SESSION 8

DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

IN THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT, God forbids adultery and thereby emphasizes the goodness of sex within the marriage covenant. Sexual immorality distorts the picture of the gospel and becomes an idol that controls our behavior. Jesus showed how the sin of adultery begins with lust in the human heart. Through the gospel, we are forgiven of our disobedience and we are set free to live in purity so that others might see the goodness and glory of God.

STEPS TO PREPARE

1. Read and reflect on the passages we will study this week, recording questions and insights that come to you as you read:
   ▷ Deuteronomy 5:18
   ▷ Proverbs 6:20-29
   ▷ Matthew 5:27-30

2. Review the Teaching Plan (pgs.90-93).
   ▷ Refine the lesson plan based on your group’s particular needs.
   ▷ Adjust the plan if necessary.

3. Study the Expanded Lesson Content beginning on page 94.
   ▷ Don’t feel pressured to teach all of the content in a single meeting.
   ▷ Determine what elements of this lesson are most applicable to your particular group.
   ▷ Consider ways to personalize the lesson content for you and your class.

4. Pray for the Lord’s guidance as you lead your group through this material.

LESSON OUTLINE

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT HELPS TO EMPHASIZE...

1. Why God hates adultery (Deut. 5:18).
2. The consequence of committing it (Prov. 6:20-29).
3. The cure for the lustful heart (Matt. 5:27-30).
DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

CONNECT

OPTION 1

Begin by showing or describing the Pepsi® commercial in which a Coke® driver is using a Pepsi product (p.94).

Fidelity is often an unspoken expectation in society. Perhaps it’s being faithful to a team, a company, a brand, a product, a political party, or a social cause. What does “betrayal” look like in these cases? Does pledging fidelity by an oath or contract change the situation? Explain.

Transition to the subject matter of this session by pointing out how Scripture requires fidelity to God—the First Commandment—and to our spouse—the Seventh Commandment (pgs.94-95).

OPTION 2

Lay down two yard sticks about three feet apart. Challenge students to jump over them. Now, put the yardsticks further apart and repeat the challenge. Keep doing so until the students can no longer jump the distance. Now, put the yard sticks close together again. Guide students to imagine the yardsticks are the edges of two very tall buildings. They’re on top of the buildings, and the ground is several hundred feet below. Would the students still be willing to make the jump?

Chances are, they’ll say no. Explain to them that they didn’t want to jump, short as it was, because the consequences of missing would be so severe. Likewise, our lesson today is about an action that has very severe consequences. So severe, we should be wary of even coming close to “making the jump.”

TRANSITION

In this session, we will look at the Seventh Commandment, in which God forbids adultery and thereby emphasizes the goodness of sex within the marriage covenant. Sexual immorality distorts the picture of the gospel and becomes an idol that controls our behavior. Jesus showed how the sin of adultery begins with lust in the human heart. Through the gospel, we are forgiven of our disobedience, and we are set free to live in purity so that others might see the goodness and glory of God.
CONVEY

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT HELPS TO EMPHASIZE...

1. WHY GOD HATES ADULTERY.
Read Deuteronomy 5:18 and open up for discussion regarding the reasons why God forbids adultery. Highlight the reasons below (p.95).

- Because it goes against God's original design.

- What are some passages in the Bible that confirm the goodness of sex within marriage? What does the prohibition against adultery tell us about God's view of sex and marriage?

- In what ways can we, as students who are not married, bring honor and glory to God that displays the beauty of the gospel?

- Because it destroys marriages and family (pgs.95-96).

- Have you or someone you know walked through the pain caused by adultery? What were the consequences of this sin? Why do you think immorality is treated so seriously in the Scriptures?

- Read 2 Samuel 11, and list the mistakes that David made before, during, and after his descent into adultery.

- Because it damages a picture of the gospel (p.96).
- Because it is an expression of spiritual adultery (p.96-97).

- What are some activities the Scriptures would consider “spiritually adulterous” toward God?

At this point, consider using the story “The Best of Intentions…” in the PSG (p.71) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.

2. THE CONSEQUENCE OF COMMITTING IT.
Introduce Proverbs 6:20-29, and encourage students to notice the contrast between “life” (wise obedience) and “death” (burned by disobedience). Trace the progression of sin—flattery, lust, infatuation (pgs.97-98).

