

God's Answer to Your Greatest Struggles  
**Our Struggle with Purity**  
Do Not Commit Adultery  
Exodus 20:14

**Introduction:**

*[Before exiting to Kids Worship and Little Kids Praise, the children are seated at the front for a story, introducing their lesson to be continued downstairs on "Peace" that comes in keeping promises. The story also forms an introduction to the sermon to adults on keeping promises in marital faithfulness.]*

One day, Ben's mom asked him what he would like to do for his birthday that was coming up the next Friday.

"Well," said Ben, "I'd like to have one friend over for a party with the family, a sleepover, and then go fishing with Dad on Saturday morning."

When his mom asked who he wanted to come to the sleepover, Ben knew right away.

"I want Johnny to come," he said. "He's my best friend, and I want it to be just the two of us."

So the next day, Ben invited Johnny to the party. "It's my birthday on Friday, and I'd like you to come and stay for a sleepover, and then in the morning, we'll go fishing with my dad. It will be just the two of us. It will be awesome."

Johnny was really excited about the party plans too. "That will be great," he said.

"You will definitely come, right?" asked Ben. "You're my best friend, and you are the only one I've invited."

"Of course I'll come," said Johnny. "I'll be there on Friday. I promise."

But the next day Luke, another boy in the same class at school, spoke to Johnny. "Hey, Johnny, I'm having a party and I'd really like you to come. It's going to be at Chuck E. Cheese's; everyone's going to be there, and then we're all coming back to my place to camp out in tents!" Johnny loved Chuck E. Cheese's, and when he asked who else was invited, he found that his other friends were all going to Luke's party. And Luke's backyard was like a forest, so he was excited to think of camping back there.

"That will be great," he said. "When's the party?"

"It's on Friday," said Luke.

Johnny didn't know what to do. He had promised to go to Ben's party, but now he felt like he wanted to go to Luke's.

Later that day, Johnny saw Ben on the playground. "Look, Ben," he said, "I'm not sure if I can come to your party."

"Why not?" asked Ben. "Luke asked me to go to his party, and I really want to go there."

Ben didn't say anything.

But when he got home, Ben cried and cried. In fact, he couldn't stop crying. Ben's mom found him sobbing and wanted to know what was wrong. "Johnny told me he was coming to my party," said Ben. "He promised. But now he doesn't want to come."

Then, after a while, Ben got angry. "I don't care if Johnny doesn't come to my party. I hate him, and he's never going to be my best friend again."

Johnny wasn't happy either. He knew he couldn't go to two parties, and he had to make up his mind. So when he was getting ready for bed, he decided to ask his dad.

"Dad, I've got a problem. I promised I'd go to Ben's party on Friday, but now I've been invited to go to Luke's party as well. Luke's party is at Check E. Cheese's. My other friends will be there, and then they are having a campout in tents. I would rather go to Luke's party, but what should I do?"

"Hmmm," said Johnny's dad. "You made a promise, and then you got what seems like a better offer. This is a big decision. Johnny, what if I got a better offer for a wife? You know, there are a lot of really smart women at my office, and some of them are really friendly."

"You can't do that, Dad," said Johnny. "You made a promise to Mom!"

"That's right," his dad said, "and that's why you don't have to worry. And your mom doesn't have to worry. I made a promise when we got married. And it's really important that we learn to keep our promises, even when we are young."

Johnny thought about what his dad had said. Early the next morning Johnny phoned Ben. "Ben, I'm sorry I upset you by talking about Luke's party. If you still want me to come to your party, I'd really like to come."

Johnny had a blast at Ben's party. In fact, he had so much fun that he didn't even think about Luke's party at Chuck E. Cheese's, and the next morning Johnny caught a fish so big Ben had to use a net to pull it up.

A few days later, Johnny got a note in the mail from Ben. It said, "Dear Johnny, thanks for making my party the best one I've ever had." It was the best party Johnny had ever been to as well. Johnny smiled to himself. He felt good inside, and he was so glad that he had kept his promise.

*[Dismiss children to Kids Worship and Little Kids Praise]*

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The enticement Johnny felt to go back on a previous commitment because a more attractive one presented itself is not isolated to grade schoolers and parties. Unfortunately, similar temptations come at us married adults too, enticing us to step away from the promise we made to our spouse. We are tempted to step outside the predictable, the routine, and—perhaps, even at times—the boring commitment to our husband or wife in order to attend someone else's party. It promises to be fun and exciting. And—here is where illogical thinking steps in—you might even think you can actually go to both

parties. That is, be married to the security of your spouse while having the excitement of an affair on the side.

