

Is Adultery Really That Wrong?

Exodus 20:14: (NASB) *You shall not commit adultery.*





Ancient biblical history paints a very specific picture of the world regarding moral and ethical behavior. In the days of the Jewish Law, there were unmistakable lines that anyone of Jewish descent knew they simply should not cross. Just as lying, stealing and murder were lines not to cross, committing adultery was one as well. Fast-forward to our world today, and what do we see? Adultery not only sounds old-fashioned, but it is all too common and sometimes it is even encouraged. There are websites that exist for the purpose of making it easy to find someone with whom to have an affair! As Christians, how should we look at all of this? Should we determine the Law is outdated and adjust to modern-day thinking? Should we focus on the Law and what Jesus taught and condemn everyone else? Is there a middle ground?



How to thrive in relation to spirituality and to who God is

Exodus 20:3-13: (NASB) Selected verses:




EPISODE 1147

You shall have no other gods before Me
THE LESSON:
GOD IS SOVEREIGN


EPISODE 1147

You shall not make for yourself an idol
THE LESSON:
THE HONOR DUE GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS NEVER TO BE SHARED OR DIMINISHED


EPISODE 1136

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain
THE LESSON:
WE SHOULD NEVER REPRESENT THE HOLINESS OF GOD'S NAME CARELESSLY, FOOLISHLY OR WITH ANY HINT OF IRREVERENCE


EPISODE 1127

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy
THE LESSON:
WE MUST REGULARLY SET TIME ASIDE TO REVERE GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY



Honor your father and your mother

THE LESSON:

THIS IS THE FIRST STEP IN ESTABLISHING HOW TO THRIVE AS A PHYSICAL NATION IN RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER



You shall not murder

THE LESSON:

THIS IS THE FIRST AND MOST FUNDAMENTAL COMMAND REGARDING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR ENTIRE HUMAN FAMILY



The seventh Commandment addresses the foundation of the human family relationship, the sacred covenant between husband and wife:

Exodus 20:14: (NASB) *You shall not commit adultery <5003>.*

Adultery: Strong's #5003 *na'aph*; to commit adultery; figuratively, to apostatize

In God's sight, adultery is an utter disgrace. As Christians, it should be a disgrace in our sight as well.

Throughout the podcast we will be dropping in on a YouTube story told by Bob and Audrey to illustrate the pain and suffering of adultery.



Seeds of temptation, I Had an Affair, Bob and Audrey's Story

- (Audrey) Bob and I both love that whole idea of doing anything for Jesus. We were in ministry; I was a Jesus girl - we were rock solid.
- (Bob) For Audrey and I, serving God meant everything to us and that involved, you know, a lot of long hours, a lot of devotion, a lot of sacrifice. As a pastor, I saw this young man who just needed some guidance. So, we invited him to be a part of our family activities.
- (Audrey) I remember feeling so exhausted, so overwhelmed, and hiding that. And then this young guy starts coming into our life and the first thing he says is, "You seemed to be doing everything for everybody. Do you need some help?" And I was like, "Yes." But the more we hung out together it turned into, "You are so beautiful in every way. I wish I could find a girl even just half as beautiful as you."

There was a good initial motivation involved, and then the seeds of temptation were planted.



Communication is everything!

If they had had the ability to communicate as a couple, she could have let her husband know how exhausted and overwhelmed she was, and he may not have suggested adding something else to their plate.

We will review the hard Old Testament consequences for adultery shortly.

First, let's look at some of the descriptions of how adultery can break our very core:

Proverbs 6:32-33: (NASB) ³²The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking **sense <3820>**; he who would destroy himself does it. ³³Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out.



Sense: Strong's #3820 *leb*; the heart; also used (figuratively) very widely for the feelings, the will and even the intellect



What does it mean when the Scripture says, adultery brings wounds and disgrace...and his reproach will not be blotted out?

In the Old Testament, the consequence for adultery was death.

The *disgrace* could be having our name disgraced. If the adultery is done secretly and privately, we have disgraced ourself before God. Until we deal with such a deep problem, we may never be the same. Life becomes an underneath-the-surface misery.

