

The TENDER Commandments
Exodus 20:14 7th Commandment Safeguard Your Marriage

INTRODUCTION

A TALE OF TWO POLITICIANS in the news recently
Mike Pence and his practice of safeguarding his marriage vs. the now Former Gov of Alabama
Robert Bentley
<http://www.albertmohler.com/2017/04/12/briefing-04-12-17/>

You look at the office of governor and here you have someone who was a fairly innocuous medical doctor and, someone who was known basically as a Sunday School teacher in a Baptist church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, married for 50 years, who was all of the sudden a major figure on the political stage coming out of almost nowhere to be elected governor of Alabama. In one sense it might be comforting to think that those seeds were sown only after Governor Bentley entered into the Governor's mansion and into the state's highest political office. In retrospect, it's actually hard to believe that that can actually be so.

But it is really interesting to ponder even some recent headlines having to do with another political leader who is being criticized, not because there was any rumor whatsoever that he might have had an affair, but precisely because he operated in terms of policies that prevented him from having an affair.

We're talking about the current Vice President of the United States, Mike Pence, who has been roundly criticized in recent weeks for his following of what was known as the Billy Graham Rule, a rule quite common to evangelical leaders and, as I said before, for very good reason. It means that a man does not meet alone with a woman who is not his wife or a member of his immediate family—not that a man doesn't meet with a woman, the key issue there is alone. Let's just state what should be then obvious. If the now former-Governor of Alabama, Robert Bentley had followed this rule, we wouldn't be talking about this scandal.

Bentley resigned for reasons of corruption, but the headlines are really about the affair. The corruption is illegal, but not the adultery, yet it is the adultery that really creates the scandal.

As I mentioned two weeks ago, someone can violate all the commandments, but it is the adultery that cuts to the heart and grabs our attention.

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

MATT 5 :27-28

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

Perhaps the most famous example of adultery is in the Bible – King David
Just consider the most famous King of Israel, David. What do most people know him for? The Psalms, yes, Goliath, yes, but the headliner is his affair with Bathsheba – even more so than the subsequent murder of Uriah.

Few people plan on committing adultery;

And few people actively seek to SAFEGUARD their marriages from adultery. Don't assume it won't happen to you.

This topic is so important that it is worth an extra week as we go through the Ten Commandments.

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

When the Bible says “You shall not commit adultery”, it is also saying that you shall also have a great relationship of emotional, relational, financial, and physical intimacy in the context of marriage.

HOW TO SAFEGUARD YOUR MARRIAGE

UNDERSTAND WHERE ADULTERY BEGINS:

The unguarded heart – the prior sin is a failure to be satisfied with all that God is for us.

EX: David – he didn't plan on it, but took small steps in the wrong direction.

There is no such thing as a “one night stand”. Adultery begins to play itself out on the stage of the imagination long before it occurs in real life. It follows the process of small steps in the wrong direction. There is a mental mistress or mister before there is a physical one. You go to bed with someone else in your heart before you do so physically.

GUARD YOUR HEART

Whether we like it or want to admit it, our hearts are geared toward a deposit or withdrawal approach to relationships, so we must guard them from acting out of a deficit or credit perspective.

LOVE IS NOT A FEELING, but it entails actions and commitments. We can get sidetracked by feelings since they are a powerful component of our hearts. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?. Jer 17:9 Our hearts are fragile

Immaturity and Conflicts

Immaturity is seen in the inability to work toward a goal out beyond the immediate. We demand that our needs be met “right now.”

Ron Mehl –“the greatest contributor to divorce is not incompatibility, but irresponsibility and immaturity”. All couples

Typically, Divorce is not the solution because marriage is not the problem. The problem is HOW THE two people in the marriage are behaving.

MARRIAGE AS COVENANT COMMITMENT-

One key aspect of marriage is cleaving. Paul grounds what he's telling us about marriage in Genesis. He made them male and female...." Tells that the essence of marriage is a covenant. It is a contract. It is a promise, a relational contract that you make with your future selves.

