

GUARDING MARRIAGE

EXODUS 20:14

Today we're tackling the 7th commandment in *God's Top Ten List*... Exodus 20 records ten words that God wrote down, and then rewrote with His own finger.

Hey, God has been around the block a time or two. He understands life, and how it best functions. The Ten Commandments are a picture of what matters most. Exodus 20 gives us foundational principles by which God wants us to live our lives.

Here are ten *non-negotiables* – ten values that should never be compromised.

Guys, a holy and happy life makes up its mind beforehand. It determines in advance where it stands. And every life should be based on God's Top Ten.

The 6th commandment, **"You shall not murder"**, teaches us to be pro-life. Human life is a gift from God. We need to respect *the sanctity of life*.

While the 7th commandment follows in its footsteps... We should also honor the institution that propagates and cultivates human life. Let's respect and guard *the sanctity of marriage*... Verse 14 tells us, **"You shall not commit adultery."**

This morning I want to begin with a clip from an episode of Veggie Tales entitled, *"King George and the Ducky"*. As you'll be able to tell it's based on the story of David and Bathsheba. The video explains to kids how the king of Israel became bored with the war his nation was fighting, and decided to sit out the battle, *only to end up in a conflict that ruined his life*. **Let's watch the video...**

I'm sure you noticed, King George had a whole cupboard of rubber ducks, just like the one he lusted after, but as he explained, **"Those are yesterday's ducks."**

And what better way, than a children's video, to illustrate the innocent, playful, and subtle forces that lead to the sin of adultery... *A chance encounter with an old friend - a late night at the office with a co-worker - a ride home from work – a chat by the water-cooler with someone who seems to really care – you get sucked in...*

Adultery can even originate at church! Christians aren't immune to this sin.

It can start as innocently as a man and woman teaching a Sunday School class together, or becoming prayer partners, or singing together on the worship team...

A little boredom - some pampering – an escape from the rigors and the routine of daily life - a little self-indulgence... and suddenly you're looking at the spouse you once adored, and the kids you would've died for... as *"Yesterday's ducks"*.

Author, Florence Littauer, expresses it this way, *"No good Christian man or woman gets up in the morning, looks out the window, and says, 'My, this is a lovely day! I guess I'll go out and commit adultery.' Yet many do anyway."*

I read that about half the men, and a third of the women, who cheat on their spouse admit that there's really nothing terribly wrong in their marriage. They're fairly content at home... *yet somehow they're driven to violate their vows.*

Tom McGuinness, a professional counselor from New Jersey, explains why adultery often occurs, *"Married people seek out or succumb to affairs when they feel devalued or less than fully alive. They're bored. Overburdened..."*

They want happy surprises. That might mean a sentimental unexpected gift every once in a while. More important... they want a loving friend, a pal who isn't judgmental. They want someone to convince them they're still lovable. For a little while they want out from under the grown-up responsibilities that have become

predictable, dreary, and difficult.” Often the lure of an affair is not about *something better*, as much as it is *something different... and easy, and that scratches an itch*.

I’ve heard adultery described as “love for the lazy”. In the video clip there was no difference between the neighbor’s duck King George desired – and the scores of ducks he already had in his cabinet. But it was easier to switch ducks than to recreate interest, and thrill, and enthusiasm for the one he possessed.

And the same is true in marriage – *it seems easier to find a new spouse than it is to make happiness happen with the one you’ve got!* It’s like the farmer’s choice... He can till, water, and weed his fields - then wait for the harvest... Or he can opt out of the labor and sweat, go to the grocery store, and buy canned vegetables.

Obviously, nothing is as tasty or healthy as fresh vegetables – and a diligent, hard-working farmer can become a rich man. But buying vegetables off the shelf, without working for them is, at least for the time being, less tiring and bothersome.

This is the appeal of adultery. It’s a quick fix. It’s convenience over commitment. It’s flirtation without dedication. With yesterday’s duck you have to work on all that happened yesterday, but with a new duck you can fake it... *at least, for a while*.

