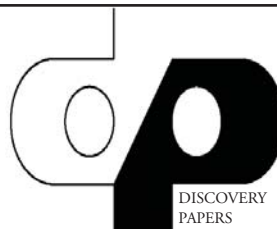


# “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY”

**SERIES: LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE**



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Good morning everyone. Today I'm starting at the back of the auditorium. This is fun. I always wondered what it's like for a bride walking in when everybody turns to look at her. And I just got my first taste of that. So thanks. The reason I'm doing this is I want you to think about what weddings are like and how people react when they go to a wedding. If you're a crying person, a wedding is probably a time when you're going to cry. Why do people cry at a wedding? They don't really cry because the cake is fabulous or because of all the things you spend lots of time on as you prepare for the wedding. I think the essence of why they cry is that a woman and a man are going to be united in a significant relationship. There's no parallel for this relationship, and it expresses a level of intimacy that, deep in our hearts, we all really want and crave for that for which we are all built. So when we go to a wedding and you watch two people being united, there's something deep inside that you can't express. There's this emotion that there is something true and pure and beautiful about a wedding, and that's part of why we celebrate weddings and why it's such a big celebration. There's all the other stuff that goes with it but that's the essence of what's being celebrated at a wedding.

Today we're going to talk about adultery but before we really talk about that I will talk more about intimacy because I think you have to understand intimacy better to understand why adultery is even one of the Ten Commandments. And where I'm going to start with is a parallel between a marriage relationship—between a husband and a wife—and our relationship with Jesus. If you read the Bible much, you'll realize that there are a lot of stories and descriptions about us being united with God that use the language of marriage. We become one with him—very similar to in Genesis where husband and wife become one flesh. Similarly, with Jesus, we use wedding language and being united with him. Jesus' first miracle is at a wedding and in the Book of Revelation it talks about coming to the marriage supper of the lamb. That's the big reception. Our whole life spiritually is a wedding. It starts with us encountering Jesus and God and becoming connected with him and it culminates in Revelation in this big festival celebration. So in a way we're always living in a wedding. As I've been preparing this, I've realized that every time you come into church it's like you're part of a wedding; this is our wedding with Jesus. We're united with

him. Let me go back and say another thing about intimacy. It requires exclusion or being exclusive. Right? You don't get married to many people—some people do but that really doesn't work. You get married to one person and similarly you only believe in one God or at least that's the way God intended it. So a lot of the language used in the Bible, when you violate that exclusive intimacy, is language of utter betrayal, something that really saps everything and takes all of the energy out of that intimacy. Right? I'll pull up one quote from Jeremiah. This is from when Israel had gone astray and they worshipped God but they also had all of these other idols around.

Jeremiah 5:7-8 God says,

**Why should I pardon you?  
Your sons have forsaken Me  
And sworn by those who are not gods.  
When I had fed them to the full,  
They committed adultery  
And trooped to the harlot's house.  
They were well-fed lusty horses, each one  
neighing after his neighbor's wife.**

So God had provided everything they needed and they were still adulterous.

Do any of you like *Lord of the Rings*? Are there any fans? I'm assuming there are some fans. My daughter loved the *Lord of the Rings*. We must have watched the special features DVDs more than the movies themselves. I can tell you all of these obscure facts. She's fabulous at *Lord of the Rings* trivia. I remember there is this one scene in the special features where Aragorn is on his big white horse—I think it's the third movie—and the horse is just jittery. They can't shoot the scene because they can't control the horse. The narration in the special feature said that they figured out, after the fact, that there was a mare in heat somewhere on the set and this stallion was consumed with thinking, “How can I get to that mare?” I realized that's exactly the same thing as to why the horse image is used here. In the animal world if you're ready to consummate something with your female animal then that just consumes you and you cannot do anything else. Similarly with us and God, we'll

get some idea of something that's going to satisfy us and we're just consumed by that and we lose perspective and we don't realize what's going on. So God rightly calls Israel adulterers, and can also call us adulterers when we worship something else. Adultery, in that context, happens in an exclusive relationship that we have gone outside of, that we have violated, that we have given up on, or that is no longer exclusive. That's part of the reason that marriage is such a theme of God's. It's one thing that we can talk about that we physically understand and experience. It is the best reflection of our relationship with God. That's part of the reason why he hates divorce so much. If everybody is getting divorces and marriage doesn't mean anything, then he's losing his best example of what it means to be with him. So he's very passionate about marriage and making it work.

