

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT – Part 2
The Ten Commandments – Week 11
Exodus 20:14
By Andy Manning

Today we're continuing our discussion of the seventh commandment. Our text is **Exodus 20:14 (CSB)**. "Do not commit adultery."

Last week we learned that the word adultery means **"voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a partner other than their legitimate, lawful spouse."**¹

But we also learned that if you want to keep the seventh commandment, it is not enough to simply avoid sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

Jesus taught that adultery includes every form of sexual activity outside of marriage.

Everything from actual adultery, to simply lusting after another woman in your heart.

So adultery includes extramarital sex, premarital sex, pornography, wayward glances, strip clubs, sexual fantasies, swinging, flirting with people other than your spouse, getting too close to someone other than your spouse, masturbation, prostitution, rape, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, neglecting your marriage, and immodesty.

The bottom line is that God created the gift of sex for a very specific context, and that context is marriage between one man and one woman.

Any time you take sex out of that context, whether your behavior is visual, mental, physical, or emotional, it is violation of the seventh commandment and a sin against God.

¹ Phil Johnson, Sermon: Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery

Question 109 of the **Heidelberg Catechism** of 1563 says: “Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery? 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.”

WHAT IS THE POSITIVE APPLICATION OF THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT?

Remember that every commandment is both positive and negative. When a commandment is stated negatively (“Do not...”), the opposite positive is implied. And where a commandment is stated positively, the opposite negative is implied. For example, the fifth commandment is stated positively – honor your father and your mother. Therefore the opposite negative is also implied – Do nothing to dishonor your father and your mother.

What is the positive application of the seventh commandment – Do not commit adultery?

Reserve all sexual activity for your marriage. Receive all sexual gratification from your spouse alone.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 (CSB) says, “3 For this is God’s will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, 4 that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don’t know God. 6 This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you. 7 For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness.”

The positive application of the seventh commandment means that we honor our marriage and the marriage of our neighbor.

Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.”

Mark Rooker wrote, “The positive content of the commandment is respect for the marriage of another man.” ²

The **Westminster Shorter Catechism** says, “The Seventh Commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor’s chastity, in heart, speech, and behavior.”

This morning I want to answer one important question about the seventh commandment. Why is adultery wrong? I want to do everything I can to motivate you to repent of and avoid and run from sexual sin for the rest of your life. And then next week we’ll come back and talk about how to overcome sexual sin.

WHY IS ADULTERY WRONG? (16 Reasons)

1. It disobeys God.

This is where we have to start.

Even if we don’t understand why God forbids something, we must avoid it simply because we live for God.

Deuteronomy 13:4 says, “You must follow the Lord your God and fear him. You must keep his commands and listen to him; you must worship him and remain faithful to him.”

Dave Ferguson, in his book *The Big Idea*, wrote, “For a Christ follower, the measure of maturity is determined by the speed of obedience. The most mature Christ follower is not the person who has attended the most church events or accumulated the most information about Jesus, but rather the person whose heart is most transformed. And transformation is seen when a person hears God and responds with swift obedience.”

Adultery is wrong first and foremost because it disobeys God.

2. It defeats marriage.

² Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 142

Why does God forbid sexual activity outside of marriage? Because it defeats marriage.

The Bible says that the only legitimate reason to seek a divorce is sexual sin (Mt 19:9).

God created marriage to be the foundation of society.

Marriage domesticates men,

it protects women,

it nurtures children. Healthy marriages form the foundation of a flourishing society.

This is why the Bible says in Hebrews 13:4, “Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.” But sexual sin defeats marriage. It wrecks God’s plan for mankind.

