

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #52, Lord's Day 41

The Seventh Commandment



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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VIDEO SERMON SERIES
Sermons on the
Heidelberg Catechism
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1. The Christian's Only Comfort in Life and Death (Lord's Day 1–1, Question 1)
2. The Pattern of Christian Experience (Lord's Day 1–2, Question 2)
3. The Law of God and Our Misery (Lord's Day 2, Questions 3–5)
4. The Total (Radical) Depravity of Man (Lord's Day 3, Questions 6–8)
5. Man's Sinnership in Light of God's Justice (Lord's Day 4-1, Questions 9–11)
6. The Doctrine of Hell (Lord's Day 4-2, Question 11)
7. Perfect Satisfaction: A Requirement for Deliverance (Lord's Day 5, Q. 12–15)
8. The One Mediator Between God and Man (Lord's Day 6, Questions 16–19)
9. True Saving Faith (Lord's Day 7, Questions 20–23)
10. The God of Salvation: A Triune God (Lord's Day 8, Questions 24–25)
11. Faith in God the Father (Lord's Day 9, Question 26)
12. The Providence of God (Lord's Day 10–1, Question 27)
13. Rich Benefits Derived from Believing God's Providence (Lord's Day 10–2, Q. 28)
14. Jesus, the Savior of Sinners (Lord's Day 11, Questions 29–30)
15. Faith in Christ (Lord's Day 12–1, Question 31)
16. The Identity of the True Christian (Lord's Day 12–2, Question 32)
17. The Unique Identity of Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 13–1, Question 33)
18. The Lordship of Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 13–2, Question 34)
19. The Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 14, Questions 35–36)
20. Faith in the Suffering Son of God (Lord's Day 15, Questions 37–39)
21. Christ—A Savior Who Has Paid the Wages of Sin in Full (Lord's Day 16, Q. 40–44)



VIDEO SERMON SERIES
Sermons on the
Heidelberg Catechism
by Rev. Bartel Elshout

22. The Threefold Benefits of the Resurrection of Christ (Lord's Day 17, Q. 45)
23. The Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 18, Questions 46–49)
24. Faith in the Exalted Christ (Lord's Day 19–1, Questions 50–51)
25. The Second Coming of Christ (Lord's Day 19–2, Question 52)
26. Faith in God the Holy Spirit (Lord's Day 20, Question 53)
27. The Holy Catholic (Universal) Church of Christ (Lord's Day 21–1, Q. 54–56)
28. The Church's Confession Regarding the Forgiveness of Sins (Lord's Day 21–2, Q. 56)
29. The Future of the Christian (Lord's Day 22, Questions 57–58)
30. Justifying Faith (Lord's Day 23, Questions 59–61)
31. The Believer and Good Works (Lord's Day 24, Questions 62–64)
32. Faith and the Sacraments (Lord's Day 25, Questions 65–68)
33. Holy Baptism and the Promise of the Gospel (Lord's Day 26, Questions 69–71)
34. The Water of Holy Baptism (Lord's Day 27–1 Questions 72–73)
35. The Baptism of Infants (Lord's Day 27–2, Question 74)
36. The Holy Supper of the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 28, Questions 75–77)
37. The Value of the Lord's Supper (Lord's Day 29, Questions 78–79)
38. The Observance of the Lord's Supper (Lord's Day 30, Questions 80–82)
39. The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (Lord's Day 31, Questions 83–85)
40. The Good Works of the Christian (Lord's Day 32, Questions 86–87)
41. The True Conversion of Man (Lord's Day 33, Questions 88–91)
42. The Transcript of God's Mind (LD 34, Introductory to God's Law)



VIDEO SERMON SERIES
**Sermons on the
Heidelberg Catechism**
by Rev. Bartel Elshout

