

## 10 Ways to be perfect 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment – On adultery

Good Morning. My name is Spence and I am the lead pastor here at Mercy Church. This is my first sermon after 4 weeks away from the pulpit. Chris Gaynor & Ryan Brooks also preached phenomenal sermons. Ryan's sermon from last week is *still* stinging me a little bit. Such a timely word for many of us. Listen though, one of my great joys is that we have SUCH gifted preachers here at Mercy. Pastor Scott & Pastor Rashard preached in our 10 commandment series and both of them preached what I believe was their best sermons to date. Ya'll I want to encourage you at some point this week to thank the Lord for the amount of gifted teachers of God's word we have here at Mercy. We have gifted pastors who can preach, and we have several other men and women who are STRONG teachers of God's word. And when people are faithful to God's word...man that's a good thing for a church.

OK, so like I said those two guys preached in the 10 commandments because that's what we are going through this summer. You can find them in your bible in Exodus 20. Pastor Scott took number 6 and Pastor Rashard took number 8. That's because I told them I felt number 7 needed to be mine to preach. Let me go ahead and put it up here for you. **"Do Not Commit Adultery."** - Exodus 20.14.

So that's what we are getting into today. So let me say at this juncture...we have great kids programming here at Mercy. I don't think I'm going to say anything a middle schooler hasn't heard before, but this is probably a PG-13 sermon. But if

you've talked with your kids about this, you are probably good to go.

Probably no more relevant command here in Charlotte in 2019. Charlotte continues to be one of the top cities in America for 20s & 30s to move into. High single population. The average age of people getting married has gone up by 5 years since our parents generation. In the past 10 years the % of single people in the 25-34 age range who are cohabitating has risen 24%. And that number is even HIGHER in the age 50+ category. Why? It's not because people are taking longer to prepare for marriage. Reading books on marriage and praying more. No its because they are getting naked and breaking this commandment. They can have sex without the mess of marriage. Sex has become a casual swipe right thing.

So we are going to answer 4 questions today.

- 1) **WHY God gave these laws.** Today is a good day for that. Our culture is super anti-authoritarian and is like "why you wanna hold me down?" Gonna talk about why they are here.
- 2) gonna look at **what does this command actually does forbid?**
- 3) **Why does it forbid what it forbids?**
- 4) Last – **How can we experience the blessing of God in this area?** This area of life that DOMINATES the minds of so many in our day. Ya'll this thing ends in Romans 8.1 – There is no condemnation for those in Christ. It ends in 2 Cor 5 – In Christ you are a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come. This bible's approach to sex combines a tone of sacred with a message of celebration. And that's what tone I hope this sermon sets. In fact, I was reading a few sermons & books

& whatever I could to prepare for this and one guy said it really well.

The commandment is pronounced in a negative. It is saying “don’t do something.” That’s because it is protecting something sacred & positive. And this pastor said the positive way to say it is “Thou shalt have great sex.” Which I thought was great. Because that’s what its doing. It’s protecting and guiding us towards something really wonderful.

Ok, so we are on commandment 7 and we need to begin by remembering **Why did God give us these laws?** it is a good thing that God gave us these commandments. And what we believe about the commands comes from what we believe about God.

**Why did God give us these laws? God designed us.**

See the Anthem of our culture is that you are at your freest when you are independent of any outside rules that would constrain you. You have to be free in order to determine your truth. You have to discover yourself. And rules keep you from self-discovery. Now the PROBLEM with that is it isn’t logical and ultimately will fail you. I went fishing the other day and it was awesome. We had to get out there at 5:30am because from 5:30 to 6:30, the stripers are jumping up out of the water. It’s awesome. And I caught one. It was great. Picked him up & took a picture. But then I set him free. And to set him free meant to put him back in the water. If I set him free on land or in our canoe...he’d die right? But what if the fish really WANTED to be in the canoe with us? See the rest of the Roanoke river...Following his desire wouldn’t make him FREE,

it would kill him quickly. **Real freedom is found in following our design, not our desire.**

And I recognize this flies right in the face of American culture. In fact, for those of you who were raised in a foreign country, I have found this is one of those things you shake your head at in disbelief when it comes to home grown Americans. We’ve been told since we were born...that we are to trust and follow our desires above all else. After all, that’s what it means to be free right?

