

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT
The Ten Commandments – Week 10
Exodus 20:14
By Andy Manning

INTRODUCTION

The title of this sermon is “The Seventh Commandment.”

In 1631 the producers of the King James Version of the Bible were fined 300 pounds by the Archbishop Laud. That amount was equal to about a lifetime’s income back then. Why were they fined? They accidentally left a word out. It was the word “not” in Exodus 20:14, so the verse read, “Thou shalt commit adultery,” rather than the correct translation, “Thou shalt NOT commit adultery.” This edition of the Bible became known as the Wicked Bible.

Today we’re going to talk about why that little word “not” is so important.

We live in a sex-crazed, sex-obsessed culture.

Anyone who knows their history and is paying attention to the state of our society today would agree that our culture has reached new lows in terms of sexual sin.

This can be traced back to the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s, when it was declared that any form of sexual repression was unhealthy, and that to reach ultimate happiness and self-actualization you must break loose of the morality of the Bible and of tradition and do what whatever feels good to you.

And since then American culture has become more immoral with each passing year.

According to the Los Angeles Times, 50% of married people have had affairs.¹

According to the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17% of men and women admit to adultery with a brother-in-law or sister-in-law.

The same report found that the average length of an affair is two years.

Another study found that 74% of men and 68% of women said they would commit adultery if they could be guaranteed they would never get caught.²

These days adultery has even become a money-making industry.

There are popular websites like AshleyMadison.com, which is a dating sight for married people who want to commit adultery without getting caught.

The number one day for signing up for a new account is New Year's Day, followed by Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and then Father's Day.

Their slogan is "Life is short. Have an affair."

There's another website called Christian Swingers.

It is for Christian married couples who want to swing.

Their slogan is "A dating site for faithful couples."

The website says, "For Christian swingers, things are not easy. Often other religious people judge you out of ignorance or envy, telling you that your lifestyle and love practices are wrong, but the Bible teaches us "judge not lest you be judged."

¹ Stephen Kiehl, "Adulterers Need Cards Too," Los Angeles Times, July 12, 2005.

² Mark Driscoll, Sermon, Do Not Commit adultery.

Now there are even greeting cards for adulterers.

A few years ago a woman named Cathy Gallagher developed a line of greeting cards for couples in an adulterous affair. It's called the "Secret Love" collection of cards.

Their line of Christmas cards for adulterers reads, "As we each celebrate with our families, I will be thinking of you."³

Everywhere you look in American culture you see sex.

Advertisers use sex to sell their products.

We've all heard the saying "sex sells." And it does.

We see sex on TV and at the movies.

Studies show that the average American views sexual material more than ten thousand times a year.

And by a ratio of more than ten to one, the couples on television are not married to one another.⁴

We see sex in books and magazines.

We see sex anytime we leave the house because of the immodest dress attire that has become the norm.

And then there is the booming internet porn industry.

³ Al Mohler, *Words from the Fire*, p. 130.

⁴ Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*, p.157

Philip Ryken wrote that “the internet is the most powerful purveyor of pornography in the history of the world. What makes the internet so dangerous is that it is anonymous, accessible, and affordable.”⁵

12% of websites are pornographic. That’s 24,644,172 sites.

Every second, \$3,075.64 is being spent on internet pornography; and 28,258 internet users are viewing porn.

40 million Americans are regular visitors to porn sites.

1 in 3 porn viewers are women.

70% of men aged 18-24 visit porn sites in a typical month.

In the US, internet porn pulls in \$2.84 billion per year.

The entire world wide industry is \$4.9 billion a year.

And according to CNSnews.com, the percent of porn downloaded during business hours is 70%;

The average age of a boy’s first exposure to porn is five years old.

Our culture is so sexually immoral that bad is now good, and good is now bad.

Homosexuality used to be illegal; everyone agreed it was evil. Today, homosexuality is celebrated and the evil ones are those who believe that it is a sin.

It used to be shameful to have sex outside of marriage. Today, it is embarrassing to be sexually pure.

⁵ Ibid. p.163

Movies are made making fun of forty year old virgins.

In the book *The Myth of the Greener Grass*, J. Allen Peters wrote about a woman taking a French class with eleven other women. One of them asked the group, “If you have not been unfaithful to your husband, raise your hand.” Only one woman raised her hand. Later on one woman went home and told her husband about the incident. The husband asked, “Did you raise your hand?” She said, “No.” He said, “Have you been unfaithful.” She said, “Yes, I’ve been faithful.” He said, “Why didn’t you raise your hand.” She said, “Well, I felt ashamed.” People today feel ashamed for living a life of purity and fidelity.