43. The Holy Law of God (Lord's Day 34, Questions 92–95)
44. The Second Commandment (Lord's Day 35–1, Questions 96–97)
45. Preaching of God's Word and Graven Images (Lord's Day 35–2, Question 98)
46. God's Commandment Concerning His Name (Lord's Day 36, Questions 99–100)
47. God's Name and the Oath (Lord's Day 37, Questions 101–102)
48. The Fourth Commandment, part 1 (Lord's Day 38–1, Question 103)
49. The Fourth Commandment, part 2 (Lord's Day 38–2, Question 103)
50. The Threefold Requirement of the Fifth Commandment (Lord's Day 39, Q. 104)
51. The Sixth Commandment (Lord's Day 40, Questions 105–107)
- 52. The Seventh Commandment and Marriage (Lord's Day 41, Questions 108–109)**
53. The Eighth Commandment (Lord's Day 42, Questions 110–111)
54. The Ninth Commandment (Lord's Day 43, Question 112)
55. Final Observations About the Law of God (Lord's Day 44, Questions 113–115)
56. The Prayer of the Christian (Lord's Day 45, Questions 116–119)
57. The Address of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 46, Questions 120–121)
58. Hallowing of God's "Father" Name (Lord's Day 47, Question 122)
59. The Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 48, Question 123)
60. The Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer, (Lord's Day 49, Question 124)
61. The Christian's Petition for Daily Bread (Lord's Day 50, Question 125)
62. Readiness to Forgive (Lord's Day 51, Question 126)
63. The Last Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Lord's Day 52, Questions 127–129)



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Sermon #52 Lord's Day 41

The Seventh Commandment

1 Corinthians 7, verses 2 thru 5
Questions and Answers #108 and #109

i. Introduction and Review

1. Adultery Forbidden

2. Marriage Promoted

3. All Immorality Condemned

Introduction and Review

Beloved congregation, what a special chapter Genesis chapter 2 is! In Genesis 1, we have this magnificent description of the creation of this world. But then, in chapter 2, then, as it were, we zoom in on a very special aspect of that creation, namely, the creation of man. And not only do we read that God created man after his own image, but in that chapter, we witness the first marriage that was ever, ever established. We all know the story. Adam, as he named the animals, realized that they all came with a companion and he did not. And then, God uttered these remarkable words, and said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”—a help that is suitable for him, a help that will exactly match who he is (Genesis 2:18). And then, God, in a marvelous way, created a woman. Putting Adam to sleep, he took out of Adam a rib and formed the woman, and then brought her to him (verses 21, 22). And so, literally, God took Eve out of Adam’s flesh, and then he brings her back to him and said, “Now you two will become one flesh” (verse 24). And so God took Eve out of Adam’s bosom, and then returned Eve to his bosom and says, “You shall be one flesh.” What a beautiful moment that was! And for the first time, a man and a woman were brought together by God and were united in marriage.

And yet, congregation, we know that one of the most alarming things revealed to us in chapter 3 is that when Adam and Eve sinned, when they fell, it immediately impacted their marriage. Because now Adam blamed his wife, and said, “The woman thou hast given me” (Genesis 3:12). And so,

once the relationship with God had been severed, it also impacted the horizontal relationship of marriage. And yet, remarkably, congregation, even though the fall has impacted that marvelous relationship established by God, yet, remarkably, in a fallen world, it has pleased God to preserve that institution. It is one of the flowers of paradise, the other flower being the Sabbath. And yet, congregation, because of sin, because of our depravity, that relationship is always under attack. Ever since man has become a fallen creature, that manifests itself alarmingly in how men now deal with the gift that God gave to Adam and Eve, the wonderful gift of becoming one flesh, affirming the amazing union that God established. And now we live in a world where that wonderful relationship is under attack from every angle; is being undermined also in our culture. And therefore when God gave the Seventh Commandment, he gave that Commandment in order to protect this wonderful institution that may still function in a fallen world.

And so, with God's help, we're going to consider the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." And let's read Lord's Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and consider the exposition of the Catechism regarding this Seventh Commandment.