Once, a movie star, a leading man, was being interviewed on a late night talk show. The host asked him, “What makes for a good lover?” The interviewer was trying to bait the actor for a juicy description of his sexual escapades...

But he answered, “A great lover is someone who can satisfy one woman all her life long... and who can be satisfied by one woman all his life long. A great lover is not someone who goes from woman to woman to woman. Any dog can do that.”

It reminds me of a comment by Roger Staubach – all star quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys. Staubach, and Joe Namath of

the Jets, were the two premiere quarterbacks at the time. Reporter Phyllis George asked Staubach the question, “Roger, how do you feel when you compare yourself with Joe Namath, who is so sexually active, and has a different woman on his arm every time we see him?”

I love Roger’s reply. He commented, “Phyllis, I’m sure I’m just as sexually active as Joe. The difference is that all of mine is with one woman.”

Guys and gals, if you want to score a touchdown in God’s game plan reserve your sexuality for your spouse. *If you’re single* keep yourself for your future mate. *If you’re married* only have sex with your present mate. *Don’t commit adultery.*

Once, a Sunday School teacher asked her class of second graders to explain what was meant by the 7th commandment, “**You shall not commit adultery.**”

One little boy responded, “*It means you shouldn’t chop down an adult tree.*”

That’s actually not a bad answer. Imagine walking through a downtown park in a major city, and admiring the old, stately oak trees. The trees are part of the city’s heritage. They’re historical landmarks – civic treasures. But what if you pulled out a chainsaw and started cutting one down... It would cause an uproar. Citizens would do all they could to stop you from destroying their beloved trees.

Whenever someone commits adultery we should react the same way...

Marriage is a societal treasure - a moral landmark - part of our spiritual heritage. Marriage is the central thread that holds together the fabric of civilization. It’s the incubator of humanity. Marriage brings stability to a people - and for the sake of future generations it should be preserved at all costs... *Adultery is the chainsaw.*

But that reminds me of another Sunday School teacher who recited to the class the Ten Commandments. As soon as she'd finished, one of the kids asked about the 7th commandment...

“Teacher, what does it mean to commit agriculture?”

The little guy had gotten his words confused - *but he still received the right answer...* For while the teacher laughed, another student spoke up with a great response. He answered, **“It means you shouldn't plough in another man's field.”**

That's the correct definition for committing agriculture and for committing adultery... In both cases **“you shouldn't plough in another man's field.”**

The sin of adultery occurs when a person engages in sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage - *when you decide you'd rather plough in someone else's field, rather than your own.* Even if two unmarried people have sex it still violates their future spouse. In a sense, *it's adultery in advance.* You're still guilty of plowing in another's field, and he or she will have to deal with the damage you cause.

If you have doubts about the seriousness of God's attitude toward adultery, just take note of the punishment God prescribed for adultery in the Old Testament...

Deuteronomy 22:22 tells us, **"If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil person from Israel."** Obviously, for His chosen people God planted a *high hedge* around the sanctity of sex and marriage. He wanted to preserve the family, and protect the nation from moral collapse.

In ancient Israel the punishment for adultery was carried out by stoning.

According to the Jewish Mishnah the adulterer was placed knee deep in a box of manure. Perhaps this was the origin of the expression **"knee deep in trouble"**.

Once the person was put in the mire the victim was then pelted with stones until their face slumped into the slime. After the execution a tree was planted in the box of manure to stand in the city as a testimony to the seriousness of adultery. A town with a lot of trees was considered a "*shady place*"... in more ways than one!

This morning I want to organize my thoughts about adultery in three ways...

First, I want to look at its **lineage**, or progression - *the descent downward that leads a person into adultery*. Second, I want to survey the **damage** it causes. That should scare us all. And finally, I want to talk about the **salvage**. Is it possible to salvage an adulterer - or a marriage that's been injured by adultery?

Let's look at the *lineage*, the *damage*, and the *salvage* of adultery.

First, let's talk about its **lineage**, or its progression. Let me give you its five stages: **attraction**, **distraction**, **traction**, **action**, and finally **subtraction**.

