Cape Cod schools, “We know that sexual experimentation is not limited to an age.”³ Have we really gone this far? Yes, we have!

Where Are All the Happy People?

I just have one question. If sex is truly the means to personal happiness and satisfaction and the happier you are the more sex you have and more people are having sex more frequently than ever before, then why aren’t there more happy people? Where are all the happy people? I don’t see our sex crazed society overflowing with happy, contented people. Unbridled sex outside of marriage does not bring happiness. It brings heartbreak, pain, rejection, discontent, emptiness, guilt, and shame.

God has not blessed the sexual union of persons outside of the context of covenant marriage between a man and a woman. If you want to enjoy the garden of graceful sex then enter through the gates of covenant marriage. If you want to enjoy God’s sweetest blessings of the sexual union, then wait until your are married. I beg you, young people, do this God’s way - wait until you are married and then you will know His blessing!

Sex outside of marriage, which the Bible calls the sin of fornication, does delivers temporary physical pleasures but those pleasures pass away so quickly. However, sex outside of marriage also brings with it a spiritual heaviness that becomes an unbearable burden which does not pass quickly away and forces one to ignore the deep inward cry of the conscience that says, “this is not right!”

The Spiritual Significance of Sex

However, the sacred union of husband and wife carries the unique blessing of God and it entails a mysterious spiritual blessing which Paul says ultimately points to the union between Christ and His church.

³ Source: www.boston.com/news/local/breaking_news/2010/06/provincetown_to.html accessed 14 August 2010.

Ephesians 5:31-32

31 *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* 32 *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

The Bible is filled with this kind of language. The church is the bride of Christ (Rev 21:2,9). The feast that awaits all believers in the kingdom of God is called the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9). The purity of holy lives are likened to the beauty of a white wedding dress (Rev 3:4-5; 19:14).

The significance of sexual union within marriage goes far beyond mere physical pleasure and procreation. *There is a spiritual significance to sex.* The reason I referred to this aspect of the marital relationship as ‘sacred’ a moment ago is because God has chosen to set it apart in a particular way. The reason for this is at least two fold.

First, because God has set apart this expression of physical joy to be reserved only for husband and wife, that is, those who have made covenant promises to each other. It is sacred because it is ‘set apart’ by God. However, there is a second and deeper reason.

A Physical Sign to Spiritual Reality

The second reason we can refer to the marital bed as sacred is because this physical act is a sign that points to a greater spiritual reality. *The same God who knows how to bring pleasure to the body also knows how to bring pleasure to the soul.* If God knows how to supply the needs of the body, does He not know how to satisfy the desires of the soul? At His right hand are pleasures forevermore according to Psalm 16:11. *God has chosen to use the covenantal sexual relationship between husband and wife as an analogy for the covenantal spiritual relationship between Himself and His people.* We see this most clearly by the graphic words God uses to describe Israel’s turning away from Him in order to worship other gods (which are not God at all).

Covenant Promises = Marital Promises

God made covenantal promises to Israel and Israel willingly accepted those promises. The sweetness of those covenant promises are expressed in the sentence so often spoken by God, *“I will be their God and they shall be my people”* (Jer 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ez 11:20 cf. Deut 4:10). Israel responded to this by replying, *“All that the Lord has spoken we will do”* (Ex 19:3).

This would equate to the “declaration of intent” contained in contemporary wedding ceremonies. *“Will you have this woman as your wife to have and to hold? Yes, I will.”* After the “declaration of intent,” then follow the wedding vows. Only in the case between Yahweh and Israel, these ten commandments are the wedding vows. *These covenant promises are the marriage vows between God and Israel.*⁴

The first command was that Israel was to worship God and God alone. No one else but Yahweh was to be worshiped by the people of God. *Therefore, to turn away from God and worship anything else other than Him is the spiritual equivalent of the physical act of adultery.*

Adultery is to marriage what idolatry is to worship. Idolatry is spiritual adultery or whoredom. When spiritual fidelity to God in worship is forsaken, God always uses the terms “adultery” or “whoredom” to describe that kind of spiritual unfaithfulness.

⁴ See Ezekiel 16:8.

