



Faithfulness & Purity

Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27-30

Faithfulness vs. Adultery

Read Exodus 20:14: The seventh commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery.”¹

God demands faithfulness within marriage, and adultery is a severe violation of the marriage covenant. The positive commandment is, “You shall remain faithful to your spouse.”²

Adultery, by analogy, is used to designate the unfaithfulness of God’s people when they worship or serve other gods or idols (*Jeremiah 3:8-9*; cf. *James 4:4*).

Adultery in the Heart

Jesus referred to the seventh commandment in his “sermon on the mount” (*Matthew 5-7*). Read Matthew 5:27-28.



1. What is the meaning of Jesus’ teaching in verses 27-28?

Jesus points out that not only the action (adultery) is wrong; the attitude of the heart (lust)³ is wrong.⁴ Jesus’ focus is on the heart. This leads us to consider “sexual immorality”⁵ in general. Sexual immorality includes adultery, prostitution, sexual relations outside of marriage, and other attitudes and actions that violate God’s standards for proper sexual behavior.⁶

Discussion Questions

2. In our world today, many people disagree with the Bible’s teaching concerning sexual immorality. What do you think about this disagreement? Why is sexual immorality bad? Why is it wrong? Why must Christians avoid sexual immorality?⁷

📖 “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20, NIV84*)

¹ ‘adultery’ (*nā ‘aph*) – refers to sexual relations between a man and the wife (or betrothed) of another man; or sexual relations by a married (or betrothed) woman with any man other than her husband. In general application, ‘adultery’ can refer to any sexual relations involving a married person with someone other than his/her spouse.

² For married people to avoid adultery (and other sexual sins), they need to strengthen their marriage relationship. This is a very important subject, and very worthy of study! However, this lesson will be more general.

³ ‘lust’ (*epithumia*) – strong desire. In verse 29, ‘lustfully’ (*epithymēsai*) literally means ‘to desire’ her.

⁴ ‘Faithfulness is more importantly of the mind. Exclusive intimacy, permanent commitment, and mutual trust are violated first in the mind’ (Robertson McQuilkin, *Biblical Ethics* [Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1995], 216). According to Jesus’ teaching, if a married man or woman lusts for someone other than his/her spouse, or if any person lusts for a man or woman who is married to someone else, they commit ‘adultery in their heart.’

⁵ In the NIV, the Greek word translated ‘sexual immorality’ is *porneia*, which was used as a general term for sexual misbehavior. ‘Sexual misbehavior’ includes anything that is contrary to God’s design and standards for sexual behavior. Sex is part of God’s very good creation, and it is to be valued and enjoyed by human beings. However, God intends that sexual relations take place only within the intimacy of the marriage relationship (*Genesis 2:24*; *Exodus 22:16*; *Deuteronomy 22:13-21*; *1 Corinthians 7:1-5, 8-9*).

⁶ Pornography (a word that comes from *porneia*.) is not explicitly listed in the Bible, but it is also sexual immorality.

⁷ ‘sexual immorality’ is a serious sin that is deserving of God’s judgment (*Galatians 5:19-21*; *Ephesians 5:3-7*).

📖 “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God ... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.” (*1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 7, NIV*)

3. Read Matthew 5:29-30. Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away,” and “if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away” (*Matthew 5:29-30*). He did not mean this literally! Jesus was using a dramatic figure of speech (hyperbole) to make his point. How can we apply this teaching? How can we avoid or guard against temptations to sexual sin?



📖 “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” (*Colossians 3:5, NIV*)⁸

📖 “Flee from sexual immorality.” (*1 Corinthians 6:18a; cf. 2 Timothy 2:22*)

📖 “Keep your way far from her. Don’t go near the door of her house... Why, my son, would you be infatuated with a forbidden woman...?” (*Proverbs 5:8, 20a, HCSB*)

4. In what kinds of ways are we tempted to sexual sin, including sins in the mind and heart? Do you think it is okay to read books, look at magazines or the Internet, or watch movies and entertainment which explicitly describe, show, or promote sexual immorality? What is acceptable? Explain.

📖 “Finally, brothers and sisters, 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.” (*Philippians 4:8, NIV*)

5. In what ways might we influence *others* to be tempted toward sexual sin?⁹

Reflection/Application

- If you are married, are you being truly faithful to your spouse?
- Are you involved in any type of sexual immorality? Are you allowing yourself to be tempted? Do you need to turn from your sin and trust Jesus as your Savior? As a Christian, do you need to turn from your sin and commit to faithfulness and purity? By God’s grace and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment, make a specific commitment to respond to this lesson.

⁸ This verse is in the context of a passage that speaks of the believer’s new life in Christ (*Colossians 3:1-17*). To effectively deal with temptations to sin, we need a new orientation. We need a transformed heart. We need a renewed mind. We need to be set free from the controlling power of sin. We need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We need to be ‘in Christ’ through faith! As Christians, we need to remember: ‘No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.’ (*1 Cor. 10:13, NIV*).

⁹ Of course, we can influence others by our bad example. We should set a good example! Even if we feel that a particular activity is okay for us, like watching a particular movie, we should be careful about how it might influence someone else (*1 Corinthians 10:23-33*). ‘So...whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God’ (*1 Cor. 10: 31*). Modesty in dress is also important. The subject of modesty can be controversial, and it is complicated by the varying standards in different cultures. Still a woman’s dress (or lack of dress) can influence lust experienced by a man. We should think about the way we dress, including the appropriateness of our dress for particular occasions.