

We have made it to the seventh Commandment where God states to His people, **“You shall not commit adultery.”**

Reader’s Digest tells the story of a young boy who was learning about the Ten Commandments in Sunday School. After Sunday School one day, where the topic in class was the seventh Commandment, this young boy asked his father, “Daddy, what does it mean when it says, “You shall not commit agriculture?” Obviously, this young boy had got his signals crossed in Sunday School, but his dad did not miss a beat and he replied, “Son, that just means you’re not supposed to plow another man’s field.”

This morning we are going to greatly expand on that idea of plowing another man’s field as we consider the topic of **adultery**, which the dictionary defines, and I am being careful this morning, as a sexual relationship between a married individual with someone other than their spouse. Adultery occurs when an exclusive marriage relationship is no longer exclusive.

As I have been trying to do with each commandment, I want to introduce this seventh Commandment with a Bible story. This story is a well-known story that’s found in **2 Samuel 11**. It’s the story of David and Bathsheba. So, if you have your Bible, turn to **2 Samuel 11** and we will begin with **verse 1**.

Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.

In this first verse, we are given a little bit of background information to set the stage for this story. We are told that in those days, kings and their armies went to war in the spring time rather than in the winter, and practically that would make good sense, and rather than going himself, David sends out his nephew Joab, who is the commander of his army to go against the Ammonites.

As the king, it was not required that David go out to war as he has already been in his fair share of battles and he is a much older man now, but it would seem that the writer implies that David should have been with his men instead of remaining behind. In other words, we could say that David wasn’t where he should have been, and as we will soon find out, he would have been better off on the battlefield.

² Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king’s house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.

During the heat of the day, David likely napped like most people, and afterwards during the evening when it was cooler, David lounged on his flat-roofed terrace which overlooked the city. David had a great view from his palace – apparently too great a view, because he suddenly notices a very beautiful woman bathing herself. Now, it wasn't a sin for David to see this woman bathing. It was innocent, it was an accident, but unfortunately, David does not turn away, and instead, he fixes his gaze upon her, and now he is in real trouble – he just doesn't know it yet.

Well, the night is young, no one is around, and oh by the way, David is king, and in **verse 3** we are told,

So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

David learns the woman is Bathsheba and she is married to a man named Uriah – one of David's thirty chief warriors. From the outside, David's inquiry seems to be innocent. From the outside, David only appears to be a nosy neighbor – that's what it looks like from the outside, but on the inside, in his heart, David's imagination has gotten the best of him. He's already slept with Bathsheba and she doesn't even know it.

⁴David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. ⁵The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

Unfortunately, David puts action to his thoughts, and as the king who apparently feels he answers to no one, he summons Bathsheba to his palace and he sleeps with her. It's just a short one-night stand, no one got hurt, no one has to know what happened – it will be their little secret, and Bathsheba goes back home. A short time later Bathsheba sends a short little message to David: *"I'm pregnant."*

I think it's fair to say that David did not expect that – I mean it was only a few minutes – and now he's panicked, he's got to cover this up, and this is what he does. Let's continue with **verse 6**. We read,

⁶Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of Joab and the people and the state of the war. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's

house, and a present from the king was sent out after him.⁹ But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.¹⁰ Now when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"¹¹ Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing."¹² Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you go." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.¹³ Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord's servants, but he did not go down to his house.

¹⁴ Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.¹⁵ He had written in the letter, saying, "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die."¹⁶ So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there were valiant men.¹⁷ The men of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David's servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died.

This one-night stand with Bathsheba turns into a murder by David, and let me remind you, that this David is the exact same David who wrote the 23rd Psalm. Now overall, David was a great king, even called "a man after God's own heart" and yet in this story, we would never know it.

We learn later in **2 Samuel 12**, the prophet Nathan confronts King David about what he did, and he tells David that from that point on, the sword would never depart from his house. David would experience trouble and turmoil in his own family, and the child that Bathsheba was carrying would die. Yes, David was forgiven of his sin – for Nathan told him so; however, there would be terrible consequences and nothing would ever be the same for him.

That one night of passion sparked years of family pain – a son died, there was rape and incest in his family, and the kingdom was divided as another son rebelled against David. His sin jeopardized his family, it jeopardized his faith, and it jeopardized his future. It's been said, "Sin will take you further than you were planning to go, cost you more than you were willing to pay, and keep you longer than you wanted to stay." Adultery is that destructive and that's why God tells His people in **Exodus 20:14**,

“You shall not commit adultery.

