

The Ten Commandments

A Study in Luther's Catechism¹ - Lesson 7

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.

Marriage

Honor God's Gift of Marriage

God designed marriage to be a lifelong commitment of one man and one woman to live together as husband and wife. It is at the heart of God's design for human relationships. In the intimate relationship of marriage, God brings companionship and great joy. Through husband and wife, children enter this world and God establishes families. Then God uses the family to nourish and train children and to pass along the truths of salvation to another generation.

It is no surprise that Satan, the world, and our own sinful nature seek to undermine God's gift of marriage. Often people enjoy the pleasures of marriage without the commitment. Husbands and wives are tempted to break the promises they made to each other. So many forces around us seek to ruin this beautiful gift. In the Sixth Commandment, we discover how God helps us treasure and defend the blessing of marriage (p. 81).

Consider and discuss:

- How do you define marriage?
- What has changed since you first studied the Sixth Commandment in catechism as a young person?

66. With the Sixth Commandment, God protects marriage. **What is marriage?**

Genesis 2:22, 24 The Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. That is why a man *leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife*, and they become one flesh.

Marriage is a one-of-a-kind relationship God established when he first created Adam and Eve. In marriage, a man and woman leave their fathers and mothers to form a new family unit. Under a solemn promise, they join their lives together for as long as they live.

A CLOSER LOOK

Marriage Is a Public Declaration In our society, a man and a woman enter into marriage by declaring their commitment to each other in a public ceremony. They publicly speak their promises in front of a pastor or an official who is authorized by the government to perform weddings. Witnesses are present as well. For Christians, this public ceremony is a clear statement that the man and woman are making a commitment to each other for life.

This lifelong commitment is at the heart of God's plan for marriage. Until this lifelong commitment is openly declared—which in our society happens though an official ceremony—Christians honor God by refraining from the sexual relationship.

Engagement Before the actual marriage takes place, a man and a woman have already made a promise to each other—the promise to get married. We often refer to that as the engagement. Christian couples will give serious prayerful consideration to their relationship before making that promise. Breaking any promise involves sin. Breaking the promise to get married inflicts deep emotional pain on another person and affects his or her future in a significant way. Christians don't wish to harm another person or cause such pain. The agreement to marry another is made only after a person is thoroughly convinced of his or her own desire to marry.

67. Marriage is a special relationship because of the many unique blessings God gives through it. **What blessings does God intend to give through marriage?**

Genesis 2:18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be *alone*. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Genesis 2:24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become *one flesh*.

¹ This study will use *Luther's Catechism* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2017). You may purchase a copy at nph.net.

1 Corinthians 7:2–4, 9 Since sexual immorality is occurring, *each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.* The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is *better to marry than to burn with passion.*

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, “*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.*”

Consider and discuss: What is the ideal age to teach a child about marriage?

A CLOSER LOOK

Marriage—The Foundation for the Family As we contemplate the blessings God gives through marriage, we clearly see the importance of protecting and strengthening the marriage relationship. Marriage provides the foundation for the family unit. This family structure is designed to play a huge role in the spiritual, social, and financial stability of every member of the family. In Christian homes, husbands and wives encourage each other with the Word of God. In Deuteronomy 6, God instructs parents to teach God’s Word to their children. The teamwork of a committed husband and wife makes it easier to support and raise children.

68. Marriage is not simply a custom or a tradition. Rather, it is a solemn and binding agreement between two people. God’s Word underscores the fact that in marriage a man and woman are making a commitment. **What promises are included in the marriage commitment?**

Romans 7:2 By law a married woman is bound to her husband *as long as he is alive*, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all, and *the marriage bed kept pure*, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

Ephesians 5:21–25, 28 *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*

A CLOSER LOOK

Christ is Our Model By comparing the marriage relationship to the model of Jesus and his church, God teaches important truths about marriage.

Husbands and wives are equal in value in the sight of God. Yet God has revealed that in marriage, as in most other relationships, there is benefit in having someone take the leadership role. God asks the husband to serve in this role with an attitude of sacrifice. A husband’s goals are not to be selfish. He uses his position of responsibility to do all he can to serve, just as Christ used his authority to be a blessing to others. A husband seeks to love his wife as Christ loved the church, ready to give up everything—including his own life—for her.

And as the Christian church submits to Christ, so a wife submits to her husband. Christians submit to Christ not with resentment but with joy. A Christian wife honors her husband and respects him as the head, holding a deep appreciation for the responsibility God has given him. She seeks to support, encourage, and assist him. Husband and wife work together to build their marriage and family.

Christian husbands and wives can and do sin in their marriage relationships. Christ’s perfect model is not always lived perfectly. A Christian husband can fail to love unselfishly; he can fail to lead. A Christian wife can fall short of honoring her husband as her head. When husbands and wives see their faults, how blessed they are to know Jesus. Though they are imperfect, he loves them perfectly. He gave his life for their sins. In him, husbands and wives have forgiveness. Jesus’ divine love gives them reason and power to grow and to model their marriage after the relationship between Christ and the church.

Consider and discuss:

- Why might we naturally bristle at the word *submission*?
- How does knowing Christ equip a husband for marriage?
- How does knowing Christ equip a wife for marriage?

