



grow. pray. study.

October 6, 2019 *Words of Life: Reading the Ten Commandments Through the Eyes of Jesus*
“Faithfulness: You Must Not Commit Adultery”

Scripture:

Do not commit adultery. *Exodus 20:14*

‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.”²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. *Matthew 5:27-30*

This week we are memorizing:

Do not commit adultery.

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

God (not us) the source of faithful love

MONDAY 10.7.19 Psalm 89:1-5

Here rendered “loyal love,” the Hebrew word *hesed* “includes the idea of love and devotion, and faithfulness to a promise or a covenant. When used to describe God its emphasis is on God’s faithfulness to his covenant with his people, his promise to be their God always, and to protect them and take care of them. It describes his special feeling for his people.” * The idea of loving faithfully began in Scripture not with human commitments but with the very character of God.

- In Psalm 89:14, *hesed* is described as one of the basic foundations of God’s rule in the universe: “Your throne is built on righteousness and justice; *loyal love* and faithfulness stand in front of you” (cf. also [Psalm 33:5](#)). How easy or hard do you find it to trust in God’s faithful love when life brings disappointment or pain? Even in human relationships, do you find value in “I’m with you” even in a situation which the other person cannot “fix”?
- Other passages ([Micah 6:8](#) is a notable example) called God’s people to lives filled with loyal, faithful love. Clearly this kind of love that reaches deeper than just the fluctuating, changeable emotions our culture often labels “love.” In her novel *Many Waters*, Madeleine l’Engle wrote of a “vast, patiently waiting love” at the heart of the cosmos. How does believing in that, rather than a cold, empty universe, lay the foundation for you to live a life of loyal, faithful love?

Prayer: God of loyal love, I am keenly aware of the times when I do not live up to your love for me. Keep me growing to both live into your love and live it out toward others. Amen.

* Robert G. Bratcher and William D. Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Psalms*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1991, p. 53.

At first, a narrow concept of “adultery”

TUESDAY 10.8.19 Exodus 20:14, Proverbs 6:23-32

The way that Israel’s sages wrote in Proverbs on living out the seventh commandment was accurate, but relatively narrow. Their focus was on “the man who approaches his neighbor’s wife.” The passage knew that a woman could act seductively (“with her eyelashes”—verse 25), yet in the end it spoke to “he who commits adultery.” Violating someone else’s committed marriage was (and is) clearly a hurtful choice. But this passage seemed to limit the commandment to only one kind of male action.

- Verse 26 may jolt us. Was Proverbs endorsing prostitution? Scholar John Goldingay clarified: “Proverbs isn’t implying that recourse to a prostitute or having an affair with an unattached woman is simply fine; it’s rather pointing out that an affair with someone else’s wife will cost much more than that kind of dalliance.” How did even that pragmatic warning link sex with the relationships it creates or destroys, rather than just with physical sensations?
- [Leviticus 20:10](#) also defined adultery only as something a man did with a “married woman.” It said adultery was one of the actions for which ancient Israel executed people. So they enforced the seventh commandment in a way that showed how they limited the application of the sixth commandment. The Proverbs passage we read today didn’t mention execution. What light does that cast on how God’s people’s sense of the right way to deal with those who didn’t keep the commandments shifted over time?

Prayer: God, you have been so patient with your people as, through the centuries, our insight into your vast love and the lives that grow from it has grown. I’m not “there” yet—keep me growing. Amen.

Prophets: spiritual faithlessness = adultery

WEDNESDAY 10.9.19 Jeremiah 3:6-9, 20; Ezekiel 23:36-37

Today’s readings were two of many in which Israel’s prophets used marriage to show the kind of bond God wanted with his people. (See also Hosea, [chapters 1-3](#). Scholars differ. Some believe God actually told the prophet to choose a heart-breaking life for himself and his children. Others see it as an elaborate “parable” to show Israel God’s heartbreak.) The prophets contrasted the people’s lack of faithfulness with God’s eternal love, patience and eagerness to make the relationship work. This imagery showed (and shows) that God sees marriage commitments as deeper than just physical.

- The prophets often voiced God’s calls to wayward Israel in the pained tones of a deserted spouse. Jeremiah’s phrase about Israel “committing adultery with stone and tree” (elements of pagan shrines) was particularly striking. How did the prophets’ repeated use of “adultery” as a way to describe Israel’s spiritual abandonment of God point to the reality that the seventh commandment was about more than just getting caught having sex in the wrong bed?
- One provision in Israelite law ([Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#)) somewhat puzzlingly said if a man divorced a woman, he could not take her back and remarry her after she’d had another spouse. [Jeremiah 3:1](#) actually referred to that provision. Yet the prophet said the divine love of God, Israel’s “husband,” rose above that, and called his people to “return” ([Jeremiah 3:12, 14](#)). At what points in your spiritual journey has it been important to you that God is always willing to welcome you back?

Prayer: God of rescue and welcome, no matter how far we wander from you, how doggedly we resist your call, you remain eager to take us back. Grow my heart toward the kind of faithfulness you show to me and all of us. Amen.

