

The Ten Commandments
Lesson 16: No Adultery
Treasuring One's Mate God's Way

Introduction

God is holy and faithful; these characteristics are ascribed to Him often in Scripture. As a faithful God, He calls for and delights to see faithfulness in His people—faithfulness first to Him and His Word, then to other people, especially faithfulness between a husband and a wife. As the Holy One, God delights in mental and moral purity, and He also expects us to strive for purity in our relationships. This purity is at the heart of the seventh commandment found in **Exodus 20:14**, which simply reads, *“You shall not commit adultery.”*

Once again, this command cannot be obeyed merely by not doing something; instead, it is actually a command to do everything possible to enhance and uphold marriage, the most sacred and treasured of human relationships. We do that by following Jesus Christ, who has given us His life and also provides us with the power to fulfill His will. The seventh commandment is not merely a call to avoid adultery, but a call to being holy and faithful to God and to treasuring one's spouse and one's marriage God's way, seeing both as a gift from God.

Fulfilling this command means honoring the marriage covenant. How are we to honor marriage and avoid adultery, safeguarding the husband-wife relationship? How are we to genuinely treasure our spouses? What do the Scriptures reveal about the husband-wife relationship and God's design for marriage? What is the meaning of adultery and how does it affect the marriage relationship? Is there forgiveness for such an act? We will explore these and many other questions and Scriptural answers as we look at the seventh commandment and its full meaning.

This lesson can lead to a fresh understanding not only of God's design for marriage, but also of our relationship with Him. The design God has given is not just a plan for an orderly marriage and family life, though it is certainly that. It is also the delight of His heart. He loves the idea of marriage, the joy of holy romance, the challenge of being a godly husband or wife, and the potential for each husband and wife to know Him better because of the experience He gives each in the marriage relationship. Prayerfully studying the seventh commandment is an opportunity for those who are married to grow as husbands and wives and as married couples. It is also an opportunity for those who are single to understand marriage better and to prepare for marriage if that is the Lord's design for them.

1. Marriage Made in Eden

To understand the meaning of marriage and faithfulness in marriage, it is vital to understand God's design and creation of this blessed relationship. As with several other commandments, we find the foundation in Genesis. In Eden, the Lord set forth the importance of marriage, the roles of husband and wife, the essence of their commitment to one another, and the joy He intended for them in that relationship. We will look at these truths and how they form a foundation for fulfilling the seventh commandment.

- a. God created Adam on the sixth day and placed him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it. His relationship with the Lord had begun. Read **Genesis 2:18**. What was God's assessment of Adam's situation.

- i. Look at **Genesis 2:19-20**. What did God command Adam to do?
 - ii. What did Adam discover when he searched for a companion in all of the creatures that God had made (**verse 20**)?
- b. What was God's solution for Adam's aloneness? Look at **verses 21-23**.
- i. How did Adam respond to his bride when he saw her? What deeper meaning can we see in what he said (**verse 23**)?
- c. What insights do you gain from the statement in **verses 24-25**?
- d. In **Genesis 3**, we discover the fault line for the first family earthquake.
- i. What did the serpent say about God and His Word in **verses 1, 4, 5**?
- e. How did Eve respond to the serpent's suggestions and the lure of the forbidden fruit, according to **verse 6**? What did Adam do?
- f. What happened as soon as they ate from the Tree of Knowledge (**verse 7**)?
- g. How did God deal with the serpent for tempting Adam and Eve (**verses 14-15**)?
- h. What consequences did Adam and Eve face for disobeying God, according to **Genesis 3:17-24**?

God dealt with the serpent and then presented consequences with which the man and woman (all humanity) would live until Christ establishes his kingdom on Earth. Certain disciplines were put in place, certain consequences would become evident—pain in childbearing and child raising; tension between husband and wife; a cursed earth causing a laborious daily life; and the certainty of approaching death, each day. Of course, God banned Adam and Eve from the Garden, placing them outside it to live and work and be a family.

In reflecting on this first temptation, what parallel can you draw about dealing with temptation to commit adultery?

We often see and hear statistics about the number of husband and wives who commit adultery in our modern world, and television, movies, and books increasingly present adultery as a commonplace occurrence. How do you think this kind of information affects modern marriages?

What are the results of adultery in the hearts and homes of those affected by it?

Just as the serpent tempted Eve with doubts about the Word of God, the goodness of God, and the will of God, so he tempts people today. God's design for marriage is good, and any alteration of it has proven to be a stumbling block, destroying marriages as well as other family relationships and friendships. But in spite of millennia of evidence about its destructive potential, many still choose to taste the forbidden fruit of adultery. **Chapters 4 and 5 of Genesis** tell the story of Adam and Eve continuing life as a married couple outside of the Garden of Eden. They worked the land, making a living and experiencing the God-given joy of intimacy as husband and wife, along with the blessing and challenge of children. They had to learn to deal with sin and the tragic consequences it brings, and they faced death, as God had said they would.

What would the days ahead hold for marriage? God wanted to make sure people understood His will concerning this special relationship, which was vital enough for the prohibition against adultery to be included in the Ten Commandments (the heart of all Law).

2. Building A Marriage—Avoiding Adultery

Building a marriage means overcoming many obstacles, one of which is others who will not follow and obey God. Sometimes the two people in the marriage are themselves the biggest problem, because one or both will not obey God. Let's look at God's guidelines for marriage, and then we will look into the life of King David and see how he faced the temptation to commit adultery.

