

## **Women's Bible Study: Fall 2010**

10 Apps for Life: A Modern Look at the Ten Commandments

God's Union: Exodus 20:14

November 3, 2010 – Juli Fischer

It is an honor to be here today and speak to you. After listening to Jacqui's washing machine story last week where she discovered her basement full of water, I was reminded of an experience I had as a newly married wife. We were living in SLC at the time and Phil was in pediatric residency. We were headed for Africa after he was finished and, for some reason I cannot quite remember, we decided that it would be better for me to go to the laundromat instead of owning a machine. I rather liked it. However, at the same time we were given a fancy toilet seat cover with a wire. This cover was blue, fuzzy, and incredibly warm and comfy. One day I went to the laundromat, got my clothes into the very large machine, and walked across the street to buy a cup of coffee. When I returned there was water all over the laundromat. I ran to my machine and discovered that it had leaked the entire tub of water. That very toilet seat cover seemed like a great idea at the time and would provide comfort and pleasure, but it ended up in the trashcan after causing a large amount of trouble. The wire in it had jammed a part of the machine and just kept it on run. A little personal thing that seems emotionally pleasing at the beginning can lead to big problems for lots of people. This is like our topic of today, Adultery.

Recently my nephew told my niece he'd had 3 affairs during the past 3 years. The news was extremely difficult to take. The shock, grief, anger, betrayal, and despair that have become a part of our conversations now attribute to the fact that adultery is certainly a big deal. The ripples are spreading and still growing. With a group this size, I am certain that many of you have experienced adultery in some way whether it be a bit removed or very close to home. Thanks to my nephew, I understand now more fully about the devastation that adultery can create. It is

heartbreaking to see it so often around us. Through today's lesson, my prayer is that all of us would understand more deeply why God put this command in the big 10, and that we would renew our hearts towards holiness and understand the importance of purity in our lives.

## THE "WHO" OF THIS COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:14 simply states *do not commit adultery*. No explanation given. It is a command for the entire community just like the rest of the commandments. It applies to the unmarried and the married and to the young and the old. Penalty for committing this sin was punishable by death. Leviticus 20:10 says, "*If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death*". Jesus explains this command with more detail in Matthew 5: 27, 28 where he says

*You have heard the commandment that says, you must not commit adultery. However, I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

This gets most of us in the category of adulterer. Have you slept with a non-spouse? Guilty of adultery. Have you looked at someone with lust and desire? Guilty of adultery. It is not enough to say I have never committed adultery so I am off the hook. It seems that the folk back in the NT days were confused about this commandment and thought the same way. If they never committed the act of adultery then they were fine, clean, and holy. Jesus takes the command and expands it. He uses it to show us that all of us are unclean, unholy, and in need of a savior. We want to take this command and use it as a small umbrella when Jesus' idea of this is for us to be under a very large tent. Do not misread this, or check this one off if you have never committed adultery. Jesus is including most of us in Matthew. Our desires, passions, and thoughts are all part of His plan to mold us and shape us after Him. They can be a wishful thought, (if only my husband

looked like George Clooney) to a long-term desire (I wish I were married to someone else). Jesus is saying in Matthew for us to own up to it and admit that we have committed adultery. Therefore, the “who” of this lesson is all of us. Absolutely all of us. No exceptions. Old or young. Married or not. We commit adultery.

## THE “HOW” OF THIS COMMANDMENT

Now let us go into our modern day lives and talk about how we commit adultery. There is always the obvious, and even if Bill Clinton says he did not have sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, being physical can have many facets and it is all adultery. Intimate personal contact with someone other than your husband is adultery. We do not have to go all the way for it to be adultery. In addition, with the onset of social networks like facebook we have made it very easy to engage in friendships that are not appropriate or are leading us in the wrong direction. Having a so-called friendly discussion with past boyfriends or with co-workers can lead to engaging our minds in adulterous thoughts. It is allowing us to think thoughts that are not healthy for our marriage. Marriage is holy, sacred, and even fun. God wants us to honor marriage as much as He honors His relationship with us. A longing for what you do not have is not honoring to the marriage. Several months ago, there was an article in Ridgelines that very aptly described this. This woman, who remained anonymous, admitted to having a strong attraction to another man because of his kindness and attention to her. Her husband had become distant and inattentive and this allowed her to become vulnerable to attention from someone else. Both this husband and wife were committed Christians and involved in great ministry. But this can happen to anyone. Sometimes we can think we deserve something from another man because of something our husband is lacking. Maybe he does not help much around the house or is not involved with the kids or is not the spiritual leader of your home. You might meet someone who is one or all of those qualities that he does not have. You actually think that you deserve something from another man that your husband is not providing. I know I have thought this. I used to watch my neighbor come home at 5:05 every day and then spend his evenings fixing things around the house. This was during Phil’s residency days when long hours were the norm