69. The Sixth Commandment speaks to all: young and old, male and female, married and unmarried. **As we study how God established marriage, what do we learn about the blessing of the sexual relationship?**

Genesis 2:24 *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

70. God designed the sexual relationship to be a blessing of marriage. In what way, then, do some who are not yet married sin against the Sixth Commandment?

1 Thessalonians 4:3–5 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid *sexual immorality*; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in *passionate lust* like the pagans, who do not know God.

Genesis 39:6–12 (Potiphar’s wife tried to entice Joseph into a sexual relationship with her, but he refused. He acknowledged that it would be wicked—a sin against God.)

71. The Sixth Commandment also has much to say to those who are married. When do some who are married sin against the Sixth Commandment?

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and *do not be harsh with them*.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all, and *the marriage bed kept pure*, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

2 Samuel 11:1–4 (David lusted for Bathsheba, the wife of one of his most courageous soldiers, and brought her to his house so that he could have sexual intercourse with her.)

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: *Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers ...* will inherit the kingdom of God.

Matthew 19:9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.

1 Corinthians 7:15 If the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

72. Sins against the Sixth Commandment are so common and so accepted by the majority of people. In what ways can both married and unmarried sin against the Sixth Commandment?

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 has already committed adultery with her in his heart*.

Ephesians 5:3–5 *Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Ephesians 5:12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

73. What does God say about homosexuality?

Romans 1:26, 27 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were *inflamed with lust for one another*. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: *Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

1 Timothy 1:9, 10 We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, *for those practicing homosexuality*, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.

74. In his Word, God tells us that there is something unique about the sins against the Sixth Commandment. In what way does God help us appreciate the seriousness of sexual sins?

1 Corinthians 6:18–20 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, *sins against their own body*. Do you not know that *your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit*, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Consider and discuss: What is the key difference between the biblical view of one’s sexuality and the view our society promotes? (Review **1 Corinthians 6:18–7:4**)

75. What should we do when the Sixth Commandment shows us our sins?

Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. *Repent* and believe the good news!”

Matthew 3:8 *Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.*

76. What good news gives us the confidence that our sins against the Sixth Commandment are forgiven and helps us do as God commands?

Hebrews 4:15 We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—*yet he did not sin.*

Hebrews 7:26 Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

77. It is an amazing truth that God counted all of our sins against Jesus and that he counts Jesus’ righteousness for us. As we consider this great truth, we want to obey God’s commandments. **How does God’s Word serve as a guide as we want to honor God by keeping the Sixth Commandment?**

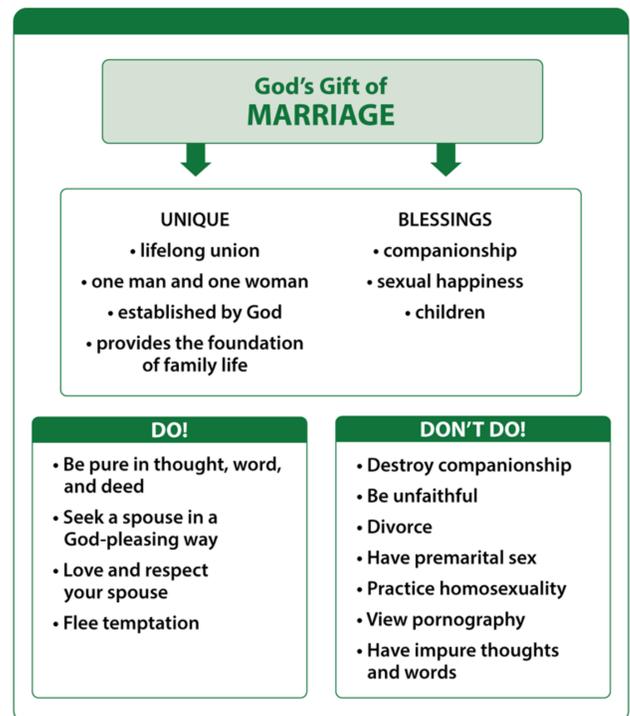
Colossians 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

Ephesians 5:22–25 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now *as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

Ephesians 5:33 Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Romans 13:13, 14 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, *clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.



Consider and discuss:

- Marriage is a wonderful gift from God. That it is challenged and distorted by an unbelieving world is not a new phenomenon. This occurred in Jesus’ day as well. Read Matthew 19:3-6 to see the answer that Jesus gave when marriage was challenged in his day. What insight does this give for today?
- How should we teach a young person about the gifts of marriage?

Connections

In his Word, God provides examples of husbands and wives who cherish the marriage relationship as a gift of God. In their marriages, they demonstrate a partnership focused on the goal of serving the Lord. Aquila and Priscilla provide us with an example of such a marriage. Their marriage partnership is a wonderful example of how God’s design for marriage can bring great blessing to other people.

Acts 18:2, 3, 18, 19, 24–26; Romans 16:3, 4

In what different ways was the marriage of Aquila and Priscilla a blessing to other people?

- For those not married, create a list of blessings you may expect from the marriage partnership you may have one day.
- Make a list of the blessings God can bring to you and others through a Christian marriage today.