

## Honor Marriage – Exodus 20:14

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *The Seventh Commandment*

**You shall not commit adultery.**

#### B. *The Wicked Bible*

1. In 1631, the first of the *King James Bibles* were coming off the printing press.
2. There were some *minor misprints* in those first editions, and one *glaring, horrifying major* one!
3. Someone quickly realized that the word “not” had been omitted from the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment. It read, “Thou shalt commit adultery.”
4. The misprint caused great consternation. So huge was the outcry, that edition was called the *Wicked Bible*.
5. And while most people were *shocked* – no doubt there were a few in England who secretly said, “Phew!” for they were guilty of the very sin the misprint commanded!
6. But as soon as the error was known, the presses came to a screeching halt and it was corrected.

#### C. *Deeper*

1. As we’ve been covering the 10 Commandments over the last 6 weeks, we’ve seen that each is far more than just a simple prohibition or command.
2. At a casual first glance, they each seem pretty straightforward and easily understood.
3. But as we’ve been seeing, each command is actually a profound revelation of deeper and more far-reaching truths than first meet the eye.
4. And such is the case with this – the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment.

### II. TEXT

**You shall not commit adultery.**

#### A. *What Is Adultery?*

1. If we’re going to obey this command, we need to first understand what adultery *is*.
2. A mother was talking with her young daughter one day, explaining the 10 Commandments to her.
  - a. she first quoted each command, then paraphrased it and gave a quick idea of what each meant.
  - b. she did fine until she got the 7<sup>th</sup>, then she was at a loss to explain just what *adultery* was in terms her little girl would understand.
  - c. she said, “The 7<sup>th</sup> commandment says, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’”
  - d. then she paused, and said, “Well, um, oh – I’m not sure how to explain this one.”
  - e. her little girl said, “That’s okay mommy, I know what it means. You shall not cut down an adult tree.”
3. *Not exactly!* Just what *is* adultery?
  - a. it seems this is a word for which people have *different* definitions.
  - b. we recently had a President who helped muddy the waters on just what constitutes adultery.
4. Adultery is any intimate bonding with anyone *other* than your husband or wife.
  - a. it’s a uniting of one’s self with someone other than your spouse,
  - b. whether that bond be *emotional*, or *sexual*.

#### B. *Changing Views Of Adultery*

1. For most of history, while people have *struggled* with marital fidelity and loyalty, they have also generally understood adultery to be *immoral & wrong*.

- a. it's only when a culture is in its *death throes* that it makes light of adultery and *accepts* it.
  - b. and even then, it's usually only the upper classes, the elite, who are pardoned for being unfaithful.
2. Charting society's attitude toward adultery *today* reveals a disturbing trend.
    - a. there's a widespread acceptance of not only the *inevitability* of adultery,
    - b. but some are saying it is actually a *good thing* and something we ought to embrace as *normal – preferred even* to traditional ideas on monogamy.
  3. Now, this may be shocking to us as we sit here in church, being people who claim a morality and ethic based on God and the Bible, but it really shouldn't be surprising to us for this reason . . .
    - a. while *we* believe in God as Creator and Law-Giver,
    - b. the prevailing view on origins in the world around us is *evolution*.
    - c. and with evolution as a worldview, adultery makes perfect sense!
    - d. after all, man is nothing but a grown up germ – one of the highest and most intelligent of the animals, but an *animal* nonetheless.
    - e. and as we look at the animal kingdom we see that *they* don't practice marital fidelity; they have *many* sexual couplings with many *different* individuals.
    - f. this is the rationale being used today to justify dismantling the Judeo-Christian views on marriage and sex which have been in place for the last 1500 years in Western civilization.
    - g. *evolution* demands that men and women embrace a *modern* view of sex and relationships.
    - h. in this new scientifically enlightened age, we're told we must throw off the shackles of our religious yesteryears and adopt a new ethic.
    - i. listen to what Dr. Helen Fisher wrote in her book *Anatomy of Love: The Mysteries of Mating, Marriage and Why we Stray*.
      - 1) she said that men commit adultery, "to ensure a widespread dissemination of their genetic material."
      - 2) and a woman does it as "an alternative strategy for the acquisition of resources to support herself and her young ones."
    - h. sociologist Morton Hunt wrote,
 

Polygamy seems better suited to the emotional capacities and requirements of many people, particularly men; it offers renewal, excitement and continuance of expressions of personal rediscovery, it is an answer to the boredom of lifelong monogamy. We are by nature polygamous. <sup>[1]</sup>