Phil Johnson said, “Adultery ruins the first and most important human relationship.”³

Mark Driscoll tells the story of a vine that he grew at his house. His goal was that the vine would grow cover a large part of the house. The growth was slow; the vine required a lot of water and nutrients. It required pest control. But eventually it grew and covered a large part of the house like he wanted. But then one day as he was weed eating he accidentally severed the base of the vine; completely severed it. In one instant, in one act, he destroyed the vine that he devoted years to growing. He compared that vine to marriage. A great marriage takes years to grow, but gradually it grows to bless you more and more every day. But that wonderful marriage and all the years you put into it can be defeated by one single act of adultery. It’s not worth it.⁴

³ Sermon: Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery

⁴ Mark Driscoll, sermon on the seventh commandment.

3. It decimates God's gift of sex.

Most people don't know that the Protestant Reformation saved sex.

Before the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church had come to believe and to teach that sex was a necessary evil only to be used for the purpose of procreation.

The theologian Tertullian from the third century regarded the extinction of the human race as preferable to the act of procreation.

Ambrose, from the fourth century said that married couples should be ashamed of their sexuality.

Augustine said that sexual intercourse was lawful but sexual passion was sinful.

Many priests instructed married couples to avoid sex altogether.

The Roman Catholic Church gradually began to prohibit sex on certain holy days.

By the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church said it was sinful to have sex on 183 days out of the year!

But then the Reformers, such as Martin Luther, and John Calvin, led Christians back to the Bible. They taught that sex was a good thing because it was a God-thing.

It was not a necessary evil, but a gift of God which served multiple purposes, including procreation, intimacy, and enjoyment, all within the context of marriage.

Philip Ryken wrote, "The traditional Roman Catholic view of sex was utilitarian. Intercourse was only for procreation, the propagation of the human race. The biblical view of sex is not merely procreational, but also relational, and even

recreational. Sex is for love, for pleasure, and for joy. And it is in order to protect this joy that God has given us the seventh commandment.”⁵

But when you take sex outside the context of marriage, it ruins God’s gift.

It leads to children born out of wedlock without a married mom and dad.

It’s enjoyable in the moment, but in the long run it leads to broken hearts, disease, and even death.

And it destroys intimacy. Sex is meant to keep a husband and a wife close; it fosters intimacy. But when you bring a third party into the bed, the intimacy is decimated.

Philip Ryken wrote, “Why is adultery in all its forms forbidden? Not because sex is bad, but because it is designed to be such a powerful force for good. Sex is like superglue. When used properly intercourse seals the bond of matrimony. It is the glue – the covenant cement, as Tim Keller calls it – that helps to hold a marriage secure. This is why husbands and wives are required to have sexual relations.... God has made us sexual beings to seal the love between a husband and wife. Their sexual union cements their total spiritual communion.... Since sex is like superglue, squeezing it out at the wrong time or in the wrong place always creates an awful mess. The wrong things get joined together, and getting them unstuck again tears at the soul.”⁶

4. It disadvantages children.

One of the devil’s lies about sex is that as long as it involves two consenting adults it doesn’t affect anyone else.

Wrong. When sex is taken out of marriage, it does great harm to the children who are involved.

Where there is adultery, there is usually divorce, and divorce is detrimental to children.

⁵ Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*, p. 153

⁶ Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*, p.156

Writing for Breakpoint, **Eric Metaxas** said, “Children from divorced or never-married homes are more likely to die in infancy, more likely to get divorced themselves or become unwed parents later in life, more likely to live in poverty, more likely to fail in school, less likely to graduate from college and get a good job, less likely to be in good physical health, more likely to abuse drugs as teens and adults, have lower life expectancies, have higher rates of mental illness, be at greater risk of suicide and child abuse—and on and on.”⁷

5. It dishonors God.

God created us to glorify Him.

1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”

But sexual sin dishonors God.

When you commit sexual sin, you are not simply sinning against your spouse, and your children, and the other person, and their spouse and children; you are sinning against God.

In Jeremiah 29:29 God called the sin of adultery an outrage.

After King David committed adultery he wrote in Psalm 51:4, “Against you—you alone—I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. So you are right when you pass sentence; you are blameless when you judge.”

God created us to reflect His image, His character, His nature. His nature is love, faithfulness, loyalty, truthfulness, self-control, and holiness.