Question #108: *What doth the seventh commandment teach us?*

The Answer is: *That all uncleanness is accursed of God; and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, and live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock or in single life.*

Questions #109: *Doth God forbid in this commandment only adultery and such like gross sins?*

The Answer is: *Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, He commands us to preserve them pure and holy; therefore He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto.*

And so, as we consider the Seventh Commandment, the Commandment that governs marriage, first of all, *It Forbids Adultery*, and we will carefully define that term. *It Forbids Adultery*. Secondly, *It Promotes Marriage*, because the Heidelberg Catechism correctly makes that application and therefore we must *live chastely and temperately*—that means with self-control—*whether in holy wedlock or in single life*. And thirdly, *All Moral Impurity is Condemned*, because this Commandment *forbids*, it says here, *all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto*. So, *The Seventh Commandment and Marriage*; first of all, *Adultery Forbidden*; *Marriage Promoted*; and *All Immorality Condemned* all that entices men thereto.

1. Adultery Forbidden

What does the word "adultery" mean? And please listen carefully as I try to define it for you, because all too often, the assumption is made that adultery means sexual immorality. Now, there is an obvious connection. But the word "adultery" is much broader than that. And that's why the Dutch word in the Seventh Commandment much more accurately expresses what actually we find in the Hebrew text. And so, the Dutch literally says, "Thou shalt not break the marriage," or, you could read it this way, "Thou shalt not harm the marriage"—thou shalt not do anything that is harmful to that blessed relationship. So therefore, I would call "adultery," I would call that "the umbrella term." That covers anything, anything within the marital relationship that is harmful to that relationship. That in itself is already very, very convicting. Because if anyone would have thought that they would escape the thrust of this Commandment, what married person would dare to say today, they have never done anything that was harmful to their relationship. And so, when we misbehave ourselves in our marriages, when we misbehave ourselves toward each other, we are transgressing the Seventh Commandment—Thou shalt not harm the marriage.

So, under that umbrella, falls the term of "fornication." Fornication is the New Testament word

that describes every conceivable form of sexual immorality. And so, when fornication is committed by married men or women, they are guilty of the worst form in which one can harm a marriage. Nothing harms a marriage so much as sexual infidelity. That's why when Christ speaks, in Matthew 5 and in Matthew 19, of the reality of divorce, the breaking of the marriage union, he does not use the word "adultery," but he uses the word "fornication," specifically the word "fornication." And he indicates in both chapters 5 and 19 that the commission of sexual immorality, the commission of sexual infidelity within the bonds of marriage is a legitimate and biblical ground for divorce (Matthew 5:32 and 19:9). Because you see, fornication, sexual immorality, is the worst kind of adultery. It is the most harmful thing that can happen to a marriage relationship.

And Christ is saying also there, recognizing the consequences of it, that the harm that sexual infidelity does to a marital union is of such a nature that it can be beyond repair in such a way that that marriage can no longer function. And so, therefore, he allows for that exception. But he allows for that exception to protect the marriage relationship. As if Christ is saying, in Matthew 5 and 19, especially addressing men, but women are equally guilty, he's saying, if you go that far, if you cross that line, if you become unfaithful to your spouse, those will be the consequences flowing out of it. And so that exception that he gives there is meant to stop sinners in their tracks, so that they would realize what the consequences of such an action would be.

And Christ makes it clear in both passages that the guilty party forfeits the right ever to marry again. Now, does that mean that the other party in the marriage is innocent? Of course, they're both sinners, but what he means there is innocent of that particular sin; the one who is innocent of fornication may remarry. But the one who is guilty may not ever marry again. Such are the serious consequences of breaking the marriage by means of fornication.

And so, divorce is a sad reality in our world. And what's so alarming in our culture today is that people will break that relationship, the marital relationship, for many other reasons other than fornication. And clearly, Christ forbids that. Christ is saying, fornication, sexual immorality, sexual infidelity is the only biblical grounds on which a marriage can be dissolved lawfully.

And then, he does not say that you have to divorce, but you may divorce. In other words, the better way always is reconciliation, and fortunately, there are multiple examples throughout history where God gave his grace, and the relationship was healed. And yet Christ recognizes that the situation can be that serious that healing is no longer possible. And so, this marital union is very, very sacred in the sight of God. That's why the consequences of the transgression of this Commandment are to very, very serious.

