

# Ten Commandments

## # 7: A Better Story

Exodus 20:14

Dr. Kevin Maurice ---- July 13, 2025

Turn with me in your Bible to Genesis chapter 2. And as you turn there, let me tell you about one of the most important conversations that I never actually had.

When I was thirteen years old, in the seventh grade, I was sitting next to my dad, and we were watching the nightly news. And we were listening to Dan Rather report about the impeachment hearings of a certain U. S. president. And I was listening and trying to understand what in the world the definition of “is” is. And there was a lot of discussion around this particular president’s adulterous affair.

And as we watched, my dad looked over at me, and with a rather serious expression, he asked, “Kevin, do you understand what’s going on?”

Now I had no idea. But I had a little bit of an idea. So, in full teenage confidence, I said, “Yeah, for sure.”

So, he nodded thoughtfully, and then he asked, “So that means you know about ... you know, the birds and the bees and the sex?”

So now I’m in full panic mode. Because at this point in my life I have survived exactly one health class that was taught by a football coach who was really good at wheeling in the TV cart and pushing “play.” And like many in my generation, unfortunately, I’d been exposed to internet pornography well before I had any framework for what intimacy was meant to be. But on this topic, I had never had a real or meaningful conversation, about marriage or sex.

But I told my dad, “Oh, yeah. I understand.”

So, he nodded. He gave me a thumbs up, and said, “Okay.” And we both went back to watching TV. And that was it. That was my talk.

And listen, I’m not blaming my dad. I think he was doing his best. But on this topic, I was left with silence, which was quickly filled in by the world and our culture with a lot of noise.

And so, what I learned about love and marriage and sex, I learned from songs and sitcoms and movies. And that message was really loud and it was constant. And most of it was just not true. It was just confusing.

So, thank God for His Word. Because on this subject of marriage and sex, God speaks with clarity and truth and grace. And what He gives to us is a better story.

This summer we're studying the Ten Commandments, and today we come to the seventh: "You shall not commit adultery."

God says that for the sake of human flourishing, for the good of your soul, here is a moral law that is true across time and space: Do not commit adultery.

Adultery, clearly defined, is sexual activity outside of the covenant boundary of marriage.

For some, that command feels distant. For others, this hits really close to home. But wherever you are this morning, whoever you are--single, married, old, young, hurting, or hopeful--God invites us to look deeper.

Because this commandment is not just about behavior. It's about the sacredness of a relationship. It's about the kind of love that we were created for.

So, today we're going to walk through the Scriptures—not just to understand a commandment, but to see the story behind it. Because what we see in God's Word is that the Christian sexual ethic doesn't say less than the world; it actually says so much more. There is more meaning, there is more value, there is more beauty in God's design.

And to see this design, we have to go back to the beginning. Because unless we understand the purpose of marriage, we won't understand why God says, "Do not commit adultery."

So, let's start at the very beginning. In Genesis 1, God creates the heavens and the earth, and He says it's good. Everything that He looks at, He says that it's good. In Genesis 2, God creates humankind—the first man, Adam. And for the first time in the Bible, God says something is not good.

This brings us to Genesis 2:18. And if you're able, will you please stand with me for the reading of God's Word. "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helper fit for him.'" We'll be skipping to verse 21. "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought

her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

Please be seated.

It was not good for man to be alone. Again, this is the first “not good” thing mentioned in the Bible. And so, God forms Eve. But she’s not an afterthought. She’s not an accessory. Genesis says she is a helper fit for him. The Hebrew phrase in Genesis 2 is *ezer kenegdo*. In the Old Testament, *ezer* is used sixteen different times, not to describe a human being, but to describe God Himself as Israel’s helper and even military ally. That word *kenegdo* means “suitable to him” or “face to face with him.” It means this is a match, a complement.

So, Eve is not Adam’s assistant. She is his necessary partner. She is his ally in a mission that God is giving to them. So, man and woman, each in the image of God; equal, distinctly different, yet interdependent. That is God’s design for marriage.

