

# COMMANDMENTS

## **Do Not Commit Adultery** (Exodus 20:14)

**Bottom Line:** Adultery is a symptom of a much bigger heart-problem: unfaithfulness to God.

**Discuss for a moment the role that marriage and family play in our society. In what ways are they essential? What good do they contribute to society?**

The institutions of marriage and family are integral to the well-being of society. It's near indisputable that when marriages and families break-down, society and culture also break down. Increases in crime and increases in poverty are almost always results of the breakdown of the family unit and there are very few exceptions to this rule. The importance of the family is clearly seen in the Ten Commandments. God commands us to honor our parents, to not steal from one another, and here God demands that the institution of marriage be protected. Adultery is a sin that hurts not only our spouses, but our families, and by hurting our families, it hurts our society.

The negative action condemned in this commandment is adultery. But like the other commandments, this commandment has a positive implication. The commandment "do not murder" has a positive implication of preserving life. The commandment "do not bear false witness against your neighbor" has a positive implication of protecting the reputations of others.

**What are some positive implications we should take away from this commandment?**

**Read 1 Corinthians 6:18. How is sexual sin a sin against your own body?**

This passage clues us into a deeper significance behind why adultery and sexual immorality are such devastating sins. Not only are we hurting others, but we are hurting ourselves. Why? In verse 17, Paul explains that "he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit." When we are saved, we are spiritually united to Christ in a unique way that resembles a marriage (Ephesians 5:25-28). We belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to us. Just like a wedding ring given to a spouse, God gives us His Spirit to signify that we belong to Him and that He is devoted to us in love (1 Corinthians 6:19; Ephesians 1:13). In the same way that adultery is unfaithfulness to a spouse, adultery is also unfaithfulness to God. Therefore, sexual immorality is a sin against ourselves because it grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; cf. 5:3-5), putting distance between us and God. We're not only hurting others, we are hurting ourselves.

**Read Matthew 5:27-28. How do you see this spiritual dynamic to adultery emphasized by Jesus? Ultimately, what do these verses teach is the root of sexual sin, including adultery?**

**If sexual sin is a matter of the heart, how do we fight against sexual sin? How does Jesus' description of this fight in Matthew 5:29-30 inform the way we think about sexual sin?**

What Jesus emphasizes, and what the seventh commandment teaches, is that adultery and sexual sin are only symptoms of a much deeper problem, a problem of the heart. These sins arise from a heart that has a low view of faithfulness. Adultery against a spouse doesn't value the covenant made

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with that person. Likewise, a lack of faithfulness to God betrays a heart that doesn't value the covenant we are in with Christ. When God calls us to Himself, He expects us to be faithful to Him, just like we can appropriately expect faithfulness from a spouse. By forbidding adultery, God was protecting Israel's societal health, He was protecting the institutions of the family and marriage, but He was also demanding Israel's faithfulness to Himself above all else. God makes this direct comparison in Jeremiah 3:20: "Like a woman faithless to her lover, even so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel."

**Read James 4:4-5. According to James, how do we commit spiritual adultery against God? How does James' question in verse 5 tie back into what we discussed about quenching the Spirit? What do verses 6-10 tell us we should do to help fight against spiritual adultery?**

**What in your life, or as James would say, "in the world", is competing against God for your affections? Which of those things can you put a stop to immediately? Likewise, what in your life increases and stirs your affections for God? How can you devote more time to those activities?**

Adultery, both physical against our spouse, and spiritual against God, is a symptom of a heart that isn't fully given to the one we've committed the sin against. But just like James said, "God gives more grace." The sin of adultery, both physical and spiritual, is not beyond the grace of God to forgive. We've all been guilty of breaking this commandment in one form or another, but the hope of the Gospel is that our salvation is not ultimately dependent upon our faithfulness to God but upon His faithfulness to us. He has promised to never leave us, nor forsake us (Hebrews 3:15). The good work that He began in us will be brought to completion (Philippians 1:6). "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is His faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

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**Reflection:** Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

**Romans 5:8 and John 3:16 both say that God has proven His love for you by sending Jesus to die for your sins on the cross. Jesus took the penalty of your spiritual adultery against your Creator so that you could have a renewed relationship with Him. Have you responded to that act of love? Have you given yourself to the One who will always be faithful to you?**

**Taking Jesus' advice in Matthew 5, what do you need to cut out of your life in order to protect your heart against lust, adultery, and sexual immorality? Do you need to install accountability software on your phone or your computer? Does your spouse have full-access to your phone, computer, and social media accounts? For those that are single or widowed, is there anything in your life that you need to take drastic action against that tempts you to sin?**

**Taking James' advice in James 4, how can you "come near to God" so that He will come near to you? Where can you carve out more time in your daily routine to focus more on God?**