Let me give you an illustration. Electricity is a very, very useful element of our lives. Life is unthinkable without electricity. But electricity is only profitable to us, it's only harmless to us if it is properly insulated. When you remove the insulation, that electricity that produces so many good things for us, that electricity becomes lethal. That's how it is with sexuality outside of marriage. It is by God's design that a man and a woman, a husband and a wife, that they become one flesh. That's by God's design. And so, it's God's design that human sexuality must function within the bounds of marriage. But once it functions outside the bounds of marriage, it becomes a lethal and it becomes a destructive force.

And congregation, the evidences of that in our culture are enormous. What a destructive force human sexuality has become in our Western world, because it has been removed from the only context in which it was designed to function. And what assault is made in our culture upon the blessed relationship of marriage. And I realize that sin is sin, and that when we transgress God's Commandment, whether we transgress the Second or the Ninth Commandment, but it seems to me that there is no transgression that does more harm than the transgression of the

Seventh Commandment. The wretchedness, the misery, that pervades in our culture because of the transgression of this Commandment is unspeakable indeed.

Then the Catechism uses plain, and clear, and unmistakable language; it says, *That all uncleanness*—all sexual immorality, all that functions outside of marriage, all that desecrates that blessed one-flesh union that God established, all of it *is accursed of God*. That's serious language, congregation, very serious language. And that's why, especially the people of God have a calling in this culture of ours to do everything we can to protect the sanctity of marriage. That's why we are explicitly commanded in the Word of God—we read it together—that we are to flee from fornication; that as the people of God, as Christians, we are to be as far removed from it as we possibly can.

That's why, when you read Leviticus chapters 18 through 20, God gives us very explicit instructions to the people of Israel. I mean, you read those chapters especially Leviticus 20, then you will read a listing of all the forms of sexual immorality that were commonly practiced by the Gentiles. And God knew that his people, his chosen people that he had delivered out of Egypt's bondage, the people he was leading to the promised land, would enter a nation where they would be surrounded by people who would indulge in that gross sexual immorality. Because ultimately, the land of Canaan, and the nations that dwelt in it very much resembled how the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities that were destroyed by God's judgment. And why were they destroyed? It's because fornication had reached such heights, such unspeakable heights, that God came with an irreversible judgment upon them.

But that's also the reason why God commandment the people of Israel to destroy the inhabitants of the land, because these nations there, they were worthy of that divine judgment, and they would pose an enormous danger to the people of Israel, and of course, Israel's history only bears that out. And the Lord Jesus tells us that as we draw nearer to the end of human history, that it will be like in the days of Noah. And how wicked that first world was we do not know, but it was so wicked and so perverse, that the Bible is almost silent about it, except that the imagination of man was evil continually (Genesis 6:5). We have every reason to believe that that first world, too, had utterly corrupted itself also when it came to the whole issue of morality. And Jesus says, One of the signs of the days of my return will be that it will again be like in the days of Noah, that it will again be as in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:26–30). And there are, indeed, alarming signs, very alarming signs that we are again moving in that direction.

The words of Hebrews 13, verse 4 are very clear: “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” And so, what we read also in 1 Corinthians 6 explicitly addresses the various sins of sexual immorality. Now is Paul saying there that such sinners cannot be saved? No, because he says, “Such were some of you,” writing to the Corinthians, “There was a time that you lived like that, but by the grace of God, you are no longer like that.”

And that's why judgment is upon our culture as well. In 1 Corinthians 10, verse 8, we read this, “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” Oh, how devious Balaam was. He had failed, he had failed in his mission, and therefore did not get the money he was looking for. And then he made the evil suggestion to the king of Moab, and he said, “have some feasts that pertain to your gods.” Balaam knew very well that that included brazen sexual immorality. And so, we're told here, that in one day twenty and three thousand perished (Numbers 25:9 and 31:16). And so, what the Catechism is saying is, we who name the name of Christ, we must detest what God detests. In Leviticus 20, verse 23, we read, “And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things”— that are listed in that chapter—“and therefore I abhorred them.”