Marriage is a covenant, a public promise. It is a permanent and exclusive legal commitment to share your entire life with someone else. Every religion agrees on this. If you don't have a promise like that, then you don't really love a person enough to give yourself to them in marriage.

A modern view of marriage defines it as feeling. To say, "I love you but I don't want to marry you" means, "I don't really love you that much." EX: wedding vows of "As long as we both shall love." That is such a wrong view of love and marriage.

Love is commitment. This is what you most want. If you love a person, that means you have no problem making a commitment to them. Therefore the Bible teaches that marriage is a decision, a commitment, to serve them regardless of your feelings. Feelings can take you to the door, but only a commitment will open the door. Your feelings will ebb. At some point you will look at that person and say, "Yuck." If you are waiting for the person for whom you will never feel, yuck, or ticked off, or what a jerk, or whatever, you will wait forever.

Marriage discloses the purposes of the heart.

EX: A bridge with all kinds of structural defects that you can't see. All kinds of hairline fractures. But then a 5 ton Mack truck comes over the bridge, it shows up all the defects b/c it strains the bridge. It doesn't create the strains and weaknesses. It uncovers them.

When you get married, you know what happens? You get a great big MACK truck coming right for your heart. It is the weight of your sin and that of your spouse.

Ex: Walter Payton – Emmett Smith – great runners show commitment

Payton rushed over 9 miles with a football in his career. Doesn't sound like much does it. He was paid pretty well, right?

Look at it this way – every 3.8 yard he was knocked to the ground by someone, perhaps twice his size, who wanted to get him out of the game. Imagine running or walking 9 miles up Hwy 27 and every 10 feet being hit as hard as possible by someone twice your size. How much money would it take to get you to do it?

What kept him going was COMMITMENT. He was committed to hang in there when it got tough and to train in the off season.

Are we that committed to our marriages?? To stay in "game shape"; to work on the hard stuff?

Expectations

The #1 cause of conflict is unmet expectations, which are usually unstated and often unreal. No one married a mind-reader, so we all need to learn to clearly state REALISTIC expectations. PRINCIPLES :

- Unless you tell your spouse the observable changes you're asking him or her to make, your partner can not meet your expectation. – don't get mad if your spouse does or doesn't do something you haven't talked about. Always ask, "is it realistic?"
- When you get into an argument it is often helpful to take time to identify and evaluate your expectations.
- Our emotional reactions can be used as alarms signaling the presence of an unmet expectation. If your response isn't proportional to the event, then there is something else going on that hasn't been identified and communicated.
- Communicating unmet expectations can help you and your spouse grow in your relationship.
- It is best to carefully examine your spouse's expectations before choosing not to meet them.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Rom 12

Lack of Nurture

If you fail to provide the support, comfort, love and affection – both emotional and physical- you promised when you stood before the altar, then you open the door to problems. A marriage is like a garden – it needs to be cultivated and nurtured. If not, then weeds grow up and choke out the fruitful plants.

Two key areas to nurture are Love and Respect – Eph 5

If you fail to safeguard those areas, then you are opening the door to relationship danger.

Practically what might safeguarding your heart look like in marriage? JWJL

For Husbands, ask yourself some questions...

- Am I faithful to my wife physically, while my heart engages in multiple dalliances with "mental mistresses."
- Do I love my wife with the dying love of Christ for his Bride (Ephesians 5), or do I neglect *that* part of the law to concentrate on "making her spotless" by my law to the point that she does not *feel* loved, cherished, or affirmed by me?
- As her leader, has my heart become so cold and loveless that her heart has been made a barren wasteland devoid of any hope that she will experience genuine tenderness from me?
- Am I passive as a leader, especially in our spiritual life? Do I initiate prayer with my wife?
- Am I giving her time and attention so that she knows that she is my top priority?
- Do I encourage her heart to love Christ and his Gospel by my sorrow over my sins, and my joy over the love of Christ for me, or does my soul process the truth of God like a machine and turn the Gospel into a devouring sword?
- Does my crying "Abba-Father!" stir up her faith to do the same, or is my religion a burdensome set of rules and regulations that disheartens and discourages those around me?

