

The Ten Commandments

Commandment #7: You shall not commit adultery

Today's commandment has many straightforward applications. The commandment to avoid adultery is intuitive to many still today in our fallen world. Even many (though certainly not all) "lost" people understand that affairs and infidelity are wrong but the commandment goes deeper than many care to realize or consider.

1. A definition
 - a. Adultery can be defined as any sexual/romantic relationship or action that takes place outside of marriage
 - b. The commandment forbids ALL such actions and more outside of the marriage covenant
2. An obvious application
 - a. The clearest violation of this commandment occurs when a man or woman is guilty of a sexual relationship outside of their marriage vow
 - i. Just as a note, there is some disagreement about whether adultery can occur when neither party is married
 - ii. Frankly, I do not think it much matters because sexual relationships are forbidden outside of marriage but, if you are interested, the biblical term for such things is typically "fornication" and it too is condemned in Scripture
 - b. God has given us marriage as the proper arena for all romantic relationships and His desire is that those covenantal bonds be the exclusive context for sexual encounters and all of the desires that lead up to those actions
3. A deeper implication
 - a. If you recall, last week we saw that Jesus took the previous commandment and expanded its application greatly to include not just murder but also hatred
 - i. The point we made last week is that hatred is the seedbed of murder and, therefore, it is the same in substance if not degree
 - b. In the same way, Christ would teach us that the commandment to avoid adultery includes more than the physical, sexual action
 - c. Jesus said that those who have even lusted after someone in their hearts they are guilty of the same sin
 - i. The logic here is the same
 - ii. Lust is what gives birth to adultery when it is fully formed
 - d. This means that the sin of adultery lurks in every heart
 - i. We must be constantly aware of our propensity to wander from the straight and narrow in this respect as well
4. A definite motivation
 - a. Some might wonder why this is such a big deal... specifically as it relates to lust

- b. Why can't a man or woman entertain romantic thoughts about someone else?
- c. Obviously, there is a line between thinking and doing!
 - i. Underneath this commandment is a clear esteem of marriage
 - ii. Marriage is the exclusive place for romantic involvement and this is not just because of our feelings, it is also because of what marriage is meant to represent
- d. Recall that Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that marriage is meant to picture the relationship between Christ and the church
 - i. This means that the goal of the covenant is to illustrate something larger than itself
 - ii. The most important, fundamental and necessary relationship in the universe is the relationship between Christ and His church
 - iii. We are to reflect that bond in our own marriages
- e. It is unthinkable and, frankly, sickening to consider Christ looking longingly at another bride
 - i. How heartbreaking, demoralizing and damning would it be for the church to realize that Jesus secretly desired another
 - ii. Conversely, the church is always reprimanded and brought to repentance whenever she strays from fidelity to her spouse
 - 1. These things being so, the act of adultery in the context of a relationship that has such profound ramifications for how the world can see Christ and His church must be immense and this explains the severity of violating this commandment