

“Commit, rather than Consume” (Exodus 20:14)

We are in the series of “The Call to Undivided Intimacy,” studying the Ten Commandments. Today we will study the 7th Commandment “You shall not commit adultery”.

1. Living in the consumer age

There is a data like this.¹

- Each year the average American throws away 65 pounds (29 kg) of clothing.
- An average child will accumulate 238 toys by the time they are 10 years old. They will only play with about 12 of them.
- 60% of private consumption worldwide is done by 12% of the world, who live in North America and Western Europe.

We live in an age of consumerism. We live in a time where we have more choices of consumption than any other time in history. We think it is better to have wider choices of consumption, and it's good to have the ability to consume more. And we seek to have this ability. And we feel sad if we can't have this, and feel irritated if our attempt for this is hindered.

In this consumeristic culture, even human relationships are objects of consumption. Choose someone who will meet your needs. The more choices you have, the better. Don't settle for forever. If you are not satisfied, go for the next. You don't have to be patient. It's nonsense to limit yourself. If you are tired of one relationship, it's a sign that the time has come. Time to find someone who can fill you up. If you find something better, leave the old thing, and get the new thing. Seek something more exciting, more pleasurable, and enjoyable.²

But God tells us to stop right there. God says committing is better than consuming.³ That is the heart of the 7th commandment.

“You shall not commit adultery.” This means you cannot treat another person like a belonging. You cannot treat one another as if the other person were

¹ <http://www.ba-bamail.com/content.aspx?emailid=15774>

² Almost 50 percent of all marriages in the United States will end in divorce or separation. Researchers estimate that 41 percent of all first marriages end in divorce. 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce. The average length of a marriage that ends in divorce is 8 years. <https://www.wf-lawyers.com/divorce-statistics-and-facts/>

³ Christina Hergenrader, “Love Rules: A Study of the Ten Commandments,” Kindle, 2016, p104

a thing. We must respect, love and care for one another because each person has their unique soul and personality and dignity.

2. God seeks covenant relationships

God seeks covenant relationships. This starts with creation of the world. God created humans in His image. God is the God of Trinity, who was before the creation of the world. In the fellowship of the triune God, Father, Son Jesus, and Holy Spirit, there is a perfect harmony, unity, love and righteousness.

And God placed human beings in relationship with himself. But humans betrayed God, and sinned against Him. They avoided God, and hid themselves. But God still called to them, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9)

God sought relationship with people, and he is still seeking relationship with people. The whole Bible shows that God is the God of covenant, he makes covenants with people, and those covenant relationships are defined by commitment and exclusivity.⁴

God made unconditional promises to us. And, based on His resolve and commitment to that covenantal relationship, we submit ourselves to Him in love and obedient service.⁵

“I will be their God,” He declares, “and they will be my people” (Ezekiel 37: 27). God wants your exclusive loyalty. He alone is your God. God seeks the covenant relationship. Relationship is important for us.

We are not to live alone, and can't live alone. We live in a community. We live within relationship with others. There are many kinds of relationships. Friends, class mates, colleagues, neighbors, and family, siblings, and spouse.

The foundational among them begins with marriage.

Any kinds of relationships should reflect the image of God because we are created in the image of God. But marriage is very unique. That is a covenantal relationship.

The Bible tells us God's relationship with us is like marriage. In the OT, God's people, Israel is described as his wife (Jer 3:1). In the NT, God's people,

⁴ Mark Mitchell, “Ten: How the Commandments Set Us Free,” Kindle, 2016, Location 844

⁵ Michael Horton, “The Law of Perfect Freedom,” Kindle, 2004, Location 2808

the Church is called his bride (Rev 21:2). If there is a breakdown on marriage, it is sure to have a ripple effect throughout other social relationships.⁶

The primary purpose of the 7th commandment is to protect marriage. And this principle can be applied to other relationships.

3. Destruction of the covenant love

Adultery is a violation of marriage relationship. Incidentally, if people who are not married commits the same kind of thing, this is considered a disgraceful thing and serious violation (Duet 22:21; 29). They are evil things. Some cases are considered that a man murdered a woman (Duet 22:26). They could be stoned to death (Duet 22:21-25).

The Bible says, in marriage, a husband and a wife become one flesh (Genesis 2:23-24). What does it mean to become one flesh? It is for the two persons to enrich their relationship by growing in knowledge of each other without reserve and without anyone else intervening.

Ephesians 5:22-25, 28

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

At a wedding, a bride wouldn't feel, "Why should I submit to my husband?" In the same way, a bridegroom wouldn't feel, "Why should I love my wife as my own body?"

To love your spouse as your own body. "This is now bone of your bones and flesh of your flesh. (Gen 2:23)" This is the relationship between a husband and a wife.

