

The Seventh Commandment

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BIG SANDY, Texas—We as believers are thankful that we are saved by grace. In fact, we should reflect our appreciation by giving much thought and attention into recognizing God's expectations for us.

We can reflect back to the time in the Old Testament when the children of Israel were brought out of the land of Egypt—the house of bondage (Exodus 20:1-2)—and remember that God gave them instructions about how to live (verses 3-17).

Let's spend some time considering the Seventh Commandment.

Exodus 20:14—"You shall not commit adultery."

Old Testament anomalies

We are all familiar with the Old Covenant penalty for adultery—the death penalty for both sinners (Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22).

Yet the Old Testament allowed for polygamy, as men were known to have multiple wives and concubines. The famous examples included Jacob (Genesis 29:16-30), Gideon (Judges 8:30-31), David (1 Samuel 27:3; 2 Samuel 5:13 and 20:3) and Solomon (1 Kings 11:3).

Greater consequences

As we consider the Seventh Commandment, we have the opportunity to ask the following two questions. Must all sins be viewed the same? Or do some sins create a greater revulsion than other sins?

According to the book of Proverbs, the answer may surprise you.

Proverbs 6:30-32—"People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; he may have to give up all the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul."

Is the Bible condoning stealing? No.

Is the Bible encouraging stealing? Of course not.

But these few verses in Proverbs reveal that some sins have greater consequences than other sins.

And the specific sin used to make this point was the sin of adultery. Adultery creates much chaos and pain.

Comments about divorce

What does the Bible say about divorce?

- Moses wrote about a bill of divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).
- God granted Israel a bill of divorce (Jeremiah 3:8).
- Jesus mentioned the bill of divorce (Matthew 5:31) and then discussed a limited exception clause to have a divorce (verse 32).
- When the Pharisees later asked Jesus if a man could put away a wife for “every cause” (Matthew 19:3), He mentioned Genesis 2:24 (verses 4-5), the bill of divorce (verses 7-8) and reiterated the limited exception clause to have a divorce (verse 9).
- After the apostle Paul quoted a strong command from the Lord about married people staying together (1 Corinthians 7:10-11), he gave his opinion to believers about general guidelines where a believer was not bound to stay with a mate (verses 12-16). Paul’s opinions in this letter ended up in the Bible.

Higher expectations

Along with the greater mercy of the New Covenant came some higher expectations of believers. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained a tougher standard for disciples to follow concerning the Seventh Commandment.

Matthew 5:27-28—“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”