- How can temptation lead a person into sexual immorality? How can Christians guard against potentially compromising situations?
What are some other activities that would fall under the prohibition against adultery in the Seventh Commandment?

Highlight the description of the man who commits adultery in Proverbs 7, especially how the story ends (v. 22-23). Use this as a way of driving home the serious consequences of adultery (idolatry that leads to destruction). Also mention how sex outside of marriage cheapens God’s gift of sexuality (p.98).

At this point, consider using the story “Little Choice, Big Deal” in the PSG (p.72) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.

In what ways can sexual sin become an idol? What are some ways you see a cheapening of sexuality in society today?

What are some examples of movies or television shows that romanticize or glamorize adultery? What should be our response to their message?

3. THE CURE FOR THE LUSTFUL HEART.

Transition to this section by asking the group what we should do in light of God’s design for sexuality. Introduce Matthew 5:27-30, and encourage students to note how Jesus traces adulterous behavior back to the heart (p.99).

Emphasize that a gospel-transformed heart is the only solution to lust and adultery. Then, discuss specific ways we can avoid temptation, pornography, and lust (p.99).

At this point, consider using the story “Satisfies More than Snickers” in the PSG (p.75) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.

How does pornography distort sexual desire? What are some practical ways we can hold each other accountable as we seek to live holy, pure lives that glorify God?

Tell the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery to drive home the point that our sexual sins can be forgiven (pgs.99-100).

How can we demonstrate the attitude of Christ toward those who have fallen into adultery? How does the gospel give us hope as we deal with sexual sin?

Oftentimes, lapses into lust are followed by strong remorse and feelings of shame. How can we use those feelings to move us to godly sorrow and repentance rather than paralyzing us from serving the Lord and others?
As with every generation, there is a growing need to speak biblically to students over the topic of sex. Part of this stems from the sexual confusion and perversion promoted with the culture, while the other part stems from the basic need for our students to rightly understand God’s design and intention when it comes to sex and romance.

Why do you think it is important to understand issues of sex and romance in light of God’s design and intention?

There are several points throughout this session where the details of this Commandment collide with a student’s life. For starters, it teaches why God hates adultery, noting that it goes against God’s design, is an expression of spiritual adultery, and misrepresents the gospel, etc. Not only that, but the session also emphasizes the consequences of committing adultery, allowing students to see first hand the biblical warning to those entering into an adulterous relationship.

How could avoiding God’s instruction in this area cause heartache and pain?

Finally, similar to the previous session, the issue of adultery is one that is primarily of the heart. Thus, even though many of your students are years away from being in a marriage relationship, they can still identify with the root issue of lust that leads to physical adultery. Moreover, since lust is ultimately an issue of the heart, any student who has lusted in his or her heart is a sexual sinner in need of forgiveness and restoration. Thus, when it comes to issues of pornography, premarital sex, or same sex attraction, it is important to note that these things are symptomatic of a deeper issue taking place within the heart. And like with all heart issues, the only lasting cure for sexual sins is the finished work of Christ on our behalf.

What is the connection between our purity as God’s people and our proclamation of the gospel? What are some practical ways we can elevate the institution of marriage in our churches?

Why is it important to focus on the heart when it comes to issues of purity?
DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY
THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT HELPS TO EMPHASIZE WHY GOD HATES ADULTERY, THE CONSEQUENCE OF COMMITTING IT, AND THE CURE FOR THE LUSTFUL HEART.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION AND DISCUSSION STARTER

Not long ago, a commercial came out for Pepsi Max® that depicts two truck drivers eating at the same diner. One represents Pepsi Max and the other Coke Zero®. The Pepsi guy strikes up a conversation with the Coke guy while the song “Why Can’t We Be Friends?” plays from the jukebox. Next, the Pepsi driver offers a Pepsi Max to his newfound friend (who happens to be wearing a Coca Cola hat and uniform). Thinking this is a sign of true friendship, the Coke driver takes a large swig of the soda. But the Pepsi driver gets his smartphone out, records the other driver, posts the video to YouTube®, and then tells the guy what he’s just done. The commercial ends with the two of them launching out of the diner window in a brawl.

The reason the Pepsi Max commercial is effective is because we see the Coca-Cola driver “cheating” on his company. In reality, of course, he was just drinking another soda. He was not married to the product; he just worked for the company. Even though he wouldn’t be legally prohibited from drinking Pepsi, there is irony in his actions. What makes the spot effective is that we expect fidelity from the truck driver, even without oath or commitment.