And then we get to verse 24, which says, “A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to, be united with, his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

So, in Genesis 2 God creates marriage. And then He creates sex. Sex is His idea. And God creates sex to take place within the boundaries of marriage between a husband and a wife to cultivate this one-flesh relationship. It’s all rooted in something that the Bible calls a covenant. A covenant is a sacred promise. It’s this binding commitment of both present and future love and faithfulness.

And so, we see the marriage covenant is emotional, it’s physical, it’s also spiritual. Adam and Eve are naked and not ashamed. God creates marriage as this place where you can be fully known, fully loved, naked, unashamed. And that’s why sex, by God’s design, was created to exist inside of marriage. Sex isn’t just an expression of affection or love. It’s a binding act. It reinforces intimacy and trust.

So, that’s God’s design for marriage. That’s God’s design for sex.

One day, Jesus is asked about this design. He’s questioned about marriage. And His response is to go back to creation. He actually quotes Genesis 2. This is Matthew 19. Jesus says, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,

and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

So, when He’s asked about it, Jesus doesn’t offer a new definition or a different definition of marriage. He returns to the original one. Marriage is one man, one woman, joined as one flesh in a covenant that no one should separate. And even this high view, this high call of what marriage is meant to be, doesn’t give us the whole story. Because after the cross, after the resurrection, the New Testament pulls back the curtain even further. And in the Book of Ephesians, we’re told that marriage actually points to something beyond itself.

In Ephesians 5 the Bible tells us that “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” But now it goes a step further. It says, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

Marriage is first and foremost a mystery. And the great mystery is that this temporal human relationship is actually a reflection of the eternal relationship between Jesus the Christ and His bride, the Church.

Marriage is not just about companionship or romance or procreation. It is a living parable. It’s a picture of Jesus’ sacrificial love for His people.

My friend Christine Lawless, one of our amazing teachers here at Grace, describes marriage as a puzzle. One man, one woman—those are two different pieces. But when they fit together, when they align, they complete a bigger picture.

So, mankind is created in the image of God. The Latin phrase for that is *imago Dei*—image of God. Marriage is created in the image of the Gospel—*imago evangelium*—image of the Gospel. Marriage is meant to reflect Christ laying down His life for us. That’s the story of marriage.

But that is not the story the world teaches, is it? Because the world treats marriage like a cell phone contract, where you stay in it as long as it’s working for you. But if not, just shop around.

And this turns marriage into this consumer relationship where it’s all about my personal satisfaction. At the same time, our culture also says and holds up romantic relationships as THE thing. This is supposed to be THE thing that will ultimately fulfill you. So, culture distorts the purpose and then over-promises the truth, the result.

And that's how love becomes transactional. It's how desire becomes detached from commitment. It's how sex becomes all about gratification and not unification. And again, this is why sex before or outside of marriage doesn't just break a rule; it deforms God's design. It deforms God's design because our souls are not created for disposable intimacy.

God's design is like sheet music. Because, yes, there is structure. There are rules. And that's what makes music possible. Because without structure, there's no melody—it's just a mess. But with that structure there is melody, there's harmony, there's rhythm, and there's something greater than the sum of its parts. It's not just notes. It's not noise. It's music. That is God's design.

But here's the point in all of it. Marriage is a gift. But it is not the goal. It is a signpost, but it's not the summit. Marriage points us to the greatest relationship for which we are created, which is union with Christ.

So, if you are married, this is your calling: to reflect the Gospel, in and with and through your marriage; to love your spouse—not perfectly, but sacrificially.

If you are single or dating, this message is still for you. Because the deepest truth about marriage is that it's not really, actually, about marriage. It's about Jesus, the ultimate love that we are made for.

Marriage and singleness are both reflections. Singleness reflects the sufficiency of Christ for His people. Jesus is always enough. Marriage reflects the covenant love of Christ for His Church.

And that is why adultery wounds so deeply. Because it doesn't just cross a moral line. Adultery shatters something sacred. It treats this mysterious reflection as something less than.

So, I just want to pause for a second and say that I know that for some of you this is not theoretical today. Because maybe you've experienced this on a very personal level. You've committed to someone, and you honored your vows, and those vows were broken. And now you're the one who's left picking up all those pieces.

And if that's you, please hear me. Your Savior knows, and He sees you, and He knows what was done to you. And He wants you to know that He will never walk away. You are loved by your Creator.