And therefore, dear congregation, what an obligation we have, if we profess the name of Christ, to abhor that which God abhors, to detest that which God detests. And that's why we are called by this Commandment to invest in our marriages. Marriage—to main a proper functioning marriage takes a continual commitment. Good marriage do not just happen. We need the grace of God to be good spouses, to be faithful husbands, to be faithful wives. Because you see, when marital infidelity happens, it rarely happens overnight. It means that already that marriage was becoming dysfunctional; and ultimately that dysfunction then results in infidelity. And that's why what I said at the beginning is so important. That's why we need to examine ourselves. We need to examine ourselves as husbands and wives. Is there anything that I am doing that's harmful to my marriage? Because that's what the Seventh Commandment means, "Thou shalt not harm the marriage." We need to examine ourselves. We need to do whatever we can to repent of our sins, and to seek, by the grace of God, to live a life that we are called to live, especially as professing Christians.

2. Marriage Promoted

And that leads us to our second thought, that the Seventh Commandment, it positively calls us to be engaged in our marriages according to God's revealed will. And so, what is God's revealed will? Well, there is no passage in Scripture that more accurately describes that for us than Ephesians 5, the second half. That is *the* most foundational passage for marriage in all of Scripture, and it behooves us, as husbands and wives, to read that passage regularly, to be reminded of what the Word of God teaches about the marital relationship.

So, what does Ephesians 5 tell us? What does it exhort husbands to do? It tells husbands we are to love and cherish our wives. We are to love and cherish them as our own flesh, for Paul says, "What man ever hated his own flesh?" And so Paul is saying, moved by the Holy Spirit, he's saying to husbands, he's saying, "You have to view your wife as your own flesh. She is one flesh with you. And you are to love her, and you are to cherish her." As one author has said, that means that, as husbands, we need to treat our wives as an expensive piece of china.

Because women are very different from men. That's why men need to understand, God created women with a special gift of relationship. Women have a special, special DNA. That's their strength. That's why women are not exhorted to love their husbands. But husbands are exhorted to love their wives. That means that Ephesians 5 tells us we need to go out of our way to manifest to our wives that we love them, and that we cherish them. I remember in seminary, our professor spoke about this, and he was very blunt. He said to us, "Men, loving your wife is not an option. Loving your wife is what God commands you to do."

And of course, wives are exhorted to lovingly submit to their husbands. That is God's order. And had Adam and Eve not fallen, there would have been no issue. But once the fall occurred, and the devil, see, the devil is a brilliant theologian—the devil understood God's order, also when it comes to husbands and wives. And so, what does he do? He does an end-run¹ about this. Rather than approaching Adam directly, he deals with the wife, and therefore undermines the marriage, and bypasses God's structure that he established in marriage. And so, now, for wives, it can be difficult to submit to their husbands, and yet, that's God's revealed will. God has established your husband as the head of the family. He is the spiritual head, he is the leader. He doesn't have to earn that position. That is his God-given position.

And the beautiful thing is that, if both husbands and wives take their biblical responsibility seriously; in other words, if the husband goes out of his way to love and cherish his wife, to live

1 "end-run" is an American football term referring to a play in which the ball carrier attempts to run wide around his own left or right flank, which is an evasive trick.

sacrificially for her, it will be very easy for a woman to love and submit to a man who loves and cherishes her. If a woman goes out of her way to honor her husband, to honor him as the head of the household, it makes it very easy for the man to love and cherish his wife. But because we are sinners, often this doesn't function. And we have the wretched tendency, the wretched inclination, that we say, "Well, I'm not going to love and cherish her until she submits to me." Or the woman says, "I'm not going to submit to that man until he loves and cherishes me." That's just turning it upside-down, you see. No, and when you read that passage, Paul says, we are to do it as unto the Lord. And so, why am I called to love and cherish my wife?—because God requires it of me. Why are you to submit to your husband?—because God requires it of you.

And so, if we take what God requires of us seriously, if when we get up in the morning, and we say, "I will love and cherish my wife today, because that's what God asks of me, first of all, to love and cherish my wife, to love her unconditionally." And for a woman to get up out of bed in the morning and say, "Today I will honor my husband, because God requires it of me." And see, if, by the grace of God, we go out of our way to do what God requires of us in the marital relationship, the marriage will function wonderfully, and it will function beautifully.