Nike told me to just do it, Disney told me to follow my heart, parks and rec told me to treat myself. And it’s garbage. If I follow my desires...I’ll die. I have a strong desire to eat Chocolate everything always. For real. I love Chocolate. But Lindsay Justice tells me that is bad for me. And Lindsay is the nutritionist and I’m the chocolatist. Lindsay says eat leafy greens. But I do not desire leafy greens. But my body is designed for leafy greens. Which course of action is actually going to make me more free? Following my desire or my design? My desire is actually harmful for me here.

Take it another way: A lot of times around tax season I do no desire to sit down and go through the whole process it takes to file my taxes. I don’t desire to pay the government money and I certainly don’t desire to take time to figure out how much money I need to pay them. Is it best for me to follow my desires? Will that make me freest? No. I’ll go to jail. Following my desires is not what is best for me there.

My point is: we desire all kinds of things that are actually harmful for us. Why would we think that sexual desires are never harmful for us?

You guys know what the CW channel is? It's the channel that makes the same T.V. show over and over with different characters. Dawson's Creek, One Tree Hill, Gilmore Girls. Same basic show. Don't @ me. There was one show though called 7<sup>th</sup> heaven. And the DAD was a pastor. And his 14 & 17 year old daughters are considering having sex and the parents response is "Well, we want you to have a plan. You know, when you are older you will feel ready." And the 14 year old astutely says something like well maybe I'll feel ready soon. Maybe I feel ready now. And then the pastor dad leans back on the couch in exhaustion and they cut the scene. ARE YOU KIDDING!? I could have written that one better. Like all teenage CW female leads, this girl has a really sharp wit. I think the script should have read:  
Teenager: "So just follow my feelings? No matter how dishonest, exploitive, manipulative, or immoral they are?"  
Pastor Dad: "Well no, that's not what I meant."  
Teenager: "Right, because I mean Hitler followed his feelings and look where that got him"  
Pastor Dad: Well yeah but I'm not suggesting....  
Teenager: So if I can't follow my feelings all the time, are you suggesting there is some higher moral standard that I must submit even my feelings to?  
Pastor Dad: Yes.  
And then he would be doing HIS JOB! Teaching people that our desires are not the final verdict on what good is, the design of God is the final verdict. <sup>1</sup>

I mean think about it: Have you ever followed your desires

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Keller made this basic point in his sermon on Proverbs 5. I adapted the illustration to 7<sup>th</sup> heaven, but the point I got from him.

and gotten into a bad place? I imagine most of us can say yes to that. The point: God's laws are good for us. They aren't given to make us captives of a religious prison. They are actually set out to show us how to experience true freedom we were designed for.

First Belief: God designed us and his design is better than our desires. Second **Why did God give us these laws? God Loves Us.** He didn't set these commands up to say now ok humans. If you keep these, THEN I will love you. Then you can have eternity with me. Then I will save you from your sins. No. These commands are set inside of the story of scripture.

Exodus 20 STARTS with: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery. YOU ARE FREE PEOPLE AGAIN: here's how to live. Ephesians 2 tells us while we were still slaves to sin Christ died for us. Not after we obeyed, BEFORE we obeyed. Then it says we are to walk in the good works God has created us for. GOD is our designer but he's also our rescuer. Here's the story:

**We've said all summer these commandments are not requirements for you to earn God's saving love. They are instead the manual for how to walk in the saving love God has GIVEN you in Christ.** So week 1 I gave you this key to understanding the 10 commandments:

**We do not obey to earn salvation from God, we are saved by Him and so we obey.**

The 10 commandments are not arbitrary dictates of a detached being. They are the design of a good and loving

father who rescued us from our own sin and offers us his blessing on our lives through these commands. The story of the bible is that God designed us...and when we ran away from that design...and ran away from him...he came after us. He sent Christ to pay for us. He designed us, he rescued us, he won us victory over sin and death, he came to live inside of us so that he's always with us, and he promises us eternity with him. This is the God we obey. A loving, relentless heavenly father. God is a sovereign designer and a loving father.

Now let's move to our second question.