I do want to say as a word of caution; I know people get divorces, I know that's an issue. I know adultery is an issue and I just want to be clear that God can redeem anything. So I'm not trying to say if you commit adultery or if you get divorced then you're out. That's not at all the message. The message is that marriage really matters and it matters that it reflect a right relationship with God.

There is another parallel I want to paint between human marriage and intimacy with God. If you've done any marriage counseling, you may have heard about the five love languages. The languages are Words of Affirmation, Gifts, Quality Time, Physical Touch, and Acts of Service. I'm terrible at that last one. What's funny is that as I was preparing this I told Janice, who's my wife, "Hey I found this quiz for the five different love languages. You answer about twenty questions and it ranks your love languages." Not surprisingly, my order was one order and Janice's was exactly the opposite order. That tells you a bit about what our married life is like. I was thinking about those love languages. Every one of them (except for the physical touch, I'm still trying to think about that one) are expressions of worship with God. Quality time: spending time with God. Acts of Service: doing things for him and him doing things for us. Words of affirmation: singing praise to him and him speaking through his Word to us. Gifts: giving gifts to him and him giving gifts we don't deserve to us. It's all the language of love. We talk about it in a marriage context but it also applies to how we relate with God. These are all aspects of what it means to have an intimate relationship.

As Steve mentioned, in the culture today, marriage can be devalued, although people still enjoy weddings. It's interesting. Exclusive relationships are devalued and yet people still love weddings and people still get married. There's a note of hope in that. The culture hasn't killed that

yet. However, our culture does not want us to put all of our eggs in one basket. If you're investing, you have to diversify. If you work, you can't work too long at one job because you might get punched into something so it's better to work a bunch of different jobs—maybe a new one every couple of years. Marriage and relationship with God are exactly the opposite. It IS putting all of your eggs in one basket. So one thing I want you to come away with this morning is God is very much for putting all of your eggs in one basket in marriage. If that phrase ever comes up then just remember that there are times when God wants you to do that.

I'm going to be Silicon Valley just for a moment. To some of you this will not make any sense at all, but to others you'll say, 'Ah, I get that.' I come from a software company. I work at HP and I do software design and user interface design. When you're trying to build some software you're trying to create something that will perform a task. You have to communicate with some other software and they have to work together to do something. If you build something, the more you can constrain it, by making it do one thing and ONLY one thing really well, the easier it is to make. The more complicated and the more flexible something has to be, like some NASA project that has to do everything in the world, the longer it takes to build and it's really complicated. But if it's fairly well constrained then it's easy to build and there's freedom in that. There's freedom to create because of the constraints. In the same way, putting all your eggs in the basket with marriage and putting all your eggs in the basket with God, actually creates a freedom. Having these constraints around you allows you to then enter into the relationship fully, to be vulnerable, to try things because you're not trying to manage all of these other things around you. There's something safe in that. So even though the world wants to say 'independence, do your own thing, keep all of your options open' it also—when it stops and thinks—recognizes that that is really not the best way to approach things all of the time. There's hope out there.

Let's talk a little bit about Jesus' comments. I appreciate what Brent Becker did last week when we talked about murder. He talked about "Thou shalt not murder," the commandment before this. He read in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where Jesus talks about how murder is not just killing somebody, but it's also your words and your attitude. Jesus now follows it with a very similar pattern on adultery.

Matthew 5:27-28—

**You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'<sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone**

**who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

It says *looks at a woman with lustful intent*. Yes, I am going to talk about pornography this morning. Statistically, I'd say roughly, somewhere between 50-70% or more of the men sitting in this congregation have looked at pornography somewhat regularly. Pause and think about that for a second. True with women too. That is a part of the experience of culture. The statistics in Christian circles play that out. I don't want you to think about this as "He's going to slam me for that." I just want you to think about, if that's me, that's me. Just own up to it. That's me. Start with that. Jesus goes on to say,

Matthew 5:29-30—

**If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.**

Interesting that it's your eye.

