

Word #7: Honour Marriage

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Date: 06 September 2026

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[0:00] Let's go to God for help this morning. Father, please open your word to us by the Spirit who inspired them.

! Please help us to come with all seriousness to hear from you. Give us, Lord, ears to receive both the weight and the grace of your word, and hearts that long to honor what you have made good. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Most of us love a wedding day. Yeah? You think of the weddings that you have attended. It carries a solemn promise. Promises, in fact.

A covenant made before God. Sealing of two lives into one. One, 25 years ago, Chrissy was at the altar.

She still remembers the vows she and Bill made. They made for each other that day. They will have one another to hold for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death separates them.

[1:18] Forsaking all others, they belong exclusively to one another. And they promised lifelong faithfulness, loyalty and love to each other.

They were happy. They had two kids. And they shared the ordinary routines of life. By all appearance, she thought her marriage was stable and good.

20 years ago, sorry, sorry, 20 years into her marriage, 5 years ago, one evening, she discovered messages in Bill's phone that aroused suspicion that he was having an affair.

She read the messages over and over again, hoping for alternative explanations. She was the only one that she was having an affair with her. But she could find none. She finally confronted him.

And he admitted that she was his office co-worker. And they have been seeing each other secretly. Chrissy said at that moment, she felt as if the floor had disappeared beneath her.

[2:28] Her first reaction was not anger. It was shock. She said, I couldn't understand how the person I trusted most, the person I trusted most in the world, could be the person who hurt me most.

Then came the questions. How long has this been going on? When did you stop loving me? Was anything in our marriage real?

What does she have that I don't? How could you come home every night and look me in the eyes? Insomnia followed.

She repaid conversations in her mind. Ordinary things would trigger her hurt. Their favorite restaurant, a particular song, the date of their anniversary.

She wasn't just grieving the affair. She was grieving the marriage she thought she had. She told her counselor, he didn't just break my trust.

[3:41] He changed the way I look at our entire history together. We are continuing with our series on the Ten Commandments and we are at the seventh word.

We have heard it read just now, you shall not commit adultery. At first glance, it is a straightforward command. It means, do not have sexual intercourse with anyone other than your spouse.

But by now, you know that for every of the shall nots, we want to know what we should do instead. And the positive flip side of this command can be seen in Hebrews 13.4.

Sorry, you have got a sermon outline that you can use to help you, to follow the sermon. And Hebrews 13.4 says, Honor marriage.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure. For God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Sexual immorality refers to any form of sexual activity before or outside the relationship of a marriage between a man and a woman.

[4:57] Now why is God concerned about keeping the sexual union exclusive between only the husband and wife in a marriage? Or that sexuality be expressed only within the marriage covenant?

Now to be sure, the seventh word is not the first time sex is addressed in the Bible. Wind the clock all the way back to Genesis 1.

And we read in verses 27 to 28. I'm sure all of you know this by heart. God created mankind in His image, male and female.

We were created sexual beings. And the first command to humans, what was it? Be fruitful and multiply.

Fill the earth and subdue it. How else can they multiply except through the sexual union? They were not amoebas. So, sex was God's idea right from creation.

[6:01] And Genesis 2 tells us that Eve was not just a companion, but a helper suitable for Adam. A helper whom Adam needed in order to fulfill God's mandate to have children and to care for the earth.

And it was also here that God instituted marriage. You see that in Genesis 2.24. And again, many of us have heard this before.

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife. And they become one flesh.

And the wife does the same. We see here that marriage is between two adults of the opposite sex and of different parents, living parents, but still honoring them, coming together, uniting their lives as a one flesh union.

C.S. Lewis wrote, They haven't simply entered into a new arrangement. They have become a part of each other, a fusing. So, marriage is inherently good, a part of creation order.

[7:25] Malachi 2.14 teaches that God weakens the marriage covenant. And Matthew 19.6 says that, Jesus says that, God himself is the one who joined the husband and wife together.

This one flesh union is stronger even than that of the parent-child relationship. So, as parents here with married children, I'm sure many of us here, we honor our children's marriage by not interfering in their marriages.

unless they ask us for advice and help. They belong exclusively to one another, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

And it is through this union that God builds up a family for the stability and flourishing of the wider community. What does God say more about marriage?