Adultery, like all sin, doesn't just hurt people—and it does hurt people. But it doesn't just hurt people; it distorts something holy. And that's true of every single one of the Ten

Commandments. When we break God's law, we don't just disobey; we're unravelling something sacred.

Think about this with the commands we've talked about this summer:

**Keep the Sabbath holy**—to violate that is to diminish the *imago Dei*. It turns human beings into machines. No rest makes us less than human.

**Do not murder**—to break that command is to destroy the *imago Dei*. Killing a human being, even with our anger and our thoughts is to treat an image-bearer as less than. It treats them as an animal.

**Do not commit adultery**—because it's covenant betrayal. And it brings marriage down to the level of just another story.

And here's the thing: adultery doesn't begin in and only take place in a bedroom. It begins in those small compromises that maybe even feel harmless at first. It's a lingering look or a flirtation at work. Or it's that hidden, secret text message from an old boyfriend or girlfriend. Or it's this emotionally charged friendship that starts to go past healthy boundaries.

Those things aren't harmless. In many ways they are rehearsals. They are moments where faithfulness is tested and sometimes traded for something that feels exciting and new and flattering.

And beneath those moments there's this deeper temptation, there's this whisper of *What if?* Because, *What if I deserve more? What if I had just married someone else? What if there's something better out there for me?*

And that is the same lie that Satan used in the garden. *What if God is just holding out on you?*

Often adultery doesn't begin with another person. It begins with a desire for another story, a different life. What if?

One of the fastest growing literary genres, especially popular among female readers, is called romantasy—romance and fantasy. There are these emotionally immersive and also erotic novels. But it's not just books. It's TV, movies ... think about it .... you name it ... anything that is inviting us to imagine sexual fulfillment outside of our marriage, anything that invites you to escape or long for a version of intimacy that, if we're realistic, may not really exist. What slowly happens is that you begin to measure real people against a romantic fantasy. And that might not

sound scandalous. But it warps expectations. And over time, it can steal the joy and the meaning and the purpose out of marriage.

Because if we only think that adultery is only physical affairs, we are missing the bigger picture. Jesus makes this so clear in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5 Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Jesus says that whoever looks at another person lustfully has committed adultery. Because what we look at shapes what we long for.

Which brings us to perhaps the most corrosive spiritual force in, at least, modern human history. And I’m talking about pornography. Because for so many people, pornography is the first, the most accessible, and the most consistent teacher of sexuality. And it is everywhere.

According to a Barna study from last year, somewhere between fifty-five and seventy-five percent of Christian men view pornography regularly—at least weekly. Among women porn has risen sharply in the last decade. It’s now as high as forty percent among Christian women. And every single day one out of four Google searches is porn related.

So, it’s not hidden, and it’s not going anywhere. Sexual content is embedded and is a part of every single social media platform. Why? Because it’s big business. A modest, extremely conservative estimate is that last year worldwide the porn industry generated \$66 million dollars.

And our culture is destigmatizing it. Pornography gets labeled as sex work. It’s talked about as empowering, and it even gets celebrated. In a survey of Gen Z, fifty-eight percent of young people ages thirteen to twenty-four said that not recycling was more immoral than pornography.

But porn is not harmless. It has been neurologically proven to rewire our brains. It is addictive.

And more than that, Jesus tells us it is visual adultery, because it dehumanizes people. It teaches us that bodies are for consumption, not for commitment or covenant; that sex is all about taking, not giving; that people are just objects, not image-bearers.

We have to fight it. So, how do we fight it? How do we fight upstream against this? Jesus says it starts with our eyes. We have to guard our eyes. Immediately after saying that looking at someone lustfully is adulterous, Jesus then says, “If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out.”

And that's not a message about self-mutilation. He's talking about the seriousness with which we take this sin.

And for many of us, limiting our freedom on this, limiting our internet access or restricting our ability on our phones or screens might feel like ripping an eye out.

So, let me just be very vulnerable with you. Years ago, I asked my wife Kate to put a number of limits and restrictions on my phone and my computer. So, I don't have internet browsers on my phone. I can't download any new apps. She has my screen time password, and I am not allowed to know it. I don't know it. Y'all, I'm a thirty-eight-year-old man, and it's kind of embarrassing when someone sends me something and I say, "I can't open it." I have to ask my wife to help me download Candy Crush.