If we are thinking that way, we are not dealing with reality. We need to be reminded of what the Scriptures say about the Seventh Commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Listen as the Word of God tells us the truth.

*Reader’s Theatre: read by Scott, Brenda, Tom, and Mary  
(see script on pages 11 & 12)*

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The most scandalous misprint in all of Bible-making came in the year 1631 when someone discovered a word missing in the hot-off-the-press KJV. It was the word “not” in the Seventh Commandment. It made the Authorized Version to read, “Thou shalt commit adultery.” Thereafter the 1631 edition became known as the “Wicked Bible.”

When we look at the TV sitcoms and Hollywood movies, we might wonder if our society has been issued Exodus 20:14 in the 1631 edition. Adultery is epidemic, spreading contagion among marriages whose immune system of commitment has been compromised.

There is no doubt whatsoever about what the full text of the Seventh Commandment prohibits: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” The sermon today is simple. It will answer four questions: What is adultery? What does adultery cost? How do you guard against adultery? What if you’ve done it?

### **What is adultery?**

The Seventh Commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery.” What sin exactly is it addressing?

If this set of books [*display a set of encyclopedia volumes with re-labeled spines*] were the encyclopedia of sexual sins, each volume would have a different title and topic.

- This one might be **Fornication: Sex Before Marriage.**
- This book might be entitled **Sexual Abuse: An Unspeakable Perversion.**
- This volume, **Pornography: Degrading, Disastrous, Demeaning and Addictive.**
- And this one: **Lusts: Fantasies and Adulteries of the Heart.**

Jesus said mental fantasies are themselves sinful. “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” (Matthew 5:27-28)

“Committing adultery in one’s heart is sin. But do not succumb to the faulty reasoning that there is no difference between physical and mental adultery. Adultery breaks the marriage covenant, whereas adulterous thoughts do not. Adultery provides the ground for divorce, whereas mental adultery does not. Adultery violates and defiles another’s body, whereas its mental counterpart does not. Adultery invites abortion and sexually transmitted diseases, whereas the mental adultery does not.” (Kent Hughes, *The Disciplines of Grace*, page 131)

Although all these volumes describe sexual sins, they are not what is prohibited by the Seventh Commandment. Oh, these other topics are addressed forthrightly, unflinchingly in other biblical passages that call them what they are—sin—but they are not what we are considering in our text and sermon today.

➤ This volume: **Adultery:** *Sexual relations by or with someone who is married.*

Why is prohibition against adultery elevated to prominence among The Ten Commandments? It is because adultery is the violation of the marriage covenant. As such, it is a direct assault against marriage. And marriage is close to the heart of God.

When God first formed the human race, he brought Adam and Eve together and pronounced it “Good.” And he proclaimed they should be the prototype of all future marriages: “So shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. And they, two, shall become one flesh.” The entity of one new family unit is proclaimed in the public ceremony of marriage, and that unity is consummated and illustrated literally as two become one physically. But, according to 1 Corinthians 6, when a person has sexual relations with someone not their spouse, two also become one again. And, for those who are married, it is a direct assault again “what God has joined together.”

Christian marriage is also close to the heart of God because it is supposed to illustrate the relationship between Christ—the Bridegroom—and the Church—the Bride. Husbands are to be servant leaders loving their wives as Christ loved the church. Wives are to follow the leadership of their husbands as the Church follows Christ her Lord. When adultery enters the mix of the Christian home, it is like throwing acid on the family portrait of Christ and the Church, ruining the image painted by the words of Ephesians 5.

Adultery is a grave act against the covenant of marriage. In fact, I take the position that Jesus warns that adultery is so acidic it can even be permitted to burn through the bonds of marriage that God intended to be life-long (see Matthew 19:9).

And that is why the prohibition against adultery rises to prominence as one of the Ten Commandments.

