

The TENDER Commandments
Exodus 20:14 7th Commandment

INTRODUCTION

The direct way in which the Bible addresses issues of sexuality will push many of us out of our comfort zones. Such is the text we come to today – Do not commit Adultery.

WARNING: THIS topic may get awkward and uncomfortable, for all of us.

Before it does, I'll start with something I read this week from J.I. Packer. He said "When I was very young and first met the text of the seventh commandment, I thought (believe it or not) that adultery meant simply a grown-up way of behaving. Since then I, like you, have learned that some adults do in fact see sex outside marriage as a sign of being truly grown-up—"mature" is the word used, though I think it is misapplied."

After I read that, I thought, "that would be an odd command" – "Don't grow up". At that point my mind jumped to a song I heard often in my childhood – it was from the stage play version of Peter Pan – The Song is "I won't grow up". It is what Peter sang to his band of lost boys. Part of it goes like this...

I'll never grow up, never grow up, never grow up

Not me, Not I, Not me! So there!

Never gonna be a man, Like to see somebody try And make me.

Anyone who wants to try And make me turn into a man, Catch me if you can.

Then it hit me, there is a connection between adultery and a Peter Pan complex – "I won't grow up, I'll stay a kid forever".

While the world may think that adultery is in some way sophisticated and "mature" behavior, in reality, it is behavior of one who doesn't want to grow up and assume adult responsibilities and commitments. To be honest, that doesn't simply apply to adultery, but to all of the 10 Commandments. The Divine implication behind the commandments is that we are responsible moral agents who are accountable for our actions. Assuming responsibility is a grown up behavior.

As we continue, my prayer is that in this series, need to understand that

-The Ten Commandments ARE NOT ABOUT WHAT God WANTS FROM US, BUT WHAT HE WANTS FOR US.

-Remember that THE Ten Commandments ARE SOMEONE WE MEET BEFORE THEY ARE SOMETHING WE OBEY.

The context of the Ten Commandments is to be understood as a Covenant commitment ceremony,

Stipulations Relating To Loving

LOVE FOR God IS SINGULAR – EXCLUSIVE

Love for God is SPIRITUAL

Love for God must be Sincere

Love for God must be Safe Guarded

Honor Your Father and Mother

Do not murder

Exodus 20:14 Do Not Commit Adultery

You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matt 5:27-28 (and vice-versa)

REMEMBER WHY God gave the Ten Comm- to preserve and equip Israel to be a light to the nations.

The commandments are to be lived out as a covenant people, not called out as something the nations were to do. They were not given so we could scold the nations.

The 10 Commandments are a testimony to the effects of the Fall. Sin is so deep and broad in the human heart that God has to give commands against behaviors that would seem to be obviously wrong and dangerous. It shows how twisted and corrupt we are in our thinking and in our desires that we have to be told not to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, and covet.

While adultery has always been around, it hasn't always had a public rooting section. Today, We live in an Ashley Madison world – a dating site founded in 2008 with the explicit intention of helping married people have affairs with each other. “Life is short. Have an affair” was the slogan Ashley Madison used. Even with that positive spin on the sin, the Ashley Madison subscribers were NOT happy when their names were revealed several years ago. **Marriages were destroyed, jobs were lost, and some people took their own lives.**

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/feb/28/what-happened-after-ashley-madison-was-hacked>

The hack of Ashley Madison was historic – the first leak of the online era to expose to mass view not passwords, not pictures, not diplomatic gossip, not military secrets, but something weirder, deeper, less tangible. This was a leak of desires.

The 10 Commandments were, in a sense, the first “leak of desires”. God is revealing for all of Israel, and us, to see – deep in our hearts there are desires for idols, for autonomy, for adultery, for murder, for stealing, lying, and coveting.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/23/ashley-madison-end-of-fairytale-marriage-rethink>

In week 3 of this series I remarked that each prohibition involves a related command or positive- **SWINGING DOORS**

Many of the 10 commandments framed in the negative “thou shalt not.” It is easier to give the simple prohibition than it is to spell out all the positive ways of promoting the positive.

Ex: Parenting

But when the Bible says you shall not commit adultery it is also saying that you shall also have a great relationship of physical intimacy in the context of marriage. That too is the 7th Commandment.

You know, if you start with the negative you will never understand the command because the prohibitions in the Bible about sexual sins are incomprehensible unless you understand what a tremendously positive glorious view the Bible has of sex.

We seek to protect what is valuable – build fences, put it in a box or case, etc. So too with marriage and physical INTIMACY. It is so powerful and valuable that it should be protected.

The Cosmic Glory of Marital Oneness

When married couples in love say in a Romeo and Juliet sort of way, “this thing is bigger than us” they speak more truth than they realize. The sensations and the lure of intimacy are so huge because they were designed to reflect and point to something glorious – the intense joy of being overwhelmed with the love and blessing of union with Christ. J.I.Packer

When we understand the Biblical view of marriage and physical intimacy, then 7th commandment becomes clearer and *almost unnecessary*.

R.C. Sproul, *The marriage state is an image of my relationship to God in a profound way. Both my relationship to God and my relationship to my wife involve a covenant structure in which mutual parties are bound to each other by commitments sealed with oaths. Both involve knowing in intimacy. Both create a place where I can be naked and unashamed. In marriage I enter the most intimate of all human relationships. It involves risk. But, if it's to work, I must be naked. And if I expose myself utterly and my wife has seen all that I am, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, and understands who I am, and still loves me, then I experience at the human level something of the most deep and profound love of all, God has seen all of me, in Christ He accepts me, and gives himself to me.*

THIS IS COSMIC AND MYSTERIOUS.