### **What does this command forbid?**

**"Do Not Commit Adultery." - Exodus 20.14.**

Probably the most common understanding of this commandment is that it is prohibiting having sex with someone who is married to someone else. Which it is. So if that's you right now you need to see the plain faced rebellion you are waging against God. Like David with Bathsheba you need to repent of your sin first to God and then to everyone you are harming through this. There is no good way out. The best time to turn from this was yesterday, the next best is today.

But if that's not you, questions start to follow like...is that all there is to it? Since my girlfriend isn't married, does this really apply? What if you are engaged? How does this apply to someone who is gay? Is that included here?

Well, all good questions that we are getting to today. First let's remember what we said at the outset. That this is a prohibitive command protecting something very positive. And that very positive thing it is protecting is the sexual relationship of a husband and wife in marriage. Going back all the way to the beginning of the bible in Genesis 1 & 2 is an understanding that God has designed marriage to be one man and one woman united for life.

And sex is meant to be practiced inside of that union. Again the commandment here can also be "DO have Great Sex!" God is the one who designed it to be pleasurable! He knows how it works best. And the point of what God is doing here is protecting the sacredness of marriage. God designed sex.

So what is this commandment saying is off limits? Well, thankfully the New Testament speaks to this in several places. There is a word in the Greek that is used repeatedly in the New Testament for any kind of sexual act happening outside of the marriage relationship and its called *porneia*.

**21 For from within, out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders...23 All these evil things come from within and defile a person." -- Mark 7:21,23**

It's translated here 'sexual immorality.' Porneia was used by New Testament authors as a junk drawer kind of word to refer to any sexual act happening outside of the marriage relationship of a man and a woman.<sup>2</sup> This includes sex with someone else's spouse but is by no means limited to that. One

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 15.19; Romans 13.13; 1 Cor 5.1,11; 1 Cor 6.9,18 ; 1 Cor 10.8; Gal 5.19; Eph 5.3; Col 3.5; 1 Thess 4.3; Heb 13.4; Rev 21.8

scholar said that Jesus, like all other first century Jews, would have understood the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment covered a multitude of sexual sins. Which means there is pretty much one answer to the litany of questions often asked:

- What if we love each other? Well, are you one man and one woman and married? If not, its porneia.
- What if we are engaged? Well is engaged the same as married? NO. you can't move into a house just because you went under contract. You gotta wait til you sign on the line before you move your stuff in. Same is true with sex. If you aren't married, its porneia.
- What if we don't go all the way though? You know just do other stuff? Well...is it sexual? Its porneia. Now, at this point I'm not going to rule out innocent displays of affection. What I'm saying is that there is a definite line you cross from affection to foreplay. And you know it when you do. So as we say down here in the south: "Boy you best not be lightin' the fuse of a rocket you don't intend to launch."
- What about gay marriage? The bible doesn't change here. Sex is reserved for One man and one woman in marriage. Anything else is porneia. Sometimes people tell me Jesus never talked about homosexuality. But he did. 11 times in the gospels he affirms the Pentateuch's understanding of blessed sex, which is

between one man and one woman in marriage. Anything outside of that was porneia.<sup>3</sup> But let me say something else here: The reality that people feel attracted to other people is NOT what we are talking about. Either attracted to the opposite sex or the same sex. The reality we are talking about is submitting those desires just like everything else to the Lordship of Jesus. And because we have members in our church who are attracted to people of the same sex, I have learned about the incredibly difficult position you are in where it feels like you are caught between two worlds deeply opposed to each other. And I want you to know this is not a church where we want you to feel like you have to hide or live in shame. God does not identify you by your sexual desires and neither will we. Around this time last year one of our members, Joseph Rue, wrote a wonderful article on this that you can find on our blog. And in his words "Sex was not the point of Jesus' ministry, you were." We want Christ to be the identity we focus on and everything else to come second. Happy to meet one on one with you because its hard to do this justice in a short window.

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<sup>3</sup> I took this specific quote and the idea of this list from J.D. Greear's sermon "Thou Shalt Have great sex" preached in his *This is What the Heart Looks Like* series at the Summit Church in 2010.

Jesus even goes beyond this standard in Matthew 5 where he actually interpreted this commandment for his followers and said:

27 “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery.  
28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. – Matthew 5:27-28.