## What does adultery cost?

Suppose this beautiful, ornate vase was for sale, on display at the Bombay Company or some other boutique of rare and precious items. And suppose it caught your eye. You like its color and contour. You imagine right where it could fit the décor of your bedroom. But before you went any farther, before you picked it up, before you took it to the cashier, before you handed over your credit card, before you packed it out to your car, and before you set it up in your bedroom, what is the one thing you would be wise to do? Answer: Look at the price tag. Before taking the risk to even touch it and certainly before sliding your credit card, you certainly would want to know one thing: “How much will it cost?”

The same thought should be on one’s mind before considering the purchasing a vase of “adultery.” Let’s flip over the tag and reveal the high cost of adultery.

To help us read the fine print of its cost, let’s look through the eyes of one of the most famous adulterers of the Bible, King David. David was King. He was not a cheap politician who had taken over a city making people call him “Your Majesty.” He was no desert nomad with a band of raiders. No, he had become King under anointing of God. He had a huge army, 500 personal bodyguards, and a prosperous nation. As far as you could walk, David was the man in control.

David was successful, and he was secure. He was married to the love of his life, Abigail. Abigail, whose beauty was only surpassed by her brains. But it had been 17 years since he had married her. Maybe his life had settled into a successful, secure, and dull routine.

From his palace rooftop, he looked out upon his neighborhood. He saw another man’s wife, the beautiful Bathsheba, with of Uriah the Hittite. Knowing what it would cost David to take the next step, you or I would yell, “No, David. Stop. It’s bad enough to have lusted. Stop.”

But, having committed adultery in his heart, he soon had committed adultery with his body. A little spice on the side. No harm done. No problem. But there is a price to be paid, whether you read the tag or not. What did adultery cost David?

### **1. Transparency, replaced by a cover up.**

When a person begins an affair, it inevitably leads to loss of transparency, integrity, and honesty. Whatever communication had been going on with one’s spouse is lost behind the barrier of deception. Communication—real communication with your marriage partner—is lost because the very thing that has started to dominate your thoughts, is not being shared at all. It is being actively hidden.

For David, of course, the cover up took on criminal proportions, leading eventually to his giving instructions that Bathsheba's husband, the loyal and faithful Uriah was to be killed in battle.

**2. A place as role model**, replaced by becoming an excuse for sons to sin.

Later one of David's sons, Amnon, had a crush on his half sister, Tamar. Instead of seeing a role model in his father, Amnon saw in his father an excuse for his own sexual aggression. He raped his half sister, Tamar.

Moms and Dads, little eyes are watching. When they are teens and young adults, may you be proud to have them follow your footsteps.

**3. Family**, for it disintegrated as a result.

When Nathan the prophet confronted David, he repented. But the natural consequences had already been set in motion. Nathan predicted: *"Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. 'Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'*" (2 Samuel 12:11-12)

This prophetic judgment was fulfilled precisely. David's son Absalom later led a rebellion. As Absalom swept toward Jerusalem, he consulted with Ahithophel, *"Give your advice. What shall we do? And Ahithophel said to Absalom, 'Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened.'* So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." (2 Samuel 16:20-22)

Who is this Ahithophel who gave such counsel? A careful reading of the Bible reveals he was the grandfather of Bathsheba! [*Ahithophel was father of Eliam, 2 Sam. 23:34; Eliam was the father of Bathsheba, 2 Sam. 11:3*] He had nursed a grudge until he now squeezed out a rag of bitterness into the cup of revenge for David to drink. Part of that bitter cup was the disintegration of David's family.

This third cost is the one that motivated me to accept the assignment of preaching on this difficult topic. It is because I love those children who were up here a few minutes ago, that I preach with urgency to you who are their moms and dads. I do not want any one of those children to become human tug-of-war ropes in a custody battle between two parents who love the child but cannot forgive each other. Children must not be torn limb-from-limb. If I can stand in the way of even one of you, to turn you back from the path of adultery and its potential family disintegration, this sermon will have been worth it, to the glory of God and the strengthening of your family.