Adultery begins with an innocent **attraction**. "Wow, she's a beautiful woman." "Ooo, he's a friendly person." And there's nothing wrong with noticing a person's features or friendliness - as long as we quickly move beyond those thoughts...

Eugene Peterson writes about this kind of attraction, "There is nothing wrong with happening to see a beautiful woman. Nothing wrong with an involuntary rapid pulse beat, a surge of red-blooded manhood, an inner whisper, "Wow"! But now the struggle begins... with your fantasies, your flesh, your faith, your future."

It's not the first look that gets you into trouble it's what comes afterwards... the lingering, the lust, the desire... ultimately, the rationalizations and justifications.

It reminds me of the two monks standing beside a river. They were approached by a gorgeous, young woman who needed to

cross the stream. One of the monks picked her up, laid her over his shoulder, carried her across, and sat her down.

She appreciated his efforts, but his companion was bothered and agitated...

Later that night he complained... “As monks, we’ve both taken vows to never look on a woman, let alone touch her body. At the river today you did both.”

That’s when the first monk put it in perspective, “My brother, I put that woman down on the other side of the river. You’re still carrying her in your mind.”

This second monk had allowed his *attraction* to turn into a **distraction**.

This is the second step... If I fail to discipline my thoughts, and allow myself to focus on a woman, other than my wife – that’s when the fantasy starts, I begin to wonder what it might be like to be with her... and suddenly, I’ve crossed the line.

This is no longer an innocent look – *this is a sinful distraction*.

And this is what Jesus warns us about in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5 tells us, "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." When you *look to lust* you’ve committed adultery in your heart. Obviously, the sin’s *seed* is not as far-reaching or as destructive as the *deed* – but in a spiritual sense it’s just as loaded with evil.

Jesus is clear... It’s not *the look* that defiles us, but *the look to lust*. According to Jesus, “adultery begins in the head long before it ends in the bed.”

And here’s what happens next... the sinful distraction starts to gain **traction**.

You look for opportunities to be around this person... Your trip to the copy room starts to include a stop by the water cooler right next to his office. Or you pick her son to be on your baseball team in hopes of seeing her more often.

You begin to look for times when the two of you can be together, or talk on the phone, or pass notes. Flirtatious communications begin to occur. Nothing physical transpires – *not yet* – but the relationship is definitely starting to gain traction.

Proverbs 7 gives us a picture of a man who experienced this kind of traction...

The writer remembers, “For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night.”

Here’s the man’s first mistake. Rather than remove himself from the source of the temptation he flirts with danger. He makes a point to pass by her house...

“And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart.

She was loud and rebellious, her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner.

“So she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face (or a shameless, attitude) she said to him: “I have peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows.” In other words, “I love God! I went to church today, and offered a sacrifice, and prayed about our relationship... *How can God be against two people in love?*”

Hey, this kind of traction often tries to provide religious justification for the sin.

She continues, “I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; He’s taken a bag of money with him, (an indication he’ll be gone a while) and will come home on the appointed day.”

“With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver.”

Hey, he failed to stop the traction that was pulling him in...

Guys, if you feel this same pull - if you too are flirting with danger – cease and desist immediately! Don’t just walk away... run for your life. Get another job. Move your family. You overcome traction with lots of retraction. End the contact today!

And if you don’t, hear the ominous words that follow – the writer of Proverbs adds, “As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would cost his life.”

Understand, *innocent attraction* leads to *sinful distraction*... which then gains *traction*, and culminates with **action**... a late night at the office, a hotel rendezvous, an out of town trip – and then the lies start... the duplicity.. the guilt... the cover up. And ultimately the action causes **subtraction**. There are no exceptions. A price gets paid... Here we’re told of the man... “he did not know it would cost his life.”

And that’s when the writer of Proverbs draws his conclusion, “Now therefore, listen to me, my children; pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths; for she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men.” Even if a man who’s

careful and strong plays with fire long enough he's going to get burned!

Entertain the *distraction*, ignore the *traction*, and you'll experience some *subtraction*... There'll be hell to pay – and I'm not talking so much about eternal damnation. God can forgive an adulterer, but there's still hell to pay on earth.

