

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Honoring Marriage” (from the “Written in Stone” sermon series)

Scripture: Exodus 20:14 and Matthew 5:27-30

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of Exodus, we are exploring the seventh of the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses for the people of Israel. The first five commandments dealt with “No other gods” (20:3) and “No idols” (20:4-6), “No misuse of God’s name” (20:7); “observing the Sabbath” in verses (20:8-11); “honoring our parents” (20:12); and “honoring life” (20:13).
- The seventh commandment continues with our focus on our social relationships with one another and commands that we are to not commit adultery.
- This commandment focuses on the relationship within a marriage, and that an act of unfaithfulness in this relationship is against God’s will.
- We see throughout the Old Testament (Lev 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22) that acts of adultery were considered a capital offense and were in line with ancient society’s (in this case, the ancient Near East) teaching to control sexual behavior.
 - There are many reasons why this was so important, but one of the key reasons had to do with hereditary and ensuring the children in a family were considered legitimate heirs to the patriarch of the family.
- One interesting observation from ancient culture is that the act of adultery was a wrong against the husband of the woman caught in the act of adultery (it was a wrong against the husband of the woman involved and who she was caught with).
- Society back then granted the husband the right to determine what penalty was to be enforced, however, he could not absolve them both altogether. He could pardon his wife but had to punish the other man involved.
- The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible further explains, “Jeremiah 3:8 indicates that divorce was one of the lesser penalties a husband could impose on his adulterous wife. The Babylonians, Assyrians, and Hittites permitted the husband to exact punishment or to give clemency to his wife. Pardon for the wife meant pardon for the man as well.”

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- This commandment, within the series of those concerning relationships, concerns that of our most intimate relationships...marriage. These three commandments concerning relationships are: (1) Honor your father and mother; (2) You shall not murder; and (3) You shall not commit adultery.
- We see examples of adultery throughout scripture, notably with the stories of Joseph and Potiphar's wife Genesis 39, and the story of King David and Bathsheba.
- Consider the old saying: "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, it will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you want to pay."
- People do not usually set out to engage in adultery. It is usually a series of small decisions that continue on and on and spiral out of control.
- Throughout scripture we see adultery defined as something more than just physical contact. The prophets warned of spiritual adultery with things like worshipping idols. Jesus reiterates this commandment and then expands the meaning in Matthew 5:27-29. In this passage, Jesus emphasizes how critical it is to avoid adultery in its many forms. Faithfulness is critical to Jesus, particularly in marriage.
- Paul writes of marriage in Ephesians 5:31-32, noting that those married "become one flesh". Paul ends this by saying "This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church." Marriage and Christ's mission are closely linked together. In a mysterious way, the pattern of marriage mimics the pattern of Christ. Jesus left his Father in heaven and came into the world out of love for you and me. He wants to be united out of love with each of us, and one with us.
- Paul is telling us that faithful marriages are like a mirror that can reflect the faithfulness of God to a wider world. When your spouse forgives you in what can be an impossible situation, it reflects Christ's love and forgiveness He offers to all of us.
- Faithfulness in marriages can be like a mirror reflecting the faithfulness of God to the world, as revealed by Jesus Christ. It does not happen by chance but can be cultivated.
- To cultivate a faithful marriage, these three things are key: (1) pray together; (2) Reach out to friends (when you need help); and (3) Communicate with one another (with the goal of listening and caring). This will help to cultivate faithfulness each and every day.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What does this commandment teach us about the nature of God?
- How can we protect our marriages from sin of adultery?
- Read Matthew 5:27-30. How does Jesus define this idea of adultery? How does it differ from what we read in the Old Testament texts?
- In what ways can marital infidelity impact those that are involved? How can it impact others that are close to those involved?
- How can our marriage be a mirror of God's, and reflect, faithfulness and love to others?
- In what ways can we cultivate a faithful marriage?