and sleeping was what he did the most of when he was able to. I longed for Phil to be one of those kinds of people. The kind that came home at 5:05 and fixed up things around the house. I had it in my head that what I needed was across the street from me, not the man but that kind of man. This did not help our marriage at all and was wrong of me to dwell on. We can trick ourselves to think what we are doing or thinking is harmless, helping us, and even necessary. The “how” of adultery is often subtle, deceptive, and destructive.

#### THE “WHY” OF THIS COMMANDMENT

We have talked about the “who” and the “how” and now I would like to discuss the “why” of this commandment. Adultery is about violating a covenant between man and wife. The word covenant has a very strong meaning and it formally binds two parties together in a relationship. God made several covenants with men in the Old Testament and they were carried out even though the relationship was often one-sided. God always fulfilled His part and always kept true to His character. Many of the men in the Old Testament did not believe God and took matters into their own hands. Look at Abraham. God made a covenant with him and said he would have a son. Things were looking rather bleak after many years of barrenness and Sarah past the age of being able to conceive, so Abraham took matters into his own hands. Do you think he felt like he deserved this? He caused a lot of devastation by not believing God and by doing things his own way. Marriage is a covenant designed by God. It is not merely a promise to remain faithful to each other, but a full covenant with like characteristics to the other covenants in the Bible. We are to remain faithful to our spouse and treat marriage as a holy covenant, not just a flaky promise that I will do my best if you do your best.

My brother died 3 years ago of pancreatic cancer. He had known his doctor, who I will call Jim, for over 20 years and the doctor’s wife was a part of my brother’s church. Jim was not a believer and actually thought Christians were weak and often criticized his wife for her stand for Christ. This went on for many, many years. She remained faithful but it was difficult. Jim’s insults hurt and his disdain for her grew. When my brother was diagnosed something happened to Jim. He

felt devastated by the diagnosis and went to his wife for help. During the 6 months that my brother dwelt with his cancer, Jim accepted the Lord and reconciled with his wife. The last I heard about them is that they were actively trying to restore their marriage to its fullest potential. I bring this story up because Jim's wife had every right to leave and she could have felt like she deserved it. But through her view of what God designed for marriage, the effect for good that she has had is incredible.

Hebrews chapter 13 is concluding this book with some strong exhortations for the community. Listen to the first four verses.

*Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

God wants his community of believers to be strong and for this to happen the marriages must be strong. The list in Hebrews shows us the important ways we can show others who Christ is and also take care of each other. Hospitality and taking care of the prisoner and mistreated are all focused on showing love. But it seems that you also need to be taking care of your own home, your own marriage.

You can also see how God views marriage by looking at Ephesians 5: 31-33.

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."*

In the ESV study Bible the notes say this: *Marriage from the beginning of creation was created by God to be a reflection of and patterned after Christ's relation to the church.*

The marriage bed is to be undefiled. God wants our marriages to be witnesses of what the relationship is between Himself and the church. There is absolutely no room for any sort of adultery in that. We are called to be holy and pure. 1 Peter 1: 14-16 says, “*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy.*”

I heard a pastor recently in California say that adultery, and for that matter all other sexual sins, were like a night light in our life. What we think of as desirable or great or exciting is actually nothing in comparison to what God has in mind for sex in marriage. Sex in marriage is to be like a laser beam, not just a night light. I love that analogy. God designed us to have a laser beam and we make it into a night light.