**For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup>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 your members than that your whole body go into hell.**

So he's saying that this really matters. He's saying that it's better to get rid of something that makes you less of who you are. Or it may be good to get rid of something that reduces your independence or reduces your autonomy. Because if you don't get rid of it then it is going to consume you and it's going to take over. He goes on to say,

Matthew 5:31-32—

**It was also said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce." <sup>32</sup>But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery ...**

He is enabling her to express something outside of the marriage context that God put together.

**... and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**

So I know some people in here have married divorced women and yes there is an element of adultery in that.

Again, I want to clarify, nothing is unredeemable. God can redeem everything. If everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has committed adultery, there is a lot of adultery that has gone on for people in this room. So don't think this adultery is only a really bad thing that you have never done, kind of like when Brent said, "If I haven't killed anybody then I'm OK." So if I haven't actually committed adultery then I'm OK. No, no, no, no. Jesus is saying that if I have headed down this path; if I've given up on exclusive intimacy in some way, even in my thoughts, then I have committed adultery. I have violated the commandment. It's a part of our experience. How does this happen? How do we get into this? Why is it a part of our experience? Because God wants us to have intimacy. He made it for us with him. He made it for us with marriage. I'll talk a little bit later about if you have to be married to experience intimacy at this level. The answer is "No" but we'll come back to that in a second. So, he's made us for intimacy, we know that. We may not even be able to rationally understand that. We're going to try to satisfy that. We want that kind of intimacy so bad. What Satan is really, really good at—I got this from Lynne Fox or else it was one of the counselors here—Satan never creates anything on his own. He always takes something from God and twists it or manipulates it some way towards his purposes. So Satan has taken something beautiful—sexual intimacy—and twisted it in a way to create things like pornography, or to have some fantasy life that says, 'Hey, I can get this intimacy, it's real easy.' But intimacy is extremely hard. You can't look at your spouse or even being with God and say, 'You know today I'm going to accomplish intimacy.' Check it off. I'm done. I've succeeded. It doesn't work like that at all. It's hard. It takes work. It takes communication. It doesn't mean it's blissful all of the time.

Satan deceives us and says, 'Hey, you can get this intimacy some other way.' But it's empty. It's shallow. It's not a two way street. I want us to think in terms of a comparison—we started off comparing our personal intimacy with a spouse to intimacy with God. I want you to connect something like pornography with Israel worshipping the golden calf. The golden calf is the molten image that the Israelites made out of gold about the time of the Ten Commandments. They said, 'God is too distant. It's too hard to relate to him. He's too big. I want something tangible that is right in front of me and that I have control over.' It is exactly the same with something like pornography. I want something that I can manage, that will satisfy me, that isn't complicated. I think I can get some intimacy out of this, but it just keeps on consuming and destroying. So God gets upset with the Israelites for worshipping the golden calf saying, "That is meaningless, you're not going to get anything out of that. You've just wasted tons of your time and mine. You've

gone off and you're destroying yourself.' That is exactly the thing that's happening when we try to pursue intimacy through something like pornography or some other actual relationship outside of marriage.

So we can try to go for intimacy with a short cut thinking we can control it or get it another way. The other thing we say is, 'Intimacy is just too hard to get. It is complicated. It takes work and I'm not going to try for it.' Maybe you have some issues. Maybe you have some sexual abuse in your past or an emotional issue that makes intimacy really hard to reach, and so you say, 'I'm just going to check out.' You might even be married and you might say, 'Yeah, I'm just not going to go there. We'll just function as being married but we're not going to pursue intimacy together.' That's also dangerous. God created us for intimacy with him and for intimacy in a marriage context. So trying to avoid it or escape from it is perilous.

How do we deal with this? We've got this desire for intimacy—this thing we want and crave. It's hard to get, it's hard to grab onto, it's hard to make simple. There are all these ways we try to pursue it that don't work. I'm going to suggest a few ways to make it work—to care about it and to pursue it. What if you are not married and asking, "Am I missing something?" The answer is, "Well, you're missing something, but it's not the big thing that you're missing." When we get to the Book of Revelation and we're joined with Jesus, there is no more marrying and being given in marriage. Marriage is an institution that goes away in the time of Revelation. Then we're simply with God and Jesus. That's the relationship that counts. That's the one that matters. The whole reason we're here is to get us ready for that. And yes, human marriage helps prepare us and understand that better but by no means is it required to get there.