The act of adultery is heartless and self-destructive, and it can carry lifelong disgrace:

Proverbs 30:20: (NASB) *This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no wrong.*

In other words, don't judge me; this is my life. The conscience of an adulterer is seared. It is dead and cannot feel.



Job laments evildoers who seemingly "get away with it." He mentions adultery in his list:

Job 24:15: (NASB) *The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, No eye will see me. And he disguises his face.*

The shame of adultery seeks the cover of darkness and secrecy.

Let's return to the audio clip with Bob and Audrey. Remember, compliments planted the seeds of temptation.



Paying attention to temptation, *I Had an Affair, Bob and Audrey's Story*

- (Audrey) *When I knew I was going to be seeing him I made sure I looked good. I felt like I was invincible. I thought I could have this guy flirting with me - nothing would ever really happen. You know, sin takes you further than you ever thought you would go. It goes little by little by little. You just start just one little compromise, just a teeny tiny compromise and then you quickly find out that there's no such thing as a small compromise. Because that one little touch of the hand or that one little rubbing against, it did something. It electrified me somehow, and so I wanted more. You see, sin always craves more and is never satisfied and wants that next thing, the next thing, the next thing, and before you know it, you're on this, this thing that you just can't get off of.*



“There is no such thing as a small compromise.” One step led to another. The seeds of temptation were cultivated.

We have heard it said there could be healthy reasons for having extramarital relations and it can strengthen a marriage. How can that be?

If we have made a covenant and step outside of it, we are violating that covenant. It is never a good thing to violate a covenant. There are NO excuses!



Suppose we are not eating well and it is suggested to continue eating poorly on purpose to cause a massive heart attack so we can wake up and change our life afterwards. We would NOT choose to do that.

God puts adulterers into a specific category:

Psalms 50:16-19: (NASB) ¹⁶But to the wicked God says, what right have you to tell of My statutes and to take My covenant in your mouth? ¹⁷For you hate discipline, and you cast My words behind you. ¹⁸When you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you associate with adulterers. ¹⁹You let your mouth loose in evil and your tongue frames deceit.

The associations of adulterers belong to those who take what is not theirs and those who are deceitful.

It is nonsense for an adulterer to say, “This is how I *feel*; don't judge me.” Feelings are not principles of God. Those feelings will violate God’s principles whenever we give them a chance.

Though not stated in the actual Commandment, adultery was punishable by death, as were many other sins.

**Abbreviated list of civil crimes
which carried a death sentence under the Mosaic Law**

- Adultery (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22)
- Incest (Leviticus 20:11, 14)
- Bestiality (Leviticus 20:15-16)
- Witchcraft (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27)
- Idolatry or apostasy (Leviticus 20:2; Deuteronomy 13:6-17)
- Public blasphemy (Leviticus 24:10-16)
- False prophesying (Deuteronomy 13:5)
- Kidnapping (Exodus 21:16)
- Bearing false witness in a capital case (Deuteronomy 19:16-19)
- Not guarding your known-to-be-wild ox that killed someone (Exodus 21:28-29)





Salvaging Sacredness:

The Old Testament clearly states God's perspective on the sacredness of marriage for Israel. He also does not mince words regarding the horrific damage that adultery causes, as it plainly breaks the covenant of marriage. *Its penalty is therefore severe.*

Israel was God's chosen people, and they were called out from the world to follow Him. He expected better from them.

It is sobering to see how seriously God takes the marriage covenant and the corresponding fidelity that it requires.

With the harsh reality of physical adultery in place, is there an Old Testament spiritual application?

To begin to fully understand the gravity of physical adultery, we need to look further into the Old Testament teachings regarding what we will call "spiritual adultery." Remember, humanity was created in the image of God. We are His human family. He demonstrated this profound connection by the way He described His relationship with Israel.