Let's look at the Old Testament laws relating to marriage, particularly those dealing with adultery. The seventh commandment, "*You shall not commit adultery,*" implies several things. First, it is possible for anyone, including the people of God, to commit adultery, so this commandment is a caution, a warning that we must watch ourselves carefully to avoid it. Adultery is a choice, not something that just happens. God gives us grace to follow His commands. Therefore, we can be sure that He gives Christians the strength to resist any temptation that could lead to adultery. It is mandatory that all husbands and wives do all in their power to be faithful to their mates. More than that, this command is a call to treasure one's spouse. How? Through words of encouragement; by acts of kindness and service; with thoughtful, loving gifts; through a loving touch that measures and expresses commitment; and with time spent together talking through struggles and triumphs, on sad days, mad days, and glad days.

Married persons must avoid anything that could lead to adultery—lustful looks, flirtatious glances, inappropriate touching, or comments that are better left unsaid. We must practice everything that builds a marriage relationship—spending time together, talking and praying together through problems as well as possibilities, listening to one another, worshiping and also having fun together, all the time learning how to show love to one another.

- a. Under the Old Testament Law, what cautions did God give concerning adultery? First, read **Leviticus 18:20**. What results come with adultery according to that verse? Also, read **Leviticus 20:10** and **Deuteronomy 22:22** and record the consequences God gave for such an act. What do these verses tell you about the seriousness with which God viewed this sin?

- i. God made it clear that for a married person to have sex with anyone other than his or her spouse would defile both participants in the act, making them spiritually and morally unclean in God's sight.
 - ii. God provides a caution in the way that he states these commands against immoral sexual acts given in **Leviticus 18**, mentioning a number of relatives and in-laws with whom married persons are not to have sexual relations and also specifically mentioning one's "neighbor" or "near one." Adultery usually occurs with someone with whom time is spent, someone nearby. Therefore, we must be particularly cautious in any relationship with a "near one." God wants all relationships marked by His love and holiness, which is evident when we see how seriously God views this sin.
 - iii. In **Deuteronomy 22:22**, Moses emphasizes the Lord's command that those who committed adultery (as well as their partners in sinful acts) were to be stoned to death. God's statement was that putting participants to death would purge Israel of this evil, whose infectious influence brings corruption and destruction to the individuals and the relationships it touches.
 - iv. Adultery is against the Lord's will for anyone, but He especially abhors it in His people, those whom He calls holy and has treasured and set apart to do His will.
- b. Let's review the story of King David's adultery which is found in **2 Samuel 11:1-27**.
- i. According to **verse 27**, what did God think of what David had done?
- c. In **2 Samuel 12:1-9**, of what did the prophet Nathan accuse David?
- d. How did the Lord punish David, according to **2 Samuel 12:10-14**?
- e. In **1 Kings 15:5**, we find a summary statement of the wonderful legacy of David along with a realistic look at his sin in "*the matter of Uriah*." Carefully read that verse noting both the legacy and the exception and record your thoughts.

In **Proverbs 4:3**, Solomon states, "*When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, then he taught me and said to me, 'Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live...'*". **Proverbs 5** contains a warning against adultery.

- a. First, what pictures does he give about the adulteress in **verses 3-6**? What are some of the consequences of adultery according to **Proverbs 5:7-14**?
- b. Read **Proverbs 5:7-8, 15-20**. What are some ways to maintain a faithful marriage?
- c. According to **Proverbs 5:21-23**, what are the consequences of sin and refusing to listen to words of wisdom?

The words of an adulteress can be sweet as honey and smoother than oil, but “in the end” one finds her and her words “bitter as wormwood,” poisonous, cutting, and wounding like a sharp dagger. Adultery drains a man or woman of life, because more often than not it causes private sorrow and public shame and dishonor; it can also cause disease. It is costly mentally, morally, spiritually, financially, and physically.

Solomon quotes his father as warning him, “Do not go near the door” of the house of an adulteress. We can extend this to mean that husbands and wives should avoid any meeting place or meeting with another person that could potentially become an opportunity for adultery. Instead, those who are married should stay close to home as much as possible, building their relationship with spouses and families.

Adulterous relationships are responsible for an enormous amount of wasted time, energy, and resources. Solomon passes on his father’s advice to “Rejoice in the wife of your youth” (**Proverbs 5:18**), reminding us that the covenant that we make to be faithful in marriage is for life and is not to be disregarded when we would like a new source of sexual pleasure. A married couple should delight in the relationship God has given them—mentally, emotionally, physically, sexually, and spiritually—being “exhilarated always” (**Proverbs 5:19**) with each other’s love.

The “eyes of the Lord” watch every step we take. Solomon reminds us that every person is accountable to God for each action performed, every path taken, and every relationship cultivated. Following God and His ways especially in marriage, brings joy.

- a. Read **Proverbs 6:20-35**, noting the cautions against adultery and its consequences. Record any additional insights.
 - i. How does adultery affect other relationships? How does this folly affect one’s reputation, according to **Proverbs 6:33**?
 - ii. According to **verses 34-35**, how does it affect other’s attitude toward the adulterer, especially the offended party?

Those who are married need to watch out for the flattering words and appreciative looks that others may use to entice a man or woman into beginning an illicit relationship. Following the path of adultery is like taking hot coals from the fire where they belong and placing them where they do not belong, where they damage and wound. Infidelity puts in one’s heart what does not belong there. The wounds last; one’s reputation is deeply stained; one’s heart is scarred; and many relationships are crippled (not simply those between husband and wife).

The examples and exhortations of the Old Testament are crystal clear. Be careful; cherish your husband and wife in a holy, faithful relationship. Guard your heart, remembering that you are accountable to God.

Homework: Read **Matthew 5:27-30, 19:3-9; Psalm 101:3; Job 31:1; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.**

Lesson Topics: **Jesus Speaks About Marriage And Adultery, The Spirit’s Purity For The Believer’s Mind and Body.**