

# The Commands of Christ

## The Seventh Commandment-B

*Exodus 20:14*  
Part Eighteen

*With Study Questions*

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# The Seventh Commandment-B

*Exodus 20:14*

**You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).**

## **Introduction**

I find myself in the odd place of spectator who simultaneously occupies the perimeters of fantasy and reality. This bizarre epiphany came to me years ago when I, as one who enjoyed prime-time television sit-coms, found myself amused by these light comedies which regularly presented adultery, homosexuality and pre-marital intimacy as a mere, and sometimes comical, annoyance (if that) which was inevitably healed by the following episode. Sexual intimacy was, and is, regularly offered to the public as something with little or no consequence—that is the *fantasy*.

The *reality* first hit me some twenty-five years ago when a woman who attended a Bible study I was leading had raised four children with a man who, after twenty-five years of marriage, began a relationship with another woman. This woman, who was in her fifties, grieved worse than anyone person I had known who had lost a spouse to death. I remember her explaining to me that if he had died, she would still have the good memories of a life spent together. But now she didn't have him or the fond memories of a household. It would have been easier if he had died!

To say that a sexual indiscreet culture is playing with fire is a gross understatement. I am hard-pressed to think of a sin which is more pervasive and destructive than the one we address in this commandment.

## **Review**

## **The Law**

In quick review of the law of God in general, we learn the law of God accomplishes numerous things. First, the law reveals to us something about the moral character of God. Secondly, the law is the ultimate and final authoritative declaration of what is good and ethical. Finally, in our greatest efforts to obey God's law two things will happen—we, and those around us, will begin to know the blessings that come with obedience and

we will come to a greater understanding of our need for a Savior (Romans 7:12, 13).; since the Spirit indwelt Christian cannot help but discern how they fall short of God's perfect standard, this will happen.

Toward the end or goal of obedience, we discussed being watchful of our hearts (Proverbs 4:23), controlling our environment (Proverbs 5:8), temperance (Proverbs 23:31-33), praying and fasting (Matthew 4:2; Luke 6:12), fear of God and consequences and availing ourselves of God's various means of grace.

At the same time we must all recognize that our battle with sin is a lifelong endeavor. As we pursue the Seventh Commandment we will ask and seek to answer: why this is such a monstrous sin (deserving of the death penalty). What is the essence of this sin? What is included under this commandment? How does one engage in this battle? What do we learn of Christ and His faithfulness to His bride?

### **III. Essence of Adultery**

Let us take a moment and examine the essence and depth of this commandment.

#### **Building Block of Society**

This Seventh Commandment is directed toward protecting the sanctity of the home—the fundamental building block of society. The marital vow is a holy commitment that should not be violated by sexual unfaithfulness under any circumstances. Adultery refers to infidelity on the part of either men or women. In general, a wife who loves, and is faithful to, her husband, and a husband who loves, and is faithful to, his wife will yield a society of physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy children.

The tentacles of this sin reach way beyond what happens in the privacy of one's bedroom. Societies crumble when this commandment is forsaken. That this has widespread civil ramifications is accentuated when we read of this transgression as, not merely a sin, but a crime!

**The man who commits adultery with *another* man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death (Leviticus 20:10).**

Our natural shock of death being the just penalty for adultery has birthed numerous brands of theology designed to either mitigate or altogether eliminate the above passage and the church's embarrassment of it. What this passage should do it reveal how heinous this sin is and how corrupt we have become that we should think God's laws to be ridiculous. If we think God's laws are ridiculous, it stands to reason that God thinks we're ridiculous.

It is not my purpose here to address the entire due process necessary for this to become the law of the land; I highlight this merely to show the widespread and egregious nature of the sins contained in this commandment.

### **Pictures Faithfulness to God**

Pursuing further the essence of this commandment, we learn that the marriage relationship is designed to reflect a believer's relationship to God. People who are unfaithful to God are referred to as adulterous. Like a jealous husband Ezekiel records the judgment of God using this intimate language.

**Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes, which played the harlot after their idols (Ezekiel 6:9).**

Similarly to other commandments the adulterer is expressing contempt, not only for his own body and the others involved, but, as we'll see in a moment, God Himself.

### **Protecting Chastity**

The Seventh Commandment concerns our own, and our neighbor's, chastity or purity. Thou shalt not commit adultery is put after the Sixth Commandment (thou shall not kill), it has been said, for our chastity should be as dear to us as our lives, and we should be as much afraid of that which defiles the body as of that which destroys it. We would fight, and perhaps kill, to protect the chastity of a loved one, but what effort do we make to protect our own?

## IV. To What Does This Command Pertain?

What behaviors fall under the heading of “You shall not commit adultery?”

### Adultery

Adultery is the primary violation of this commandment. That is, when you have made vows to another, consummated those vows in the marriage bed, and then violated those vows through sexual union with someone other than your spouse, you have violated this commandment. Marriage vows are binding except in the case of adultery by the other spouse, desertion<sup>1</sup> or death.

### Fornication

As we learned earlier, the commandments are far reaching in their application. The Ten Commandments are summary laws extending beyond the seventeen verses of Exodus. Fornication is also a violation of this commandment. Galatians 5:19 states, “**Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness...**” I mention this verse because there is a distinction between adultery and fornication. Though there is a distinction (adultery referring to married persons and fornication referring to unmarried persons), both are forbidden by this commandment.

Fornication ‘*porneia*’ broadly refers to “any sexual sin.”<sup>2</sup> We must understand, not only the letter, of this commandment but the spirit of it as well. The spirit of this commandment is a matter of sexual purity. If you are single, you are to be faithful to your future spouse. If you never intend to marry – a state of mind that you may not always hold to – you are to be faithful to Christ and in Christ as well as providing a model of chastity to those around you.

### Reproach upon Christ

What we see in this sin is that it brings reproach upon Christ. Paul

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<sup>1</sup> Adultery by your spouse or desertion by your spouse is not so much a justification for the termination of the marriage covenant as an understanding that the covenant has already been violated by the unfaithful partner.

<sup>2</sup>Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G4202). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

teaches that our intimate association with Christ actually brings Him into this sin. Paul draws a picture of this sin in such a way that it drags the very body of Christ into the harlot's bed.

**Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! (1 Corinthians 6:15).**

### **Destruction of Oneness**

God created sex in such a way as to build a mysterious union between two people that makes them one. Multiple sexual partners robs men and women from experiencing the union that God designed as the most intimate union a human can experience with another person. Paul goes on to compare this physical union to our spiritual union with God.

**Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:16, 17).**

The body of a Christian is considered the temple of God. Illicit sex desecrates that temple. Although the following passage is often applied to physical fitness, its primary application is sexual immorality.

**Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).**

Like Joseph, who left his coat behind, the Christian should flee (run away-physically, if necessary) sexual immorality.

### **Homosexuality**

Homosexuality also falls into the realm of this commandment. It is not merely homosexual rape or homosexual infidelity, as some suggest, but

homosexual behavior itself.

**For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error (Romans 1:26, 27).**

**You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. 'Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion (Leviticus 18:22, 23).**

## **Other Violations**

Other violations of this commandment, according to The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Standards<sup>3</sup> include,

**...rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections; all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent or light behaviour, immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages; having more wives or husbands than one at the same time; unjust divorce, or desertion; unchaste company; lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage plays; and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others."**

In light of these things, we may wish to rethink what we watch, read, attend, the company we keep, etc.

## **Lust**

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<sup>3</sup> I would strongly recommend acquiring the Westminster Catechism and Westminster Confession. These historically sound and precious documents give well studied, well thought out, and Biblically sound statements regarding the commandments and other critical issues of the Christian faith.

Who can give a sermon on this commandment better than Christ Himself?

