

Discussion Questions: Living in Freedom

7th Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery - Exodus 20:14

Drawn from the February 23, 2025 sermon by Dr. Jeff Chandler

Opener: Compare how contemporary TV and movies portray marriage with what was done 50 years ago. How do they differ? Which do you feel are more realistic?

I. What does this commandment forbid?

No adultery (see Exodus 20:14)

As in our day, many people in Jesus' time tried to figure out what the law allowed them to get away with. By the first century, teachers of the law had gone over the short command about adultery and had narrowly defined that adultery was ONLY when a man had sexual relations with a married woman who was not his spouse. For them the issue was about children and inheritance. An Israelite man wouldn't want his wife sleeping with another man primarily because he wanted the assurance that all children in his household were his offspring. This interpretation created many problems. If a married man had sexual relations with an unmarried, unbetrothed woman, the Israelites didn't consider it adultery (although the man would be responsible for the support of any children who were conceived and would have to take her as a second wife). If she were a prostitute, he was off the hook altogether. But a married woman faced the harshest penalties if she was unfaithful, including the prospect of being divorced and abandoned or worse, executed along with the offending man.

1. Can you imagine how this double standard affected marriage relationships? How does this square with God's intent in Genesis 2:24 that "a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one flesh."?

2. How do people today try to manipulate the definition of adultery?

As the legal teachers looked for loopholes, the Old Testament prophets and Jesus brought the matter back to principle: The issue wasn't only offspring, it was faithfulness at the heart level – both with God and in our human relationships.

The Old Testament prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea) often decried the sins of Israel. They pointed out practices that were socially accepted at the time but affronts to God. Invariably they would mention the practice of idolatry and men visiting temple prostitutes. Jeremiah 5:7 is typical: *"Why should I forgive you? Your children have forsaken me and sworn by gods that are not gods. I supplied all their needs, yet they committed adultery and thronged to the houses of prostitutes."* These prophets called a spade a spade.

Jesus went even further and tightened the meaning of adultery to include internal thoughts.

Read Matthew 5:27-28 (New Living Translation)

"You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

We began this session with the simple question: What does this commandment forbid?

Realizing that not everyone doing this lesson is currently married, the application can be applied not only in married relationships, but also dating relationships, friendships and in our relationship with God.

<p>The principle is this: Anything that threatens to undermine openness and trust in our committed relationships is sin and a violation of God's purpose.</p>
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Taken at the level of marriage: A key purpose of marriage is intimacy (See Genesis 2:18). Therefore faithfulness to our spouses must begin in our hearts, not our bodies. Our hearts and minds are the true wellspring of intimacy; our bodies only follow their leads.

Taken at the level of dating: Pursuing sexual intimacy without a covenant relationship (marriage) undermines trust and openness. This is because there is no assurance of commitment.

Taken at the level of non-sexual friendship or family bond: Confidentiality and the freedom to share openly are essentials for a relationship to flourish and for people to stay mentally healthy. A broken trust or betrayal can be devastating.

Taken at the level of our relationship to God: We know from the first three commands that God wants exclusive worship and honor. This attitude flows not only vertically but horizontally. As we are devoted wholeheartedly to him, it follows that we should also be devoted to the people in our lives.

3. How have you seen the importance of this principle in your own relationships?

II. Managing our minds

This lesson addresses adultery, and so it is important not to sidestep the area of sexual temptation in dealing with the topic. Jesus went right after lust in his discussion of adultery. In our sexually charged world, all of us need to be cautious of what we take in.

Paul warns in Ephesians what can happen to people's hearts who give themselves over to sensuality.

Read Ephesians 4:18-19 (New International Version)

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

4. How does an overdose of sensuality (or violence, swearing, etc), tend to affect your own sensitivity? How do you manage that?

Pay attention to emotional snares

People usually get into compromising situations when they have an emotional need and an easy solution presents itself. Satan is a master at bringing cheap substitutes and forbidden fruit across our paths, along with the whisper in our minds that "no one will find out". When we minimize the consequences of our actions, the Bible says we are fools.

Read Proverbs 6:32 (New Living Translation)

The man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys himself.

5. For those in the group who are comfortable, give an example when you maximized the consequences of a temptation in your mind and were able to avoid it.

III. How to stay bonded for a lifetime

Building openness and trust is bedrock of a happy marriage, and in fact, any of our relationships. When we become experts at faithfulness in all aspects of our lives we prosper.

Faithfulness is dependability, loyalty, and stability particularly as it describes God in His relationship to human believers. The faithfulness of God and His Word is a constant theme in the Bible.

Read Deuteronomy 7:9 (New International Version)

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

6. How does God's faithfulness inspire you to follow his example?

Ways to remain faithful in our relationships

- Make a commitment to God's standards – live according to His Word.
- Maintain your relationships – give time, attention, affection.
- Know your weaknesses – avoid tempting situations.

7. For those in the group who have been (or previously were) married for a while, what kind of things helped establish strong and faithful bonds in your marriage?

Group Prayer Time: In this session we took a closer look at the subject of faithfulness – both in our human relationships and with God. As we cultivate this quality in our lives we will become closer and happier. Pray for each other to grow in this area and to avoid pitfalls which can hurt our relationships. Pray also for any other needs in the group that people mention.

For personal reflection in the group or on your own:

Read 1 Corinthians 4:2 (New International Version)

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

What "trust" are you most concerned about being faithful in right now?

How has the principle of establishing and maintaining trust helped you to avoid sin?

Next week, March 2, pastor Jeff will cover "You shall not steal" and there will be discussion questions available at www.sequimcommunitychurch.org/downloads