Once you get rid of integrity, the rest is a piece of cake. — Larry Hagman



Giving in to temptation, I Had an Affair, Bob and Audrey's Story

- *(Audrey) I had a sexual affair with this guy for three weeks, and I knew that it couldn't continue because I just felt something in my heart say, you have to tell Bob. It was the most intense, scary, awful moment in the whole world. I said, "I actually did, I did it, I had an affair."*
- *(Bob) So, immediately my mind is flooded. Images of her with this person. Where am I? Where were our children? This isn't just a little oops. You say that you love me but yet you give yourself like this? It makes no sense. The rage and the anger that I had was so intense. I just stormed out of the room. Slammed doors. Stomped my feet. I mean, I was a mess. I really wanted to hurt her. I wanted her to feel what I was feeling.*

It is difficult to describe the depth of the damage we can do to the people we love the most when we do not take our relationship seriously and with the expected sacredness. It can be heard in Bob's voice. This video was made 12-13 years after the affair, and you can still see the depth of hurt; it just comes welling back.

In this introductory text, God is lamenting the men of Israel treating their wives treacherously while continuing to go before God to worship:

Malachi 2:16: (NASB) *For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and him who covers his garment with wrong, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.*

God is pointing out the casual use of divorce as a tool of convenience and hypocrisy. It is insulting to Him.



Jeremiah 2 begins with God lamenting Israel's spiritual infidelity and unfaithfulness. Observing this will help us understand what spiritual infidelity looks like and how it is likened to physical adultery.



(Source: Text Commentaries by Dr. J. Vernon McGee) ...The messages found in chapters 2 through 6 were given during the first five years of Jeremiah's ministry before the Book of the Law was found. During this time, however, Josiah, a young man like Jeremiah, was seeking the Lord and instituting certain reforms in the nation. Primarily, he was trying to clean up the idolatry in Judah. The nation had forsaken the living God and had gone over into idolatry. You can see that the combined efforts of this young king and the young prophet Jeremiah had a tremendous effect upon the nation.

The nation was broken into two pieces - the 10 tribes were the northern kingdom, and Judah was the two tribes of the southern kingdom. The young King Josiah was trying hard to put things in order.

Here is what God tells Jeremiah the prophet in terms of the sinfulness of Israel and Judah:

Jeremiah 3:6-10: (NASB) *⁶Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. ⁷Yet I thought, after she has done all these things she will return to Me; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. ⁹Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.*



If God hates divorce, why did He divorce Israel?

It sounds like God is contradicting Himself. In Malachi God says, *I hate divorce*, and in Jeremiah He says, *I gave her a writ of divorce*. In Deuteronomy 24 when a writing of divorce was handed to a spouse, they were officially free from their spouse. Why, if God hates divorce, did He divorce Israel? He divorced her because it was the best thing for her. She needed to be punished and to be put away from God because she had gone away from Him. He let her leave. The consequences of walking away from God are deadly.

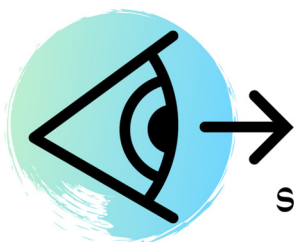


What does the phrase *lightness of her harlotry* mean?

Her idolatry was obvious. Judah did not treat anything with sacredness, and everything was taken lightly.

¹⁰Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception, declares the LORD.

Not only does Judah fail to return to God with her whole heart but brings deception instead.



**GOD SEES
idolatry
as
spiritual adultery**

Idolatry is worshipping anything that is created rather than the Creator. *Committing adultery with stones and trees* refers to the following of pagan rituals that built altars and images, worshipping what was created and imagined. In Paganism, it is the earth that is a god or a goddess. It is inappropriate to worship these inanimate things like the earth, or trees, or rocks, instead of God Almighty. They took their allegiance to God, their Creator and gave it to the created.



Next, we see the mercy of God unfold:

Jeremiah 3:12-14: (NASB) ¹²Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD; I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever (Come back to Me, Israel! I am waiting). ¹³Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, declares the LORD.

God was telling them to acknowledge their iniquity, take responsibility and be accountable for their sin and repent.