Reflections for HER?

- Do I show a lack of respect through regular Criticism or Comparison that demeans him?
- Through my attitude, tone, and words do I set up an emotional minefield for him to weave his way through?

- Do my Tone plus facial expression/body language communicate that he's an idiot, worthless, or can never do anything right?
- Am I competing with my husband for leadership in the marriage?
- Are my time and energy invested in other things (EVEN THE KIDS) to the point where my husband feels ignored?

There are so many good marriage books I could quote, but I'm going with two CONTRASTING country songs – THE voices of our culture.

I'm Gonna Miss Her –  VS – The Good Stuff

Brad Paisley

Well I love her, And I love to fish
I spend all day out on this lake, And grief is all I catch

Today she met me at the door, Said I would have to choose
If I hit that fishin' hole today She'd be packin' all her things
And she'd be gone by noon

Now there's a chance that if I hurry
I could beg her to stay, But that water's right
And the weather's perfect , No tellin' what I might catch today

Well I'm gonna miss her When I get home
But right now I'm on this lake shore
And I'm sittin' in the sun, I'm sure it'll hit me
When I walk through that door tonight
That I'm gonna miss her
Oh, lookie there, I've got a bite
Yeah, I'm gonna miss her
Oh, lookie there, I've got a bite

Compare that approach to marriage and conflict with this one....

Lyrics – The Good Stuff

Well, me and my lady had our first big fight, So I drove around till I saw the neon light
The corner bar, it just seemed right so I pulled up
Not a soul around but the old bar keep, Down at the end lookin' half asleep
But he walked up and said, what'll it be?, I said the good stuff
He didn't reach around for the whiskey, He didn't pour me a beer
His blue eyes kinda went misty, He said you can't find that here

'Cause its the first long kiss on a second date, Momma's all worried when you get home late
And droppin' the ring in the spaghetti plate, 'Cause you're hands are shakin' so much
And its the way that she looks with her eyes and her hair, Eatin' burnt suppers the whole first year
And askin' for seconds to keep her from tearin' up
Yeah man, that's the good stuff

He grabbed a carton of milk and he poured a glass, And I smiled and said I'll have some of that
We sat there and talked as an hour passed like old friends
I saw a black and white picture and it caught my stare, It was a pretty girl with bu-font hair

He said, that's my Bonnie, taken 'bout a year after we wed
He said, I spent five years in the bar when the cancer took her from me
But I've been sober three years now
'Cause the one thing's stronger than the whiskey
Was the sight of her holdin' my baby girl
The way she adored that string of pearls, I gave her the day that our youngest boy Earl
Married his high school love
And it's a new t-shirt sayin' I'm a grandpa, Bein' right there as our time got small
And holdin' her hand when good the Lord called her up
Yeah man that's the good stuff

He said, when you get home she'll start to cry; When she says, 'I'm sorry', say 'so am I'
Look into those eyes so deep in love and drink it up
'Cause that's the good stuff
That's the good stuff

Two contrasting approaches to marriage and conflict

- The first is self centered and lazy; not willing to sacrifice and do the hard work
- The second recognizes that "the good stuff" comes through the willingness to work at it, confess and apologize.

Which approach do you take in marriage, or relationships in general, if single?

We call the Friday before Easter "Good Friday". Why is it good?

Because that's when Jesus did the hard stuff necessary for us to get a relationship with God. God FULFILLED COVENANT FAITHFULNESS, when we were unfaithful.

We blow the 7th commandment all the time in our actions or in our hearts, by commission or omission, BUT Jesus IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL TO HIS BRIDE.

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.

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