#### THE “NOW WHAT” OF THIS COMMANDMENT

Temptation comes to us often and in many forms. As we are concentrating on adultery I would like to suggest a few things.

1. When you are doing anything, even chatting or emailing, and you do not want your husband to know, there is a red flag. If a man is emailing you often and you are deleting it, there is a red flag. When an ex- boyfriend starts calling you on your cell phone and you don't tell anyone, there is a red flag. Heed those flags and run. Temptation is calling and you do not want to answer that call. 2 Timothy 2:22 says to *flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.* If you are flirting with someone or flirting with an idea today, then run. With all of your heart, run!
2. If you struggle with temptation, get help. Ask God to help but you need the body of Christ around you. Don't do this alone. How about a friend? Or a WOW if you are in MOPS? Or a pastor? Counselor?
3. Accept Christ's forgiveness, which is complete, and do not dwell on past mistakes. Don't let those mistakes define who you are today but use them

wisely in your life to help you become more holy. Look ahead and see what God has for you now.

4. Treat marriage like the covenant it is, which is as holy as God's relationship to us. Remember you are in a covenant relationship. Not to be taken lightly.
5. Mentor younger women.

Here is Janine. She and I have become dear friends in the past two years and I have learned a lot from her.

Juli: Where did you grow up?

Janine: In Edina. My dad was a mining engineer.

Juli : What happened in your teenage years?

Janine: I started drinking when I was very young and when I was about 11 I started getting into trouble with drinking, drugs, and shoplifting.

Juli: How long did this continue?

Janine: For a very long time.

Juli: What did your parents say or do for you during those first years ?

Janine: When I was locked up at age 13 my parents disowned me and had very little to do with me after that.

Juli: What happened next?

Janine: At age 15 I began my new career as a prostitute. I had been raped the night before and something inside of me died and I just did not care about much after that. I worked in a massage parlor in the warehouse district of Minneapolis for about 10 years. I made very good money and spent it all on drugs and men. I then started my own escort service and had countless women working for me. I did this for 20 years until I went to jail in 2008 . While in jail I learned about the

Lord and that is when I gave my heart to Jesus. Since then I gave up my whole worthless life of crime and now live here in Rochester where I am an active member of Next Chapter Ministries, celebrate recovery, and am helping others find their way to Jesus. I found hope that I did not know existed and I want others to find the same.

Juli: What were the consequences of your life of adultery?

Janine: Depression, low self-esteem, no self-respect, loss of family, health issues, and suicidal thoughts and even attempts.

Juli: How did you view yourself as a woman during this time?

Janine: I thought I had no worth as a person. I used drugs to numb that feeling.

Juli: Since becoming a Christian, has this changed?

Janine: Yes, drastically. I accepted the Lord's forgiveness and I know I am a new creation in Christ. I have hope. I also have a new image of who I am and that image is based on Christ and not on me. I depend on Jesus all day long and pray for His will to be done in my life and not my own will. My hope is to start a ministry that will help women who are in the same position as I was. I would like to give them a safe place to be, and the hope that I found not in men or in money but in Jesus.

Juli: You mentioned that your parents disowned you. Did you reconnect?

Janine: On November 11<sup>th</sup>, I am driving to Arkansas to be reunited for the first time in 24 years with my parents. It is my dad's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and I was invited to come for the party which is a miracle on its own. I believe my mom knows Jesus now and I am praying for my father. I sent him "Jesus Calling" and my mom said he is reading it for which I am very grateful. My twin sister has also become a Christian and she is now living at the Fellowship home with Next Chapter Ministries.

Juli: What is God doing around you now?

Janine: I am amazed at how many people that I used to work and use with are now involved with either celebrate recovery or Next Chapter Ministries. It is a miracle again to see some of the worst people that I used to know in Rochester now singing praises to Jesus.

Janine helps bring out the final point I would like to emphasize. Do you remember the penalty for adultery in the Old Testament? It was death. If you have committed adultery or , for that matter, any other sin , I want to remind you that the death penalty has been paid on the cross. Jesus died for you. Jesus died to take the blame for your adultery. You can be forgiven and now you can view yourself through the eyes of Christ. I love these verses in 1Peter 2:9,10. Remember them as we close.

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*