Scripture has much to say about fidelity, oaths, and commitment. But Scripture’s focus is on more important things than brand loyalty for certain teams, companies, or products.

First and foremost, God desires for us to be faithful to Him, to put no other gods before Him and live in purity. This faithfulness is expressed in our actions, such as your future lifelong commitment to your husband or wife. God intended marriage to be for life. Because marriage is the physical and spiritual union of a man and woman, there are dire consequences that come from breaking this commitment.

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH
If God had the gospel of Jesus’s salvation in mind when he established marriage, then marriage only ‘works’ to the degree that approximates the pattern of God’s self-giving love in Christ.  
—Tim Keller

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY
We should fear and love God, and so we should lead a chaste and pure life in word and deed, each one loving and honoring his wife or her husband.
—Martin Luther
THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT HELPS TO EMPHASIZE...
1. WHY GOD HATES ADULTERY (DEUT. 5:18).

Following the Commandment forbidding murder is the one forbidding adultery. Take a look at the black-and-white way the Commandment comes to us:

Do not commit adultery (Deut. 5:18).

BECAUSE IT GOES AGAINST GOD’S ORIGINAL DESIGN.
The prohibition against adultery doesn’t make sense until we understand God’s original design for sexual expression within the confines of marriage. From the beginning, God established a blueprint for the family. He saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and He created woman. Adam and Eve together reflected the image of God in their relationship of trust and love.

In Genesis 2:24-25, we read: “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.” God’s design was for one man to be united with one woman as one flesh. Man would leave his father and mother in order to form a new family. In the innocence and purity of the Garden of Eden, they would live together naked and not feel any shame.

BECAUSE IT DESTROYS MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES.
The glorious picture of marital bliss in the Garden is shattered by human sin. When the first couple sinned against God, they became separated from God. The marriage covenant is still powerful, but because of sin, it is a fractured version of what God originally intended. Trust is broken. Marriages are imperfect. Many fall apart.

Throughout Old Testament history, we see how marriage was damaged as a result of sin in the world. Men mistreated women by betraying them or taking multiple wives. Adultery became commonplace.

A well-known story of adultery in the Old Testament is that of King David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11. Here we see a strong king who followed after God’s heart, but who fell to the sin of adultery. David, the giant-killer and mighty warrior, saw from the rooftop of his palace a beautiful woman bathing. What the king wanted the king got. Disregarding the fact she was married to Uriah—a soldier on the front lines fighting for Israel—David slept with her.

After Bathsheba informed him she was pregnant, David sent for Uriah, thinking he could cover up his sin by having Uriah spend the night with his wife. But Uriah was a faithful servant who extolled the virtues of his king and soldiers. Even David’s plot to use alcohol to dull Uriah’s senses didn’t work. Uriah didn’t sleep with his wife, and the secret pregnancy would soon be known. The lust that led David to adultery next led him to lie and then led...
him to kill. In a remarkable display of depravity, David sent Uriah to the front lines and ordered the other military advisers to pull back during the fighting so Uriah would die.

David did not get away with this act of cruelty. God’s law is clear and is intended to guide His people to a life filled with joy. David’s sin reaped consequences for his family and country.

**BECAUSE IT DAMAGES A PICTURE OF THE GOSPEL.**

You may wonder what God’s law about adultery has to do with the gospel. In Galatians 3:24, Paul wrote, “The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.” If we apply this verse about the law in general to the specific law against adultery, we see that this Commandment (like a guardian) was meant to protect marriage. It protected the design of what God established from the beginning.

The law also protected marriage as a picture of the gospel. The apostle Paul wrote that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Marriage is connected to Christ in that it paints a picture of our relationship with God.

In Matthew 19:5-6, Jesus reaffirmed the Old Testament’s vision of a man leaving his family to become one flesh with his wife. This passage demonstrates the fact that Christ came to fulfill the law, not banish it. It also demonstrates the importance of fidelity in marriage. Jesus went so far as to say, “Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate.”

God is the One who joins men and women together. Marriage is more than a document that deals with assets, rights, and obligations. It is the physical, lasting union of a man and woman for life. Adultery is the tearing apart of the “one flesh” God has established. That’s why it damages people emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.