Number one, he says that, this union is permanent. Jesus said, what God has joined together, let no one separate.

[8:34] And Paul says that, only at the death of a spouse is the other released from their marriage covenant. You find that in Romans 7, 2 to 3.

And so, friends, we honor marriage by going the distance. Till death do us part. Not as long as I'm happy.

When Esther and I were first married, we promised each other that no matter how angry we were at each other, the word divorce will never pass our lips.

And God also said that this union is to be marked also by faithfulness. You will find that in Malachi 2, 14 to 16. Permanent faithful.

In other words, lifelong faithfulness. Lifelong faithfulness is both the hedge, the hedge that protects, and the foundation on which marriage can flourish.

[9:41] With a promise of lifelong faithfulness, a couple will then not be afraid to love, to give, to be vulnerable, to be genuinely open, to be known, to be intimate, to trust, to be dependent, and to be truly transparent and free.

And God holds them accountable and indeed provides the means to keep that promise. And this lifelong faithfulness is simply a reflection of God's own character.

Psalms 100, verse 5 says this, His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations. And so we honour marriage by being faithful in our own marriages, by growing towards our spouse in trust, in intimacy, in loyalty, in unselfish giving, in vulnerability, in truly knowing and accepting, cherishing, and enjoying one another.

Listen guys, if your marriage at this moment is difficult, please seek help and counsel now. Don't wait until it becomes unrepairable.

And notice that no marriage is perfect. There's always things to work on and things to work out. Don't give up. Our world has devalued faithful lifelong marriages.

[11 : 28] In Malaysia, for every 100 new marriages registered in the country, nearly 32 existing marriages are legally dissolved.

100 people getting married, at the same time, 32 getting their marriages dissolved. This is from our statistics department. In July, a few of us were on a boat for three days.

It was in Flores Island in Indonesia. Besides us, there was an Aussie mother and daughter, five young ladies, four from Netherlands and one from the US.

The young ladies were astounded that Esther and I have been married 36 years and that Desmond and Joanna were married for 23 years.

They couldn't believe it. All their parents were divorced. The American and the Aussie mom, they themselves were divorced. No one else there was still married or had parents who haven't divorced.

[12 : 39] We can honour marriages in the way we view and talk about marriage. So don't say things that undermine marriage, but support it.

Pray for marriages you know. Acknowledge that lifelong, faithful, committed marriage is good and beautiful. Celebrate your wedding anniversary.

celebrate your spouse. Look around this room. Look at all the grey hair, some of them already disguised by dye, hide hair dye.

Look at the wrinkled couples still in this hall, married for decades and still holding hands. Celebrate them.

God bless every one of them and you. I don't have a wine glass here, but cheers. You know another reason why marriage is inherently to be honoured?

[13 : 47] It is Christological. It is what marriage was modelled after. In Ephesians 5, 22-33, Paul calls this a profound mystery because he says, and I quote from the ESV study notes, marriage from the beginning in Genesis was created by God to be a reflection of and patterned after Christ's relationship to the church in the future.

How did Christ relate to his church? He loved her. In that passage he loved her, gave himself up for her, sanctifies her, nourishes her, cherishes her, and never hates her.

This models the way a husband should relate to his wife. To love her, to be willing to sacrifice for her, to help her towards her holiness and flourishing, to nourish and cherish her, and to never hate her.

The church's role in return is to submit to Christ, and this models for the wife, her submission and respect towards her husband. And Paul adds that for a husband to love his wife is to love himself. So you cannot separate your own good from that of your spouse. So, we honour marriages by honouring the role that God has given to husbands and wives, by looking to Jesus and pointing one another to him.

[15 : 33] It is also within the security of a covenant of lifelong faithfulness that God fences the gift of sex. He fences that precious gift of sex.

It is unfortunate that some of us grew up with the idea that sex is icky, even in a marriage. But God doesn't agree with that.

He celebrates sex within marriage. Even before sin entered the world in Genesis 3, when the world was still in God's own word very good, in Genesis 2.25, the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Sexual union within marriage was already there. Very good and free of shame. In Proverbs 5, 18-19, which was read just now, the man is called to rejoice in his own wife, to be delighted and be satisfied by her body and be intoxicated with her love.

