

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 35 (Q3LES10) THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTRY.....

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: Proverbs 5: 1 - 23**
3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we covered the sixth commandment, which is ***Thou shalt not kill***. It is covered in SC questions 67 through 69. We learned that, like the fifth commandment before, this commandment is about our relationship with others. It requires us to take all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others. It requires us to help others who are in danger of death or physical injury. It forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of others unjustly. In accordance with God's Word, there are three lawful reasons for the taking away of the life of an individual: as lawful punishment, in a just war, and in self defense. As the sum of the six commandments which cover our duty to man says, we should love our neighbor as ourselves.
3. **Introduction:** This week we will look at the seventh commandment. The seventh commandment is covered in questions 70 through 72 of the SC. Like the preceding two commandments, this commandment deals with relations with others. The fifth commandment dealt with the duty and honor of our relationships with each other as superiors, inferiors, and equals. The sixth commandment dealt with the civility of man to man. The seventh commandment deals with the relationship of man and woman. This commandment is overwhelmingly supported by scripture proofs.

4. **Questions & Answers:**

Question 70: Which is the seventh commandment?

Answer: The seventh commandment is, *thou shalt not commit adultery*.

Question 71: What is required in the seventh commandment?

Answer: The seventh commandment requireth the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech and behavior.

Question 72: What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?

Answer: The seventh commandment forbiddeth all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.

6. The SC, LC and WCF?

- a. The SC and the LC both cover this commandment in three questions, the SC in questions 70, 71, & 72, the LC in questions 137, 138, & 139. As usual, the SC is a summary of the answer provided for the LC, and both are in agreement with each other. The LC expands greatly on the duties required and the sins forbidden by this commandment. The WCF does, in this case provide direction specifically related to the seventh commandment. Chapter 24 is titled “Marriage and Divorce”, and has a lot to do with this commandment.

7. General

- a. By Christ’s definition, this also may be one of the most broken commandments. Anyone like to take a shot at Christ’s definition? (**Matt 5:28 “*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*”**).
- b. To clearly understand what we are talking about, we need to understand the words. Let’s start with adultery. Would anyone care to take a shot at the definition of adultery? Back to my trusty Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary.

Adultery:

- Violation of the marriage bed; sexual intercourse between a married man and a woman not his wife, or between a married woman and a man not her husband.
 - In scripture, all manner of lewdness or unchastity; also idolatry or apostasy.
- c. Closely associated with adultery is fornication. Would anyone like to take a shot at the definition of fornication? Again, my Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary says about fornication:

Fornication:

- Voluntary sexual intercourse between an unmarried woman and a man, especially an unmarried man: it is generally forbidden by law.
- In the Bible. (a) any unlawful sexual intercourse, including adultery; (b) a forsaking of the true God and worshipping of idols.

7. Preservation of our own and our neighbors chastity,.....

- a. The SC answer to question 71 is a summary of the LC answer to question 138. While the SC says simply that it is required that we act for the “*preservation of our own and our neighbors chastity, in heart, speech and behavior*”, the LC says: “*The duties required in the seventh commandment are, chastity in body, mind, affection, words, and behavior; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel; marriage by those that have not the gift of continency, conjugal love, and cohabitation; diligent labor in our callings; shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto.*”
- b. TV’s approach is similar to the LC response, so we will look at this subject from the LC q138 perspective.
- c. What are the duties required by the seventh commandment.

Chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behavior. (1 Peter 2:3 “***While they behold our chaste conversation coupled with fear.***”)

- What is chastity? My Webster’s New 20th Century Dictionary starts with chaste.
 - Not indulging in unlawful sexual intercourse, virtuous, especially of women; free from obscenity, pure in thought and act, unmarried

So chastity is:

- Abstinence from all unlawful sexual activity: especially of women.
- Freedom from obscenity
- Purity; unadulterated state; as the chastity of the Gospel.
- Celibacy or virginity
- The preservation of it in ourselves and others. (1 Cor 7: 2, 35 – 36 “***(2) Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. (35) And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend unto the Lord without distraction. (36) But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let him marry.***”)

We should guide our lives trying to avoid unchaste thoughts and actions.

- Watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses. (Job 31:1 “***And made a covenant with mine eye: why then should I think upon a maid?***”)

Our senses should not be used for evil things. Easier said than done.

- Temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel.

Good scripture proofs for all of these. **(Prov 2: 16 – 20 “⁽¹⁶⁾To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; ⁽¹⁷⁾Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God: ⁽¹⁸⁾for her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. ⁽¹⁹⁾None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. ⁽²⁰⁾That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.”)**

Plan ahead. Guide your actions so that you do not put yourself in a compromising position, or do things which will lead to your fall.