Adultery is the opposite of those things. It dishonors God.

6. It distances you from God.

You were created to have an intimate relationship with God.

⁷ <http://www.breakpoint.org/2018/02/take-a-stand-for-marriage-2/>

This is so important that the quality of your life is entirely dependent on the quality of your relationship with God.

The closer your are to God, the more fulfilling and enjoyable your life will be.

But adultery (all) sin distances you from God.

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

Hebrews 12:14 says, “Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.”

Psalms 24:3-4 says, “3 Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? 4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not appealed to what is false, and who has not sworn deceitfully.”

7. It deteriorates your health.

Sexual sin is very dangerous.

It can lead to all sorts of diseases.

Writing about sexual sin, the author of **Proverbs 5:11** says, “At the end of your life, you will lament when your physical body has been consumed.”

And in **Proverbs 7:26** he said, “For she has brought many down to death; her victims are countless.”

As of 2014, 110 million Americans have a sexually transmitted disease at any given time. That’s about one out of every three people.

8. It decreases your influence.

God created you to reach the lost for Christ, and to help other Christians grow in Christ.

But when it becomes known that you are an adulterer, that you have sinned sexually, you lose your influence. You lose your credibility.

Proverbs 6:32-33 (CSB) says, “32 The one who commits adultery lacks sense; whoever does so destroys himself. 33 He will get a beating and dishonor, and his disgrace will never be removed.”

Once you commit sexual sin you will damage your reputation, and people will never think of you the same way.

9. It debases you.

You were created in the image of God. People are different than animals. We were created to be God’s image-bearers; to show forth His goodness in greatness through our lives.

But when you commit sexual sin, you don’t act like God, or like a human being was designed to act, you act like an animal.

Jeremiah compares adulterers to horses “neighing after someone else’s wife.”⁸

In fact, sexual sin puts you lower than some of the animals. There are animals like the turtle dove and the stork that are faithful to one mate for life. When we commit sexual sin we act less intelligent and less wise than birds.

Mark Driscoll wrote, “An animal conquers others; a Spirit-filled man will conquer himself.”⁹

10. It drains your resources.

Do you remember the story of the Prodigal Son? The younger of two sons demanded his inheritance before his father died, and he ran off to the big city to live it up.

⁸ See Jeremiah 5:8; 13:27.

⁹ Mark Driscoll, Sermon, Do Not Commit Adultery

Luke 15:20 tells us how he lost is money. “But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.”

It was sexual sin that drained his finances.

That’s what sexual sin does. It drains your finances, your energy, your attention.

It is a total distraction from the things that you should be investing yourself in.

Sexual sin leads to a wasted life.

11.It disciplines you.

Remember that God disciplines His children when they sin against him.

Don’t for one second think that you can get away with sexual sin.

Galatians 6:7-8 says, “7 Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap.”

Proverbs 6:29 says, “So it is with the one who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.”

Hebrews 13:4b says, “God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.”

God will find a way to painfully get your attention and motivate you to repentance.

The rod of God’s discipline is not something you want to mess with.

12.It damages you.

Studies show that premarital sex elevates your risk for divorce. In other words, sex before marriage will very likely hurt your future marriage.¹⁰

¹⁰ Glenn T. Stanton, 8/29/11, Christian Post, “Premarital Sex and Divorce – Is there a link?”

And if you are married, don't think that leaving your spouse for another person will make you happy. What percent of people actually marry their forbidden lover? 3%. What percent of those marriages end in divorce? 75%. What are the odds of a lasting marriage? Not even 1 percent.

1 Corinthians 6:18 says something interesting, "Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body."

There's something unique about sexual sin. It hurts you in ways that no other sin does.

1 Corinthians 6:13b says, "However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."

God designed your body, and He says that it is not designed for sexual sin.

It's like using a chain saw to cut your hair. That's not what a chain saw is for. You're going to get hurt.

13.It destroys two souls.

The sin of sexual immorality is very serious. The punishment is hell.