And listen, it's not because I'm scared of this. And it's not because I'm scared of the world. But because I know my own heart, and I know that deep down, and in fact, not that deep down, probably on the surface, I am a sinful, tempt-able human being. And I want to give myself every single chance that I have, that I can get my hands on, in this fight against pornography and against adultery.

So, if you're married, if you're single, if you're older or you're young, we all need help with this. Husbands—let me just talk to the guys for a second—husbands, what if you made today the day? I mean, are you tired of hiding it? What if today was the day that you had a hard conversation and you confessed and you invited your wife to help you guard your eyes?

Wives, what if you asked for that same kind of accountability?

Parents, I did youth ministry for twelve years. I have one piece of advice. Please, love your kids enough to not hand them a fully loaded phone with the safety turned off.

We all need help with this. Let's invite people into our lives with whom we can be honest and talk about our temptation. We cannot fight this alone. Pornography thrives in secrecy. Shame grows in the dark. So, we've got to drag it kicking and screaming into the light.

Call a friend. Do it today. Talk to a pastor. Find a real, Christlike brother or sister who you can go to and confess to and ask for help. We don't need more willpower on this. We need more people.

There's a famous play called *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller. The main character is a guy named Willy Loman. He's having a midlife crisis. He's a traveling salesman, and he's

not very good at it. He's full of self-pity and his life is filled with these what-ifs. One day he begins to have an adulterous relationship. He cheats on his wife.

And there's this haunting scene where his son, who wants to surprise his dad, goes to visit him on a work trip. So, he goes to dad's hotel room, and he sees his father having an affair. And at first, Willy Loman yells at his son, and then he threatens him. And then he begins to make excuses, and then tries to justify his actions.

But eventually, Willy Loman's whole world comes crashing down. And all that self-deception, all that self-justification just melts away. And he realizes what he's done to himself and to his family. And he is completely exposed. His soul is naked, and he is ashamed.

That's what sin does, especially this sin. Because we were made for so much more. Adultery, in all its forms, lives so much closer than we want to admit.

Maybe you understand this commandment. Maybe you understand it far too well, and it's already cost you a marriage. Or it could be that it's a sin struggle that's lived out in your fantasies, in your imagination. Or it's this ongoing secret battle with pornography.

Whatever it may be, we have all fallen short of faithfulness. We've all fallen short of faithfulness—physically, emotionally, or spiritually—maybe all three.

But our unfaithfulness is not the end of the story. And this is where the beauty of the Gospel breaks in.

There's this incredible detail about the Ten Commandments. I read about it this week, and I've been thinking about it all week. When God gives us the Ten Commandments—gives them to the people of Israel—He didn't just speak them. He wrote them out, right? On two stone tablets, to a guy who looks suspiciously like Charlton Heston. Why two? Did you ever wonder that? You always picture them this way, right? Five on one, five on the other. How Western of us, as if God just kind of ran out of room on one—*Oh, got to get another tablet out.*

But it's not a formatting issue. In fact, it's very likely that both tablets had all ten commandments written on them. Because in the ancient world when two people made a covenant, they made two copies, one for each person. That way, if the covenant was ever broken, you could bring your copy and say, *Look*, to the other person and hold them accountable.

But the Bible says that both tablets, both copies, are placed inside the Ark of the Covenant. Why does God keep both? Because He doesn't just give us the law. He also takes full responsibility for fulfilling it. And He knew that we would break the covenant. He knew that we

would be unfaithful. And He already made the choice, and He said, “I will carry the whole thing. I’ll carry it the whole way ... on my own back, on my own shoulders, up the hill, onto a cross.” Jesus carries the covenant because we cannot.

God does not abandon the unfaithful. He doesn’t shrug away our sin. But He doesn’t walk away from sinners. He runs after us.

There’s a book in the Bible called Hosea. And it’s a book that’s all about the love that God has for the unfaithful.