Today if a high school or college student admitted to being a virgin, they would be laughed at, or at least treated like an intriguing new species.

It used to be the norm to remain a virgin until marriage. Now it is the norm to have sex before marriage.

Not only that, it is the norm to live together before marriage. You have to test-drive before you buy, right?

Not only that, but today it is becoming the norm to avoid marriage altogether and just shack up until you are ready for a change.

Our culture is sex obsessed and sex-crazed, and sexually confused.

What does the Bible have to say to our situation?

The seventh commandment in **Exodus 20:14 (CSB)** says, “Do not commit adultery.”

According to God, adultery is a serious sin. Take a look at the punishment in Israel for committing adultery. **Deuteronomy 22:22 (CSB)** says, “If a man is discovered having sexual relations with another man’s wife, both the man who had sex with the woman and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.”

Today, for Christians, the punishment for adultery is divorce. You don't have to seek a divorce when your spouse commits adultery, but sexual sin is the only Biblical reason for divorce and remarriage (Mt 5:32).

And there is an eternal punishment. The Bible says that the ultimate punishment for adultery is hell (Eph 5:5).

So the Bible is clear that adultery is a sin, and that God hates it.

But what is adultery?

WHAT IS ADULTERY?

Let's begin with a very basic definition.

I like **Phil Johnson's** definition. "Adultery is voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a partner other than their legitimate, lawful spouse."⁶

According to that definition, most Christians have not broken the seventh commandment.

But as you study the Bible, it becomes clear that there is a lot more to adultery than simply a married person having sexual intercourse with someone other than their spouse.

The Bible makes it very clear that God created sex for the context of a marriage between one man and one woman.

So in actuality, any sexual activity outside of marriage is a violation of the seventh commandment.

Jesus made this clear in the Sermon on the Mount.

⁶ Phil Johnson, Sermon: *Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery*

Matthew 5:27-28 says, “27 “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. 28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Jesus gave us the bookends of sexual sin.

The worst form of sexual sin is the physical act of adultery.

The least harmful of all sexual sins is visually lusting after a woman other than your spouse.

And in between those two are all the other sexual sins you can think of.

Every form of sexual activity or sexual expression outside of marriage is a violation of the seventh commandment.

That idea is a far cry from the contemporary sexual ethic.

Today in America there is only one sexual sin, and that is having sex with someone without their consent, or before they are old enough to understand what they are consenting to. Consent.

The view today is that as long as you are not harming someone, then an act should not be considered immoral.

For example, this year a high school newspaper in California got a lot of attention because one of its editions was focused on relationships and sex in high school. Here are some of the statements.

“Any concept that shames youths for having or not having sex is detrimental.”

“Although abstinence until marriage for religious or moral reasons is completely acceptable, the stigma that if you don't wait then you are impure is as toxic as it is normalized.

“Now is the time for acceptance of any sexual experimentation and experiences at any stage in someone's life with anyone they choose. As long as both parties are consenting, mutually benefiting and understand the potential ramifications of their choices, then sex is okay.”

“Whether one has sex on the first date or doesn't kiss until the fifth, it's nothing but a personal choice. As long as it's consensual and they feel safe, it is healthy and natural-healthy and natural both all caps. It is crucial that we all ingrain that into our minds rather than the idea that judging someone based on their sexuality is okay.”

But the Bible is very clear that what makes something immoral is not lack of consent, but lack of God's consent.

It's not whether an act hurts someone, but whether an act dishonors God.

And the Bible is very clear that all sexual behavior outside of marriage is against God's will and dishonors God.

1 Corinthians 6:13b says, “The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”

Notice the word “sexual immorality.” In Greek that is one word, *porneia*.

In the Christian Standard Bible it is translated “sexual immorality.”

In some Bible translations it is translated “fornication.”

What does it mean? “Illicit sex including adultery, incest, premarital sex, or any extramarital arousal.”⁷

Kevin DeYoung, in his book *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality* wrote, “There are at least eight vice lists in the NT (Mk 7:21-22; Rom 1:24-31; 13:13; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Col 3:5-9; 1 Tim 1:9-10; Rev 21:8), and sexual immorality is included in every one of these. In fact, in seven of the eight lists there are multiple references to sexual immorality (e.g., impurity, sensuality, orgies, men who practice homosexuality), and in most of the passages some kind of sexual immorality heads the lists. You would be hard-pressed to find a sin more frequently, more uniformly, and more seriously condemned in the New Testament than sexual sin.”⁸

Let’s get specific and look at the many ways people violate the seventh commandment. And these are in no particular order.