#### 4. A clear conscience, replaced by a guilty soul.

For the Christian, one of the most precious enjoyments is a clear conscience before God. But adultery causes the distress of a guilty soul. David writes in Psalm 32 about how he felt before he repented: “*When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.*” (Psalm 32:3) He realized at its base, “*Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight.*” (Psalm 51:4)

Randy Alcorn has written a list of costs resulting from adultery, entitled “The Exorbitant Price of Sexual Sin.” Copies are available at the offering boxes today. Please, pick one up and put it where you will be reminded. Read it over and over. Remember it is true:

#### **The Exorbitant Price of Sexual Sin**

(By Randy Alcorn)

1. Dishonoring my Lord and Savior.
2. Deeply hurting my spouse and children.
3. Bringing great pleasure to Satan, the enemy of God and all that is good.
4. Undermining the faithful example and hard work of other Christians.
5. Possibly bearing the physical consequences of such diseases as gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, herpes, and AIDS.
6. Heaping judgment and difficulty on the person with whom I committed adultery.
7. Possibly causing pregnancy, with the personal and financial implications.
8. Causing shame and hurt to friends, especially those I've led to Christ and discipled.
9. Invoking shame and lifelong embarrassment upon myself.

Although God forgives when we repent, he also has placed within nature the law of sowing and reaping. Often there are unavoidable costs: *Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched? So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.* (Proverbs 6:27-29)

## How do you guard against adultery?

### Pursue Purity

When those addicted to cocaine are interviewed, they usually admit cocaine was not their first drug. They first experimented with marijuana or alcohol. These are sometimes called “gateway drugs.”

When those caught in the claws of adultery are interviewed, they usually admit that prior to picking up this volume: *Adultery: Sexual relations by or with someone who is married*, they first sampled readings from these other books. These were “gateway sins.”

A boxer is seldom knocked out with one blow. But relentless body blows sets the boxer up for that one decisive knock-out punch that lands him on the canvas.

The first way to guard against adultery is to pursue purity in all aspects of your sexual life. This may involve an accountability partner or group, like the men’s A-Teams, or life groups with genders meeting separately for times of honest disclosure and earnest prayer.

### Pursue your Spouse

Instead of giving your energy toward development of an out-of-bounds, sinful relationship, pour your attention toward renewing your marriage with communication, commitment, and passion. The spark that made you fall in love in the first place can still become a satisfying flame of love and commitment.

*Dear Ann Landers: Two years ago, I was a married woman who became involved with a married man at work. At first, it was just flirting, but before long, we knew we were in love. It was exciting and wonderful. We finally decided to divorce our spouses and get married. What do I have today? My two children, who were once happy and well-adjusted, are now in therapy. I also have huge legal bills. My in-laws despise me because they see their grandchildren only twice a year. I have a husband who sits in a chair at night drinking beer and smoking cigarettes while I cook, clean and fold laundry. I wish I had used the effort I spent trying to hide my affair and put it to work saving my first marriage. I would have been a lot happier. Please print my letter so other married women (and men) will think before they start fooling around. Signed, Smart too late.*

Marriages do go through phases. There is the excitement of early romance. And often there is the phase involving the humdrum of routine and resentments. But if you continue to work on communication, acceptance, and forgiveness, your marriage will graduate into other phases. Times of fulfillment are ahead that can only be enjoyed by those who invest into their commitment tears of disappointment and prayers for perspective.

*Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times. Be exhilarated always with her love. For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress, and embrace the bosom of a foreigner? (Proverbs 5:18-20)*

### **What if you've done it?**

If you have already invited adultery into the midst of your marriage covenant, I am so sorry for you. I grieve for what it has cost you and what it might yet cost you. But I also want to tell you that God is a God of hope and a future.

Two words sum up what must be done: **Repent and Rebuild.**

**Repent** by changing your mind as to what is right, and changing your will as to what you will do. Change your mind to see it for what it is under the mask. Gruesome, destructive, covenant-breaking. It is sin. Ask forgiveness from God. And, repentance involves also a changing of your will. No longer can you be involved with that person. You must end the adultery, now. You cannot taper off as if it was a nagging habit. You must deal decisively.

In Matthew 5 Jesus spoke metaphorically, but graphically of the need to deal decisively with such sins. *“And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.”* Jesus spoke metaphorically, but graphically of the need to deal decisively with sexual sin.

Second, you must rebuild. **Rebuild** your marriage. Many questions need to be carefully thought-through: What conditions caused you to be vulnerable, and how can you and your spouse begin dealing with them? Do you confess to your spouse? If so, how and when? If this sermon is striking close to home for you, please come discuss your situation with one of our pastors or a Christian marriage counselor like Michael Makinster who counsels clients here during the week.