When Janice and I were engaged to get married, about 25 years ago, I had a friend from high school and his parents were strong Christians. We were having lunch with them and I asked them—they were wise—what advice they had for me in getting married. I remember and will never forget what his mom said. Her name is Sheila Mount, she had very direct eyes, she was strong and she was wise and she said—she just pinned me with her eyes and said—"OK, the number one thing you need to do to have a good marriage is spend time on and work on your relationship with Jesus. That's the best thing you can do." At the time I thought, wait a minute. I was hoping for something a little more practical, interpersonal, and relational with my wife. I have to tell you, Sheila was exactly right. If you want any relationship to work, the best thing you can do is to get close to Jesus

and work on intimacy with him and then intimacy in other areas. It's not that it's going to be easy but it will pan out.

I have one book recommendation; this is thanks to Mark Verber. It's called *A Praying Life* by Paul Miller. The reason I recommend it is because it has helped me to make prayer a part of the rhythm of living. Prayer is not like some exotic thing but rather it is simply inviting Jesus into everything that's going on. So, if you like books and want a book to read and you're thinking, "Man I need a book to read before the summer ends and it's almost over," I recommend that one.

The other thing I'd recommend is to pursue intimacy with your spouse and yes, consider your love languages—that is if you're married. Pursue all of the love languages. Find new ways to pursue intimacy with your spouse. Care about intimacy and be open to intimacy in ways you might not have thought of before. Probably the most important thing for me in preparing this sermon has been thinking about my marriage strictly in terms of intimacy and trying to stretch out what that means. Trying to experience it more ways, either in just a look or thoughtful ways of doing things together or sharing experiences. These things were there before but I don't think I realized that it was all part of this intimacy package. Again, it's a two way street. You can want intimacy and maybe your spouse doesn't or maybe it looks differently. So it'll be hard but it's worth it.

Last, I do suggest you cut off your hand and pluck out your eye. Let me explain what I mean by that. That it really matters—this stuff. Don't think, "Oh, yeah I'll get around to it some day or I'll care about it later or I don't have time for this now." I would recommend inviting God into any situation that is adulterous. Whether it is something you're looking at or it's some way you're worshipping something that's not God. He's there already. It's not like he's not there watching what you're doing. So he's there already, just acknowledge that and let him help you. I also recommend getting in touch with some other believers, a small group with which you can talk about these kinds of things. I would recommend guys with guys and girls with girls, that works better. Get to a spot where you're not just talking about, what did you do this weekend? But have a relationship where you can talk. Find somebody that you can talk about these things with. Whatever it is, that is causing you to sin or pursue intimacy apart outside your marriage, figure out what it means to cut it off or to pluck it out—to get rid of it. It might mean some sacrifice in giving up on something you like or enjoy but it's going to kill you if you don't.

At the end, this is the last point I'm going to make just to reinforce some of the other things I've been talking about:



pursue intimacy. God made you for that. He wants you to experience it at the depth of your being. That's what you're made for and he will help you get there. It's hard, it's tricky, it's not easy but he'll help you get to it and it's totally worth it because it helps you understand why you were made and it helps you understand the most significant relationships you're involved in. He wants to be intimate with you. He wants to enjoy you. He wants to be pleased by being with you. He experiences all kinds of those intimate emotions inside himself, in his being, in his relationship with you. He loves you in that way. So, he just wants to be with you. I hope we'll be able to get there.

Let me pray:

Father, thank you for reaching out to us in deeper ways than we can possibly imagine; for wanting us at the depth of our being. Lord, we confess we are prone to wander. We are easily deceived and we need you and your power and your grace to forgive us of all the ways we go off. Restore us to yourself. Thank you for being so much in the business of forgiveness and restoration. Help us to be intimate with you Lord. We love you Lord and we're grateful. Amen.