

A sermon preached by the Revd Martin Tanner in St Mary's Church,
Market Drayton on Sunday 3rd July 2016 at 10.30am

Bible Readings: Exodus 19 v1-8 John 8 v2-11

COMMANDMENT 7 "Do not commit adultery"

IT IS JUST FOUR WORDS: "Do not commit adultery"

But to understand those four words we need to understand four things:

1. To understand adultery, we need to understand LOVE.
2. To understand love, we need to understand MARRIAGE.
3. To understand marriage, we need to understand SEX.
4. To understand sex, we need to understand the BODY.

I must be short, for this sermon could easily take an hour!

First, LOVE it NOT a temporary *feeling* I may have. Love, at its best, is not about me. It is a *commitment* to do the best for someone else. To cherish them and bring the best out of them.

Second, MARRIAGE is 'an all-embracing, loving, permanent bond' in which husband and wife promise that that they will be faithful and true to each other until death parts them.

Marriage is not an invention of man or a scheme of governments or created by society. It is a gift of God when he created the world and first appears in Genesis Chapter 2 v24.

Amazingly, the Bible says that the love between a married couple is like the love Christ has for his Church. Human love is a mirror of divine love and there is nothing greater than the love Christ has for his Church because he died for us and gave his life on the Cross.

The purpose of marriage is to give a couple **a secure foundation and security** in which their relationship can grow as they love and cherish each other because they know they are safe.

And a foundation in which **their children** can be lovingly and securely nurtured and brought up.

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Third, God made us sexual beings. He gave us testosterone and hormones and passion and desire.

Human beings are UNIQUE as a species **in that RELATIONSHIP, not reproduction, lies at the heart of sex.** It is no accident that, uniquely among the higher species, we have intercourse face to face.

Sex is God-given and sex is good and positive.

The Bible is very clear on this.

It is the Greeks and Augustine who have suggested otherwise.

Suggested that sex is bad and a necessary evil but has to be tolerated for the survival of the race. But they are wrong! **Sex is meant to bless a marriage and draw a couple closer to each other.**

It is meant to be the seal on a marriage.

However, like all good things, sex can be misused.

It can be used by men as a weapon of war in the form of rape; It can be used casually with many partners and result in huge health problems.

Sexually transmitted disease is rising year by year, affecting about 500,000 people every year and costing the NHS millions and millions.

Sex is a God-given good-thing.

Fourth, God has given us our BODIES and is interested in how we live.

It is A LIE to say that God is only interested in spiritual things. After all, Jesus had a body himself and lived on earth in one for 30+ years. We can't restrict God to just spirituality and cordon him off from everyday life. It matters to God what we do with our bodies.

Why have I gone on about LOVE, MARRIAGE, SEX and BODIES?

I have done so because they are all GOOD things God has given us.

I want us to understand that they are VERY GOD gifts from God.

Be in **no doubt** about their GOODNESS.

SO why is adultery a sin?

WHY is it forbidden in the 7th Commandment?

The answer lies in the very word itself: ADULTERY.

The dictionary definition of adultery is: **'to render something POORER IN QUALITY by adding something else'**

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Can you see it? Adultery renders a marriage poorer.

Adultery takes what is good and makes it worse, even destroys it.

If marriage is '*an all-embracing, loving, permanent bond*' between TWO people it is made the poorer if a THIRD PERSON is involved. It is no longer a true bond. Adultery has rendered it the poorer.

Its VERY FOUNDATION has been undermined.

And nothing is secure if its foundations are shaky and weak.

The world may glamourise adultery and call it a 'fling' an 'affair' a 'romance' a 'bit of fun' **but the truth is** it takes what is good and undermines it and does so at great cost.

The 7th Commandment is given so we may avoid great pain and enjoy what God has given us.

Turning to John 8, we learn that Adultery is not the unforgiveable sin and there is hope for those who have sinned.

Men, the Pharisees and Teacher of the Law, use sex as a weapon to try to trap Jesus and bring a woman caught in the act of adultery to him and ask if she should be stoned to death as the Law required.

Jesus creates space for reflection by writing in the dirt and then, after a time, replies, "*Let him who is without sin be the first to cast a stone*".

And they all slip away until only Jesus and the woman are left.

Jesus, of course, IS "*THE ONE without sin*" and He who *could* have condemned her, does not. He shows her mercy.

Then He says,

"Go now, and leave your life of sin." John 8 v11

Jesus offers any caught up in sexual sin **mercy and forgiveness** but he also expects a changed life to follow: "Go NOW and leave your life of sin"

He doesn't expect us to put things off until tomorrow. "Now" "Today" is the time to make the change. Time TO LEAVE past behaviour in the past.

"Go now, and leave your life of sin." John 8 v11 is actually a text for every one of us here.

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We ALL have sinful desires and so we must ALL guard our MINDS and guard our BEHAVIOUR.

THOUGHTS become words
and WORDS become actions
and ACTIONS become habits
and HABITS become CHARACTER.

If we want to have a Christ-like character, **then the place to start is with the purity our thoughts.** PROVERBS 4 V23 says,

***"Above all else, GUARD YOUR HEART
for everything you do flows from it."***

MOST affairs happen between friends.

SO, if you are married never flirt.

If you are single never flirt unless you are serious in your intentions and the other person is free and suitable.

Boundaries need to be kept, then misunderstandings will not arise.

GUARD YOUR HEARTS.