

The Ten Commandments: Posted on our Hearts and in our Homes
What Does Idolatry and Adultery Have in Common?
Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:27-30

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Introduction to Text: We are in a series of messages concerning the 10 Commandments. Today we are considering the 7th commandment. Indeed, this is the commandment that deals with adultery. I feel a little bit like the children's Sunday School teacher who was apprehensive about how to deal with the subject of this commandment. She had prepared for that inevitable question from one of the children, "What is adultery?" Sure enough, no sooner than she had begun, a little hand shot up to ask a question. "Yes?" the teacher acknowledged. The little child then asked, "What does 'commit' mean?"

Let's read the text and add to the Exodus text with Jesus' elaboration from the Gospel of Matthew.

Text: ¹ Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.

¹⁴ Do not commit adultery.

Matthew 5:27-30—²⁷"You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. ²⁸ But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell!

Introduction: Like that children's Sunday School teacher I spoke of before reading our text, I have my own story about teaching through the Ten Commandments. Several years ago, I was leading School chapel services through each of 10 commandments for 10 consecutive weeks. When I came to week 7, it suddenly dawned on me that I had quite the issue on my hand. How was I going to talk about the issue of adultery with the youngest of these children?

To be perfectly honest, I have fretted over this message this morning more than usual, but for a different reason. Today, I realize the tremendous hurt that thinking about this subject brings to some of you. In fact, I read somewhere this week that perhaps every person has been touched in some way by adultery. Whether as a child, as parents whose adult children suffered through adultery, or you particularly have dealt with adultery, it is likely true that everyone or almost everyone feels the sting of this subject this morning.

Then, there is the matter of how widely accepted adultery is in our society.

Ted Turner, the wealthy media mogul, said, "If you're only going to have ten rules, I don't know if adultery should be one of them." (By the way Ted Turner made this comment in the context of giving his own list of 10 Initiatives—as he called them.)

Well, Mr. Turner, the truth is that adultery is a big deal to God. Through adultery, incredible hurt enters our world. Through adultery, entire societies crumble. The truth is this: Adultery is very close to the heart of God. God has felt the sting of adultery over and over again. That's right! In case after case, passage after passage, the Biblical writers described humanity's rebellion against God with the word adultery. So, I begin this morning by asking a question.

What does Idolatry and Adultery have in Common?

At the heart of both idolatry and adultery is ...

- Breaking of Covenant

The concept of covenant is the key to strengthening your marriage relationship. I know that is true because the idea of covenant is the true source of all relationships—with God, our families, our friends, and our mates. “God loves us by covenant. He provides for us by covenant. He blesses us by covenant. He operates in our lives by covenant. In reality, every truly valuable thing in life is ours because of covenant. The truth is, our God is a covenant God, the Bible is a covenant book, and we are covenant people.”¹

God made a covenant with Noah to protect through the flood and then a covenant not to flood the earth again in that same manner. God made a covenant with Abraham that he would become the father of many. In addition to these God made covenants with Moses and David. In the New Testament the sacrifice of Christ for our sins is referred to as a covenant. The basic idea in a covenant is that these covenants are absolutely binding. Notice these texts.

Deuteronomy 7:9 says, “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

God fashioned with us a covenant that can be summed up this way. “I will be your God and you will be my people.” (Exodus 6:7, Jeremiah 7:23, and Ezekiel 36:28)

It is an irrevocable covenant according to Psalm 89:34. “My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.”

The conclusion about covenants then is that **God is a covenant God and if we are going to be God's people, we must understand covenant and be willing to live, ourselves, in covenant relationships.**

The best way that I know how to say this is: Covenant is promise! When I decided how to talk to children about adultery, I came upon this idea. Adultery is breaking your promise. When you married, you made a promise.

Quote from Thornton Wilder play, *The Skin of our Teeth*. “I didn't marry you because you were perfect. I didn't even marry you because I loved you. I married you because you gave me a promise. The promise made up for your faults. And the promise I gave you made up for mine. Two imperfect people got married and it was the promise that made the marriage. And when our children were growing up, it wasn't a house that protected them; and it wasn't our love that protected them—it was that promise.

¹ Fred Lowery, *Covenant Marriage: Staying Together for Life*, Howard Publishing, 2002, pp. 43-54.

- Complacency—Like Israel becoming complacent in relationship with God, we become complacent in our marriage relationships.
- Compromise—Like the issue of complacency, we also begin to compromise. The Matthew passage is all about compromise. Compromise leads to disaster. Proverbs 6:27 says, “²⁷ Can a man embrace fire and his clothes not be burned?”

So What?

We have a variety of groups here today. I want to see if I can’t take just a minute and make application to each group.

If Single...

Remain Pure—Preventing adultery begins by maintaining purity while you are single.

Remain Prayerful

Remain Picky—Make a vow to the Lord that you will not even consider marrying an unbeliever. Easiest way to make that commitment is to never considering going on a date with an unbeliever.

If Married...

Stay serious about the Promise

Stay serious about Prevention—Jesus has a harsh statement in Matthew 5, but it is for the prevention of adultery.

If Guilty...

Repent

Receive Forgiveness

Renew Commitment to Purity—Jesus’ words apply “Go and sin no more.”

If Betrayed...

Because of the close connection between idolatry and adultery, your pain is close to the heart of God.