¹⁴Return, O faithless sons, declares the LORD; for I am a master (same word as “married”) to you, and I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Notice the two-fold relationship - *faithless sons* and an adulterous spouse. God is saying: Israel has abandoned me on every level. I was a Father to them; I was as close as a spouse to them. In both cases, they have walked away for the sake of paganism and idolatry. God wanted Israel back as His beloved in spite of her faithlessness as sons and her adultery. It is amazing to see how merciful God is when His children make mistakes. This was God’s mercy in full bloom. What did He ask for? Only that she take responsibility for her sins.

Observations:



- God was profoundly attached to Israel as a nation.
- This attachment provoked Him to hold them accountable to the tools (the Law, prophets, rituals) and standards they were given.
- Israel responded with adulterous idolatry and hypocrisy.
- God’s attachment provoked Him to “divorce” them for their own good.
- God’s mercy left the door of acceptance open through sincere repentance on their part.

Like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32, despite the fact that the son had left turning his back on his father and his heritage, the father was longing and looking for him to return. As soon as the father saw him returning, he joyously ran out to meet him. How did the father know his son was returning? He was looking and waiting. In Jeremiah, God was looking and waiting for Israel to come back. He took a hard judgment against her as He had a right to, but His heart wanted her to come back. She was His chosen people.



Salvaging Sacredness:

Jehovah Himself directly taught us the degradation adultery brings, be it physical or spiritual. It breaks sacred promises, *but there can be recovery* with grace, love and true repentance.

God’s handling of Israel is a dramatic example of the destruction that occurs when fidelity to a covenant is broken.

The Old Testament is loud and clear regarding adultery! What direction do the teachings of Jesus take this?

As you might have guessed, Jesus takes the solid foundation of the Old Testament and builds a sacred structure upon it that is even more precise and challenging. Why would he do that? Why would he make things harder? Jesus does not make this point to make it harder, but it is to make us more faithful, to lead us to understanding how to have true fidelity to God.

Jesus raised the bar even higher because this Commandment, and the one from Episode 1168 on murder are about our relationship with the people around us. We need to maintain such a high standard of integrity because we represent Jesus. Integrity to God and our covenants is what should keep us going. We must have a sense of pure, unadulterated honesty and clarity for what we are committed to.

Subtlety may deceive you; integrity never will. – Oliver Cromwell

Trauma and choices, *I Had an Affair, Bob and Audrey's Story*

- *(Audrey) Just when I didn't think the desperation could get any lower, I found out that as a result of this affair I had become pregnant. And on that day, I didn't think I could face my life. I just felt like I had blown up my whole family. I cried out to God, "Will you forgive me?" And then I went to Bob, I said, "Could you ever find it in your heart to love me again?"*
- *(Bob) I knew that in that moment I had to forgive her, but I was only capable of so much. That afternoon I had to forgive her again. Later that evening, the next day, weeks, months, even years. Forgiveness really was a process for me, but we together chose to press in, to each other, but really into God because we were hoping that He could rescue, not just us, but rescue our family and my children.*

FORGIVENESS



Bob's response was so honest. He was on the road to forgiving Audrey; he was committed to that. However, he was honest enough to realize he was not emotionally ready to embrace it all. It was a process. It took years. This did not stop him from moving forward, needing to revisit his reasons for forgiveness again and again as they worked to reestablish their broken trust. He grew into his forgiveness. What a great example. Adultery is a deep and dark sin. A lot of people might not be able to do this as Bob did.

After the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave serious practical examples of what standards of godliness were to look like for his disciples. Matthew 5:21-22,27-28,38-39,43-44 and other Scriptures all carry the same theme - *BUILDING UPON, CORRECTING AND LIFTING* the requirements of the Old Testament Law and its' current (in Jesus' day) applications with the phrase, *But I say to you*.

"But I say to you..."

- Corrected misunderstandings and misuses of the Law
- Elevated the Law to a higher standard

Matthew 5:27-28: (NASB) ²⁷You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with **lust <1937>** for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Adultery can exist in our thoughts. Our thoughts need to be sacred. In that privacy of our own heads and thoughts, we think we can go where others cannot see. God and Jesus can see those thoughts. If we are not cultivating or developing sacred thoughts, but rather sinful thoughts, we will go in the wrong direction. It is in our thoughts that the sin first begins. *But I say to you* - Jesus is telling his disciples they represent him, so act like it!

