

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 8

How to save a marriage

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Exodus 20:14
Subject: what we should not do
Complement: commit adultery
Exegetical idea: We should not commit adultery.
Homiletical idea: **Save marriages; don't destroy them.**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to save marriages, rather than destroy them.

Introduction

The sexual revolution of the second half of the 20th century has become the moral nightmare of the 21st century. Pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry. Sexually transmitted diseases are pandemic. Men and women are dehumanized. Young people are exploited. Children are abused. Pure and holy desires are perverted. Our villages, towns and cities are filled with broken hearts.

In the midst of this moral madness, we desperately need to listen to the 7th word of blessing from our loving God: You shall not commit adultery. As we take a fresh look at this 7th commandment today, we are going to answer 3 questions. First, what is adultery? Second, why is adultery so wrong? And third, how can we protect marriages against adultery?

Let's start with our first question. What is adultery? What did the LORD our God mean when He said, "You shall not commit adultery"? One little boy thought the 7th commandment was "Thou shalt not come eat all dirty!" But the 7th commandment isn't talking about washing your hands before you eat! What is adultery? I'm sure that we could find many definitions for adultery in different cultures. But I'm not so interested in public opinion. I want to know what God's Word has to say. What about you? So how does the Bible define adultery?

Let's begin our study with some passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that use the same Hebrew word found in the 7th commandment—you shall not commit adultery. Leviticus 20:10. “If a man commits adultery with another man's wife--with the wife of his neighbor--both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” We could conclude from this text that adultery is an inappropriate relationship with a married individual.

Leviticus 18:20 is more specific. “Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.”

In Jewish law, adultery was defined very specifically: sexual relations between a man and a married woman other than his wife. Sexual relations between a married woman and any man other than her husband.

According to the mosaic law, the consequence for adultery was very severe. In Deut. 22:22 we read, “ If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.” Notice that this penalty also existed if a woman was betrothed to be married, formally engaged. Deut. 22:23-26 “If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, [24] you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death--the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you. [25] But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. [26] Do nothing to the girl; she has committed no sin deserving death.”

The Word of God was clear, and the message is still clear. Do not be sexually active with another man's wife. Do not commit adultery.

At this point, some who might be looking for an excuse to be sexually promiscuous might say, “Alright! I won’t be sexually active with any woman who is married or engaged. I’ll just be sexually active with single women. That’s not adultery.” And technically speaking, at least according to Jewish law, that person would be correct. That person would not be committing adultery.

But what’s wrong with that logic? If individuals are sexually active with other unmarried individuals outside of marriage, they are predisposing themselves to unfaithfulness after marriage. If a woman will be sexually active with a man who is not her husband before marriage, what is there to prevent her from being sexually active with man who is not her husband after marriage? Sexually promiscuity before marriage predisposes a person to adultery in marriage.

That why the apostle Paul appeals to Christians to not only flee from adultery, but to flee from all inappropriate sexual activity. Listen to Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 6:18-20. “.....” Flee from sexual immorality. The Greek word that Paul here is the Greek word “porneia” from which we get the English word pornography. Porneia has a much broader meaning than adultery, a married individual having sexual relations with someone other than his or her spouse. Porneia refers to any kind of sexually inappropriate conduct. Run from it, Paul says, because inappropriate sexual conduct damages you personally and dishonors God publically.

Jesus goes one step further. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus has this to say about the 7th commandment. Matthew 5:27-28 “You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' [28] But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” If Jesus was walking in our midst in the 21st century, He would say, “Not

only should you not commit adultery; not only should a married individual not be sexually active with anyone other than his or her spouse. Do not expose yourself to sexually explicit movies or read sexually explicit books or magazine, or go to inappropriate web sites on the Internet.

Lustful thoughts are just one step away from adultery. In fact, Jesus said that a person who dwells on lustful thoughts has already committed adultery in his or her heart.

I vividly remember the day that a distinguished gentleman in his early 60s came into my office in Collegedale, Tennessee. His marriage was in crisis and so was his moral conduct smelled like a sewer. He had been surfing on the Internet and had found some inappropriate web sites. At first, he was shocked by the porneia that he saw. If he had listened to the apostle Paul's counsel, what would he have done at that moment? FLEE.

But this gentleman didn't listen to Paul's counsel. He loitered around, like the foolish young man described in Proverbs 6:7-23. "....." You may want to read Proverbs chapter 6 as a follow-up to this message. It's the story of a foolish young man who didn't flee from sexual immorality.

The elderly gentleman in my office didn't think that it would ruin his life when he loitered around those inappropriate Internet sites. At first, he just looked at pictures. After all, "It wouldn't hurt anyone, would it?" Oh yes. It will break hearts and break homes. Just wait and see." Having loitered at that inappropriate Internet web site, this gentleman came back, again and again. Then he went to chat rooms, just as a passive observer, you understand. But soon he was involved in two way conversations, then multiple secret liasons, and multiple adulterous relationships. When his wife found out about her husband's adultery, it broke her heart.

When he sat in my office, he was hurting too. Committing adultery will hurt you. The wise man Solomon was right when he said in Proverbs 6:27-29, “.....” And also in Proverbs 6:32-33, we read, “.....”

Adultery will damage your own life, your own heart. But as this elderly gentleman discovered, adultery will also break the hearts of those who you love, those who love you. If you commit adultery, you will break your spouse’s heart. Just ask any spouse who has been through that terrible ordeal. If you have children, you’ll break their hearts too. You will scar them for life. You’ll break the hearts of your friends too. People who looked up to you. People who trusted you. And most of all, you will cause intense pain to the heart of God. God loves you, and he wants your conduct to reflect His unfailing love, His faithfulness, His integrity. The LORD our God knows how many hearts will be broken. That’s why He gives us this word of blessing from the mountain—do not commit adultery. And that is why Jesus said to a woman caught in the very act of adultery, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Adultery is so wrong because it damages us, it breaks hearts, its destroys home and it brings pain to the heart of the LORD our God.

