

Ten Promises - “**God’s Faithfulness**” - **Commandment 6**

Rev. Scott McGinnis - First Presb. Church of Newton, KS - Nov. 15, 2020
(Based on Rev. Darrell Johnson’s sermon series *The Manufacturer’s Specifications*)

We’re continuing our series on the Ten Commandments drawing from Rev. Darrell Johnson book of sermons called *The Manufacturer’s Specifications*. I’ve said the tag line a few times for this series, “*when all else fails, consult the owner’s manual.*” Well the Ten Commandments are like our owners manual in that they tell us how we were made to best live and how God promises to help us live.

Today we are going to focus on “**You shall not commit adultery**”. For this commandment we will also look at Matthew 5:27-30, where Jesus gives us His interpretation of this commandment in His Sermon on the Mount.

Before we wrestle with this commandment, or any of them, we need to keep in mind God’s motivation in giving them is love. God does not want us to ruin our lives. Yahweh loves us and wants us to enjoy the fullness of life for which we’ve been created and redeemed. God really wants us to enjoy our lives.

And we need to keep in mind that these commandments flow out of Yahweh’s character. He is faithful; He keeps promises. God didn’t dream up a bunch of rules and then impose them on us. Yahweh’s commandments flow from Yahweh’s good character.

This commandment flows out of God's faithfulness.

Yahweh is the God who keeps promises, the God who makes and keeps covenants, the God who does not turn away from or cheat against us His beloved.

This commandment also flows out of God's righteous

jealousy. "I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:5). Remember God's jealousy is God's zeal to protect what is supremely precious (J.I.Packer, A Quest for Godliness). Yahweh loves us so much that He will not tolerate rival gods, rival loves, coming between Him and His beloved.

And this commandment flows from God's oneness:

"Hear, O Israel, Yahweh your God is one" (Deut. 6:4).

"Let us make humanity in our image" (Genesis 1:26).

Yahweh is the one God who exists in fellowship, in community, as the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yahweh is the God of committed love, of total oneness of heart and mind.

"You shall not commit adultery." Why? *"Because I, your God, will not. I am utterly faithful. I keep my commandments; I protect My relationships."* As creatures created in this God's image, and as people redeemed by this God's mercy, we are to reflect in our relationships

God's faithfulness. We are commanded to not commit adultery because Yahweh would never do so to us.

Here God is not imposing some arbitrary rule upon life; God does not want to squelch joy. The Living One is telling us a mystery about our humanity. The mystery is that we were made for fidelity; to live otherwise violates who we are.

Now let's now tackle the sixth commandment head on. Let's do so by asking: **What is the Creator's intention in this commandment?** That is, what is Yahweh after here?

What is God's intention? We get at the answer when we realize how the commandment was first understood by those who first received it; and when we hear what Jesus, the Lawgiver in human flesh, does with it in His Sermon on the Mount.

1. Consider first the historical/sociological context. This is how people heard this originally. Women of that time were considered to be the property of a man. A woman was her father's property until she married, when she then became the property of her husband. (Property: that's what she was then. And she could be sold without her consent.)

Therefore, adultery with another man's wife was simply considered a violation of that man's property rights. The males who first heard the commandment took it to mean

the infringement of another man's rights; there was no thought of the woman's rights (because she had none).

Males did, however, understand the sixth commandment as binding the woman to unconditional fidelity. She was his and his alone. But he was not hers and hers alone. That was the context of the first hearing of this commandment.

2. Then a needed interpretation happens: the Lawgiver comes down from the mountain top. He comes all the way down. He comes into our flesh and blood as Jesus the Nazarene. And in His Sermon on the Mount Jesus helps males see that they had grossly mistaken the intent of the sixth commandment.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you, that every one who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28).

Jesus corrects the mistaken understanding of the Law in two ways, thereby, intensifying the commandment in two ways:

(a.) First, Jesus challenges the supposed right of a male. As one scholar puts it, “Like the wife, the husband is under and obligation of fidelity. The wife is exalted to the same dignity as the husband” (Friedrick Hauck, TDNT, Vol. IV, p. 733).

Jesus delivers the woman from the status of a thing to fulfill the desires of men, to a real person, with her own rights. Adultery is a violation of a commitment to a person, a violation of the woman's right to exclusive fidelity with her husband.

(b.) Second, Jesus intensifies the sixth commandment in a second way by deepening the meaning of adultery. The line is crossed whenever a man lusts for another woman. Remember: the Living God speaks the sixth commandment out of love, He really wants the best for us. And Jesus is seeking our health. So then what does Jesus mean by "lust"? He means the desire to possess, the desire to take for oneself, the desire to use for one's own gratification. Lust is self-centered and self-seeking.

In equating lust and adultery, Jesus is driving home the original intent of this commandment: *unconditional faithfulness to the person of the other*. So we can restate the sixth commandment positively: ***"Your marriage thrives in the context of unconditional commitment."***

It is helpful to reaffirm the goodness of the sixth commandment. The Lawgiver loves us and does not want us to ruin our lives. Yahweh loves us and wants us to enjoy to the fullness of life for which we were created. God really wants us to live fully human lives. Faithfulness is how we were created to live that full life.

Would you pray with me?

Dear God, Thank you for your faithfulness. Thank You for Your loyalty and loving kindness. By Your indwelling Holy Spirit, help us to show the same faithfulness and love in our relationships. Heal that which is broken in us, so that we can love as You love. In Jesus Name, Amen.