      - 1) by which he means it's our *nature* to *not* be faithful to one person.
      - 2) rather, nature *demand*s that we have multiple partners.
    - i. this is what is being held up by the social engineers of today.
    - n. no wonder adultery and divorce have reach epidemic proportions.
  4. Up until about a hundred years ago, in the public mind, adultery was simply *wrong*.
  5. But then the influences of the Enlightenment crept in and adultery was excused if there was genuine love between the adulterers.
  6. Recently, a whole new ethic has developed embodying the influences of evolution which says, adultery is okay, as long as *NO* love is involved.
    - a. that's right – a married person should reserve their soul and their love only for their spouse,
    - b. but their *body*, well, it's needs are best met by a multitude of sexual encounters with different people!
  7. So there's been a devolution of thought regarding adultery, where it's gone from being wrong, to being permitted in the case of genuine love, to being allowed only if there is NO LOVE!

### **C. Why Does God Prohibit Adultery?**

1. Why does God *prohibit* adultery? What's the big deal?
2. Didn't He know about evolution?
3. Of course He did, He knew all about it: He knows it's a big pile of stinking refuse!
4. No - God knows all about man and woman and what's best for them.

- a. God created us male and female.
  - b. we bear His image, and as His image-bearers, He lays out the path for life as it's meant to be.
  - c. when He says, "You shall not commit adultery" it's for our absolute best.
  - d. it's not meant to keep blessing or pleasure from us – but to keep us IN the blessing and to maximize our pleasure.
5. You know the story well; when God created Adam, at first he was alone – and God declared Adam's aloneness was *not* good.
  6. The solution was Eve. He put Adam to sleep, and took from his side that which He made into his bride.
    - a. then God presided over their union as He made them husband and wife.
    - b. consider the summary statement God made over them.
    - c. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become" – what? "One-flesh."
  7. Marriage forges a *oneness*, an *intimacy* between a man and woman that is unlike any other relationship.
    - a. in marriage, you take two people who *used* to be simple individuals,
    - b. and in marriage they become ONE!
    - c. they don't cease being individuals – but their individuality is taken up into something that is bigger than just the sum of their parts.
  8. All of us have experienced this with the couples we know.
    - a. we knew some single man, and when we thought of him we thought of *just him*, as an individual.
    - b. we know some single woman, and again, when we think about her, we think of just her without reference to anyone else.
    - c. but then that single man and woman meet, fall in love, grow in their relationship, and get married.
    - d. now, a funny thing happens on the day of their wedding.
    - e. when they exchange vows, rings, and that special kiss; something happens to our conception of them
    - f. from that point on, whereas before, we used to think of them simply as *individuals*, now we can't think of one *without* thinking of the other.
    - g. a spiritual union has been forged between them.
    - h. a new identity has been added TO them – it's the oneness of their union as husband and wife.
  9. Paul helps us understand what's *really happening* in marriage in Ephesians 5 where, after detailing the duties of the husband and wife he says –
    - 31 **"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."**
      - a. Paul reaches back to the Creation story for the very first statement about marriage and then adds this
    - 32 **This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**
      - b. he's just detailed the duties of the husband and wife in marriage,
      - c. quotes the creation mandate for marriage, and then says in effect,
      - d. "What I've really referring to in all of this is the union between Jesus and His covenant people."
  10. Paul's point is that marriage is a *picture* of the relationship between Christ and the Church.
  11. Adam and Eve serve as a living picture of what God intended in the Creation itself.
    - a. man was created for God, to be His companion, just as Eve was created to be Adam's.
    - b. and just as man and woman bear the image of God, their union as husband and wife is the image of what God has planned for man in his union *with* God.
  12. The reason God forbids *adultery* is because it destroys the oneness marriage creates.
  13. Marriage is a *covenant of oneness*, where two are united in a bond that includes everything they are and do.