Of course, your spouse has his or her own personality, so they are not you. There is a clear boundary. But as soon as you get married, your spouse

⁶ Ibid, 2811

becomes bone of your bones and flesh of your flesh. You both have different personalities, but you accept and love each other as your own body, as yourself. The relationship between a husband and a wife is the only relationship where you can do this.

Adultery is to destroy this relationship between a husband and a wife. As you break your relationship with bone of your bones and flesh of your flesh, you end up destroying yourself. Of course, your family get hurt. And the partner in the affair and the partner's family also get hurt.

4. Biblical Sexuality

Sexual immorality is the sin against their body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:18-19).

In evangelical churches, sometimes salvation of the soul is overemphasized. And this may cause the misunderstanding that our bodies don't matter. But the Bible sees our entire being, as one whole which consists of spirit, mind and body. So our bodies are important.

Marriage is God's gift for experiencing the deepest relationship of humanity. "Sex is like Super Glue for the soul: it binds two people together spiritually."⁷

One day, we will stand before God totally "naked" spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically. At that time, we will have relationship with God with whole our being, all our heart, mind and strength. And we will experience that we are the Lord's greatest joy and the Lord is our greatest joy forever. This fellowship is the covenant relationship the Lord has given us. Only in this holy covenant relationship, there is this level of joy.

And marriage points out this covenant relationship with Christ in the future. And "Sexual intercourse is the gift God has given for the purpose of sealing the covenant of marriage."⁸ Sexual intercourse is only allowed in the covenant relationship, which is marriage. That's why Christians define premarital sex as an act against God, and this includes living together.⁹

⁷ Mark Mitchell, 851

⁸ Ibid, 2820

⁹ Christina Hergenrader, 123

But contemporary culture claims the total opposite of this. To get what you want when you want. This is wonderful. There are so many attractive things in the world. And you can get it instantly! If it becomes inconvenient, you can change it anytime. Everyone is enjoying. Don't miss the opportunity!

But the truth never changes. "You shall not commit adultery."

"Whenever we commit adultery, we sin against God, our own body, the partner in the affair, our spouse, and the partner's spouse."¹⁰ We not only violate our covenant with God. But we also lead someone else to violate his or her own. "It violates covenants; it destroys relationships established by a good God for our pleasure and thanksgiving."¹¹

5. A matter of heart

When we study these things, we tend to think, "Then up to where is okay? And from where is sin?" This is a Legalistic approach. Legalists are concerned about "lines." "How far can I go, practically, without sinning?"

Can you see this legalist is trying to avoid sin on the surface, but actually he is trying to come closer to sin as close as possible?

What he is thinking in the depth of his heart is "What can I get?" When this question "How far can I go?" comes up in our mind, we should ask, "Am I relating to my neighbor (in this case, my girlfriend, boyfriend, or spouse) as a person created in God's image? Am I honoring this person's body? Am I loving him or her as I would myself?"¹²

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matt 5:27)"

Adultery is more than a matter of action, it's a matter of the heart.

There three types of adultery.¹³

(1) Physical Adultery

¹⁰ Michael Horton, 2858

¹¹ Ibid, 2861

¹² Ibid, 2843

¹³ Mark Mitchell, 806, 811, 824, 824, 827

It is voluntary sexual involvement between a married person and someone other than his or her spouse.

(2) Mental Adultery

It doesn't involve physical contact but rather takes place in the mind.

(3) Emotional Adultery

It is developing emotional intimacy with someone other than your spouse.

Emotional adultery usually begins with a married couple losing that emotional connection they once enjoyed with one another. A wife no longer feels understood by her husband. A husband feels he can no longer share his true feelings with his wife.

What "love" means in the world in general is to use the other person. People misunderstand that "love" is to control the other person at will for own satisfaction. It is to ignore the other person's dignity and see him or her as if the person was a thing.

Here is what "love" is according to the Bible.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love is not concept but is action! Love is patient. To be patient is to take time and wait to calm down so your emotions don't burst out. It is not to retaliate. Love is kind. To be kind is to be compassionate, to be merciful. It is to overcome our own laziness, to overcome our desire to indulge ourselves. And it is to serve others, be in the position of a servant.

This love is the foundation of all other human relationships. And the deepest relationship based on this love is the relationship between a husband and a wife. To accept and relate to someone as a person with a unique personality is the same foundational principle that applies to all other relationships.

But when we start to act following our self-centered desires, the other person become an object of our desire. And he or she will no longer be a precious person with a unique personality, but will become a thing that is to be used to

satisfy our desire (Rom 1:24, 26, 27). And this happened because human beings chose to separate from God (Rom 1:21).

God gave us humans the order of love. And it is in the relationship between a husband and a wife where this order of love is practiced and experienced in the most profound way. But this order of love has been destroyed and broken. It is because man chose to leave God.