HOW IS THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT VIOLATED?

First, extramarital sex.

Sexual intercourse with someone other than your spouse.

Deuteronomy 5:18 says, “Do not commit adultery.”

This is the worst and most obvious way to violate the seventh commandment; the physical act of adultery.

It is the worst form of sexual sin because it destroys God’s institution of marriage.

⁷ This definition of *porneia* comes from Craig Groeschel in a sermon called “What Satan is Telling Single Adults.”

⁸ Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Teach About Homosexuality*, 74-75

Second, premarital sex.

Sexual intercourse with someone before marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 (CSB) says, “8 I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they remain as I am. 9 But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, since it is better to marry than to burn with desire.”

Paul said you have two options.

Number one, remain single and chaste, abstaining from all sexual activity.

Or number two, if your sex drive is too strong to control, then get married.

Two options: Chastity for singles, and exclusivity for marrieds.

Third, pornography.

Matthew 5:28 says, “But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Philip Ryken wrote, “The eye is a window to sinful desires. One way to gain victory over sexual sin, therefore, is to turn away our lusty gaze. Godly women have always understood that this requires modesty in the way they dress. And godly men have always understood that preserving sexual purity means being careful about what we keep looking at.”⁹

Fourth, wayward glances.

Looking at someone other than your spouse for the purpose of sexual gratification.

⁹ *Written in Stone*, p.163

This is another form of lust.

Proverbs 4:25 (CSB) says, “Let your eyes look forward; fix your gaze straight ahead.”

It is immoral to “check out” other women; it is immoral to be a “girl watcher.”

Mark Driscoll said, “Your manhood is not best expressed by conquering ladies but rather conquering lust.” Sermon, Do Not Commit Adultery

Fifth, visiting strip clubs.

This is another form of lust.

Job 31:1-2 (CSB) says, “1 I have made a covenant with my eyes. How then could I look at a young woman? 2 For what portion would I have from God above, or what inheritance from the Almighty on high?”

There’s a famous love song called “I Only Have Eyes For You.”

It is God’s will that you have eyes only for your wife.

God wants you to be a one-woman man, not just physically, but visually.

Sixth, sexual fantasies.

Imagining yourself with someone other than your spouse is sin.

God does not just claim Lordship over your actions, but your thoughts.

Matthew 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Psalms 19:14 says, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.”

Seventh, flirting with people other than your spouse.

Proverbs 6:27-29 (CSB) says, “27 Can a man embrace fire and his clothes not be burned? 28 Can a man walk on burning coals without scorching his feet?”

When you flirt you are playing with fire.

Eighth, getting too close to someone other than your spouse.

It is improper for a man carry on a close friendship with a member of the opposite sex.

Guys should hang out with guys, girls should hang out with girls.

The seventh commandment doesn't merely forbid adultery, but any and all acts that leads to adultery.

Adulterous affairs almost always start out as friendships.

This is where some guys object. “The Bible doesn't say I can't be friends with girls other than my spouse.”

Yes, but the Bible does say don't be dumb.

Ephesians 5:17 says, “So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”

Instead of asking, “How far can I go without it being a sin?” you should ask, “What's the wise thing to do?” and “What's the most godly way to live?”

Ninth, masturbation.

This is just another form of sexual activity without your spouse, and it's wrong.

First of all, it involves sinful fantasies.

And second, it steals sexual energy that belongs to your spouse.

If you have a sexual outlet outside of your marriage, then your sex life in marriage is not going to be as good.

Your sex life will be the healthiest and most enjoyable when your spouse is your only sexual outlet.

Let's mention a few obvious violations of the seventh commandment.

Tenth, prostitution.

Paying for sex with someone who isn't your spouse.

If you are married, it is adultery.

If you are not married, it is fornication.

Proverbs 23:27 (CSB) says, "For a prostitute is a deep pit, and a wayward woman is a narrow well."

Eleventh, rape.

Forcing someone to have sex with you.

The Bible says that a man who rapes a woman violates her (Deut 22:28-29).

Rape is stealing someone's sexuality, and the Bible says it is immoral to steal.

The Bible says to love your neighbor as yourself, and rape is the opposite of love (Mk 12:30-31).