14. And God intends it to be a living picture of the kind of relationship He wants with us.
15. Therefore it's sacred, special, and to be lived by the guidelines He sets for it.
16. And here's what He says – **no adultery!**
  - a. no sharing with anyone **outside** the marriage what's shared **in** the marriage!
  - b. we are called to oneness with God, and then with our mate.
  - c. to forge ties to someone outside the sphere of those two relationships is just plain taboo!
17. The reason is because it strikes out at and mars the intimacy and union marriage is meant to bring about.
18. Man's great need is love and the sense of connection to another.
  - a. he was created by a loving God, to know and enjoy Him forever.
  - b. marriage is God's great training ground for that eternal union with Him.
  - c. but adultery ruins it.
  - d. it may promise oneness and companionship, but like all sin, it's a lie and a cheat that ends up working death and ruin.
19. This is why God prohibits adultery, because it hinders men and women from enjoying the rich, full life He wants them to have.
20. I've had opportunity to speak with many people who have had affairs.
  - a. and let me tell you something – they **NEVER** turn out well! Never.
  - b. they always inflict terrible pain, hurt and loss.
  - c. even when the adultery is ended and the husband and wife forgive and reconcile to one another.
  - d. the grace and the mercy of God is a wonderful and healing thing, but adultery leaves scars that are deep and dark.
21. Adultery is **not** the unforgivable sin.
  - a. but it is a fundamental breach of the covenant of oneness which is the heart and goal of marriage.
  - b. and remember – God intends marriage to be a picture of our covenant and union with Him!
22. Once again, as with the previous commands, we see that it's all about covenant – about this special relationship of love and intimacy God wants with us.
23. As marriage is a picture of our relationship with God, so adultery is a picture of our forsaking Him.
24. The man or woman who thinks that he or she can cheat on their spouse and be a good Christian at the same time is a blind fool and doesn't have a clue about how closely connected the covenant of marriage is to their relationship with God.
25. The prophet Malachi made this point exactly in ch. 2 when he said –
13. . . . **You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. <sup>14</sup> Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. <sup>15</sup> But did He not make *them* one, . . . therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. <sup>16</sup> "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."**
  - a. God was speaking through the prophet to people who thought they were spiritual and religious.
  - b. they came with tears to the altar, pleading with God to show them mercy,
  - c. but they were treacherous, back-stabbing adulterers and though they may have fooled **themselves**, they didn't fool Him.

#### **D. A Heart Issue**

1. God says something to the men of Malachi's day that's important –

2. In v. 16 He says that He **HATES** divorce!
  - a. how often do we find God saying that He *hates* something?
  - b. not often – and so when we do hear it, it makes us sit up and take notice.
  - c. God hates divorce for the very reasons we’ve already looked at today – it breaks the covenant of oneness between a man and woman that is so intimately tied to our covenant with Him.
  - d. it creates incredible pain and hurt and God in His love hates to see His loved ones in such torment.
3. That’s why He goes on in v. 16 to say, **“Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”**
4. Take heed to your spirit!
5. Adultery is a sin that begins in the spirit, it starts in the heart.
6. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 5.
- 27 **“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’<sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**
7. No one “falls” into adultery; they *slide* there slowly.
  - a. it all begins with a subtle turning of the heart *away* from their spouse.
  - b. that turning away may seem justified or understandable, but make no mistake, that’s where it begins –
  - c. with a subtle turning of the heart away from our husband or wife.
8. The goal of marriage is to become one!
  - a. that means for each and every one of us, we need to guard our hearts and make sure we are always aimed at getting *closer* to our mate.
  - b. adultery *begins*, not when we take off our clothes and slip between the sheets of some hotel room.
  - c. it begins when we make a choice to harden our heart toward our mate because of conflict, hurt, unmet expectations, or unfulfilled desires.
  - d. instead of realizing that that challenge is an opportunity to *create greater* oneness and intimacy, we let it drive a wedge between us, pushing us apart.
  - e. the heart turns, not *toward* our mate, which is what we promised in our wedding vow, but *away* from them.
  - f. and a heart turned away from our mate, is a heart that is hungry to find another heart to move toward!
  - g. this is why Jesus said that adultery is an issue of the heart.
9. No one – No One! whose heart is loyal to their mate, and totally devoted to oneness with their spouse, is going to commit adultery. **NO ONE!**
10. Adultery can *only* occur when we’ve not been taking care of our heart and have been playing fast and loose with our *fantasy* life.
  - a. and we’ve been playing fast and loose with our fantasy life because we’ve not been aiming *that too* at oneness with our mate.
  - b. Jesus nails that mentality here – that rationalization of sinful imaginations when He says – **“Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”**
  - c. Jesus is not saying that temptation *in and of itself* is sinful.
  - d. the first look isn’t sin; but the second probably is – because the second is taken for the purpose of drawing *pleasure*.
  - e. and we are to find sexual pleasure in none but our mate!
11. Jesus goes on to tell us how radically we must protect our hearts -
- 29 **If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.** 30 **And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from**