Ephesians 5:5 (CSB) 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."

Thomas Watson wrote, "The delight lasts a moment, the torment an eternity. Who for a cup of pleasure would drink a sea of wrath?"¹¹

14.It distorts the picture that marriage is intended to portray.

Do you remember why God created marriage?

¹¹ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, p.157

Not just for human flourishing, but to illustrate the Gospel (see Ephesians 5:22-33).

Ephesians 5 says that the husband's sacrificial love is to illustrate Christ's sacrificial love for the church; and the wife's submission is to illustrate the church's submission to Christ.

But adultery destroys this picture.

A man who commits adultery does not love like Christ.

And a woman who commits adultery does not submit like the church.

15.It dirties God's house.

Did you know that your body is God's house? Your body is God's temple; His dwelling place. God lives within you.

So what happens when you take God's house, and you use it for sexual sin?

You dirty God's house.

More than that, you desecrate and defile God's house.

It would be like me going into your house with a bucket of paint and writing profanities all over the walls, the floors, the ceilings, and the furniture.

You wouldn't be too happy about that would you?

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 says, "18 Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. 19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body."

16.It discourages your spirit.

God wants you to be happy.

In fact, He wants you to be full of joy.

Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

But sexual sin steals your joy and discourages your spirit. It leaves you feeling dirty, guilty, ashamed, fearful, remorseful, and depressed.

Proverbs 18:14 says, “A person’s spirit can endure sickness, but who can survive a broken spirit?”

Erwin Lutzer said, “When the whole thing becomes known; the rejection; the hurt; the broken hearts and broken relationships.”¹²

Thomas Watson wrote, “Lust’s practice is to make a joyful entrance, but she leaves in misery.”¹³ And, “When a man has been virtuous, the labor is gone, but the comfort remains; but when he has been vicious and unclean, the pleasure is gone, but the sting remains.”¹⁴

Adultery is no small sin. It is severe. Adultery is a...

- Sin against God.
- Sin against our body.
- Sin against our partner.
- Sin against our spouse.
- Sin against our partner’s spouse.
- Sin against our children.
- Sin against our partner’s children.

The problem with adultery is that it doesn’t just violate one, but six out of the ten commandments. It breaks...

- The seventh commandment: Do not commit adultery.

¹² Erwin Lutzer, Sermon: Living With Your Passions

¹³ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, p.157

¹⁴ Ibid., p.162

- The first commandment: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- The ninth commandment: Do not lie. Adultery breaks the promise that you made on your wedding day.
- The eighth commandment: Do not steal. You are stealing another man's wife.
- The fifth commandment: Honor your father and your mother. Sexual sin shames and breaks the hearts of your parents.
- The tenth commandment: Do not covet. All adultery begins by coveting another person's spouse, or by coveting something that God has not given you.

CONCLUSION

As I said earlier, the punishment for sexual sin is hell, and we've all committed sexual sin. We all deserve hell.

But the good news is that God loves us, and He sent Christ to die for our sins – even our sexual sins. And the Bible promises that if we repent of our sin – if we say, “God, I’m sorry for my sin; and I commit to your will from this day forward” – and believe in Jesus Christ as God’s payment for our sins, then God will forgive us, and give us eternal life, and give us a brand new start at life.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, “Even adultery is not the unforgivable sin. It is a terrible sin, but God forbid that there should be anyone who feels that he or she has sinned himself or herself outside the love of God or outside His kingdom because of adultery. No; if you truly repent and realize the enormity of your sin and cast yourself upon the boundless love and mercy and grace of God, you can be forgiven and I assure you of pardon. But hear the words of the blessed Lord: God and sin no more.”

If you would like to be saved, then pray this prayer: “Jesus, I know I am a sinner, and I want to turn from my sins and follow You. I believe that You died for my sins and rose again, and I accept You as my Savior and King. Come into my life, Lord Jesus, give me new life, and help me to follow and obey You from this day forward. Amen.”

I hope you'll join me next week as we talk about how to overcome sexual sin.