

Sunday 6 July 2008



What is it that make signs like “Keep off the Grass” and “Wet paint” provoke a reaction within us. Do we walk on the grass, or touch the paint – because it looks dry and we want to prove the sign wrong?

When God in the 10 commandments says “You shall not commit adultery”, God is not in any way wanting to promote adultery but rather faithfulness in marriage which is why the CEV has “ Be Faithful in Marriage”. Behind this command there are assumed values.

1. Marriage is Good

The LORD God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. Genesis 2.18 NIV

- This Bible verse tells us that marriage is about companionship. Eve was literally made for Adam

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. Gen 2.22.

- There was a mutual attraction

“At last!” the man exclaimed. “This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from ‘man.’”
Gen2.23.

- There was the exclusive relationship of husband and wife, the two making an exclusive relationship, being joined together by God.

This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Gen 2.24 NLT

- There was intimacy, honesty, and vulnerability.

Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame. Gen 2.25 NLT

This scripture highlights the importance of marriage. It demonstrates that sex is God given and is a precious gift and that marriage is the place for its loving expression.

2. Adultery Defined

That’s how it was in the beginning but by Genesis 3 sin has entered the world and Adam and Eve cover up their shame. Sin distorts that which is good, which is why God forbids adultery.

Adultery is “voluntary sexual intercourse between a married man or woman and partner other than legal spouse”

3. Understanding Sexuality

God created us as sexual beings. Our gender affects more than procreative functions. It’s an integral part of who we are. It effects the way we behave, the clothes we wear and the things we think.

Within society sex is often treated as a pleasant recreational activity instead of an act of loving intimacy intended for marriage. The sex industry is big business and it is easy for persons to be treated as objects rather than as persons created in the image of God.

Adultery is wrong because it violates the exclusive relationship intended for husband and wife. It is not purely a sexual act but is also a breach of trust. According to Leviticus 4.10 when a man committed adultery with another man’s wife both were to be put to death.

Jesus acknowledges the seriousness of such an action when he says that divorce may take place when adultery has been committed.

I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." Matthew 19.9 NIV

Jesus when speaking of a husband or wife who divorces their husband or wife (presumably without the grounds of adultery) and remarry also commit adultery.

"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." Mark 10.11-12.

The Power of the Mind

Adultery does not just happen. Jesus takes us to the heart of its origins when he says:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do 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. Matt 5.27-28

We live in a world which bombards us with sexual imagery. There are films, books, television, internet etc which promote personal happiness whether this means cheating on your husband or wife or having casual sexual encounters. Sex is used to promote advertising various products. In such a world it is easy to take on the values that are promoted. It can affect our own thoughts and desires.

So Jesus is saying – guard your thoughts, guard your eyes. What we mentally feed on, affect what we will think about which in turn can govern our behaviour and actions. That's why the Apostle Paul wrote

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12.2

Strengthening Marriages

Ephesians 5.21-33 promotes healthy marriages built upon love and respect.

Marriage as Jesus intends is a mirror of his love for the Church.

J John's in his book 10 has 5 ways to Affirm Marriage:

1. Have Respect,
2. Take Responsibility,
3. Relate to one another
4. Keep Romance alive,
5. Resolve – work at your marriage

Discovering God's Forgiveness

King David in Psalm 51 helps us to see there is a way back. As fallen human beings we do get things wrong whether in marriage or with other relationships. God is wanting us to be children of his grace and forgiveness. God's forgiveness is there for us as we tune our hearts to His and seek to follow his way

God believes in marriage, there is hope for our world. In God's strength, faithfulness in marriage is not only desirable but possible and as many have demonstrated achievable. As we seek to promote the wellbeing of society God is there before us and for each one is wanting healthy, wholesome, and enriching relationships. That is God's desire for His church of which we are a part.

For Small Groups Genesis 2.18-25, Exodus 20.1-14, Ephesians 5.21-33

1. What do we believe makes a good marriage?
2. Why does God prohibit adultery and what is it about adultery that can be so destructive?
3. Reflect how our sexuality affects our lives and world.
4. What promotes a healthy attitude towards sex and what degrades or cheapens it?
5. In the light of Jesus's teaching in Matthew 5.27-28 where does adultery begin. How can we renew our minds (see Romans 12.1-2).
6. How can we promote healthy relationships whether in marriage or in other relationships?

Use your discussions as a basis for prayer.