Don't stray. The book of the Song of Songs is a book of poetry that celebrates romantic and sexual love between a husband and wife.

[16 : 58] Its passages describe anticipation, longing, physical delight, mutual desire, and joy in a marriage. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7, 1-5, tells husband and wives not to deprive each other of sex.

He wrote that marital sex is a mutual obligation and a mutual self-giving. They are to voluntarily yield their bodies to one another.

The late Tim Keller thought that sex was designed by God to be the physical sign and the seal of a lifelong covenant commitment within marriage.

So God's covenantal joining of the couple is the foundation of the marriage. Sexual intimacy within it is the means by which the union is sealed, expressed, and sustained.

It is a tender act which builds intimacy, which requires vulnerability and mutual trust, and a surrender of one to another in self-giving.

[18:10] Pastor Graham Abenian writes, God thinks sex is fantastic. It's just got to be with your spouse. Honoring marriage includes honoring the goodness of what happens within it.

Marriage needs to be worked at, guarding good times together, arranging dates so that you can have alone time with one another. And Pastor Benion adds, and I quote, making sure there is time for sex.

That's the reality of life, isn't it? The busyness of life, the tiredness from work, and the pressures of children. do not commit adultery.

After seeing how God values marriage, and especially a lifelong faithful marriage, and how much God values sex within marriage, we recognize adultery for the heinous sin that it is.

It is a betrayal of that promised faithfulness and exclusivity, a betrayal of trust and love and devotion, an act that corrupts the very thing meant to bond the couple together.

[19:30] It leaves the innocent party devastated, confused, disappointed, angry, self-doubting, and insecure.

The children, confused and scared, a once happy family thrown into turmoil, a marriage potentially damaged permanently.

And adultery damages the one who commits it. Just look at the number of high-profile pastors, teachers, apologists, who fell in disgrace with their ministries in shambles over the last few years. Look at the common person who committed adultery being ostracized and cancelled by family and friends alike. Proverbs 5 warns that unfaithfulness may seem enticing at first, but ultimately it leads to ruin, regret, and shame.

Now, most of us feel that adultery is not an issue for us. We have not personally committed adultery in the past or now or intend to do so in the future.

[20:43] Thank God. But Jesus is asking us to seek a deeper obedience. While the Pharisees are quite happy to deal with external checkable acts like murder didn't do, adultery, no, I'm okay.

Jesus points out that God's law goes deeper than that. God always cares about the heart, not just outward compliance. Jesus says in Matthew 5, 27, 28, you have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery.

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully or in the ESV with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Jesus addresses men, but the command is for women as well. don't think that Jesus is adding to the commandment. Rather, Jesus is giving the commandments their original depth and intent.

Now, look carefully at Jesus' word. He is not saying that looking at a woman lustfully will lead to adultery. Yes, it can, of course. But the key word here is already.

[22:02] The Greek verb indicates a completed action, a sin that already happened. So, let me read that sentence to you again. Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with them in his heart.

What does looking at a person lustfully or with lustful intent mean? Okay, Chris, let me ask you a question. Okay, be honest.

Put up your hands, okay? Have you ever noticed that someone is attractive? Put up your hands. Wow, many hands not up.

You are definitely better than me. You have never noticed someone as attractive? Never? Oh, come on la.

Anyone with a beating heart and a functioning eye can catch a glimpse of someone and say, hey, attractive too look up and then forget about it.

[23:13] Okay? But this is, so that is not what the verse is talking about. It is not that fleeting glance or recognition. Lustful looking is the deliberate second look.

That lingering gaze that engages the imagination and stirs up sexual desire. It is the covetous wanting of someone who is not yours to have.

And it is also the use of anyone for your own sexual gratification even if it only occurs in your head and your heart. When that happens, Jesus says you have already committed adultery in your heart right there, even before any bed is shared.

You can ask yourself these testing questions. When that thought crossed your mind, did you turn away from it or did you turn towards it, dwelling on it, stirring desire?

When you unintentionally noticed someone attractive, did you look away or did you keep looking and imagining and desiring? For some, the fantasy looks less lurid and more like an emotional daydream.