The writer of Proverbs 7 closes the chapter by saying, “Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death.” This is where the adulterer ultimately ends up, “the chambers of death”. Literally, he's referring to *the torture chamber*.

Guys, it starts out as something called an “affair” – the word “affair” sounds light, and easy... it's a *laz-y affair*. But it ends up “the way to hell”.

If only King George had read about King David...

Bathsheba was bathing on the rooftop, and he just had to have her. She got pregnant, which led to her husband's murder, and a prolonged cover-up. Finally, the prophet exposed David, and his son was killed as a judgment from God. But that was just the beginning of trouble that David's adultery ushered into his life...

His kids failed to respect him. One son raped a sister. Another killed the rapist. Still another tried to takeover the kingdom, and even has sex with David's wives.

This past week a tsunami off the coast of Indonesia ravaged the shorelines in eleven countries – killing over a 100,000 people... Well, *adultery is a relational tsunami*. When the wave crashes it devastates families and friendships. David sowed to the wind and unleashed a whirlwind that resulted in massive ruin.

It's amazing to me the naïve posture the world takes toward adultery – as if it's no biggie. In 1999, a book was published entitled, “*Affair! How to Manage Every Aspect of Your Extramarital Relationship with Passion, Discretion, and Dignity.*”

Here's the publisher's review, "a thoughtful, detailed discussion of every aspect of considering, preparing for, beginning, and conducting a successful and fulfilling extramarital affair." Trust me this author has never sat in on any of my counseling appointments where adultery was involved. Any fulfillment it brings is short-lived.

I've seen nothing come out of adultery, but pain, and wounds, and scars.

Make no mistake about it, like a tornado, a hurricane, a tsunami... adultery always causes **damage** and carnage. And it does so in at least five ways...

First, **it destroys your soul**. Second, **it steals your wealth**. Third, **it risks your health**. Fourth, **it breaks your trust**. And fifth, **it shames your God**.

Notice first, adultery **destroys your soul**.

Proverbs 6:32 tells us, "Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul."

Here's where the world miscalculates... Since dogs, and swine, and deer, and other animals show no need to be monogamous, why should we? *All we are is another animal*.

But that's not true! God made humans higher than animals. We're more than bodily processes and electrical impulses. We're body *and* soul. Humans possess a spiritual component animals lack. And our sexuality is the physical act that most reveals our spiritual nature... Sex carries spiritual connotations.

The sexual side of a person is the most intimate aspect of our identity, and when you give yourself away without receiving a lifetime commitment in return it cheapens who you are - it robs you of your honor, and dignity, and self-esteem.

Sex outside of marriage is like peeling an onion. Every time you engage in illicit sex you peel away another layer of skin. You keep

peeling, but nothing gets added to replenish what's taken. Eventually you end up as nothing. All that's left are tears.

Look in the eyes of a promiscuous person and you'll see that nobody's home.

They're like a pumpkin turned into a jack o' lantern. Their face wears a cut-out smile, but on the inside they've been gutted of joy and dignity. Adultery destroys the soul. It robs you of your humanness, and reduces you to a mere animal.

Adultery *destroys your soul*, but it also **steals your wealth**.

Proverbs 5:10 warns us, "Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner..." Chapter 6:31 puts it, "He may have to give up all the substance of his house..." Obviously, those passages refer to costly divorce settlements, and alimony payments... but they refer to spiritual wealth as well...

Understand in all cultures across the planet, human beings always cover their sexual organs. From girdles to loin cloths sexuality involves secrecy, and privacy, and mystery. Take away the *privacy*, and you *destroy intimacy* and *limit ecstasy*.

When you commit adultery you bring a stranger into your marriage bed.

Even if your spouse forgives you, and agrees to stay married... whenever you have sex your spouse will always be wondering about the affair, "Did he whisper to her the same things he whispers to me?" "What did they talk about?" "How do I measure up?" And on and on it goes. Adultery invites a stranger to bed. It allows a foreigner to rob you of the riches of intimacy and ecstasy you could've enjoyed.

This is also true for the singles in the crowd. The devil wants you to sleep around now, and steep your mind with pornography - because he knows he's sowing the seeds that can destroy your marriage after the wedding.

