

"IN LOVE" IN THE LAND**THIS WEEK:** The 7th of 10 Commandments **Exodus 20:14** "You shall not commit adultery."

My understanding of this commandment began in the 1960's in conversation with my father. I was at church one Sunday morning, sitting as usual beside him, when the subject came up (because of the sermon we were listening to). I asked a simple question. "Dad, what is adultery?" My simple question was answered according to a traditional parenting technique. That is, the question was answered by means of such a complicated explanation that the questioner loses all interest in the subject and so asks no further questions. These were the days of the Perry Mason show. So it was like that. He finished his answer and I said, "No further questions, Your Honour."

Q: So what might have been a better answer?

How about: "God invented special ways for a husband and wife to hug and kiss and touch each other all over so that they would feel really really close to each other and so that they would think that being married is really really special. Adultery is disobeying God by doing all that sort of special hugging and kissing and touching with someone you are not married to. God hates adultery because of how much damage it does to marriage." There, in my opinion, is an answer that actually answers the question. But it comes with a warning "WARNING: This answer may lead to more questions."

NOTES: Three notes about sexual sin in general: one note about adultery specifically.

1. Sexual sin is strictly forbidden but NOT because sexual activity is evil in itself.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

See how Genesis 1 ends...

Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

See how Genesis 2 ends...

Genesis 2:25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

2. Sexual sin is strictly forbidden but NOT because sexual activity is so pleasurable and so powerful.

The pleasure is not incidental or accidental. The pleasure is intentional. **Psalm 139:14** I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. The pleasure is directly related to the point of it all. And the same goes for the power of it. A very powerful experience on purpose! And like other powerful things that can be very bonding, nuclear fusion for example, it can be especially destructive... because of the effect it has on relationships: our relationships to each other, to God, "to ourselves." (re: guilt, regret, heartbreak)

3. Sexual sin is strictly forbidden BECAUSE it is so destructive.

Proverbs 5,6,7 → Destructive! To reputation, career, mental health, health, relationships. Which brings us to the specific subject of adultery.

4. Adultery is especially forbidden BECAUSE it is so destructive to marriage.

Obviously, adultery can damage and destroy a marriage. And marriage is so important a part of a society's stability and its future, that God takes a very serious stance against the things that endanger it.

Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and **adulterous**.

ACTIONS:

- a) **Get very very serious about avoiding every sort of sexual immorality.** This seriousness will have an impact on many aspects of life. For example, in our decisions about what we do and do not joke about. **Ephesians 5:1-7** Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. This means taking a very hard look at what TV shows and movies you let yourself be entertained by. We need to sharpen and heighten our consciences! Many shows and movies work in the opposite direction.

So this is the sort of church family we want to be: very joyful, but very serious about important things: like protecting the marriages and the marriage prospects of the whole group. "In love" in the land → "the land" = "a place to live" in which good things are protected from harm. Good things like families, and marriages.

- b) **Determine to fight this good fight and not to fight it alone.** Shame and embarrassment can prevent us from ever talking to anyone about this challenge. Shame and embarrassment may be appropriate under the circumstances. Pride intensifies them. "Pride goes before a fall". God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. We should be willing to humble ourselves enough to seek help.

Mould grows best in dark damp places. It doesn't grow as well in bright light. Keeping these challenges a deep dark secret makes a dangerous thing more dangerous! In part because the darkness makes everything seem bigger and scarier and less manageable. In part, because the secrecy prevents accountability.

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession **in the presence of many witnesses.**

2 Timothy 2:3, 4, 22 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him... So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, **along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.** Accountability is very helpful. In the New Testament, it is assumed!

- c) **Surrender your sexuality to God as an act of worship and self-preservation.**

Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Your body? A proper commitment to God through Christ includes the surrender of your sexuality.

A very important part of this surrender is the surrender of your sexuality to your spouse. **1 Corinthians 7:3, 4** The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Acknowledge that your own sexuality is essentially none of your business! And there is great importance in married people understanding the precise nature of the significance of the sexual portion of married life to the person you are married to: who is a member of the opposite sex! This may be a very complicated assignment. You might need some outside help or some specialized advice.

AND a very important part of this surrender to God is a confession of sin and the forgiveness of sin that results! **1 John 1:5-9** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And so we come to the Communion table.

Next commandment: (March 7) Exodus 20:15 The law against stealing