What if you’re listening today, and you have already messed up? Is there any hope for you? Listen to these words of hope from the apostle Paul. Right before the warning to flee from porneia, the apostle Paul offers these words of hope to those who have messed up. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. “.....”

I say, “Hallelujah!” What do you say? Praise the LORD. 1 John 1:9 tells us that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” And everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Romans

10:13

So there is hope! There is cleansing. There will still be scars. But we don't have to stay stuck in the muck and the mire. We can choose a new life in Jesus.

I've asked someone to share her powerful testimony with us today. It's a testimony of pain, but it's also a testimony of joy and hope. Yvette, thank you for your willingness to share your testimony today to bring glory and praise to the name of Jesus.

Yvette, your story begins with a life of pain and hurt and abuse. What was life like during your early years?

How did you find freedom from that destructive way of living? How did you find healing?

How is God leading in your life right now to bring hope and healing to others?

Yvette, thank you for sharing your powerful testimony with us. Instead of continuing a destructive cycle of breaking hearts, including your own, you have chosen to be a channel of healing and to help mend broken hearts. Instead of destroying marriages, you have chosen to help save marriages. May the name of the Lord be praised!

Let's look now at our third question: How do we protect marriages against adultery? Let me suggest four ways that we can protect marriages against adultery—both your own marriage and the marriages of those around you. First, choose to live a life of moral purity before marriage. Set healthy boundaries in your sexual conduct prior to marriage. Don't justify inappropriate sexually behavior and say, "I'll change once I get married." Many who have been through failed marriages will testify that it isn't that simple. Choose to live a life of moral purity before marriage. In practical terms, that means guarding your eyes and guarding your heart.

You can't just watch any movies or read any magazines. You can't just hang out with immoral people. If you go with the flow, you end up drowning in a sewer. Choose to live a life of moral purity before marriage.

A second way to protect marriages against adultery is to live a life moral purity in marriage. I remember a tearful man who came to me. He had encouraged his wife to watch pornography with him. He thought that it would add excitement to their relationship. If he had listened to the apostle Paul's counsel, he would have run from porneia. But unfortunately, he didn't. He encouraged his wife to watch pornography with him. And she became so addicted to pornography that she left him. She was deceived into thinking that she just couldn't be content with one man. That tearful ex-husband wished that he had lived a life of moral purity in his marriage.

Here is testimony that was sent to me this week about the impact of soap operas. (Read the testimony) By living a life of moral purity in marriage, this young mother was protecting her marriage against adultery.

A third was to protect marriages against adultery is to actively nurture your own marriage. I'm talking not to those who are married or to those who might be married in the future. Any wholesome activity that you engage in to nurture your own marriage is a way to protect your marriage against adultery. Don't be so preoccupied with your work that everyone else is noticing your spouse except you. Don't be so busy parenting your children that you neglect the needs of your spouse. Actively nurture your own marriage. Attend a family life seminar. Go to a men's conference that talks about moral purity and honoring your commitments. Go to a women's conference that inspires you to live a life of integrity and honor.

Read good books on nurturing marriage. Pray together. Worship together. Actively nurture your own marriage. That's a third way to protect marriages against adultery.

A fourth way to protect marriages against adultery is to actively nurture the marriages around you. Affirm the faithful commitments that you see in your family members and friends. Send a card. Give a word of affirmation. Encourage young people who are starting their married life together. Be a mentor to those who are preparing for marriage. Actively nurture the marriages around you.

Conclusion

We have taken a fresh look at the 7th commandment today. You shall not commit adultery. The LORD our God doesn't tell us "You shall not commit adultery" because He is trying to make life miserable for us. That's what the devil whispers in our ears. But the devil is a liar. The truth is this: adultery isn't fun. Adultery breaks people's hearts. Adultery destroys marriages. Adultery devastates children. Adultery dishonors the name of the LORD your God who created you and you redeemed you at an infinite price by His Son Jesus Christ.

We can choose to save marriages rather than destroy them. What were the four ways that we can protect marriages against adultery? Live a life of moral purity before marriage. Live a life of moral purity in marriage. Nurture your own marriage. Nurture the marriages of those around you.

I want to speak specifically to the men who are listening today. Young men. Older men. Married men. Single men. The world needs men who will live with integrity. Men who will live with honor. Men who will guard their hearts and guard their eyes. Men who will guard

their marriages and the marriages of those around them. Whether your young or old, married or single, is there a man here today who will covenant before God, by His grace and through His power, to be a man who saves marriages, rather than one who destroys them. If that's your commitment today, I want to invite you to stand. Stand wherever you are....whether here on campus, joining us via radio, television, web church...if you will covenant before God to be a man who saves marriages rather than one who destroys them, I invite you to stand right now.

Please remain standing. Now I want to talk to the women. The world needs women who will covenant to guard their hearts and guard their eyes and guard their mouths. Women who will save marriages, rather than destroy them. Whether you are young or old, married or single, will you covenant before God to be a woman of God who saves marriages, rather than a woman who destroys marriages? If that's your commitment today, I want to invite you to stand right now?

I praise God for everyone who has made an important commitment before God today. If you weren't able to stand, but you made a commitment before God in your heart, He knows the decision that you made. No commitment is missed by our loving heavenly Father. Let's just praise Him now for this word of blessing from our loving God.

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