This is a very simple and straightforward commandment from God to His people, and it’s a commandment that can either save or destroy a marriage and a family, depending on whether it is obeyed or not, and also let me say that this is not a commandment given by God that is meant to rob people of joy, but rather it’s a commandment given by God to protect people so they might not lose their joy.

Now, to understand what God is saying to His people, we should first remember what marriage is supposed to be. Marriage was God’s idea, and from a biblical perspective, marriage is one man pledged to one woman, committed to live together exclusively as husband and wife for life. That’s God’s ideal design for marriage. That’s what it is supposed to be like because in many respects, marriage is a living and mysterious picture of the loving and intimate and exclusive relationship between God and His people. We have already been told in the first Commandment that He is our God and there can be no others. We are to be faithful and loyal to Him – and Him only, and all throughout the Old Testament, whenever God’s people were unfaithful to God, they were said to be guilty of adultery against God and there were devastating consequences to be had.

Adultery is devastating on so many levels, and on top of that, according to the law it was punishable by death. So, the people in the Old Testament and those in Jesus’ day were focused on the letter of the law which prohibited the physical act of adultery, but they completely failed to understand the spirit of the law, the principle behind the law that spoke about fidelity – sexual faithfulness within a marriage relationship. Then Jesus comes along, and just like we saw last week when it came to murder, He explains there was more to this Commandment than they thought. They only had a partial understanding of the meaning and the principle behind this seventh Commandment.

So, if you have your Bible, let’s go back to where we were last week with the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5** where Jesus explains how we are to live, and as a reminder, Jesus is speaking to a large crowd who are under the impression that as long as you look religious on the outside, as long as you go through the motions – you are right with a holy God and are following His commands. Let’s pick up with His sermon, and we will begin with **verses 27-28**, where Jesus says,

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Once again, Jesus tells the crowd that He knows what they have heard. He knows what they have been taught from the oral traditions of their religious leaders. He's aware that the popular opinion is that as long as you don't do the physical act of adultery, you're okay – but they weren't okay in God's eyes, and Jesus explains that if you even look at a woman with lust in your heart, whether you are a married man or a single man, you have already committed adultery with her. And I want to point out that even though Jesus is addressing men here, and rightly so because men tend to be the predators, His teaching also applies to women just as well.

Just like Jesus did with the previous topic of murder, He raises the bar on sexual sin to include both the *root* and the *fruit* of adultery – the root being **lust**. Now just for clarification, Jesus is not saying that lust is just as harmful and hurtful as the physical act adultery, but what He is saying is that if you look upon another person with the purpose of lusting – in God's eyes, the *attitude* and the *act* are both judged and condemned as adultery. In other words, from God's perspective, a person can commit adultery in their heart without ever physically touching someone.

Now before we press on, I do need to explain what it means to **look at a woman** in the context that is given here. The “**look**” that Jesus is referring to is not the casual glance, where you notice a woman and maybe even notice that she is attractive in appearance. You can appreciate the beauty of a woman without lusting after her. That's okay, but the man that Jesus described in this passage has his eyes fixed on the woman *for the purpose of feeding his sexual appetite* as a substitute for the physical act. Like King David, the man latches on with his eyes, and the innocent glance now becomes an intentional gaze to further his sexual fantasy.

And for further application, to look upon a woman with lust as Jesus described also includes pornography. It produces the exact same lust. It's the exact same heart problem, and Jesus gives us some really good practical advice in how to deal with it. Let's look at **verses 29-30**. Jesus says,

²⁹ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

I don't know about any of you, but if I had been in that crowd, my hand would have shot right up – “*Excuse me, excuse me Jesus, but I'm not sure I heard you correctly. I must have missed something or maybe I heard you wrong, because for*

a second it sounded like you just said I have to lose a body part to deal with my lust. That can't be right, so, can you go over that again Jesus?"

What does He mean by all of this? Do I need to run to the kitchen to hide all the knives?

