

The Seventh Word

“You shall not commit adultery.”

– Exodus 20:14

(1) Sex is only for marriage

- completely faithful to spouse – no sex with anyone else
- before marriage – total abstinence
- if never marry – life-long abstinence

- sounds completely unrealistic and oppressive
- for some, this is what they hate about Christianity

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

¹²“*All things are lawful for me,*” but not all things are helpful.

“*All things are lawful for me,*” but I will not be enslaved by anything.

¹³“*Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food*” – and God will destroy both one and the other.

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Therefore, sex is for one-flesh union

(2) Sexual immorality (*porneia*) is the abuse of what sex is for

New York Times – “The Downside of Cohabiting Before Marriage”

In a nationwide survey conducted in 2001 by the National Marriage Project, then at Rutgers and now at the University of Virginia, nearly half of 20-somethings agreed with the statement, “You would only marry someone if he or she agreed to live together with you first, so that you could find out whether you really get along.” About two-thirds said they believed that moving in together before marriage was a good way to avoid divorce. But that belief is contradicted by experience. Couples who cohabit before marriage (and especially before an engagement or an otherwise clear commitment) tend to be less satisfied with their marriages – and more likely to divorce – than couples who do not. These negative outcomes are called the cohabitation effect. Cohabitation happens through what researchers call “sliding, not deciding.” Moving from dating to sleeping over to sleeping over a lot to cohabitation can be a gradual slope, one not marked by rings or ceremonies or sometimes even a conversation. Couples bypass talking about why they want to live together and what it will mean. When researchers ask cohabitators these questions, partners often have different, unspoken – even unconscious – agendas. Women are more likely to view cohabitation as a step toward marriage, while men are more likely to see it as a way to test a relationship or postpone commitment, and this gender asymmetry is associated with negative interactions and lower levels of commitment even after the relationship progresses to marriage. One thing men and women do agree on, however, is that their standards for a live-in partner are lower than they are for a spouse. Sliding into cohabitation wouldn’t be a problem if sliding out were as easy. But it isn’t. Too often, young adults enter into what they imagine will be low-cost, low-risk living situations only to find themselves unable to get out months, even years, later. It’s like signing up for a credit card with 0 percent interest. At the end of 12 months when the interest goes up to 23 percent you feel stuck because your balance is too high to pay off. In fact, cohabitation can be exactly like that. In behavioral economics, it’s called consumer lock-in.

New York Times – “A Roomful of Yearning and Regret”

The great sex, by the way, is a given. When you have an affair you already know you will have passionate sex – the urgency, newness and illicit nature of the affair practically guarantee that. What you don’t know, or perhaps what you don’t allow yourself to think about, is that your life will become an unbearable mix of yearning and regret because of it. It will be difficult if not impossible to be in any one place with contentment. This is no way for an adult to live. When you’re with your lover, you’ll be working on your alibi and feeling loathsome. When you’re with your spouse, you’ll be dying to return to your love nest. When you are at home, everything in your life will look just a little bit out of register – the furniture, the food in your refrigerator, your children, your dog – because you’ve detached yourself from your normal point of reference, and it now belongs to a reality you’ve abandoned. You will be pulled between two poles, one of obligation and responsibility, the other of pleasure and escape, and the stress of these opposing forces will threaten to split you in two.

In the end your marriage may not need to be trashed, though mine was. The affairs metastasized in our relationship from the inside out. By the time all was said and done, there was little left to save. Our marriage had become like a leaf eaten away by caterpillars, where the petiole and midrib remain with some ghostly connective tracery in between. Not enough to hold even a drop of rain. I look at my parents and at how much simpler their lives are at the ages of 75, mostly because they haven’t marred the landscape with grand-scale deceit. They have this marriage of 50-some years behind them, and it is a monument to success. A few weeks or months of illicit passion could not hold a candle to it.

New York Times – “Pornography Habit Destroys Relationships”

Clear patterns emerge from more than 30 years of academic research and organizing informed by a feminist critique of pornography. In heterosexual couples, men who habitually use pornography sometimes withdraw from intimacy with female partners, and sometimes make demands on female partners for sexual acts that are uncomfortable, painful or degrading to the woman. Women in heterosexual relationships report that both these behaviors can destroy relationships, and men sometimes report that they are aware of the damage but cannot break the habit. Anyone who doubts these trends should talk to marriage therapists and divorce lawyers. Anecdotal evidence suggests it’s a harsh business for women. The industry portrays high-profile performers with glamorous lives, but producers and directors we’ve interviewed said candidly that the industry “chews up and spits out” women.

Tim Keller, “Christianity and Homosexuality” – October 2013

One main purpose of sex and marriage is the reunion of the complementary but separate genders. Men and women each have distinct glories and we need one another. Marriage is the primary (though not only) place where those glories are blended and we are profoundly enriched. Another purpose of sex is the participation in life creation. Because of the brokenness of creation, not every couple can have children, but only heterosexual marriage holds the possibility of creating life. It also provides children with the close, life-long exposure to both male and female humanity that they need to be fully integrated.

While homosexuality is not mentioned all that often, the biblical vision for the union of the different genders in marriage *is* one of its main themes. It is everywhere. The book of Genesis along with Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce presents marriage between a man and a woman as the only divinely designed place for sexual relations. And throughout the Bible heterosexual marriage is the human construct most often used to reveal truths about God’s relationship to his people. The Bible begins with a wedding between a man and a woman and ends with one.

Because our culture teaches us that the meaning of life is found primarily in sexual fulfillment and satisfaction, within that view of life the biblical prohibitions on homosexuality may seem harsh and cruel. Indeed, God’s will in Scripture often seems to frustrate many of our deepest longings (not just sexual ones). But if we are faithful to his Word, we find that each divine demand is really a summons into a transformative process in which we discover deeper levels of peace, joy, and fulfillment in God and in Christian love than we could otherwise have known.

(3) Sex as a signpost

Ephesians 5

³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Hosea

^{1:2} When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, “Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD.” ^{3:1} The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” ² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.