**You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell (Matthew 5:27-31).**

As usual Christ gets to the heart of the matter. 1 Samuel 16:7 states, **"For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."** What man can claim innocence before God when confronted with Christ's teaching on this commandment? And how pure the heart of Christ appears to us when we realize that He never violated this commandment!

To look at a woman or man lustfully is a violation of this commandment. This is why Job made a covenant with his eyes. Job states, **"I HAVE made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?" (Job 31:1).** This clearly addresses the issue of pornography. Christians should make every effort to guard their eyes. Pornography is a billion-dollar business that preys on man's lack of self-control. You are absolutely out of your mind if you have unfiltered internet access.

The ability you, and your children, have to access unlimited information and images through your computers or iPods, etc., can be a source of good or tremendous evil. We are unwise to leave ourselves or our loved ones at the mercy of our own will power.

This should also cause us to be careful about the way we dress. Christians should be careful not to cause others to fail in this area. It is one thing to dress cute and creatively; it is quite another to dress provocatively. This is very subjective and you may wish to consult others as to the appropriateness of your attire.

## **Resist Beginnings**

Once again (similar to Christ's admonitions regarding murder) we

are encouraged to resist entertaining thoughts that grow into sinful actions. James 1:15 states, **“Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”** It has been said ‘sow a thought, reap an action, sow an action, reap a habit, sow a habit reap a character, sow a character, reap a destiny.

The idea that Jesus introduces of plucking your eye out or cutting your hand off is not an argument for self-mutilation. What Jesus is expressing is that we should take drastic action to get rid of whatever, in the natural course of events, will tempt us to sin.

Use your eyelids. Resist the second look. Avoid sexual materials in books or movies. Paul advises us regarding what we should observe and think about.

**Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things (Philippians 4:8).**

## **A Healthy Sex Life**

One word of advice that Paul gives to aid in the keeping of this commandment involves not depriving your spouse.

**The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:4, 5).**

Your body is not your own and you should be ever-willing and never begrudging to share intimacy with your husband or your wife. How often? As one pastor said, “As often as necessary.” Hopefully, husbands are willing to be romantic when it comes to their relationship with their wives and wives are willing to respond positively to their husbands.

## **Flirting and Deep Struggles**

Christians should also avoid so-called innocent flirting. Most affairs start from what would appear to be innocent flirting at the office, school or even church. One of the scenes I enjoyed most in the movie 'City Slickers' was when, Billy Crystal rescued the attractive leading lady from two villains. She later went to thank him for what he had done. Flustered by her beauty, he simply responded by saying, "I'm married." Don't even entertain the thought.

Another key element to resisting is not to allow a person other than your spouse to be the one with whom you regularly share your deep truths and struggles. It is too easy to fall into the "she understands me" trap.

## V. The Supreme Groom

Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ **"loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish"** (Ephesians 5:25-27).

I can't think of anything more sanctifying or challenging than seeking to love another the way I am loved by Christ. How important is it then to know how we are loved by our Savior? How did the Savior give Himself for His bride? He gave His very life. In all our efforts to sanctify ourselves, who is it that truly sanctifies and cleanses us? The Lamb of God. And what is His goal, which He most assuredly achieves? A glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but one that is holy and without blemish. Is this who your Savior is?

## Questions for Study and Meditation

1. Why is fidelity so important (pages 3, 4)?
2. Discuss the protection of chastity (pages 4, 5).
3. Why does the commandment contain the term adultery rather than fornication (page 4)?
4. How does the violation of this commandment bring reproach upon Christ (pages 6, 7)?
5. Is homosexual monogamy a legitimate union (page 7)?
6. Discuss the topics covered under the Westminster Catechism on this commandment (pages 7, 8).
7. How is lust different than actual adultery (pages 8, 9)?
8. Why is healthy sex life with your spouse important (page 10)?
9. How is simple flirting and deep talks dangerous (page 10)?
10. What has Christ done for His bride (pages 10, 11)?