May each of us who have or someday will speak the words of a marital covenant affirm what Johnny's dad said to his son: “That's right and that's why you don't have to worry. And your mom doesn't have to worry. I made a promise when we got married. And it's really important that we learn to keep our promises, even when we are young.”

As you heed the truths of this sermon, strengthen your commitment to your marital covenant, and invest into your marriage relationship, something encouraging will begin to happen. The stern prohibition of the Seventh Commandment (“Thou shalt not commit

adultery.”) will become for you a prediction coming true: “You will not commit adultery.”

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“Guard Your Heart”

(by Steve Green)

What appears to be a harmless glance  
Can turn to romance  
And homes are divided  
Feelings that should never have been  
Awaken within  
Tearing the heart in two  
Listen, I beg of you!

Chorus:

Guard your heart, Guard your heart  
Don't trade it for treasure  
Don't give it away  
Guard your heart, Guard your heart  
As a payment for pleasure  
It's a high price to pay  
For a soul that remains sincere  
With a conscience clear  
Guard your heart

The human heart is easily swayed  
And often betrayed  
At the hands of emotion  
We dare not leave the outcome to chance  
We must choose in advance  
Or live with the agony  
Such needless tragedy

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**“Sexual Purity”**  
(Scripture Reading by family of four)

*[Sound of telephone ring tone as if in earpiece followed by recorded message:  
“Thank you for calling the Lloyd Center Cinema. Playing today in Cinema #1, starring  
Katherine Heigl and Seth Rogen, “Knocked Up,” rated R for nudity, language, and sexual  
themes. Show times are 2:10, 4:30; 6:50; and 9:20]*

Brenda: Why was Brad Pitt voted the most admired male by teenage girls all across America? Discover what makes Brad so attractive in this month’s issue of *People Magazine*. Look for the cover picture of Britney Spears.

(Proverbs 6:20; 24-29, NLT)

Tom: “My son, obey your father’s commands

Mary: And don’t neglect your mother’s teaching.

Both: These commands and this teaching will keep you from the immoral woman.

Mary: From the smooth tongue of an adulterous woman.

Tom: Don’t lust for her beauty. Don’t let her coyness seduce you. For a prostitute will bring you to poverty.

Mary: Can a man scoop fire into his lap and not be burned?

Tom: Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet?

Mary: So it is with the man who sleeps with another man’s wife.

Tom: He who embraces her will not go unpunished.”

(Proverbs 7:6-23 TEV)

Scott: Once I was looking out the window of my house and I saw many young men, but noticed one foolish fellow in particular. He was walking along the street near the corner where a certain woman lived. Then she met him, dressed like a prostitute. She threw her arms around the young man, kissed him, looked him straight in the eyes and said,

Brenda: “I came out looking for you. Come on, let’s make love all night long. We’ll be happy in each other’s arms.”

Scott: So she tempted him with her charms, and he gave in to her smooth talk.

Tom: Suddenly he was going with her like an ox on the way to be slaughtered,

Mary: Like a deer prancing into a trap where an arrow would pierce its heart.

(Judges 16:18-21)

Brenda: Delilah realized he had finally told her the truth. Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and she called in a man to shave off his hair. And his strength left him.

“Samson, the Philistines are upon you!”

Scott: “I will do as before and shake myself free.”

Brenda: But he didn’t realize the Lord had left him.

Mary: So the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and made to grind grain in the prison.

(Proverbs 5:7-18 NIV)

Tom: Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say...

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well....May your fountain be blessed and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth...My her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?

(Exodus 20:14)

All: You shall not commit adultery.

(2 Samuel 11:1-3 NLT)

Scott: The following spring when kings usually go to war, David stayed behind in Jerusalem. Late one afternoon David got out of bed after taking a nap and went for a stroll on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was.

Tom: "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

Scott: Then David sent for her, and when she came to the palace, he slept with her.

(Genesis 39:6-12 NIV)

Brenda: Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he refused....And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even to be with her.

(1 John 2:15 NIV)

Tom: I am writing to you young men because you are strong...Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

(Psalm 119:9-11 NIV)

Scott: Question: How can a young man keep his way pure?

Brenda: Answer: By living according to your word.

Scott: I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

(Exodus 20:14)

All: You shall not commit adultery.

(Matthew 5:27-28)

Tom: You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

(Philippians 4:8, NIV)

Mary: Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.