When we were studying the book of Revelation, I said a few times that I tend to take the Bible literal until it's obvious it's not to be taken literal, and this is one of those cases. Jesus is using a figure of speech here. He's shocking us to get our attention. He's exaggerating to make a point, and I know this because if I pluck out my right eye, or both of my eyes for that matter, I can still have a problem with lust. It goes the same for my hands as well because as Jesus has already pointed out – this is a heart issue and removing body parts on the outside will not solve that problem on the inside. **So, then what is Jesus telling us?**

If you noticed, Jesus used the word **“right”** several times and that word suggests that something is favored – it's the dearest, the most cherished. The sheep are on the right, the goats on the left. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. So, in context, Jesus is saying, *“You should eliminate from your life anything that is going to cause your heart to stumble into sexual sin – even those things you might favor and cherish the most.”* You have a choice over what you look at and touch, and you may need to get radical in dealing with this sin. It's just that serious.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that is not doing us any favors when it comes to sexual sin. Our culture is not helping us in anyway, so to get serious about this, I want to give you some guardrails to protect your heart. As you know, a guardrail is a strong metal barrier designed to keep vehicles from veering off the road into dangerous areas. For example, they are all along Highway 14 as you head to the gorge, typically found near dangerous curves and cliffs, and although they may be eye sores – they can be lifesavers. So, here are three guardrails to consider to keep you from the consequences of lust and adultery:

The first guardrail is this: Avoid those situations you know will produce lustful thoughts for you. We are all different when it comes to these kinds of situations. There are situations that may impact you in the area of sexual sin that does not impact me and vice versa, but each of us must know that there is a line that we should not cross when it comes to sexual sin, and that means there are some television programs and movies we should not watch, there are some websites we should not enter, there are some places we should not go, there are some parties we should not attend, there are some books and magazines we should not read, there

are some conversations we should not share, and there are some relationships we should not have. Again, we have to draw that line in the sand and refuse to cross it. We have to put up guardrails to protect us from harm because our culture will not do it for us.

When Trish and I lived in Virginia Beach, VA, many many years ago, I struggled when going to the beach because of all the women in their bikinis, and I told Trish that I could not go with the family to the beach because of my struggle. The beach was great for Trish and the kids, but not for me.

The other day, I experienced the same thing when watching the Olympics. Trish and I turned it on, and the event being televised was women's beach volleyball. At first, I was watching the game, but then I found myself watching the women, and apparently, some of the cameramen had the same problem. I told Trish we have to turn it off, so we watched a cooking show instead. It's that serious and we have to get serious about it.

Here's the second guardrail, and it's similar to the first. We need to avoid those problematic people who set us up for intimacy and sexual sin. There are some people in your life, outside of your marriage, that you should not associate with and definitely should not be alone with. You know who they are, but in case you need a clue, they are the people you feel your heart drifting towards other than your spouse. They are the people who are leading you to keep secrets from your spouse. They are the people who are causing you to lie to your spouse. Secrets and lies are red flags when it comes to adultery. You are poking a sleeping lion with a stick, and if I just described you, avoid those problematic people, and if you have a problem cutting off that relationship and need an easy excuse, just tell them Pastor Bob said so and you can send them directly to me. I look forward to that conversation. I get giddy just thinking about it.

The last guardrail I want to mention is prompted by the second guardrail – it may be the most difficult but may be the most important. Instead of the secrets and lies, we need to honestly talk about our struggles. We need to come clean. Although people who struggle with lust and adultery tend to hide in the shadows so to speak, this is typically not a battle we can fight alone. We need to talk about it with someone, but with that said, it needs to be someone who will tell you the biblical truth, who will ask you the hard questions, who will pray with you, and who will hold you accountable. This is a great guardrail, and ladies, as your pastor I cannot be that person for you when it comes to these kinds of matters, for I have my own guardrails, but I can lead you in the right direction.

I have one more thing to say about this before I close. When the devil tempts you, and he will, immediately go to God with it. The Apostle Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 10:13**,

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Temptation is common to every one of us, we all deal with it – even Jesus was tempted, so we know being tempted is not a sin – it’s how we respond to temptation that can be sinful. So, we know temptation is coming, and we are told that God will make a way for an escape so we can bear it – and when it comes to temptation of a sexual nature, that escape needs to be very quick. Paul tells us in another passage this isn’t something we flirt with – it’s something we flee from. There’s no need to think about it and mull it over to determine God’s will. We need to put our track shoes on and run like the wind.

And better yet, long before the temptation comes, we need to make up our minds in advance how we will respond to temptation before it ever happens. We need to put up guardrails now, while it is still safe, so that when the temptation comes, you’ll know what to do and where to run.

God says, **“Do not commit adultery.”** This commandment speaks to both the *attitude* and the *act*, and it is given to protect our family, our faith, and our future.

Source Material:

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