Of course, we're also told in Genesis 2, verse 24, how intimate that relationship is: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." So, when I do premarital counseling, we talk about this—leaving and cleaving. Leaving the authority structure of your parental home, and then cleaving to your spouse. And the way that's used in the Hebrew could best be explained with superglue. That's how that relationship should be; that husband and wife are glued together that is as strong as superglue. Have you ever tried to separate something that you glued together with superglue? Very difficult, and when you do, it causes enormous damage. That's why divorce is such a very painful thing, because what happens in divorce is that something is separated that was never meant to be separated. When that bond of marriage is established, that bond is meant to be as secure, as if you used superglue to bond two things together. That's why the consequences of divorce are always so bitter. A woman once told me, who divorced her husband. She said, "I so regret, I so regret that I did not make a real effort to repair our marriage, because," she said, "divorce is a gift that keeps on giving." And she meant that negatively. She said, "It's something that I'm never done with."

So we are to cleave, it says. The husband is to cleave to his wife, and the wife is to cleave to her husband. And that's why, that's why I read 1 Corinthians 7 as well. That's why we should also jealously guard the physical aspect of marriage, lest we fall into sin. "Nevertheless"—1 Corinthians 7, verse 2—"to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." And that's why the Apostle, moved by the Holy Spirit, warns husbands and wives, and says, make sure you do not defraud each other, except it be for legitimate reasons like prayer and fasting (verse 5). That's how important also that aspect of marriage is.

And so, ultimately, you know what that means, congregation, that a marriage an only function properly by the grace of God. But thanks be to God, God is pleased to give that grace, because the marriage union is very important to him. And so, the author of marriage, who has preserved that marriage, that relationship in a fallen world, he gives grace to be married. And one aspect of that, of course, is a willingness to confess our sins to each other. A willingness to say to my spouse, "I'm sorry, I have sinned against you. Will you please forgive me?"—and a willingness to grant forgiveness, even though at that moment you may not feel like it. But when your spouse seeks your forgiveness you are duty-bound to grant it. And if that's indeed, what we, by the grace of God, if we are willing to confess our sins and to be forgiven, that even though we stumble, and we do fail, because all marital issues ultimately are sin issues. That's why I have recommended a book to

you, that I would recommend again. It has a very simple title, *When Sinners Say "I do"*—one of the most insightful books on marriage that I've ever read, which highlights that all marital issues, communication issues, you name it, ultimately are sin issues. And what a blessing it is when we can seek forgiveness, and when we can grant forgiveness. And how often?—seventy times seven times. If you read Luke 17, verses 3 and 4, we read that just a couple weeks ago, Christ says, if someone offends you, and they come and repent, you forgive them. And if they do it seven times a day, you forgive them seven times a day. And again, that's contrary to our sinful inclination. But this is what the grace of God can achieve. And, yes, we need the grace of God to have functional marriages. That's why Christians—and it applies especially to the marriage—Christians do not apologize. Listen carefully to what I say. Christians do not apologize. Apologize means to say, "Well, I'm sorry." No, Christians say, "I have sinned against you. Will you please forgive me?" That's the biblical approach. That's essential to maintain our marriages as functional relationships in which we love another.

But also it talks about living a chaste and temperate life *in single life*. And so that means that when we are single, we need to recognize that physical intimacy is meant for marriage only. That means, when I am single, I must honor the Seventh Commandment by recognizing that. And so, when we are single, we are called to live a life of celibacy, a life in which there is no physical intimacy with someone of the other sex. And that is an endorsement of marriage. That is a recognition that God has instituted marriage as the only place in which a man and a woman can become one flesh. That means that we need to subscribe to biblical principles of courtship. That means, when young people are courting, they need to honor the Seventh Commandment. And so, when young people engage in physical dating (you fill in the blanks), you are guilty of fornication. It's that simple. And I realize that when you are a young person, to remain pure sexually, it is challenging, when God wired you as a sexual human being. That's why, when young people court, there need to be parameters. That's why parents should establish parameters to protect their young people. And so, what reason we have, whether married or unmarried, to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, and the evil one." And then, I know that God gives grace to single young people to honor his Word also regarding this aspect of the marital relationship, recognizing that physical intimacy is strictly to function within the boundaries of marriage.