6. Seeking love

Nobody enters a relationship desiring to destroy the other person, their spouse or themselves. The relationship between a husband and a wife always starts with the desires “to be loved, to love, to be happy and to make the spouse happy.” And other relationships also start with the same kind of intention. The question is where these desires “to be loved, to love, to be happy and to make the other person happy” come from, and how they can be truly satisfied.

When these desires are not satisfied in a way they expected in their relationships, they will keep seeking love in different places.

There are some people who can only feel loved when they are given priority. For example, small children. As soon as they get a younger brother or sister, some children revert back to being like a baby.

There are some people who only feel affirmed in their worth by controlling other people. For example, some people can only feel affirmed in their worth as they get their way.

There are some people who feel uneasy if they feel like they are not in possession of something. For example, some people need to buy things. Or some other people always want to know what others are doing.

Our heart is made in such a way that they will never be satisfied without belonging. So every day, we look for a sense of belonging. However, relationships in this world will never truly satisfy our hearts. So we go to seek more of it, and go to seek something easier to get, and something more exciting. And so this desire can be felt as the desire to love and the desire to be loved in human relationships. We feel we “want to love”, and “want to be loved”, but actually we want to satisfy the desires in our hearts for experiencing “belonging”.

It is because in the world we only know this kind of fleeting, temporary love that we feel we need to be given priority, we need to control others, we need

to possess things, and we seek excitement. In contrast, God's love risks not receiving what is expected in return and receiving pain.

But we understand love in the way we know. So when you hear God loves you, you think God wants to control you, possess you, and use you to satisfy His desire. And when you hear God gave up and sacrificed his own for you to bless you who oppose Him, you can't believe it in your heart.

Here what's happening is although you are with God who is love, you don't fully connect yourselves with his love. You are not experiencing his love with your whole being.

7. Remain in the source of love

Now go back to human relationship. We often think, "I love him so much, but he doesn't respond to my love. So I won't care for him any longer." Or "I have done so much for her, but she betrayed me. How can I love her now?" Or "You keep saying you love me. Don't say you love me with little actions to go along with your words. If you say you love me, prove it by acting more lovingly."

We can see the same kind of attitude in the Bible.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees caught a woman in the act of adultery. She was taken red-handed; she can't make any excuses. They brought her before Jesus, and challenged him saying "In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" Jesus said, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." At this, they began to leave one at a time until only Jesus was left (John 8:3-9).

In what way are we the same as them? We are the same as them in our attitude of demanding others to be perfect in love, while we ourselves are imperfect.

If we think carefully we know that there is no one who is perfect in this world. But we separate ourselves from others, and judge others, scrutinize others. This person made this kind of mistake. He treaded me so badly. He cannot even do this. None of these are valid reasons for anyone being unworthy of love. And if we pause to think, we are not that different from them. Do we really love the other person as much as we demand the person to love us?

Jesus is the one, the only one who loved us, we who are so imperfect and selfish, just as love is described in 1 Corinthians 13. He is the one who redeemed us at the cost of his own life.

Jesus asked the woman, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus forgave someone who was apparently a sinner in the eyes of everyone, who deserved to be stoned (John 8:10-11).

It was not that Jesus treated the sin of adultery lightly. When Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you,” what he meant was, “I receive the penalty on behalf of you, you who deserve the punishment, stoning, eternal destruction. I will be crucified for your sin, instead of you being judged and stoned. I love you as I love myself. I love you more than my own life. You may think you are worthless, but you are a precious person whom I want to protect at the cost of my own life. Come to me. Remain in my love. This grace makes us possible to come back to Jesus, who is love.

Even if we ignore God, no matter how far we are away from Him, God’s love for us will never change. What’s important for us is to know that we don’t have the love the Bible describes within us, and repent from loving on our own, without the love of God. We must accept the fact that our sins are forgiven through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

We are to seek God who is love, perfect love, unchanging love, infinite love. We must remain in Jesus who is the source of love. We must deepen our relationship with God who is love. “Experiencing the Life, Changing Lives.” Then the love of God will reach others through us, you and me. Commit, rather than Consume.

This is the call to undivided intimacy.

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection:

1. What does our culture teach us about sexual relationship? What problems is it causing in our society?

2. What kind of sins can plant the seeds of adultery long before an actual, physical affair? How can we help those who are in danger of falling into these kinds of sins, and those who are committing adultery?

3. Read Ephesians 5:22-33. According to this passage, how does Christ love you, treat you, care for you? How are you connected with him? How will you deepen your relationship with him? How can this deeper relationship with him change your relationships with others?

[For a married couple] (Talk to your spouse if possible) God wants a husband and a wife to become one flesh in earthly marriage. What support from your spouse do you need to become more intimate partner in Christ? What will it be like for you to work together so that both of you come to know God, imitate Him, serve Him, and worship Him as one flesh?