Ephesians 5:31-32 ³¹ For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. ³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

The marriage relationship is to reflect our relationship with God. We were designed for a relationship with God that is so personal, so vulnerable, so intense, so passionate, and so wonderful that it can only best be described by the relationship of a husband and wife. **This comparison and symbolism are so profound that adultery is the primary image used to describe idolatry in the Bible. When we follow after other things and make them our functional gods, it is viewed as adultery. So too, in our marriages we are not to commit adultery because of the cosmic nature and importance of marriage.**

The Purpose of Marital Oneness

Real intimacy that is a signpost to the intimacy we were created to have with God. Thus adultery is FALSE INTIMACY.

Physical intimacy in the context of marriage is a way to say to someone else, I belong completely and exclusively to you. And if you use it say anything else, it's a lie. It's a non-verbal piece of communication that God designed. It's meant to carry a message, it's a communication mode, and if you use it in any other context, you destroy its god given purpose.

Do you see now why the Bible says that sex has no place outside of a fully committed relationship? Why? Sex is a model of our relationship with God, the total love and the total submission of a complete relationship with God. Physical intimacy bears witness to a total union with Him and the joy that results from it on that day when we meet with him face to face. IT IS to be a WITNESS to the sacrificial love of Christ for his Bride!

Sex is a **signpost**. It isn't the end point or the goal. *it is a sign pointing to something very profound.* – UNION WITH God AND BEING TOTALLY KNOWN, LOVED, ACCEPTED AND REJOICED IN. What God has in store for those who know him is so great that the closest image He can use for us to get a sense of it is the rapture of marital oneness – physically, socially, mentally, spiritually, etc.

THE POWER OF MARITAL ONENESS (to create a safe secure place or to harden the heart)
Inside marriage, Physical intimacy has the power to affirm, to encourage, to solidify a bond between two people Sex in marriage is a unitive act in which you say, "I belong to you!"

Adultery is so wrong because it destroys marital oneness in the way that no other sin does. It tears apart that which was meant to be united – the husband and wife; "the two shall become one flesh."

Physical intimacy outside of marriage, whether or not you are married, is a way of giving a mixed signal.

If you begin to use the non-verbal signal that means TOTAL commitment to signal something else then it is destroyed, it becomes meaningless, useless.

IF you use it in another context, if you use it outside of a covenant, instead of actually strengthening your ability to trust yourself and be vulnerable and commit yourself, it destroys your ability to entrust yourself and be vulnerable

The person who gives him or herself in Physical intimacy without a total life covenant of marriage is a person divided. It is completely out of sync to be so completely given to somebody else and not have the other person have any real obligations to share all important life decisions with you. There is a unity in the physical act, and it is so out of place when it doesn't spill out in to the other areas of your life – emotional, spiritual, relational, and financial.

You could feel or believe that you feel so united with that person, but the fact is, this person could go anywhere he or she wanted. This person is not accountable to have unity, social unity with you, or economic unity with you, or decision making unity with you, but just in this one area you had unity, and you felt married, but you couldn't be. IT'S A PETER PAN SYNDROME – "I won't grow up". i.e. The false intimacy of pornography

THE INNER HIDDENNESS OF ADULTERY – Matt 5 – adultery of the heart

Again Jesus gets to the inwardness of sin. **Obeying the command doesn't mean simply to refrain from the physical act of adultery, but to guard your heart.**

"How far is too far? How far can you go before you commit adultery?"

EXAMINE YOUR HEART. If you've committed adultery there, then you've already gone too far even if you've never touched the other person. AGAIN, adultery of the heart, like murder of the heart, should not be an excuse to carry it out in the physical world.

Important NOTE: GOD TAKES THIS COMMANDMENT very seriously – the violation of it was a capital offense – for the man and the woman.

For most of human history, this has been a serious issue. Even in cultures where adultery was almost assumed, it was not something wives were particularly happy with.

Ex: FRANCE, and the death of President Mitterand. Everyone knew he had a mistress, and knew who she was, but when she was photographed at the funeral standing just a few feet away from the wife, it caused an outcry.

While this commandment is tucked in the list as #7, it is #1 in terms of emotional and relational impact. Just compare the response of a wife or husband when the spouse confesses to breaking #8 (don't steal) verses confessing to committing adultery. Of all the commandments, this is the only one, which when broken, gives grounds for divorce.

The typical spouse will give a lot of grace when the other 9 commandments are violated, but #7 has ZERO tolerance attached to it. Even if there is forgiveness and restoration, which is possible, violation of this commandment cuts to the heart like none other can.

APPLICATION POINTS: much more in 2 weeks, so come back

The 7th commandment and PALM SUNDAY??

This final week in the pre-crucifixion life of JESUS gives a picture of Jesus coming to His people – this was HIS EXODUS.

They receive Him with joy, then a few days later they commit spiritual adultery – “We have no King but Caesar.”

On the cross, Jesus suffered for our adultery- spiritual, mental, and actual. In a group this size there are lives that have been impacted by adultery- as the victim or the participant. The cross shows that there is grace for sin, and the resurrection shows there is power for transformation and even restoration.

While the impact of adultery cuts deeper than other sins, it is still forgiven by the same cross and the same savior.

Obedience to this commandment is **SOMEONE WE MEET** before it is something we do.

Jesus is the one person who never committed adultery – spiritually or sexually – yet he became sin, even adultery, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Meet Him as we come to the Table

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