So now not only is any sexual act outside of marriage prohibited, any lustful THOUGHT – lust think lingering desire...Jesus is saying that’s now adultery. So all pornography is now incorporated under this commandment. Beyond that all fantasizing, all lingering looks....basically if it is sexual in any way, Jesus says its for a man and a woman to enjoy in marriage.

Ok that leads us right to the deeper question. Question 3 **Why does God forbid sex outside of marriage?**

I mean this is where people really struggle with this commandment. Because they say yeah I get it when it comes to most of these. Stealing is bad because it hurts others. Yes, I should honor my parents that makes sense. Yes killing others would be bad. But if two consenting adults want to have sex...why in the world is that bad? Who is that hurting? This is the one that makes doubters out of a lot of people in our day.

But here’s the deal on why God forbids sex outside of marriage: **Because we humans are more than biological beings, sex is more than biological for us.**

See when the book of Genesis tells us we are made in the image of God it means there is something about our soul that is just so much more than chemical compounds. We are spiritual beings and even people who don’t believe in Jesus usually believe that to some extent or another. We have this longing for meaning beyond ourselves. And there is something happening in sex that is beyond just the physical. The Apostle Paul in fact goes so far as to say that the union we experience in marriage...and ultimately in marital sex...is actually supposed to point us to our union with Christ. That’s Ephesians 5.

**31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. 32 This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church -- Ephesians 5:31-32**

Do you hear that? Because if you hear that this whole thing will make sense. You can choose whether to agree with God or not, but at least it will be coherent.

**Marriage is a complete union of two people.** Right? I officiating weddings because the two couples are just staring into each other’s eyes so excited. They are like “All of me loves all of you. All your curves and all your edges...So I give you all of me. And you give me alllll of you.” And John Legend is right! It’s a total union. And that union is consummated in sex. Keller: “Sex is an analogy of the ultimate uniting act by which the human soul cleaves to God in complete fidelity and faith, and the nature and love of God penetrate us – and into us come his light, glory, grace, and power.”

Like we cannot give only part of ourselves to God, we cannot give only part of ourselves to another. When giving your sexuality, you must give your emotions, your finances, your time, etc. We cannot have total intimacy without total commitment.

**Marriage is an Exclusive union** . This is major. See one of the ways God talks about his relationship with his people throughout scripture is that they are his bride and he their groom. And the reason he does this is to say they are not to give their worship to another. And when they do, God refers to them as adulterers. And the sexual relationship of marriage is built on that same exclusivity.

Sex is created by God to be a joy and a delight. A blessing that offers more than physical pleasure, God designed it to offer deep spiritual fulfillment. Because in marriage... sex rightly echoes the gospel. There in sex where you are naked with another, you are seen fully and you are vulnerable. And see with Christ we are going to be completely seen and completely vulnerable. And completely accepted. You will be fully known and fully loved in an exclusive love relationship where you are one with Christ. And God created sex to be our echo of that love. An appetizer of the greater ecstasy that awaits us in our union with Christ in heaven.

The bible often gets hit with the reputation for having a negative view of sex. But it's the exact opposite. The Bible's view of sex is the most positive and glorious view of sex possible! There is something so profound happening in sex it

puts you as close to God as humanly possible! That's pretty awesome....and also profoundly damaging when ripped from it's context of marriage. It's interesting to see people who don't believe in any kind of God recognize this... A book came out several years ago called *The End of Sex*: written by one of the senior editors of *Look* magazine who had been one of the primary spokesmen for the sexual liberation of the 60's... in this book he wrote many years later, called *The End of Sex*, he says "I know, I see now that every game has its rules. I was a proponent of sexual liberation but now I see that sex has rules, and unless you play by the rules, sex can create a depth of loneliness like nothing else can."<sup>4</sup>

Which leads to the last question: **How can we experience God's blessing in our sex lives?**

This is the part of the sermon where I hope you will hear me really try to lovingly shepherd you towards the grace of Christ wherever you are starting from.

**1. Some of you have never had anyone talk to you before about sex from a biblical worldview.** We have pastors & staff members who were raised in Christian homes who were NEVER talked to about this. So I'm not assuming anything. So if that's you, let me talk to you for a second.

First, God loves you and his plans for you are good. You can trust him. God wants you to give your body to your spouse one day as a celebration of your marriage. Not to some sex-thirsty fool who is consumed by their urges and doesn't care about you.