Exodus 34:11-17

11 *“Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.*

(I will take care of you, protect you and provide for you)

12 *Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst.*

(You can only be married to me. You cannot have other lovers)

13 *You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim*

(You need to throw away all the shoeboxes of the pictures of old boyfriends)

14 *(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),*

(I will not allow you to flirt with other men after you make promises to me)

15 *lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice,*

16 *and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.*

17 *“You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal.”*

Notices the many connections:

1. Notice vs. 12 & 15, *“Take care lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land...”* Making a covenant is entering into an agreement with someone by making promises and vows just as those made in the marriage ceremony.
2. Notice God reminds them of the first commandment (to worship Him alone) and points to the fact that He is jealous that their worship be for Him and no other non-god just as a husband would be jealous that his wife’s heart have affection only for him.
3. Notice verse 15 worshipping any gods other than the one true God, who is Yahweh, is the same as “whoring after other gods.”
4. Notice in vs. 16 the connection between marriage and worship is made even more clear, *“...and you take of their daughters for your sons...”* and result is that the sons go whoring after the non-gods of their godless wives!
5. Then comes the repeating of the second command, *“you shall not make gods of cast metal!”* This is a reminder of the “how” of worship. God is saying, “I am not a created thing so don’t not look to any created thing as though it could possibly accurately represent me!”

But then Israel “grew up” and became a “mature” nation, she forgot the LORD her God and turned away from Him and worshiped other gods. Israel eventually did exactly what she promised she would not do. She broke her wedding vows. She broke faith with God. And during her time of

spiritual adultery, God faithfully sent her the prophets who were the voice of God, like a loving husband calling back a rebellious bride to Himself. God spoke to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 5:7-8

7 How can I pardon you?
Your children have forsaken me
and have sworn by those who are no gods.
When I fed them to the full,
they committed adultery
and trooped to the houses of whores.
8 They were well-fed, lusty stallions,
each neighing for his neighbor's wife.
9 Shall I not punish them for these things?
declares the LORD;
and shall I not avenge myself
on a nation such as this?

Israel had forsaken the Lord like a faithless wife forsakes her husband. She had turned away and broken her vows and gone after “those who were no gods.” The LORD had provided food for Israel. He had fed and provided for her as a husband provides for his wife, and then after they were full of the LORD’s food, they ran off *en masse* to commit spiritual adultery by worshipping in temples dedicated to idols which was like “going down to the houses of whores.”

We Do Not Understand the Significance of This Sin

Speaking this way about adultery is foreign to our thinking. We don’t get it. We simply do not understand why this is such a big deal. You may be finding this hard to listen to. This way of talking does not resonate with us. This is because in our culture adultery is not a big deal. Adultery is nothing more than a mostly expected inconvenient marital inevitability.

Adultery Is the Theme of Our Entertainment

One of the reasons the institution of marriage is increasingly abandoned is due to the acceptance of adultery and fornication, sex outside of marriage. Adultery is story line of movies. It is the center piece of nearly every sit com. Today, it is no longer the bad guys in the movies who are committing adultery, it is the heros and the heroines. We are so taken in with this mentality that we cheer them on (just as the apostle Paul said that we would in Romans 1:32)!

Witness *Titanic*! At the time it was highest grossing movie of all time. Was anyone was offended that Jack & Rose were in the back seat each stealing from the other what rightfully belonged to their future spouses? People all around the world spent 1.8 billion dollars⁵ to see them finally seize the moment. Everyone cheered for them and yet they were sinning!

No one was sorrowful at their sin, because God has been forgotten in this nation. And sin means nothing where God means nothing. And if God means nothing we are free to glorify sin. We have forsaken God just as Israel had done. This nation is just as faithless as Israel (and maybe even more

⁵ Accessed [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titanic_\(1997_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titanic_(1997_film)) 14 August 2010.

so). Today God is nowhere in our cultural conscience as we watch our TV's and go to the movies and ***we celebrate what He abominates.***

Greeting Cards for Adulterers

Adultery is sin! To that true our culture says, "Ha! Are you kidding? Adultery is not a sin!" Our culture says, as encapsulated in one bumper sticker, "Life is short. Have an affair!" Good grief, there is even an entire line of greeting cards for adulterers. The cards debuted at the annual National Stationary Show in New York in 2005. The MSNBC headline read, "When You Care Enough To Risk Everything: With the Secret Lover Collection, now adulterers can say it with a card."⁶

One card reads, "Just when I thought I would never find true love - you came along. My soul has been searching for you since I came into this world. All my life I have had this emptiness inside, like a part of me was missing and I was incomplete... And now I can't imagine my life without you... Even if I have to share you."

That adultery (and fornication and all manner of sexual immorality) is an abomination⁷ in the sight of God is simply beyond our natural ability to comprehend. And yet this is the truth.