The Bible says to treat people the way you want to be treated. Would you want another man to rape your wife or your daughter (Lk 6:31)?

Twelfth, homosexuality.

Sex is only for a married man and woman.

Leviticus 18:22 (CSB) says, "You are not to sleep with a man as with a woman; it is detestable."

Thirteenth, bestiality.

Leviticus 18:23 says, "You are not to have sexual intercourse with any animal, defiling yourself with it; a woman is not to present herself to an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion."

Fourteenth, incest.

Leviticus 18:6 says, "You are not to come near any close relative for sexual intercourse."

Let me give you a few others that are not so obvious.

Fifteenth, neglecting your marriage.

When we looked at the fifth commandment, we learned that the command isn't just for children to honor their parents, but for parents to not make it difficult for their children to honor them.

In the same way, the seventh command does not just forbid adultery, it forbids any act that leads to adultery.

When you don't do your best to meet your spouse's physical and emotional needs, then you are making it harder for them to obey the seventh commandment.

This is why the Bible says it is immoral to withhold sex from your spouse.

1 Corinthians 7:5 says, “Do not deprive one another—except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Sixteenth, immodesty.

The Bible commands women to dress modestly.

1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, “Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel, 10 but with good works, as is proper for women who profess to worship God.”

When women dress immodestly, they make it hard for men to stay pure.

So the woman who dresses immodestly is a temptress, and she is just as guilty as the man who lusts.

Thomas Watson wrote about modesty, “Where the sign is hung out, people will go in and taste the liquor.”¹⁰ Jerome (author of the famous Latin Vulgate) wrote about modesty, “They who by their lascivious attire endeavor to draw others to lust, though no evil follows, are tempters, and shall be punished, because they offered the poison to others, though they would not drink.”

¹⁰ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, p.159

Pastor Craig Groeschel gives a humorous list of sexual sins, of violations of the seventh commandment.

- 1) Runway modeling (dressing immodestly).
- 2) Strip poker (need I say more?).
- 3) Playing house (living with your girlfriend/boyfriend).
- 4) Technical virginity (engaging in sexual activity short of intercourse; i.e. oral sex, etc.).
- 5) Tonsil hockey (there's only one place that tonsil hockey leads, and that's to the bed).

Let's take a look at questions 108 of the **Heidelberg Catechism of 1563**.

Q 108. What does the seventh commandment teach us? A. That God condemns all unchastity, and that therefore we should thoroughly detest it and live decent and chaste lives, within or outside of the holy state of marriage.

Q 109. Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery? A. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be kept clean and holy. That is why God forbids all unchaste actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires, and whatever may incite someone to them.

Martin Luther wrote, "This commandment applies to every form of unchastity, however it is called. Not only is the external act forbidden, but also every kind of cause, motive, and means. Your heart, your lips, and your whole body are to be chaste and to afford no occasion, aid, or encouragement to unchastity."

So what does the seventh commandment forbid?

Not just the physical act of adultery, but every act that leads to adultery, and every sin of the same kind.

In short, we break the seventh commandment when we engage in any sexual activity outside of marriage.

I once heard someone summarize the Bible's position on sex like this: Never before marriage, never outside of marriage, and never with the same sex.

Any sexual activity outside of marriage – physical, mental, or emotional – is a violation of the seventh commandment.

Next week we're going to talk more about this commandment.

We're going to answer the question. Why is adultery wrong?

CONCLUSION

But before we close, let me offer some hope.

After studying the meaning of the seventh commandment, everyone here should be convinced that they are a sinner. You have sinned. I have sinned.

And the Bible says that the punishment for sin is hell. Ephesians 5:5 says, "For know and recognize this: Every sexually immoral or impure or greedy person, who is an idolater, does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

So if we have been sexually immoral, are we destined to go to hell for eternity.

That is what we deserve, but that does not have to be our destiny.

That's why God sent His son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sexual sins, and for all of our sins. He was punished for us so that we can be forgiven and reconciled to God. Here's the good news. God loves you unconditionally, in spite of your sin, and He offers you forgiveness and eternal life.

All you have to do is make a decision to repent of your sin, to make Jesus the Lord of your life, and to believe in Jesus as God's payment for your sin. Repent and believe. Three steps. Admit your sin. Believe in Jesus. Call on Jesus to be your Lord and Savior.

And here's more good news. In a couple of weeks I'll show you how to tap in to God's power to overcome sexual sin and live a life of freedom and purity.