Lust: Strongs #1937 *epithumeo*; to set the heart upon, i.e. long for (rightfully or otherwise)

We typically think of this word for lust as entirely negative, but it is not.

“Desire” rightly applied is a very appropriate and helpful human emotion.

One example:

1 Timothy 3:1: (NASB) *It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he **desires <1937>** to do.*

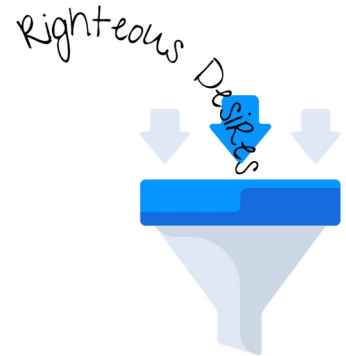
This does not mean we shut down all our human desires. It means that we filter through to find which are righteous and which are based on iniquity.

Everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart - Jesus is speaking plainly. For his disciples, looking upon another person with inappropriate desire is to commit a sin of the heart.

Are you guilty of actually committing adultery by doing this? No.
Are you guilty of compromising the principles of discipleship? Yes.
Our accountability starts from within.

James 1:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Many go into marriage thinking that the romantic, emotional love of a marriage's early days will last. What if it does not? Is that a reason to look elsewhere? When we make an emotionally-based decision, we are always liable to sin. This is not a podcast on marriage and the principles that keep it fresh and growing. If we are in a place where our marriage is stagnant and that prompts us to go elsewhere - take a time out! We do not need to look elsewhere; we need to dig in. This is a time we need to communicate and work together, not apart, not in secret. This is what Jesus is warning against.



We cannot let the difficulties of life cause us to travel down these roads with only our thoughts (which God does see) guiding our decisions.



Jesus emphatically teaches us what to do if we find ourselves in such a compromised emotional position:

Matthew 5:29,30: (NASB) ²⁹If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into ~~hell~~ (Gehenna). ³⁰If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into ~~hell~~ (Gehenna).

This is hard symbolic language. Please check into last week's podcast, Episode 1168, to understand the basis for understanding this to be symbolic.



Jesus is saying:



- **Stop looking** if what you see translates into sinful desire. Your spiritual life depends on it!
- **Stop doing** if what you are engaging in is against God's righteousness. Your spiritual life depends on it!

If an attractive man or woman is walking by, are we not supposed to look at them? There is nothing wrong or sinful about appreciating beauty in another person. However, it is inappropriate to attach an agenda, a desire or a secret wish to that appreciation. That is where the seeds of temptation are planted. We have to be on guard daily against that happening in our minds.

Adultery for Christians - be it mental or physical - is the tragic end result. It reveals *our choosing* to allow many quiet symptoms of mediocrity and sin to have a place in our hearts and minds where they have the opportunity to flourish. If we have these thoughts in our minds, we need to make a firm choice to put them away. We might have to do this over and over again during our lifetime. We need to stop just as many times as we start.





Christian Mediocrity:

We may love righteousness,
but we do not hate iniquity

Psalm 45:7: NASB You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of joy above your fellows.

We may hear and appreciate
the word, but we are not
fully committed to living it

James 1:22: NASB But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

We may love God,
but we have not used
that devotion to help us
undo our earthly desires

1 John 2:15-16: NASB Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

We may know what is right,
but we have not allowed that
knowledge to drive us

Colossians 3:5: WEY Therefore put to death your earthward inclinations - fornication, impurity, sensual passion, unholy desire, and all greed, for that is a form of idolatry.



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It is a process to undo earthly desires. When we are young in Christ, we might not realize we are doing things improperly until we gain some spiritual maturity. This is the way with all of us - when we look back, we see how childish we were. We do not say, what a failure I was! No, we say, what a child I was! We cannot see things the same way we saw them in the beginning of our walk; we need to show growth. This is why Jesus sets the bar high. He knows we will grow by striving to reach it, and this will help us put aside these sins of the mind.





