

### *The Sixth Commandment*

**You shall not commit adultery.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor each other.**

Dear People of God in Christ,

We hear in the Old Testament lesson about Joseph being tempted by Potiphar's wife to be unchaste and unfaithful to God. Joseph, a believer in the Lord God understands this and responds in faith, **"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"** (Gen 39:12)

As Christians we may be tempted to look down our noses and say about Potiphar's wife, *"That is so typical of the people of the world."* There is a great deal of immorality in the world. But the Lord does not want us to concentrate on the pagan woman. He wants us to look at Joseph.

Looking at him we learn two things. First, God's people are not spared temptations, even temptations of the flesh. Two, that God wants us to stand firm against such temptations just as Joseph did in this account.

Temptations are so common in connection with the Sixth Commandment that the Lord puts many warnings in the Bible. We heard this morning in Hebrews 13:4, **"God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."** The Lord give many Gospel encouragements as well. We heard in Ephesians 5:2, **"walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us."** What happens is that sometimes we stand firm, sometimes we don't. I am not saying that we routinely commit adultery. We do break this commandment with words and especially in our heart and mind.

It is important that we hear the call to repentance in this commandment and in the Scriptures. It is important that we constantly have the cross in view. In the cross of Jesus we find forgiveness for these sins and others. It is in our Lord that like Joseph we find strength to stand firm.

Today as we continue with the **Sixth Commandment - You shall not commit adultery.** We have this thought in part 2 – **The Lord God helps us to keep the Sixth Commandment.**

**1. How do married and single people honor God and keep the Sixth Commandment?**

I met a young man years ago who confessed he was unhappy. He wanted to date girls, but couldn't. I asked, "why." He explained that he had been married, but his wife had left him. He believed that the Bible prohibited him from dating and marrying again. He wanted to honor God, but his knowledge was faulty. He was relieved to hear that he could date and remarry. How do married and single people honor God and keep the Sixth Commandment?

A. We all honor God by being pure in thought, word, and deed.

1. This means we are to avoid what is impure in thoughts, words and actions.

In the Joseph story in Genesis 39, Joseph fled temptation. We flee temptation.

a) God forbids sex outside of Marriage for both married and unmarried. St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, **3 "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God."**

b) God also forbids sexual immorality when it comes to speaking. This would include jokes or vulgar words.

c) We are even to guard our minds against immoral thoughts. Jesus says so in Matthew 5:27-28. **"27 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** Thinking lustful thoughts about someone we are not married to is a sin. Pornography is readily available through print, T.V. and the internet. As Christians we will work to keep our minds and lives free of sexual immorality.

2. This includes the area of dating. Single people honor God when they search for a spouse. A couple works to get to know each other and their families. We get to know if the other person is a believer in the Lord. The blessings of sex and living together under the same roof are for later in the marriage.

B. Married couples also honor God in their marriage.

1. They love and honor each other. St. Paul in Colossians 3 tells husbands to love their wives and not be harsh with them. (19) In Proverbs 21:19 Solomon warns wives that they are not to be quarrelsome or nagging. In Christian love both work to show consideration.

2. Both husband and wife will honor God by saying "no" to adultery. When King David committed adultery with Bathsheba God condemned him. (2 Samuel 11:1-4). The Lord warns in Hebrews 13:4 that he will judge adulterers.

3. How will couples do what the Lord wants? The answer is with the word of God and prayer. God knows our weaknesses and sins. In his word he brings forgiveness. He helps couples to forgive each other and to resolve conflicts. In his word he gives guidance as to the roles in marriage. He strengthens us to carry out

our duties. Pray and ask God to help. Ask God to bless the marriages of the people around you. He will answer.

There is more to say than I have time. Please consider studying this commandment in a Bible class or in speaking further with a pastor.

C. Before I move on, it is important I speak of divorce. Christians honor God when they understand and use divorce properly.

1. Some might think that Christians are not allowed to divorce. This is not true. However, divorce is the exception and not the rule. Jesus mentions an exception in Matthew 19:9 **“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”** If a person breaks the marriage union through unfaithfulness, this can include desertion (1 Corinthians 7:15), the innocent party, the one sinned against, can seek a divorce. It doesn't mean they must divorce, but it is an option.

2. Sadly many people use divorce as an excuse to give up on the marriage and get out. Christians are tempted to follow that path. Counseling and resolution are painful. Even Christians struggle bearing with the other person's weaknesses and shortcomings. More than a few pastors have heard a Christian say, *“I don't want to try anymore. I may be sinning in leaving my spouse, but God will forgive me.”* In such a scenario the person is expressing a lack of repentance and they will not be forgiven. They will be condemned by God. Every Christian needs to have a Scriptural understanding of divorce. It matters for time and eternity.

## **2. We continue to honor marriage through Christ.**

When Jesus spoke of divorce in Matthew 19, the disciples commented it is better not to marry. Jesus replied that only those who have the gift to handle being single can do that. Most Christians get married. We can do what God commands. The answer is in Jesus. We can honor marriage through Christ.

A. We sin against the Sixth Commandment. Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God and made us holy.

1. Jesus calls on us to not look at a woman or a man lustfully. Unless we are gifted to be single and have not desires of intimacy, we have broken this commandment. It maybe we did not even intend a sinful thought, but it just popped up. For the adultery in our hearts and in our words and actions, God condemns us. We are also guilty when we have not done everything we can to support the marriages around us.

2. God calls us to repent and to believe the good news. (Mark 1:15) Yes, we have sinned, but we have one who has taken our sins away. Jesus lived a pure life. Hebrews 4:15 testifies, **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”** In Hebrews 7:26 it calls him

**“blameless and pure.”** The blameless Son of God took away our sins to the cross and he gave us his holiness. You are ashamed of your immorality, but God has forgiven you. Be at peace.

B. Jesus taught about immorality and divorce not to put his disciples down, but to raise them up to live as God’s holy people.

1. Are you having trouble in your marriage or do you know someone who is struggling? It probably has something to do with not feeling loved or not being able to express love. In such situations the married couple should turn to Jesus. His love overflows. He makes us feel loved and he gives us the capacity to love and to repair a marriage.

2. Are you struggling with lustful thoughts, perhaps pornography? Ever since the fall into sin, people feel empty. They crave love, fulfillment and validation. But they look for fulfillment in the wrong places. One of those is pornography. Others look for it in sex outside of marriage.

You are a child of God. You are loved. In Ephesians 5:4 St. Paul speaks of not having a hint of immorality in our lives, but of having an attitude of thanksgiving. How do we do this? In Romans 13 St. Paul says, **“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.”** Clothe yourselves with Jesus by remembering his love. Jesus loved you and gave his life for you. Jesus loves you today and is watching over you. You don’t need sin, you just need him. You will find him in the words of Scripture and in the Sacraments. When you see him, you will be full-filled.

Conclusion: Proof can be found to support this thought: when we honor God in this commandment, blessing will follow, including long marriages. Examples in the Bible would be Abraham and Sarah and Aquilla and Priscilla. Last Sunday I mentioned that we regularly have prayers for marriages that have lasted 40, 50, 60 years and more. Christ is the answer to a happy marriage. He is the answer to single people keeping this commandment. As we look to our Savior, he will bless us. Jesus not only gives us peace and joy, but he helps us to find fulfillment as his people. Amen.