



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.



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Among us there is such a shameful mess and the very dregs of all vice and lewdness. Therefore, this commandment is directed against all kinds of unchastity, whatever it may be called. Not only is the outward act of adultery forbidden, but also every kind of cause, motive, and means of adultery. Then the heart, the lips, and the whole body may be chaste and offer no opportunity, help, or persuasion toward in chastity. Not only this, but we must also resist temptation, offer protection, and rescue honor wherever there is danger and need. We must give help and counsel, so as to maintain our neighbor's honor. For whenever you abandon this effort when you could resist unchastity, or whenever you overlook it as if it did not concern you, you are as truly guilty of adultery as the one doing the deed. To speak in the briefest way, this much is required of you: everyone must live chastely himself and help his neighbor do the same. So by this commandment God wishes to build a hedge round about [Job 1:10] and protect every spouse so that no one trespasses against him or her.

I have always taught that this estate should not be despised nor held in disrepute, as is done by the blind world and our false Church leaders. Marriage should be regarded as it is in God's Word, where it is adorned and sanctified. It is not only placed on an equality with other estates, but it comes first and surpasses them all—emperor, princes, bishops, or whoever they place. For both Church and civil estates must humble themselves and all be found in this estate, as we shall hear. Therefore, it

is not a peculiar estate, but the most common and noblest estate that runs through all Christendom. Yes, it extends through all the world.

In the second place, you must know also that marriage is not only an honorable but also a necessary state. In general and in all conditions it is solemnly commanded by God that men and women, who were created for marriage, shall be found in this estate. Yet there are some exceptions (although few) whom God has especially set apart. They are not fit for the married estate. Or there are individuals whom he has released by a high, supernatural gift so that they can maintain chastity without this estate [Matthew 19:11,12]. For where nature has its course—since it is given by God—it is not possible to remain chaste without marriage [1 Corinthians 7]. For flesh and blood remain flesh and blood. The natural desire and excitement have their course without delay or hindrance, as everybody sees and feels. In order, therefore, that it may be easier in some degree to avoid unchastity, God has commanded the estate of marriage. In this way everyone may have his proper portion and be satisfied with it. Yet God's grace is also required in order that the heart may be pure.

Now, I speak of this in order that the young may be guided so that they desire the married estate and know that it is a blessed estate and pleases God. For in this way, over time we might cause married life to be restored to honor. There might be less of the filthy, loose, disorderly ends that now run riot the world over in open prostitution and other shameful vices arising from disregard for married life. Therefore, it is the duty of parents and the government to see to it that our youth are bought up with discipline and respectability. When they have become mature, parents and government should provide for them to marry in the fear of God and honorably. God would not fail to add his blessing and grace, so that people would have joy and happiness from marriage.

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Everyone should live chaste in thought, word, and deed in his condition—that is, especially in the estate of marriage. But also everyone should love and value the spouse God gave to him [Ephesians 5:33]. For where marital chastity is to be maintained, man and wife must by all means live together in love and harmony. Then one may cherish the other from the heart and with complete faithfulness. For harmony is one of the principal points that enkindles love and desire for chastity, so that, where this is found, chastity will follow without any command.

Large Catechism, I:202-205, 209-212, 217-219

Questions for the Week

1. In this commandment, God protects his gifts of sex and marriage. Using Genesis 2:24 as a guide, define marriage.

2. In addition to enjoying God-pleasing sexual union, what are the other two blessings that God gives to those who are married?

3. Which sins against the Sixth Commandment does God condemn in the following verses?

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

“But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

“The LORD, the God of Israel, says that he hates divorce” (Malachi 2:16).

4. What are the only scriptural grounds for divorce?

5. In Ephesians 5:21-25, the apostle Paul outlines the roles of husbands and wives: “[Submit] to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...” What is the God-appointed role of wives? of husbands? How will fulfilling one’s role affect a marriage?

6. Hebrews 7:26 says: “For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.” According to this verse, how did Jesus save us from our sins against the Sixth Commandment?

Family Prayer

Gracious Lord, thank you for your gifts of sex and marriage. Forgive us for our unclean thoughts and actions. Lead us to glorify you through your gifts of sex and marriage by using them in ways that please you. May we live as the people who have been redeemed and made holy by the blood of your Son. Amen.
