

The Ten Commandments
Lesson 17: No Adultery (Part 2)
Treasuring One's Mate God's Way

1. Jesus Speaks About Marriage and Adultery

What did Jesus say about adultery? How did he exhort His followers and others who heard Him speak? We will look at how Jesus addressed the issues of moral purity, of serving and being faithful in marriage.

- a. Jesus spoke of the seventh commandment in the Sermon on the Mount. Read **Matthew 5:27-30**.
 - i. What added interpretation of this commandment did He provide, according to verse 28?
 - ii. What did Jesus mean by the statements recorded in verses 29-30? (Read also **Psalms 101:3** and **Job 31:1**, for David and Job's respective ideas on the same topic.)

Jesus honored all the commandments of God, desiring always that their full intent be understood, applied, and obeyed. He first focused on the matter of the lustful look, which reminds us that obeying the prohibition against adultery is more than just avoiding sexual intercourse outside of marriage. It is a matter of guarding our hearts by examining even the way we look at those of the opposite sex. Jesus is saying that to look with sexual desire at someone other than one's spouse is to mentally commit adultery, thus violating this commandment.

Jesus called His followers to radical action. In practical terms, what he meant was to not let your eyes linger on someone who might arouse thoughts of infidelity. The first glance may be a temptation, but a temptation can be stopped. The second look, a longer gaze, is sin and more sin. Books and magazines, some websites, movies, television shows—any of these can lead down a corrupt and deadly mental path, even to the physical act of adultery. The best advice is to eliminate the source of temptation, to “*pluck it out*”—that is quit buying, unsubscribe, and unplug as necessary.

Jesus said to cut off the hand that makes you stumble. What does that mean? It could refer to any inappropriate touch or caress, any sort of sensual stumbling block. If someone, something, or someplace tempts you with images, words, or touch, stay away. Do not walk or drive that way, whether the temptation is at work or at school, in the neighborhood or near a shopping place.

- b. Jesus also dealt with the matter of adultery as it relates to divorce. Read **Matthew 5:31-32**. Is what Jesus said applicable today?

Suggestive looks and touches exchanged with someone other than one's spouse can lead to distance between a husband and a wife and, eventually, divorce. Divorce was also a problem in Jesus' day. The Jews had taken the safeguard given to Moses about a “certificate of divorce” (**Deuteronomy 24:1**) as a free ticket for men to divorce their wives for any reason. **Deuteronomy 24** sets certain limits on remarriage, and it states that the certificate was meant to verify that the divorce was sought because the wife had been unfaithful.

Keep in mind that in that time a woman found guilty of adultery was to be put to death. If divorce could only be granted in the case of adultery, a man could falsely accuse his wife of adultery and have her put to death—just so he could get out of the marriage and perhaps marry another. A certificate of divorce was permitted by The Ten Commandments, Following God Christian Living Series, Author Rick Shepherd, AMG Publishers

Moses to protect the reputation and life of an innocent woman whose husband was determined to divorce her. Sadly, many men used this “certificate” option to divorce their wives for almost any reason.

- c. Jesus had more to say about this in Matthew 19. According to **Matthew 19:3-9**, Jesus was asked certain questions about divorce. First, what did He say about God’s will for marriage (verses 4-6)?
 - i. How did Jesus explain the certificate of divorce issue (verse 8-9)?

Jesus focused on God’s original intention for marriage—one man with one woman, inseparable for life. God gave us marriage as a gift; he gives a husband and wife to each other and joins the two as “*one flesh*.” His will is simply stated, “*What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.*” Because He knew that some men would not obey His Law, God gave permission for divorce and use of a certificate of divorce, but this was only for the purpose of protecting innocent wives. He permitted this action, but He never designed marriage with divorce in mind. **Matthew 9** records that Jesus again pointed to the only situation in which divorce should be allowed—a marriage in which sexual immorality (*porneia*) of a spouse has occurred. In such a case divorce and remarriage were allowed, though not required.

- d. **John 8:1—11** tells the story of an incident in which Christ actually dealt with an adulterer. Read that passage.
 - i. When Jesus was asked to comment on the Law of Moses concerning the punishment for adultery, what was His answer?
 - ii. What can we learn from Jesus’ response to Pharisees and His words to the woman?