The Sin of Adultery Is Horrendous

The sin of adultery is horrendous. Yet, as horrendous as physical adultery is, spiritual adultery is infinitely worse. The horrendous nature of spiritual idolatry becomes even more graphic in the book of Ezekiel. Chapter 16 of Ezekiel, in my opinion, may be one of the most graphic chapters in the Bible. [I dare you to read this chapter and see if you are not moved to tears.] Listen to what the Lord says to Jerusalem through the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 16:1-2

1 Again the word of the LORD came to me: 2 Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations,

The Lord tells the story of how He protected the infant nation of Israel and provided for all her needs, food, clothing, and beauty. And of how He loved her, cleansed her, and called her, and when she had grown made vows to her and entered into a covenant with her. Then using all the blessings with which the Lord had blessed her, she turned away from Him who loved her and went after other lovers, i.e. idols, who did not love her.

Ezekiel 16:10-17

10 I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk.

11 And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck.

12 And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.

13 Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty.

14 And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD.

⁶ Accessed <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8973962/> 14 August 2010.

⁷ See Leviticus 18:20, 26.

15 *“But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his.*

16 *You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The like has never been, nor ever shall be.*

17 *You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore.*

What a shocking image?

Ezekiel 16:32-33

32 *Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!*

33 *Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side with your whorings.*

And what does the Lord do with His unfaithful wife? He separates from her. He sends her into exile in Babylon for a little while. Then He went after her and brought her back to Himself. [Jeremiah had dream about this. It is in chapter 31.] This entire drama is lived out in the life of the prophet Hosea.

Why did God do this? Why does He do this? Why has God chosen to use the most intimate physical experience to use as an analogy of spiritual fidelity or infidelity with or against Him? Why, because it is in our hearts that we either love God or hate Him. God has chosen to use the most intimate example of physical life to call our attention to the fact that only He can provide us with the highest delight of spiritual life.

Only in an intimate, holy, pure, and personal relationship with God our Creator will our souls find the spiritual satisfaction for which we thirst. God is Spirit. If we would truly love God, then we must love Him with our spirit more than all that this world has to offer. This is why Jesus said what He said about adultery. Jesus recovered the full meaning of adultery from the years of intellectual dust heaped up by inaccurate, self-righteous rabbinic teaching when He said,

Matthew 5:27-28

27 *“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.”*

Jesus took this seventh command to a deeper level. Certainly God is concerned with your outward actions, but He also concerned with the inner thoughts of the heart, because no man does what he has not first thought about doing. *If adultery is sin, then so are the thoughts that lead up to it.*

But God is yearns for His people to love Him in truth from the heart! The heart is the sacred place of divine love and worship. The heart is the arena of either pure and holy divine love or of adulterous idolatry and treacherous whoredom. Which is it? Oh, what is in your heart this morning?

There may be some of you in this room who are have lately been considering adultery or are perhaps in the middle of an affair. The Secret Lover Greeting Card website reports that “60 percent of of American men and 40 percent of woman are involved in or have been involved in an affair.”⁸ If they are even half right and the people in this room are twice as righteous as

⁸ Accessed <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8973962/> 14 August 2010.

the average american that would mean that about 9 men and 6 women in this room are toying with the thought of having an affair at this very moment.

Jesus' words in Matthew 5:27-28 condemn us all of adultery! What are we to do with our guilt? We are to fall at the feet of Jesus just as the women did who was caught in the very act of adultery (John 8:1-11). Remember his words to her. *“Woman, where are they? Is there anyone to condemn you?”* “No,” she replied. Jesus then said, *“Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on sin no more.”*

Fall at the feet of Jesus and find forgiveness for your sins this morning. Turn from your sinful wicked thoughts. Ask Him to give you a new mind and a new heart! Ask Him right now and He will do it.

- I beg you, plead with the LORD that He will grant our children and youth hearts that are hot on the trail of purity.
- Men, plead with the LORD that He will give us hearts that yearn to be pure to very depths of our being and in every dark closet of our hearts.
- Women, plead with the LORD that He will cause you to see purity as thing of beauty and prudish obsolescence.
- Hope, plead with the LORD that He will grant that every marriage that occurs out this body of believers will be sacred in the eyes of all and will not be parted until death.
- Plead with the Lord that the marriage bed will be honored by all in this church.
- Plead that the Lord will grant us to be a remnant who will not with the culture run headlong into the quicksand of sexual sin.
- Plead that Jesus may come and not find us mired in shame but singing with Joy eternal!
- Jesus, thank you for offering us complete forgiveness of our sins when we put our faith and trust in your name! Thank you for dying for our sins. Thank you for paying the penalty for us so that we who are guilty of this horrendous sin of adultery might have life and freedom through trust in You! We praise Your great name! Amen!