That's why it's alarming—it's alarming how common the practice of living together has become. Young people living together is a blatant transgression of the Seventh Commandment; period. That simply ought not to be true, but sadly, it has infiltrated the Christian community as well. I remember my dad telling me, when he came back to Savonia for the second time—he had been absent from there for twenty years—and he addressed this when he preached on the Seventh Commandment. Some parents became so angry with him for having dared to say it out of the pulpit, that young people may not live together prior to marriage. Because, sadly, that had become a rather common practice that had infiltrated the church. It boggles my imagination why parents would not recognize that that is a transgression of the Seventh Commandment.

3. All Immorality Condemned

Then it brings us to Question #109: *Doth God forbid in this commandment only adultery and such like gross sins?* And the Answer is: *Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, He commands us to preserve them pure and holy.* So let me read to you again—open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 6. Let's read those last three verses of 1 Corinthians 6 once more. "Flee"—"Flee fornication." That's what Joseph did (Genesis chapter 39). Joseph, a healthy, single young man, in a situation where it would have been so easy for him to commit fornication and get

away with it. But there's a young man who feared God, who realized that, even in the house of Potiphar, he was living in the presence of an all-knowing and all-seeing God; and he said, "How can I do this great evil and sin against God?" (verse 9). And he fled. He fled. "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that commiteth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:18–20). What a powerful passage this is, giving Christians clear, clear argumentation why we are to flee fornication! Paul is saying your body is not your own, your body belongs to Christ. You have been purchased with the price of his precious blood. Your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. That's why we read in 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 3 and 4, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour."

And so, the Catechism then unpacks this: *Therefore He forbids all unchaste actions—unchaste actions*. And so, Calvin² is very blunt; when he talks about dancing, he says, "Now we know quite well that dancing only serves as a preamble to fornication, for in particular, it opens the door to Satan, and cries for him to come in and enter with enthusiasm." And so, a group of young people came to a Christian high school principal, and they said, "We would like to have a dance. Can we have a dance?" He thought for a moment, and he said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll organize two dances—one for just the boys—boys dancing with boys; and one for girls dancing with girls." "Oh, that's not what we had in mind." "Oh," he said, "well then, it's a no-go." In other words, if you want boys and girls together real close? He said, that's not going to happen. So, he made the point, you see—unchaste actions.

Unchaste gestures. We read it is not good for a man to touch a woman.

Unchaste words, when we commit verbal fornication. Ephesians 5, verses 3 and 4: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting."

Then, *unchaste thoughts*, mental fornication. We addressed that already when we preached on Matthew 5, verse 28, so I won't elaborate on that. But without a doubt, that's the secret sin of many—"I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." So, considering the definition I gave originally, when a man permits himself to do that, a married man lusting after another woman, that already is going to be harmful to his marriage.

Unchaste desires, feeding sinful lusts. "Can a man take fire in his bosom," Solomon says, "and his clothes not be burned?" (Proverbs 6:27). And of course, how can we not, again, address the subject of pornography? I don't want to elaborate on this, I've done that before. The statistics are absolutely stunning, as to how this has infiltrated the church community. If there were no one in this congregation that is messing around with internet pornography, we would be the great exception in North America, and I hope it's true. If there's anything that has utterly corrupted our culture, it is this. The destruction that that is bringing into marriages and families, and when you actually read the statistics, how many children have been exposed to this filth by the time they're sixteen, it's stunning. And think of what Hollywood has contributed. What Hollywood had done, Hollywood has made fornication socially acceptable. So, when our forefathers had an issue with Television, they may not have handled it correctly, but their concern was correct. They realized that

2 John Calvin, or, Jean Calvin, (1509–1564) – was a well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and leading Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teachings.