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<sup>4</sup> As told by Tim Keller in sermon on Joseph, "Lust."

Second, A guy or girl does not love you if they are not willing to put your purity above their own desires. If he or she loves you, they'd be willing to wait for marriage. If they aren't willing or are in ANY WAY forceful or manipulative about pressuring you into sex...This is real simple. You need to look at them when church is over today and say its over. "thank you next." And if that sounds harsh, its because of what is at stake. And if you are the boyfriend or girlfriend who is the problem and you are like 'I never knew this' well, now you know. So start from here today.

My point: You are not missing out by obeying God in this commandment. On the contrary, you WOULD be missing out if you disobeyed him. Trust he Designed you and that he loves you.

## **2. Some of you are in deep slavery and bondage to sexual sin and you need freedom.**

In fact you are the one I've been thinking about for several weeks in preparing this message. You are a committed Christian, but when sex calls, you answer. You are in the middle of an immoral relationship you know you shouldn't be in but man the urge is too strong and you keep going back. Why? Because sex is your god right now. And though you claim Jesus, at the end of the day sex wins for you. So much so that some of you are thinking about leaving your marriage. Because sex isn't what you want it to be. Or what you think you deserve. So you lose yourself in fantasies. You haven't acted on it yet, but those thoughts are stirring and you love giving yourself to those thoughts in secret moments. Some of you are enslaved to pornography. The urge calls...you answer.

Listen, I want you to be free. For a couple of reasons: One is for you personally. You need it. The other: I know the bible is serious about secret sin being the thing that keeps God from moving in a group of his people. Happened in a battle once where Israel was up against a small army. A sure win...but somebody in Israel had stolen some things he shouldn't have. And so God didn't go with them to battle and they got routed. And God didn't go to battle with them UNTIL the hidden sin of ONE PERSON was confessed and atoned for. And I wonder if hidden sin is keeping God from pouring his blessing onto your life and onto our church. For many of you, TODAY needs to be the day of your freedom. Which means you need right now to get serious about two things:

### **1. To be free from sexual sin you have to get serious about fleeing it**

29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. Matthew 5.29-30.

Jesus is not being dramatic with this language. Remember this comes right after the word he just said about adultery. This is about sexual sin. And he's saying get serious. Do whatever it takes to rid yourself of this scourge. you gotta be serious enough to metaphorically cut your hand off. Which means get the internet out of your home, get rid of cable, get Too many



two handed, two eyed people are wandering into hell. We need more spiritual amputees walking towards heaven free from that sin. But I'm not saying its easy. We have both men's and women's groups specifically focused on this area. But I'll say your first step is just talking with one of our pastors. Let us help you find freedom. And that leads to the last thing today. See, there are plenty of blind, armless people who fall into lust.

## **2. To be free from sexual sin you must return to the God of the gospel everyday**

The reason you crave sex is because your soul is not right with God. Remember that you were designed by God...he created you to find the deepest level of satisfaction and the highest level of pleasure IN HIM. In knowing him. And in the absence of knowing him, your soul will wander to something else. So Go to him. Simply put: **What we crave in sex, we find in God.**<sup>5</sup> He is the intimacy our soul needs. And I promise he will more than fill that need.

And the more you know him, the more you fill yourself up on him...the more you will see those other desires lose their power. You can't starve them through will power. You have to feed your soul with something better. If I decide I'm finally done with sugar, I can't just stop eating sugar. The urges for sugar will be too strong. I have to START eating nutrient dense foods that will supply my body and help me feel satisfied. Then I wont NEED sugar. Being filled in your soul, completely captivated by God and his love for you, is the true way to put

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<sup>5</sup> Also from J.D. Greear's same sermon. A GREAT simple stamp on the misapplied cravings of the soul.

your sexual desires in their appropriate place in your life.

REPENT and BELIEVE again today

Lastly – To those of you saying 'I've messed up' let me remind you of the scene in John 8.11. The woman at the well. She had a messed up sexual history. And Jesus says woman I do not condemn you, now go and sin no more. His pardon came first, then the call to action. He cleansed her of her sin right there on the spot. And said now go live as a freed person. As a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.

Don't leave here beating yourself up. Leave with your eyes and heart fixed on your savior! Come to the altar and leave your sin there. Then walk out of here pardoned and free!

IN FACT – Communion