You think... I'm a single guy, how can my conduct today affect my marriage in the future? Trust me, it can. *Comparison is a killer*. How can a spouse really open up and give themselves away uninhibitedly if they think they're competing with previous partners. That's the heavy baggage that can bog down a marriage.

Pornography also creates problems. Porn is sheer fantasy. No wife can live up to the make-believe of pornography. And Satan loves to get a man use to fantasy. Once this happens, the man is never satisfied with the real thing. His wife never measures up – and when she senses his dissatisfaction it stifles her expression.

Single people, cheating on your future spouse can also cause great damage.

I want to read a letter to Ann Landers, from a man in Pennsylvania, who's just now starting to wake up to the *subtractions* that were caused by his adultery...

“Ten years ago I left my wife and four teenagers to marry my secretary with whom I'd been having an affair.... But lately, I am beginning to see things in a different light. It hit me when I was a guest at our eldest son's wedding...

That's all I was, a guest. I'm no longer considered part of the family.

My first wife remarried and her husband has been taken inside the circle that was once ours. They gave the rehearsal dinner and sat next to my sons.

I was proud to have a young, pretty wife at my side, but it didn't make up for the pain when I realized that my children no longer love me. They treat me with courtesy, but there was no affection or real caring. I miss my sons, especially around the holidays. I'm going to try to build some bridges, but the prospects don't look very promising... It'll be difficult re-entering now that they have a step-dad they like. I am writing in the hope that others will consider the ramifications before they jump.” Here's a guy who wished he had back, “*Yesterday's Duck*.”

Guys, adultery is a thief - it lures you in, and then steals you blind.

And it also **risks your health**.

I'm sure I don't need to mention the 38 sexually transmitted diseases that have now invaded our society. I heard recently a startling statistic - among Americans under the age of 40, one out of every three people suffer with an STD.

This is why Proverbs 5:11 lists disease as an aftermath of adultery. He says, "And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed."

The fourth by-product of adultery is that it **breaks your trust**.

Know that God created sex for three purposes: *Procreation*, or having babies. – *Recreation*, or for pleasure – but the most important purpose was for *Unification*, or creating between a husband and wife a oneness and a togetherness.

Sex unifies us not just physically and emotionally, but spiritually as well. When God created the first man and woman, He commanded, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." The euphemism God chose to describe sexual intercourse was "one flesh".

Sexual relations in the context of a loving, caring, communicating relationship unifies a couple - it keeps them close, and holds them together. Sex is the cement that binds a marriage and strengthens their unity. Call it *the superglue of marriage*.

And this is why sex outside of marriage does so much damage.

Here's a great quote, "Since sex is like superglue, squeezing it out at the wrong time or in the wrong place always creates an awful mess. The wrong things get joined together, and getting them unstuck again tears at the soul. This is why adultery is forbidden." Adultery creates confusion, and unintended bonds.

And the new connection that forms tears apart the old bond that existed.

This is why in the Old Testament penalty for adultery was so severe – adultery was seen as a violent act. It rips apart a union that was forged by God. If marriage makes a husband and wife “one flesh” – then adultery severs and tears the flesh.

When I officiate a wedding I always say to the groom, “Young man, no one expects you to be perfect, but we all expect you to be faithful.” Then I repeat the same words to the bride. Marriage is a *record of relationship that should be played at high fidelity*. The trust between a husband and wife – the vow, the commitment they make – is what holds the marriage together. And often, couples don’t realize how important that trust in the relationship is until suddenly it’s gone.

This is what happens with adultery – it empties the trust from the marriage, and once that trust is depleted it’s very difficult to gather it up and get it back.

Take this pitcher of water... *What if I were to pick up this pitcher, pour it out on the floor, then ask you to gather up the water and put it back into the pitcher?*

That would be an extremely difficult, if not impossible task.

Even after a lot of hard work, you might not be able to gather up all the water. This is exactly what happens when a spouse commits adultery. Trust is poured out on the ground. And it takes a colossal effort to restore that trust once it’s gone...