now, you see, the barrier between the family and the world would be removed. I think I think of the story of—I may have told you this, but—of my father, who finally relented. Now, this is decades ago, because, of course, Television is a mute point today with our social media. But this is decades ago, when finally he said, “You know, my kids are always going to the neighbors and watching Television. I’m going to get one myself, and then we’re done with it. Then, at least they’re here at home.” Until the day when the TV was delivered. And as he saw the men carrying it in, it said, in bold print on the box, “Bring the world into your house.” And suddenly it dawned on him. He said, “Sir, I can’t take your order. Please take it back.” He realized what he was doing. But this has multiplied exponentially. And this world is not going away. That’s why we have such an enormous responsibility towards our children as well. We have to find ways in which our children will be protected, in which they can survive in this extremely dangerous and treacherous environment!

And all that can entice men thereto. There’s the whole issue of immodest dress. God is the author of clothing. It was his idea, not Adam and Eve’s idea. What they did was inadequate. God covered them. He covered them completely, no fig leaves (Genesis 3:21). And so God’s intent with clothing, he realized that in a fallen world, men and women could not be naked; they had to be covered completely. And so, God’s intent with clothing was to conceal rather than reveal. And what our decadent culture has done, it found ways to design clothing so that it reveals rather than conceals. And so, what is modest dress? Modest dress is dress that is according to God’s standards, not the standards of our culture. But anyway, we need to wrap this up. *Anything that entices men thereto.*

Oh, may God give us the grace in this fallen world of ours, knowing that we are sinners ourselves. And the number of Christians who continue to fall, ministers of the gospel who continue to fall because of the transgression of this Commandment, is so unsettling. That’s why, as Christians, the only way we can make it is by abiding in Christ. We are so weak, because when the desire to sin and the opportunity, when those two meet, we’re done. We fall. Look at David (2 Samuel chapter 11). That’s why we have to pray, “Lord if the opportunity is there to sin, keep the desire from me. If I desire to sin, keep the opportunity.” Because when the two come together, we fall. “Lead us not into temptation.”

What a blessing it therefore is that we have a Savior who gave his life for fornicators; a Savior who had an ancestry stained with adultery; a Savior who was born under the shadow of being an illegitimate child; a Savior who was called the friend of harlots and Publicans; a Savior who came to give his life even for adulterers—for transgressors of the Seventh Commandment. Oh, thanks be to God that his blood cleanses from all sins, and that by his grace, by his grace, we can remain standing. And that’s why Christ said—and with that, I will end—in connection with this Commandment, in Matthew 5, he said, “If your eye offends you, pluck it out. If your arm offends you, cut it off. Because it is better to go through life with one eye, and with one arm than to end up in hell,” as if to say, the danger that this poses is so enormous, that you must do radical things to deal with it (Matthew 5:29–30). And I hope and pray that nobody here is ensnared in the ugly world of pornography. And if you are, I plead with you, do not continue. Find help. There is plenty of help available. Do not continue on that pathway, lest it destroy you.

And so, my dear congregation, it’s not easy to preach on the Seventh Commandment, but we must, especially in our day. Oh, let us be honest before God, especially as husbands and wives. Let us examine our marriages, and let’s pray, “Lord, search my heart and see if there be any evil way within me, also regarding how I behave myself towards my spouse, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Amen.

Let's pray.

Oh, gracious God, who of us would dare to say, "I am without sin"? Oh, how convicting the content of this Commandment is. Oh God, give us grace to humble ourselves before thee. Give us grace to examine our hearts and lives, our marriages, and if there be a wicked way within us, oh, give us the grace to break with it, to forsake sin and to seek thy grace, because thy grace is sufficient for our insufficiency. And Lord, should there be anyone that's deeply ensnared in sin, oh, I pray for them that they would recognize it, even tonight, and would find ways and means to be delivered from that which proves to be so extraordinarily destructive in our society today. And Lord, may we take refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Savior who was not ashamed to eat with harlots and Publicans, a Savior who has come to save to the uttermost, whose precious blood cleanses from all sin. Go with us into this week, bring us home safely, even if the weather is challenging right now. Gather with us as we come together on Wednesday; and bring us here again this next Lord's Day. Forgive us our sins for Christ's sake alone. Amen.