Jesus had been teaching in the temple area; the scribes and Pharisees brought Him a woman caught in the very act of adultery and asked what should be done with her. What would He do in this situation? Jesus stooped and wrote on the ground. Perhaps He wrote the law that said both the man and woman were to be stoned (**Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22**); she was caught in adultery, so where was the man who was found with her? We don’t know what He wrote. But we do know that He said, “*He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her*” (**John 8:7**).

John 8:9 says that after Jesus reminded them of the full text of the Law, the witnesses left, “*beginning with the older ones*,” until no accusers remained. Jesus looked at the woman, declaring that He did not condemn her and commanding her to “sin no more” (**John 8:11**). Just as God’s mercy in ancient times is so often revealed in the Old Testament, Christ’s compassion for sinners is repeatedly recorded in the Gospels. Jesus did not nullify the Law; rather, He revealed its full intent.

2. The Spirit’s Purity For The Believer’s Mind and Body

When we read through the New Testament, we not only find Jesus’ instructions for marriage, but we also find His clear guidance given through His apostles. In a cultural melting pot that viewed marriage in many different ways, God sent the apostles to reveal His will through their epistles, as well as to deliver a message from heaven to many nations in our own day. Let’s discover more of the Lord’s will for marriage and see how to build better marriages and avoid adultery.

- a. Paul has much to say regarding marriage and the importance of sexual purity. Look first at **1 Corinthians 6:12–20**. What does Paul say about the body (verse 13)?
 - i. What connections does Paul make between the body, being a Christian, and sexual immorality (verses 15-18)?
 - ii. To whom does the body of a Christian belong, and what is its primary function, according to verses 19-20?

“Adulterers” are listed among those who will not inherit the kingdom of God, according to **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**. Some in Corinth were saved out of an adulterous lifestyle into a new life in Christ, a life to be governed by the Spirit of God. In dealing with these believers, Paul clarified what this life governed by the Spirit should be like. First, he repeated a truth that some might have been misusing: *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything”* (**1 Corinthians 6:12**).

Each believer is free in Christ—not to do whatever he or she pleases, but to do whatever God wills. Apparently, some in Corinth were viewing the grace and forgiveness of Christ as license to sin or to view sin as a minor matter, particularly in the sexual area. Paul was making it clear that not all things are beneficial to us, and that no sin (sexual or otherwise) should have control over a person. God has given each person a body *“for the Lord,”* to be used for His purposes, and *“the Lord is for the body”* (verse 13), to empower us to live as He designed. Our bodies are of special significance because they are members of Christ and will one day be resurrected by the Lord.

As members of the body of Christ, we as Christians cannot join our bodies in any immoral union without touching the Lord in an unholy way. Paul commands that we run from such compromising situations. Each believer has been *“bought with a price”* and belongs to Him as a reassured dwelling place.

- b. In **1 Corinthians 7**, Paul addresses some concerns that the believers in Corinth had written him about. He discusses several issues related to marriage, celibacy, the single life, and the potential for sexual immorality. We will look at those verses that relate to fleeing adultery and building the marriage relationship God’s way.
 - i. Read **1 Corinthians 7:1-5**, What wisdom does Paul share here concerning the relationship between husband and wife?
 - ii. What does Paul command in order to avoid all kinds of “immoralities”?
- c. **Hebrews 13:4** succinctly expresses God’s will for the marriage relationship. How are we to treat marriage?
- d. Part of preventing adultery and maintaining a walk of purity is guarding ourselves from “temptation situations” and committing ourselves to God-pleasing choices. Paul speaks to these matters in **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**. Read this passage. What is God’s goal for every believer’s relationships? According to verses 1-3, what specific application does Paul give in the matter of a God-pleasing life?
 - i. In verses 4-5, what does Paul say about how one should treat his own body?

- ii. According to verses 5-8, one can defraud another, promising what one cannot or should not give, especially in the area of sexual matters. Read those verses. How does God view these relationship issues? What does God desire in our relationships with others?
- e. Through Paul's letters to the early Christians, God reveals His high standards for marriage. Read **Ephesians 5:21-33**. What basic guideline do you find for the husband and wife in those verses?