[24 : 41] A life imagined with someone who is not your spouse replayed conversations, the sense that this person gets you, but that longing is still coveting someone who is not yours and Jesus says no to that.

Jared and Marsha were working in a small rural town. They were newly married and they were there for about two years before they got transferred to the capital city.

A few weeks after living in the city, Jared received a phone call from Nancy, a lady from the church they worshipped at that rural town.

She knew her as a sister in the church. after exchanging pleasantries, Nancy said she admired him for his goodness.

And then much to his shock, Nancy started to confess romantic love for him. He ended the call quickly and told Marsha and together they prayed for Nancy.

[25 : 53] They then contacted the wife of their former church pastor to help Nancy. Paul tells us to flee from sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 6.18.

At first sign of possible temptation of a sexual nature, Paul says flee. He doesn't say stand and fight. You know magnet and iron are two magnets of different polarity.

What happens when you hold them closer and closer together? The traction gets stronger and stronger, right? Eventually they and so too is sexual sin.

The closer you get to it, the stronger its pull will be. So don't play play, just flee. What could that mean in practice?

place. Let's say when you're having trouble averting your eyes, turning away from someone you are not married to, or someone who is already married, you keep on giving them the second look, or you catch yourself missing them when they are not there, or your conversations are drifting into a closeness that belongs only in a marriage.

[27 : 19] church, it's time to take action, whether it be at work or in church or among friends, bring it before God, and also tell your spouse, if you're single, a trusted friend, bring it into the open, and make yourself accountable.

And if you still have to maintain contact with that person because of work or ministry, you must be extra vigilant, avoid spending too long in their company, definitely avoid being alone with them, but if it all gets too much, then just best to distance yourself completely.

Flee. Using pornography fits the definition of committing adultery in the heart. Does it not involve that deliberate second look, that lingering lustful gaze, the use of the imagination for sexual gratification?

Porn is just lust industrialized. It is sexual gratification without the vulnerability and commitment of a marriage. And if you're married, you are dishonoring and very likely hurting your spouse, making them feel betrayed.

and you do not want to profit an industry that is exploitative. If you're using porn, stop. Don't just carry on.

[28 : 56] If you're married, tell your spouse, confess, ask for forgiveness, talk to a pastor or a trusted friend. They can advise and keep you accountable.

and take practical steps. Give your wife access to your phone and devices. That is a good advice, whether you're using porn or not.

Alright? Give your wife access to your phone and devices. Use porn blocking apps on your devices. Remove TVs and computers from private spaces like the bedroom or study and keep them in shared common areas of the house instead.

Jesus in the next two verses in Matthew 5, 29 to 30 tells us how serious sin is and in this context the sin of adultery whether physically or in the heart.

If your right eye causes you to stumble, gorge it out. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. Jesus is not asking you to literally gorge out your eye or cut off your hand.

[30:09] You can lose your eye and lose your hand and still laugh in your heart. He is using hyperbolic languages to convey the seriousness of the matter.

Sin is seductive, more so sexual sin. Sexual sin runs deep. You don't feel like you want to break free. You protest, it feels too good.

And you think it's private and no one knows. You're kidding yourself. Some people will know or suspect your sin will be found out.

And certainly you cannot hide from God. You really cannot stay where you are. You must get out. For your own sake, if not for the sake of your family, you have to break free.

Don't worry, I'm not going to break out in song. The good news is that God has already prepared the way for you to be free. Look what happened to some in Corinth, a place where sexual immorality was rampant.

[31:20] Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6, 9 to 11, he gives a warning that I think we all should heed. Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral or idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men will inherit the kingdom of God.

And then he gives the good news. And this is what some of you were. but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Our problem is the problem of our sinful hearts. Mark 7, 21 to 23, for it is from within, out of, Jesus says this, it is from within, out of a person's heart that evil comes.

Sexual immorality, adultery and the like. And we all need a radical heart transplant. And only Jesus can deal with our heart and change them.

[32:35] He does it when we put our trust in him and in his finished work on the cross. Jesus who had never sinned, who did not commit adultery or fornication or nor any form of sexual immorality, and who did not look at anyone with a lustful intent and who did not covet.