Salvaging Sacredness:

To say we should be always aware and prepared to fight sins of desire is to understate the matter. Our vigilance must be based on the full breadth of our commitment to daily present our humanity as a living sacrifice to God.

Understanding the words of Jesus and his condemning of evil thoughts serves as a sobering wake-up call.

What about spiritual adultery for Christians? Are we liable to such a sin the same way Israel was?

Observing and applying the experiences of Israel to our Christian lives is a huge benefit. We can learn by observation. However, just because we can learn by observing does not mean we will. As Christians, we have to live up to the serious responsibility of reaching for Jesus' level of spiritual fidelity in our own lives. There is no place for adulterous thoughts or actions in a Christian heart and mind.

Live so that when your children think of fairness, caring, and integrity, they think of you. — H. Jackson Brown, Jr.



Reconciliation and life, *I Had an Affair*, Bob and Audrey's Story

- (Bob) When he was born, I asked Audrey if I could name him. I gave him my name, Robert. I don't want my son to ever question one day in his life whose boy he is. He's my son.
- (Audrey) The fact that he has his name is just that complete acceptance. It's such a picture of what God does for us. Not only does He accept us, not only does He forgive us, but He gives us His name and He redeems our life from what was supposed to be stolen and taken away. He gives us as a gift. And you know what - there's really a revival after repentance. We don't have to have any secrets anymore. We trust each other and we love being married.
- (Bob) When you participate with sin it always takes, but when you participate with God, He always gives life.

This is a great example of the godly forgiveness we are capable of as human beings. It is certainly not easy and every kind of situation like this will not end up this way. If we can find a way to come back to communicating in a godly way between ourselves when we have had such difficulty, we will have a chance. We need to lay it before God and do the work, day after day. Then maybe... What an awesome picture of the level we want to strive for! We cannot forget this is what God did with Israel. God was waiting for them to come back.

The Apostle Paul speaks of physical adultery in the context of our spirituality:

1 Corinthians 6:15-20: (NASB) ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! ¹⁶Or do you not know that the one who **joins <2853>** (to glue) himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, the two shall become one flesh.



The apostle says not to adhere to evil, but continues in [verse 17](#) below to say, adhere to God. This powerful reminder of the original model of marital fidelity was written to the Corinthians whose backgrounds were deeply pagan. They needed to see that God drew a clear line of Fidelity.

Next, Paul raises the bar even higher:

¹⁷But the one who **joins <2853>** (to glue) himself to the Lord is one spirit with him. ¹⁸Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

Joins: Strongs #2853 kollao; from kolla (“glue”); to glue, that is, (passively or reflexively) to stick (figuratively): - cleave, join (self), keep company

This is why we have to be so cognizant of the sin of adultery. It is against our own body, against a sacred covenant of God, against our spouse and against everything that is holy.

Now the apostle takes it to the spiritual level:

¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

You have been bought with a price; you do not belong to “you” anymore! That is the deal we made when we gave our life to Christ. Sensuality-based thinking needs this kind of blunt and unmistakable reminder regarding the “dos and don’ts” of Christian behavior. My body is the dwelling place of God’s spirit - it is sacred. My actions, therefore, must be sacred. My thoughts, therefore, must be sacred. Everything about me must be sacred. This is very sobering. It really hits home and hopefully keeps us from getting into trouble.



Paul’s lessons on behavior are a strong foundation for the teachings of James on spiritual adultery.

James begins with a reference to the sixth Commandment; *You shall not murder:*

James 4:1-2: (NASB) ¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²You **lust <1937>** and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

When we assassinate a brother’s reputation through evil speaking, it is like destroying one another. James is asking the church of his time, why they have such unrest? He answers that personal pleasures create conflicts; unfulfilled human desires cause us to slander and envy fuels all fires!

James continues by telling them they are in a no-win battle:

James 4:3: (NASB) you ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

He tells them they are so focused on what *they* want, they have lost what *God* wants for them. Because of this backward thinking, they *will not* receive. When Israel played the harlot, she had to come back. Christians can do the same thing.