**BECAUSE IT IS AN EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL ADULTERY.**

Physical adultery may be against a spouse, but there is always a spiritual component that is against God. That’s why David, who sinned against Bathsheba and her husband, when confessing his sin cried out to God for forgiveness. “Against You—You alone—I have sinned” (Ps. 51). Physical adultery is an expression of spiritual adultery.

In Scripture, God often describes His relationship with His people in terms of a marriage covenant. The expectation is love and fidelity. God is faithful and constantly pursuing His people, but His people “cheat on Him” by running after idols.

Through the prophets Hosea and Ezekiel, God described His relationship with the nation of Israel in graphic terms. God said that He covered the nakedness of Israel and entered into a covenant with “her,” giving the nation a female description in order to compare His relationship with Israel to that of a groom and bride. He bestowed wealth and gifts on His beloved, but the nation chose to worship idols. Ezekiel 16:15: “But you were confident in your
beauty and acted like a prostitute because of your fame. You lavished your sexual favors for everyone who passed by. Your beauty became his.”

The seriousness with which God takes our sin is a sign that God desires to receive glory and love from us. He desires to have a relationship with His people, and this relationship must be exclusive.

As believers, our relationship with Christ is now described in the terms of a bride and a groom. In James we read that friendship with the world is hostility towards God. Those who give themselves over to worldly patterns of thought and behavior are “adulteresses.” Serious language from a God serious about loving His people!

2. THE CONSEQUENCE OF COMMITTING IT (PROV. 6:20-29).

We’ve seen that God forbids adultery because it unravels a bond that should never be broken. Now, let’s look at the consequence that come from disregarding the Seventh Commandment. Proverbs 6 gives instruction and warning against adultery.

My son, keep your father’s command, and don’t reject your mother’s teaching. Always bind them to your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk here and there, they will guide you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; when you wake up, they will talk to you. For a command is a lamp, teaching is a light, and corrective discipline is the way to life. They will protect you from an evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a stranger. Don’t lust in your heart for her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyelashes. For a prostitute’s fee is only a loaf of bread, but an adulteress goes after a precious life. Can a man embrace fire and his clothes not be burned? Can a man walk on burning coals without scorching his feet? So it is with the one who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished (Prov. 6:20-29).

This passage begins with the author telling the reader that his wisdom will bring life and discipline. It is written from the perspective of a father giving advice to his son. He wants him to stay away from the woman who has a flattering tongue. He warns his son not to lust after her or be captivated by her eyelashes. Notice the progression: flattery and flirting that leads to lust and then infatuation.

The following chapter in Proverbs reiterates these warnings in the form of a story. A young man wanders past the house of a seductress. Lacking sense, he goes inside. With smooth words, she convinces him that her husband is away and will not be back for some time. (Sounds like someone today saying, “No one needs to know!”) Proverbs 7:22-23: “He follows her impulsively like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer bounding toward a trap until an arrow pierces its liver, like a bird darting into a snare—he doesn’t know it will cost him his life.”

Voices From The Church
As believers, through Christ we have been made worthy to be a place that God is pleased to dwell. In light of this, we must be driven to live a life reflecting who is inside of us.
—Eric Mason

Further Commentary
Verses 27-29 illustrate the inevitability of punishment. To “go unpunished” is a legal term meaning to be acquitted, declared innocent, pardoned, or released; to be set free from guilt, liability, or punishment (Ex. 21:19; Nm. 5:31). The basic meaning of the word is to be pure, clean, or free. To say that someone will not go unpunished is more emphatic than simply saying he will be punished.
This language may seem harsh, but that’s how serious the sin is. The point of these warnings is that our actions have severe consequences. Violating the law of God will not go unpunished. We will face earthly consequences for our sin, and unless we repent, we will face eternal condemnation too.

Do you see the contrast between life and death in Proverbs 6? The command to discipline oneself and stay away from adultery is “the way to life” (v. 23). Obedience lends protection from evil and resistance to flattery (v. 24). The adulteress goes after “a precious life” (v. 26). Then note the imagery at the end. Fire, burnt clothes, and burnt feet—a vivid illustration of the punishment of verse 29.

The consequence of adultery—just like the consequence of all sin—is spiritual and physical death. If left unchecked, sexual desire can become an idol that consumes our hearts. That’s why we must guard our heart from anything that would hinder our relationship with God. Choosing to disobey God is choosing death over life.