Yet, he died on the cross on behalf of those of us who did. may may may may may may may ask your friend who brought you here or talk to any of the leaders here.

A pastor would love to hear from you before you leave. If you are a Christian, remember that he has taken all your sins, including your sexual sins on the cross, and received that punishment on your behalf.

But if you are still battling sexual sins today, he calls you to confess your sins, repent and renew your fellowship with him.

The Lord Jesus is able to empathize with you because he has been tempted in every way as a man, yet he did not sin. And because he never sinned, he is able to help you break free from your sin, yes, even sexual sin.

[34:24] He is a sympathetic high priest who calls us to draw near. Therefore, we will receive mercy and find grace to help us. Adultery and lust are not unforgivable sins.

We can be forgiven, and yes, we can be set free. And change, turning from adultery and lust to a life of sexual purity in him.

But remember that true repentance leads to a changed life. Let it be said of us, that is what you were in the past.

But repentance can be as painful as literal self-mutilation. Why? Because you have to break off that adulterous relationship, and you have to come clean with your spouse.

God wants your marriage to be restored. Pastor Graham Bayon has very good advice in his book, Surprised by the Commandments. And let me summarize what he says about restoring your marriage.

[35:31] You have no choice but to come clean. Confess your temptations or where you are failing or your sin to your spouse.

Involve a friend you both trust. This is an essential and painful first step. Sin strives in secrecy and loses its grip when it is brought into the open.

Confession. Confession isn't easy. But it shows that you are serious, that you want to change, that you want to regain your spouse's trust.

But be ready for your spouse's hurt and anger. To those who find a spouse confessing something, on the other side, yeah? You're on the other side.

You find a spouse confessing something. Firstly, recognize the hurt that the unfaithfulness has caused. Don't minimize it. You want to get angry, get angry.

[36 : 31] You want to cry, cry. But recognize also that we are all sexual sinners in different ways. Beware of self-righteousness. And secondly, is to honor the confession.

Your spouse wants to come clean, wants to change, and very much wants your forgiveness. It will take time to work through and it isn't easy.

But this is where the dynamics of the gospel is seen. Confession, asking for forgiveness, forgiveness being given and accepted. We are to forgive each other as Christ forgave us. It can take a long time, and even when forgiveness is given, trust may not yet be regained. But by God's grace, God's grace allows us to forgive and relationships to be restored.

But don't go in alone. As in a grief party, seek help. Lean on family, trusted friends, pastors, counselors, who can help you navigate the difficult journey of forgiveness and restoration.

[37 : 42] Do it together with a truly repentant spouse. Do it together with a truly repentant spouse. Lean especially on the Lord.

Divorce should not be the first way forward. Though scripture does permit it in cases of sexual immorality or abandonment.

But it should not be the first thing to go for. Reconciliation should always be our first pursuit. The journey of reconciliation and restoration can be long, difficult, painful, and trust is not easily regained.

But by God's grace, we have seen marriages survive, even the sin of adultery. So here we are. Marriage is God's gift and God's covenant.

And it is worth protecting and worth enjoying. When God gives the seventh word, He is calling us to protect what is precious and beautiful in our life.

[38 : 50] And this responsibility falls on all of us, whether married or not. It is to be honoured by all. Support the marriages you know. Pray for the struggling.

And let us recommit ourselves to personal purity and marital faithfulness. And finally, for all who have repented and put their faith in Jesus, there is for us a future wedding day.

At the climax of human history, John hears the announcement, the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.

We will finally meet our divine husband face to face. Jesus calls us to turn our eyes from the pain and the frustration of this imperfect and sin-laden world and to look forward to the wedding day when He will take all of us, all His people into His arms forever.

And there we will have the ultimate marriage to beat all marriages. May God help us to be there to enjoy it. Let's close in prayer.

[40 : 03] Lord, thank You that You call us to lifelong faithful marriages. We pray for ourselves. For marriages that are strong, we thank You and we ask You to keep them so where they are hurting.

We ask for Your healing, Your grace and Your restoring power. For those who are single, widowed or divorced, we want to thank You that our worth is not defined by our marital status but by being made in Your image, adopted as Your children, loved by You.

Help us all, married or not, to honour marriages in how we live, speak and love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.