Here is the result of blatant and sinful human thinking and action among the people of God:

James 4:4: (NASB) *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

Seeking to fulfill sinful desires while being God's child *adulterates* our relationship with our Father. We need to have diligence to keep our priorities in the order they belong. James does not stop here. He has built the case, laid it out, and he dropped the bomb.

When God gives His spirit - His power and influence - to dwell in us, He does it to show His absolute fidelity to our highest wellbeing.

How do we repay such a life-changing gift?

James 4:5: (NASB) *Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?*

God is *jealously desiring* His spirit to work in us. Fighting it adulterates our relationship with Him.

In spite of all our clamor, fighting, desire, envy and strife, we can regroup IF we follow this process:



James 4:6-9: (NASB) *⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

James is telling us the way to get back to God; first, we need to be humble.



⁷Submit therefore to God.

Submit emotionally and with our desires; we need to lay all before Him and submit.



Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

We cannot resist the devil unless we first submit to God. If we try to do this without God, we will fail.



⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Through prayerful communication, we will draw nearer to God. With our tears and our frustrations, an open and heartfelt prayer gives God the opportunity to help us through our trials. God already knows the depth of our despair and our problems, but He wants us to know what we need from Him. He wants us to pray with that passion, emotion, anger and frustration. Once we get it out, God asks us to give it to Him so that He can take it and help us. Drawing *near to God* is not lip service but means drawing closer to Him through sincere prayer.



Check out our **CQ Kids** video:
**WHY DO WE PRAY IF GOD ALREADY
 KNOWS OUR THOUGHTS?**
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⁸*Cleanse your hands (your actions), you sinners; and purify your hearts (your desires), you double-minded. ⁹Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.*

This shows the discipline and struggle in the Christian walk. When we make mistakes, repentance should bring us to sorrow and shame. We deserve it. But then God smiles and tells us He is waiting for us to come back into harmony with His ways. We need to *cleanse* our actions, *purify* our desires (because we are double-minded) and yes, we need to *be miserable and mourn and weep* because that is repentance. We need to honestly look at how far we have gone away from our God, but we do not need to live there forever. We visit that introspective place, and we stay there long enough to give it over to the Father.

Having done all this - having repented of our adulterous behavior and purified our intentions:

James 4:10: (NASB) *Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

This is so far from where we were just a few verses before when James said, *you adulteresses*. Just a few verses later, after applying spiritual remedies, he now says, *Humble yourselves... and He will exalt you*. Despite all our vile acts and thoughts, God waits for us to stop and look back to Him. Then He welcomes us home and exalts us!

We need to realize that we may commit spiritual adultery like Israel did, but we do not need to stop there. We need to get down on our knees and do the things we need to do to clear up our relationship with God. We do not want to adulterate *anything* as Christians.



Salvaging Sacredness:

For Christians, "You shall not commit adultery" obviously means having complete fidelity to our spouses. But even more important is the higher necessity regarding fidelity to our God. If we should ever slip, fall short, get confused or be tempted, let us always remember the pathway back to fidelity is always through *true repentance, humility and a lot of hard work!*

The core of everything we talked about today - *You shall not commit adultery* - is about complete fidelity to our spouses and to our God. Jesus raised the bar so that we would know how to do this from the inside out, not just from the outside in.

Let us make sure that we take this commandment to heart and into our thoughts and desires. Let it cause us to cling closely to the spouse we have been given by God's grace. We want to cling closely to God and Jesus, as they can hold us up.

When we fall, we have to get up, ask for forgiveness and live with repentance. Then move forward!

*So, is adultery really that wrong?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on March 22, 2021
Ep. 1170: Does Being a Christian Have to Be Difficult?