- Marriage by those that have not the gift of continency, conjugal love, and cohabitation.

What is continency? Guess where I went for a definition?

Continency:

- The restraint which a person imposes upon his desires and passions; moderation.
- Self-restraint in sexual activity; especially complete abstinence.

(1 Cor 7: 2, 9 “⁽²⁾Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. ⁽⁹⁾But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.”)

The WCF, chapter 24, para 2 says: “*Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness.*”.

- Diligent labor in our callings. **(Prov 31: 27 – 28 “⁽²⁷⁾She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. ⁽²⁸⁾Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.”)**

Keep busy in your calling so you do not subject yourself to temptations.

- Shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto. **(Gen 39: 8 – 10 “⁽⁸⁾But he refused; and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he**

hath committed all that he hath to my hand: ⁽⁹⁾There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? ⁽¹⁰⁾and it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.”

When tempted, resist that temptation.

8. All unchaste thoughts, words, and action (SCq72).

- a. The answer to SC q72 simply states: *“forbiddeth all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.”* The LC q139 is significantly more complex. It states: *“The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections; all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent or light behavior, immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages; allowing, tolerating, keeping of stews, and resorting to them; entangling vows of single life, undue delay of marriage; having more wives or husbands than one at the same time; unjust divorce, or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company; lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancing, stage plays; and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others.”* Most of these are just the opposites of the requirements of q 138.

- Neglect of the duties required. **(Prov 5:7 “Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth.”)**

Remember back in question 61 (what is forbidden in the fourth commandment:[Keep the sabbath day]), the omission or careless performance of the duties required was forbidden. Same thing here, don't do what God tells you not to do.

- Adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy and all unnatural lusts. Scripture proofs are available for each of these. Let's look at **(Rom 1: 24, 26 – 27** ^{“(24)}**Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. ⁽²⁶⁾For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ⁽²⁷⁾And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.** Adultery, fornication, rape, etc. are not in accordance with God's direction, and are a sin.

- All unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections. (**Matt 5:28** *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*) Opposite of controlling our senses, as talked about above. Very hard to do. Included here is “affections”. Do not let your heart cause you to react sinfully to those you shouldn’t.
- All corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto. (**Eph 5:3 - 4** *“(3)But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; (4)Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks”*) Pornography, in any form, is not acceptable
- Wanton looks, impudent or light behavior, immodest apparel. (**Isaiah 3: 16** *“Moreover, the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet.* If you do not want to end up in a bad situation, do not dress and act the part.
- Prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages. (**Covered in detail in Lev 1 – 21, Mark 6:18** *For John had said unto Herod, it is not lawful for thee to have thy brothers wife.”*) The WCF, chapter 24, para 3 says: *“It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgement to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord: and therefore such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, papists, or other idolaters: neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies.”* I would guess this includes homosexual marriage also.
- Allowing, tolerating, keeping of stews, and resorting to them. (**Deut 23: 17 – 18** *“(17)There shall be no whore of the daughter of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. (18)Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow; for even both of these are abomination unto the Lord thy God.”*) A “stew” is defined as a prostitute or house of prostitution. Used here, it includes homosexual behavior. We should participate in this type of behavior.
- Entangling vows of single life, undue delay of marriage. (**1 Cor 7: 7 – 9** *“(7)For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. (8)I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. (9)But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is*

better to marry than to burn.”) Keep yourself from improper relationships, but if you cannot, get married.

- Having more wives or husbands than one at the same time. (**Matt 19:5 “And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.”**) Chapter 23, para 1 of the WCF says *“Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband; at the same time.*
- Unjust divorce, or desertion. (**Matt 5:32 “But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commiteth adultery.** WCF, para 5 says: *“Adultery of fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce: and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.”*

And para. 6 adds: *“Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion, in their own case.”*

- Idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company. (**Prov 23: 30 – 33** ⁽³⁰⁾**They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.** ⁽³¹⁾**Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright: ⁽³²⁾At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. ⁽³³⁾Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.”**) One sin generates another.
- Lascivious songs, books pictures, dancings, stage plays. (**Ezek 23: 14 – 16** ⁽¹⁴⁾**And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, ⁽¹⁵⁾Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: ⁽¹⁶⁾And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.”**) Can stage plays be expanded to include movies?

- All other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others.

Whatever else is not in accordance with God's Word.

10. Summary

- a. The seventh commandment deals with the relationship between man and woman. It requires the preservation of our own and our neighbors chastity, in our hearts, in our speech, and in our behavior. From the second chapter in Genesis, God has sanctified marriage. His Word is filled with both good and bad examples, and much of His Word is devoted to providing direction in this matter.