God tells the prophet Hosea to go and marry a woman named Gomer. And God tells Hosea, *Your wife is not going to love you. She’s going to have an affair. Actually, she’s going to have multiple affairs. She’s going to have children that may or may not be your own. She’s going to sell herself to other men. She’s going to break every single vow that you make in marriage. I want you to go and marry her.*

And after all of that happens and she leaves her husband, God comes to Hosea and tells him this: **“Go again, go to her again, and love that woman who is loved by another and is an adulteress.”** And here’s why. Because this is how the Lord loves the children of Israel.

So, Hosea goes and finds his wife. He finds her in a marketplace, and she’s on an auction block. She’s been shamed and stripped of her dignity. And she’s been sold into slavery. And at great cost to himself, Hosea buys her back. He buys back what has been lost, and he restores what was ruined. The word for that is redemption. And in that messy, gritty, powerful picture, God is pointing to Himself. And He’s foreshadowing an even greater love, an even greater redemption that is to come. Because while we were still sinners, while we were adulterers—not just physically, but spiritually—Jesus died for us.

And He stepped into the marketplace of our shame, and He said, “That one. Him. Her. That’s the one that I love. And I will pay any price.”

And He did. And on the cross, Jesus paid the full price for our unfaithfulness. He bears the weight of our betrayal---and still He offers us His love again, and again, and again.

And at the very end of the Bible in Revelation 21 it says this: **“I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”**

That bride is the Church. That bride is us. And one day we’re going to be radiant and spotless, but not because we were perfect, but because He loves us.

Do not commit adultery. This commandment isn't just for some people. It's for all of us.

And when you think of that commandment, I want you to imagine that Jesus is looking at you. But maybe not in the way that you imagine. Because I want you to imagine Jesus looking at you, but He doesn't have a stern look on His face. He's not holding up your search history, and He isn't ashamed of you.

Now I want you to imagine that Jesus is looking at you, and He's smiling. There are actually some tears at the corners of His eyes, because He's the groom at the front of the chapel, and the doors have just swung open in the back. And there you are. And He sees you, and He knows you, and He loves you.

That's the better story. That's the truest story. That's the one that your heart and your soul were made for. And when we see Jesus that way, and when we realize that's how He sees us, that's when we'll really understand this commandment. That's when healing can begin. That's when transformation can take place.

Obedying the Ten Commandments is not how we earn God's love; it's how we respond to His love that He's already given to us.

So, listen, if you are single today, please hear me. Your life is not on hold. The world tells you that romantic relationships are the highest good. Scripture tells us there is something far greater. The story you're living is not a lesser one. You're already loved; you're already chosen. You belong to the one who gave everything for you. So, walk faithfully in the Gospel.

If you're dating someone, you're not married yet, so you're not practicing marriage yet. But you are practicing faithfulness. Every moment in this season, every decision, every boundary, is forming your heart to either trust in God's design or to twist it. And so, honor your boyfriend, honor your girlfriend, first as a brother or sister in Christ, and walk faithfully side by side in the Gospel.

And if you're married, do not commit adultery so that your marriage can thrive and you can be fruitful.

Protect your covenant. Don't drift from what's good and true. The Book of Proverbs says to drink water from your own well. What that means is to find sexual fulfillment in your own marriage with your spouse.

God's design for your marriage is not effortless romance. It's sacrificial love. So, confess sins to one another. Speak with grace and not guilt. And walk as one flesh in the Gospel.

The Gospel is a better story. God is faithful even when we're not. He forgives us, He redeems us, He restores us. There's a lot of noise in the world today. I'm telling you, there's a ton of noise. Do not ever let it drown out this truth, that God forgave you, He restores you, He redeems you. He is your Savior. So, let's live and reflect that better story.

Would you please pray with me?

*God, thank You for who You are. Thank You that while we are sinners, You chose to love us. You sent Your Son for us to buy us back. And beyond that, You give us Your Holy Spirit to live within us so that we would know that we are Yours and we are loved. God, help us to live that way, as treasured children, as Your bride.*

*God, all these metaphors and these analogies, these things we can say about how You view us and how You love us, they are shadows. And we so long for the day when we see the substance of Jesus the Christ Himself, with love in His eyes for us. Help us to live this way, obediently. We pray these things in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*