Bonus Material and Study Questions

One of the truest tests of integrity is its blunt refusal to be compromised. — Chinua Achebe

If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters. — Alan K. Simpson

Integrity is the essence of everything successful. — R. Buckminster Fuller

This next text shows why Jesus was so hard on the Commandment regarding adultery:

Matthew 15:10-20: (NASB) ¹⁰After Jesus called the crowd to him, he said to them, Hear and understand. ¹¹It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man. ¹²Then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement? ¹³But he answered and said, every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit. ¹⁵Peter said to him, Explain the parable to us. ¹⁶Jesus said, Are you still lacking in understanding also? ¹⁷Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? ¹⁸But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. ²⁰These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.

The original marriage ideal and dealing with the idea of polygamy:

Genesis 2:23-25: (NASB) ²³The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

If only having one husband and one wife is God's way, then why would God tolerate men having multiple wives?



Most cases of polygamy were pre-Mosaic Law. This is not an excuse; it is simply a fact. Having said that, examining how these pre-Law polygamous relationships started, in every case reveals foolishness or deception. Never is it provoked by godly thinking.

(Source: New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties) The very first reference to polygamy in Genesis is found in the life of Lamech son of Methushael, who, in addition to his bloodthirsty vindictiveness toward those with whom he had quarreled, is recorded in Genesis 4:23-24 as boasting of his prowess to his two wives. After that there is no mention of plural marriage until the time of Abraham.

In Abraham's case, Sarah is always represented as being Abraham's only legal wife as long as she lived. But when she became convinced that she could bear him no children of her own, she presented him with her maid Hagar, to be her proxy in the marriage bed.

Abraham's son Isaac was married to but one wife, Rebecca, and was faithful to her all his life. But their self-willed son Esau broke their heart by becoming involved in polygamy and by marrying out of the faith – both of Esau's wives were pagans. {Genesis 26:34} Later on Esau even took a third wife... In so doing, Esau is not presented as a model for believers to follow.

In the case of Jacob, his only desire was for one woman, Rachel, the daughter of Laban. It was only through Laban's crafty maneuvering that Jacob was tricked into marrying Rachel's older sister, Leah, as well. Later on, as unhappy rivalry broke out between the two sisters in the matter of childbearing, they resorted to Sarah's misguided expedient of presenting their husband with their handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah, to serve as proxies in the marriage bed. But so far as Jacob was concerned, there never was any desire on his part to become a polygamist.

The fact of the matter was that while polygamy was contrary to God's intention and ideal, nevertheless, because of what Christ called 'the hardness of men's hearts', {Matthew 19:8} it was tolerated – especially in the case of a political leader whose dynasty would fail if he produced no son by his first wife.

It is here that God set the parameters, which of course were NOT followed:
Deuteronomy 17:17: (NASB) He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1169: Is Adultery Really That Wrong?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1169-adultery>

See:  CQRewind
SHOW NOTES

1. How does adultery affect our Christian character? Specifically, how is adultery destructive in anyone's life? (See Job 24:15, Proverbs 6:32-33, 30:20)
2. What is the first step in the path towards adultery? What can we do to keep this from happening? How are the 6th and 7th Commandments important to the fabric of society?
3. What was the penalty for adultery according to the Jewish Law? How does God regard adulterers? (See Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22, Psalms 50:16-19)
4. In what way were the nations of Israel and Judah guilty of spiritual adultery during the time before King Josiah? (See Jeremiah 3:6-10)
5. What can we learn from the way God dealt with Israel and Judah for our own experiences with adultery? What was God's attitude towards Israel and Judah *after* He divorced them? (See Jeremiah 3:12-14)
6. What does Jesus teach regarding adultery? Why does he raise the standard for his followers? What does the phrase, "But I say to you..." indicate? (See Matthew 5:27, 1 Timothy 3:1, James 1:14-15)
7. What can we do to get back on the right path when we are in an emotionally or spiritually compromised position? (See Matthew 5:28-30)
8. What steps can we take to keep ourselves from falling into Christian mediocrity? (See Psalm 45:7, Colossians 3:5, James 1:22, 1 John 2:15-16)
9. What can we learn about spiritual adultery from the writings of Apostles Paul and James? What are the steps James gives us to get back to God? (See 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, James 4:1-10)
10. Are you guilty of physical or spiritual adultery? What will you do to redevelop or maintain a proper Christian character?