Another consequence of adultery is that it cheapens the beautiful gift of sex that God has given us. The Bible doesn’t just give us warnings against sex outside of marriage; it also commends sex inside of marriage. For example, Song of Solomon is a love poem between a husband and wife who have a strong physical and emotional desire for one another. They describe their physical attraction in vivid language. Take the beautiful descriptions of marital love in Song of Solomon and compare them to the warnings against adultery in Proverbs 6-7. Immediately, you can see how sex outside of God’s plan cheapens the gift.


We’ve seen that the prohibition against adultery is an expression of God’s desire for His people to live according to His design. We’ve also seen that keeping this Commandment leads to life, while breaking this Commandment leads to death and destruction. We know that adultery tramples on the gift of marriage by polluting it with sexual immorality. But how do we stay pure? In a fallen world, we will battle lust and temptation. What do we do?

The law focuses on the action of what not to do. Jesus went even further. Knowing that our actions and motives are contaminated by sin, Jesus claimed that even if we do not outwardly commit the sin of adultery, we are guilty of sin because of our inward lusts. Jesus took the Seventh Commandment and went beyond the action to the heart:

You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 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. 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 (Matt. 5:27-30).

According to Jesus, it’s not the hands and feet that lead us to adultery; it’s the heart. Therefore, the solution to a lustful heart is not willpower or self-discipline or self-mastery. It’s a heart transformation. The only solution to an adulterous heart is to have our hearts changed by the gospel. Living in light of this change, we are to do whatever it takes to remain pure.

How do we apply Jesus’ teaching in this passage? To begin with, we ought to recognize pornography as a form of adultery of the heart. Lustful thoughts and fantasies are adultery of the heart. Whether in the form of visual pictures or erotic romance novels, pornography leads to more and more lust.

Those who have had transformed hearts are called by Christ to go beyond the mere avoidance of adulterous actions and fight against adulterous thoughts as well. This may mean giving up some of the movies and television shows that we watch. It may mean having accountability in our lives when it comes to being online or on our phones. If that seems too severe, just look at the severity of Jesus’ warning in verse 30. Better to lose something that leads us to sin rather than be thrown into hell!

Stop and think for a moment: What in this lifetime is worth an eternity in hell? The Scriptures are clear that the pleasures of sexual sin last for a moment. Eternity without Christ is suffering that will not end. The harsh words of Jesus are for our good, meant to shake us out of our slumber. If the earthly consequences of sexual sin aren’t enough to keep someone from falling, then consider the eternal consequences of unrepentant sin!

Proactively dealing with sexual sin and temptation does not mean creating a checklist of legalistic requirements. It means our pursuit of pleasure in God is greater than our pursuit of pleasure in this world. So take a good look at your life, and take a good look at your heart. If you are addicted to internet pornography, get some accountability. If you are committing adultery within your heart, seek God’s grace and repentance in your life. There should be a sense of urgency in fighting sexual sin.

The good news of the gospel is that the demand of the law—that all who are guilty of adultery deserve punishment—is met by Jesus Christ, the innocent Lamb who died on the cross for our sins. No matter how bad you’ve messed up, you can find forgiveness in Christ.

In John 8, a group of scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman caught in the act of adultery. Would they stone her? Would Jesus consent to her death? Jesus told them that whoever was without sin should cast the first stone. The men walked away. The implication is this: only Jesus had the right to stone the woman for her adultery. But did He? No. He did not condemn her, but instead told her to go and sin no more.

The woman caught in adultery was forgiven, not because she deserved it but because Christ bestowed it. She was shown grace. And that grace is what empowered her to leave her life of sin.
In the same way this woman was forgiven, we too are offered forgiveness. This grace is greater than all sin. Freed from sin, we can now live a life that is pleasing to God. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says that it is God’s will that we abstain from sexual immorality. God has not called us to live a life of sin, but of holiness. We seek to please God out of love for Him and out of gratitude for His undeserved favor.

CONCLUSION

There’s a missional aspect to keeping the Seventh Commandment. Our purity showcases our identity as God’s missional people who live for His glory. The Church is supposed to be different from the world. Jesus said in Matthew 5 that we are to be the light of the world. Our attitudes and actions should be different from those outside the Church. We demonstrate the beauty of godly living, not by lording our morals over others, but by showing them the wisdom of following Christ and the grace of trusting Him for forgiveness. The stronger our marriages, the stronger our witness to the gospel.

REFERENCES