Through Jesus' eyes: adultery's roots in mind and heart

THURSDAY 10.10.19 Matthew 5:27-30

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (as recorded in Matthew's gospel) gave much insight into how he saw the Ten Commandments. He made it plain that he took adultery seriously. But as with the 6th commandment, he made it plain that he saw the commandment as reaching far beyond just physical actions. He followed the lead of Israel's prophets in teaching that faithless hearts (as much or more as faithless bodies) deeply hurt relationships.

- Jesus expanded the idea of betrayal (as he did for several other parts of life). He said a person's heart (emotions and thoughts) can be faithless to a spouse's needs, even without any overt act. How might it be possible to commit that kind of "adultery" with your career, a favorite hobby or even your children if you gave them a higher priority than loving your spouse? How might a deep commitment to be faithful to your spouse call for changes in you at the heart level?
- Jesus was talking about your heart and mind, more than your body, so it should be clear he wasn't really telling you to mutilate your body in verses 29-30. After all, "cutting off an offending member would not necessarily end one's sin. Jesus here uses hyperbole, or rhetorical overstatement, to graphically underline his point: one must do whatever is necessary to evade destruction." * What do you believe Jesus wanted his vivid images to teach you about your inner life? What changes might you consider in your reading, viewing or other habits to take Jesus seriously?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I live in a world full of all kinds of images and messages that tug my thoughts away from your way of life. Give me the courage to "tear out and chop off" any habits or interests that keep me from a faithful life. Amen.

* Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 219197-219198). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Faithfulness: self-giving love like Christ's

FRIDAY 10.11.19 Ephesians 5:21-30

In Paul's day, Greek, Roman and Hebrew cultures all took it as a given that women submitted to men. Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, "Paul has a quite different way of going about addressing the problem of gender roles. He insists that the husband should take as his role model, not the typical bossy or bullying male of the modern, or indeed the ancient, stereotype, but Jesus himself." * Read as a whole, this passage's high standard of mutual love and respect for both partners in any marriage illuminated the kind of faithfulness Jesus said the seventh commandment called for.

- In his day Paul directed the command to husbands. What would it mean for a husband to love his wife "just like Christ loved the church and gave himself for her"? Do you believe that in God's plan the same standard applies to wives? "Love" (Greek *agape*) was about purposely chosen thoughts and actions, not an ever-changing emotional state. How did this command challenge the "lord of the manor" image many husbands then (and now) held? How did this image call both partners in a marriage to be willing to give up some comfort or power for their spouse's sake?
- In spots like today's passage (cf. also [Colossians 3:18-23](#)), the New Testament echoed a cultural form called a "household code." But it made one big shift from the standard form: it spoke to both sides of each relationship. So Ephesians 5:21 said, "Submit to each other." It was about mutuality, not something only one party gave while the other took. When and how have you seen mutual "submission" work in healthy marriages?

Prayer: O Jesus, the idea of "giving myself" for someone else, even someone I love, feels scary. Let my gratitude to you for doing just that for me move me beyond fear and into a self-giving life. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, pp. 67-68.

The bride of the Lamb

SATURDAY 10.12.19 Jeremiah 31:31-34, Revelation 19:6-9

Many people think Revelation is bleak and scary—but near its end, the vision pictured God’s eternal spiritual union with his people as a joyous wedding banquet! The book chose an image first used in [Isaiah 61:10 and 62:5](#) (and hinted at in Jeremiah 31:32 in today’s reading). It saw God’s people as a bride, with God as the bridegroom. God’s eternal promises to us spring from the type of commitments made in intense, self-giving love. And God yearns for that kind of love and loyalty from us. The Lamb’s “wedding day” is the essential backdrop against which to view and value the human marriage promises we choose to make. Devotion and faithfulness are key to maintaining the relationship’s joy, and not just a way to avoid getting in trouble.

- What is the happiest, most joy-filled wedding you can remember? Have you ever been to a wedding that instead had undertones of foreboding or concern? What made the difference? Scholar William Barclay quoted another writer: “R. H. Charles finely says that the marriage symbolism ‘denotes the intimate and indissoluble communion of Christ with the community which he has purchased with his own blood.’” * Are you grateful to be invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb, not as a spectator but as a beloved participant? Use your imagination to picture God, waiting eagerly, joyously, with eyes filled with love, to welcome you into an eternal relationship.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, what an image—you “proposing” to me, inviting me into an eternally loving spiritual commitment! It’s hard to trust myself, but, however hesitantly, my answer is “yes.” Amen.

Family Activity: As a family, discuss how you prepare for events or activities that require a high level of commitment. Do you save money for a vacation, study for a test, practicing batting for baseball or walk often to build stronger muscles? Typically when we prepare, we are able to handle the event or activity in a more healthy and helpful way. Since life will bring about times of struggle and challenge, we can prepare now by growing stronger in our faith. Talk about how you might do this as a family (consider learning Scripture, being in prayer, serving others, being in worship and sharing in Christian community). As a family, choose one or two ways you can build your “faith muscles.” Commit to following through and pray, asking for God’s help as you grow!

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Revelation of John—Volume 2, Chapters 6–22 (Revised Edition)*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, revised edition 1976, p. 172.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Janae Jensen and family following the death of George Jensen (Father), 9/13/2019

Trey Fruge and family following the death of Thomas Glen Fruge (Brother), 9/10/2019

Kent Jackson and family following the death of Patricia Jackson (Mother), 9/9/2019