**you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.**

12. Jesus is using what is known as “hyperbolic language” here – we’d call it *exaggeration* to make a point.
  - a. it’s obvious we’re not take Him literally and start gouging out eyes or cutting off hands.
  - b. guys don’t look at an attractive gal with one eye closed! If he’s going to look, it’s with BOTH eyes!
  - c. I’ve never met a guy who said, “Wow, my right eye is really wayward and loves to look at pretty women. I don’t have a problem with my left eye, just my right.”
  - d. no one says, “My right hand just keeps getting me into trouble. My left is really good, but man, this right hand, I think it needs deliverance or something.”
13. What Jesus is saying by using such intense images is that when it comes to sin, especially the turning of the heart away from our spouse, we need to be *radical* in the way we deal with temptation.
  - a. we must not give *any* ground or opening to sin.
  - b. don’t let your eye rest on provocative images
  - c. don’t let you hand on the mouse or keyboard surf to those sites or type out messages in that chat-room.
  - d. don’t spend time with *that* person; don’t flirt with *that* guy.
  - e. stay away from *those* places and people that are going to weaken your resolve and question your convictions.
14. In interviews done with men and women who had affairs, there is a consistent progression of attitudes and events.
  - a. first, there’s disillusionment toward the spouse and a inner retreat and withdrawal from the relationship.
    - 1) they give up trying to work at the relationship and resign themselves to “This is the way it’s going to be, so I might as well just accept it and live with it.”
    - 2) they may be good, moral people who say that divorce is not really an option, so they accept a hurting, painful marriage.
    - 3) the problem is, they’ll inevitably let their heart go away from their spouse, and that heart needs and wants connection and intimacy.
    - 4) typically, both men and women try to fulfill this need by improper fantasies.
    - 5) they know they aren’t right, but feel they’re *permissible* because, well, they think it keeps them from actually *doing* something wrong.
  - b. second, they find a sense of connection with someone of the opposite sex and develop an emotional attachment to them.
    - 1) this usually begins with a seemingly innocent opportunity to help the other person.
    - 2) they have some need, often with their own broken relationships.
    - 3) and as the two share and console one another, pretty soon there are emotional bonds being forged because comfort is being given.
    - 4) at this stage, the man or woman starts imagining they see in the other person all the things they aren’t getting from their spouse!
  - c. third, a physical connection is made.
    - 1) like the previous stages, this usually starts innocently enough:
      - a) a pat on the back,
      - b) a lingering hand on top of another hand
      - c) a hug
      - d) but then it happens, a kiss, a lingering embrace, and on it goes . . .
  - d. fourth and finally, there’s the rationalization of the affair and infidelity.
    - 1) there’s the attitude of settled sin that the spouse *drove* them into the affair.
    - 2) but no one *MAKES* their spouse commit adultery.
    - 4) no, that’s a personal choice – and it begins long, long before it breaks out in checking into a hotel room.

5) it begins in the heart, when a husband or wife makes a choice to not be one *with* that one they made a covenant vow to.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Much More*

1. The Bible has much more to say about divorce, forgiveness, reconciliation and how to deal with adultery and its aftermath.
2. We don't have time to go into that today – as much as I wish we could.

#### B. *The Point*

1. What I want to end with today is the *positive* the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment implies.
2. Though the command is cast as a negative – **You shall not commit adultery** - it implies a positive – You shall *honor* marriage.
3. Specifically – you shall honor YOUR marriage.
4. The goal of marriage is made clear in Gen. 2:24 – to become one-flesh.
5. That is where your fulfillment in marriage is to be found, in deepening your oneness and intimacy with your spouse.
6. Your fulfillment as a *man or woman* is found in intimate fellowship with your covenant God; but your fulfillment as a *husband or wife* is found in intimate fellowship with your covenant mate.
7. Sure your marriage has difficulties – *no* marriage is perfect.
  - a. and it may be that there's been some really bad stuff between you
  - b. God is not only bigger than the air we breath, He's bigger than any problem, any fault, any shortcoming or inadequacy in your spouse or self.
  - c. make a choice to not let problems be wedges that drive you apart, but instead to be opportunities to grow into a greater oneness with one another.

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[1] Robertson McQuilkin, *Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1989) p. 206 quoting Morton Hunt, *The Affair* (New York: World, 1969) pp.22, 23, 41