3. For Me to Follow God

How are we to apply the many truths on marriage found in the Scripture, especially those related to the seventh commandment? We have the clear testimony of someone who applied the heart of the seventh commandment even before it was written on tablets of stone. The life of Joseph provides an excellent example of how he avoided adultery and honored the marriage relationship of another family. Joseph faced the temptation to commit adultery, but he chose to follow God instead. How did he deal with this temptation? Let's look at his situation and see how his example can be applied to our lives today.

- a. Let's summarize Joseph's encounter with temptation. (Genesis 39:1-23)
 - i. Where was Joseph's focus, according to verse 9? What considerations went through his mind as he dealt with Potiphar's wife?
 - ii. What can we learn from Joseph's example? What practical actions did he take in dealing with this situation?
- b. Here are four questions to ask yourself and four actions to take during any "temptation situation," particularly when facing the temptation to sin sexually:
 - i. How does this choice affect my relationship with others? How will I relate to them or even face them?
 - ii. How does this choice affect others, specifically their relationship with me and the many relationships we share? How will my household, workplace, extended family, and friends deal with the consequences?
 - iii. How does this choice affect my relationship with myself? Does it increase the good in my heart that God desires, or does it bring evil into my life?
 - iv. How does this choice affect my relationship with God? Does it bring me closer to Him or lead me away from Him? Is this choice distancing me from Him and His will?

The key factor in overcoming any storm of temptation, like the urge to commit adultery, is to surrender to Jesus. Remember Peter's moment of doubt in the storm as he walked on the water toward Jesus? He called out to Jesus, and *"immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him."* (**Matthew 14:31**). Jesus gives us His life and power, enabling us to overcome any temptation (see **1 Corinthians 10:13**; **2 Corinthians 12:9**).

We can follow Joseph's example whenever we feel tempted or recognize that a situation is developing that could lead to sexual temptation. In such cases, we should:

- Remember these relationship issues, especially our relationship with God.
- Remember how many others are affected.
- Refuse temptation's suggestions.
- Remove ourselves from such situations as much as possible, as soon as possible.

As we have discussed, following the seventh commandment is more than avoiding adultery. It is also honoring and enjoying the marriage relationship to the fullest, treasuring one's mate God's way. The following are some suggestions for building your marriage relationship and all of the other relationships that affect it.

- **Begin by thanking God for your spouse.** Thank God for at least three things you appreciate about this very special person.
 - **Pray for Your Spouse**
 - **For your wife: Read Proverbs 31:10-31**, which describes a "virtuous woman," and pray for God to help your wife as she endeavors to become more like the ideal wife described by this passage. Such a woman...
 - is trustworthy (verses 10-12)
 - is industrious and creative (verses 13-19)
 - is fruitful in meeting the needs of many (verses 20-24)
 - has strength of character (verse 25)
 - speaks words of wisdom and kindness (verse 26)
 - is resourceful, not idle (verse 27)
 - lives in fear of the Lord and is faithful to the Lord and her family (verses 28-31)
 - **For your husband: Read Job 31:1-37**, which describes Job, who is called "a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8). Pray for God to help your husband become more like Job, who displayed...
 - personal purity (31:1-4)
 - honesty and integrity (31:5-8)
 - faithfulness to his wife (31:9-12)
 - care and concern for his fellow workers (31:13-15)
 - compassion and care for the needy (31:16-23)
 - trust in God alone, rather than in riches or any substitute for God (31:24-28)
 - grace and mercy to others (31:29-32)

Write a letter to your spouse, mentioning what you love and appreciate about him or her. Tell him or her what you just thanked God for. (**If you are single**, consider writing a prayer for your future spouse.)

Focus on becoming One—When the Scriptures speak of two becoming one, much more than a physical union is implied. God's plan is for husband and wife to share a single vision, seeking what God wants for them individually and as a couple. The goal of every marriage should be two lives spent living and working together doing the will of God. One of the ways hearts grow in oneness is through praying for and with one another. Look for ways to pray together as husband and wife. If you have not been in the habit of praying together, start with a simple morning or night time prayer together. For those who are single, pray with other like-minded believers as you seek to follow all God wants for your life.

Homework: Read Exodus 20:15; Psalm 50:10-12; Ezekiel 18:1-20.

Lesson Topics: No Stealing: The Virtue of Hard Work and Giving As Opposed to Taking

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