Adultery *breaks your trust*, and it also **shames your God**.

I believe the best deterrent to adultery is to grasp the spiritual connotations of sex and marriage. You’ll treat your spouse differently when you realize how God sees marriage... Hey, to commit adultery is to bring shame to God’s name.

Ephesians 5 tells us that marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship with His Church. Jesus is a faithful husband. We should be like committed brides...

And when you break a marriage vow you distort the sacred picture God wants to paint. Just as murder mars the image of God in man - adultery mars the image of Christ and His Church in the marriage relationship. It ruins a masterpiece.

This morning I brought with me one of my Van Gogh's. This painting is a Vincent Van Gogh original - we keep it in the garage, right over the ping pong table. It's the great painter's most famous work... it's called "*Starry Night*."

And it's beautiful... It's a testimony to Van Gogh's genius.

But what if I were playing ping pong, and I got mad at Nick for miscalculating the score. It was an honest mistake, but in my haste and anger, I took the paddle and ripped into this priceless painting, and demolished it... *What would you think?*

Wow, Pastor Sandy is being pretty rash, and foolish, and stupid. How could he do such a thing? Hey, he has no idea what a costly mistake he's just made?

This is what God thinks when he sees a Christian commit adultery... You've defiled a masterpiece. You've destroyed the picture He was trying to paint.

With the time I have left this morning, I want to discuss a few ways to **salvage** an adulterer... and *salvage* a marriage that's been ravaged by the sin of adultery.

And here is where I can offer the most hope...

John 8 describes an early morning in the temple when Jesus was confronted with an angry mob. Out of a pack of self-righteous, judgmental Jews a near-naked woman was thrown at his feet. She was an adulteress – caught in the very act.

Jesus was reminded by the crowd that the Law of Moses said to stone her... *but what did Jesus say?* It's interesting, verse 6 tells us that Jesus stooped down and started to doodle in the dirt. He wrote something with His finger in the dust.

The Bible doesn't tell us what Jesus wrote, but we know His finger also wrote another important document... The Ten Commandments were written by the same finger. It's comforting to me, that at Mt. Sinai the finger that wrote on a stone tablet, **"You shall not commit adultery"**... also wrote in the dirt to set an adulteress free.

You remember the rest of the story. Jesus challenged the Jewish leaders, **"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."** Jesus was the only one in the crowd that day qualified to cast a stone, but He chose not to...

After the angry men with the guilty consciences had walked away, Jesus said to the adulteress, **"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."** Hey, *salvaging an adulterer begins right here...* Come to Jesus, receive His forgiveness.

If you're guilty of sexual sin... *and who this morning isn't?* The words of Jesus convict us all, **"whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her in his heart"**. If you're guilty, confess it to Jesus. Jesus is the only person who's qualified to condemn you, but He's chosen not to... He wants to forgive.

Jesus says, **"Neither do I condemn you..."** but note what else He says – these words are also needed to salvage a sinner. Jesus tells her, **"Go and sin no more."**

Repentance is also needed. Jesus challenges this woman to follow Him, and walk in a new way. Perhaps that involved returning to her husband - and asking for his forgiveness - and doing the hard work it would take to rebuild his trust.

Perhaps it meant learning a new perspective on sex - and thinking about the impact that sexual purity today will have on a

potential marriage tomorrow. Either way, Jesus' words to the woman were... *make a new start... walk a different way.*

I like what Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said about adultery... "Even adultery is not the unforgivable sin. It's a terrible sin, but God forbid that there should be anyone who feels that he or she has sinned himself outside the love of God, or outside His kingdom. If you truly repent, and realize the enormity of your sin, and cast yourself upon the boundless love and mercy and grace of God, you can be forgiven and I assure you of pardon." Then he adds, "But hear the words. 'Go, and sin no more.'"

We all desire to hear the words, "Nether do I condemn you", but are we just as receptive to the words, "Go and sin no more"? If we are, we'll erect boundaries in our lives, and in our relations with the opposite sex, to guard against infidelity.

We'll be smart, and avoid situations where temptation can assert itself...

We'll be careful about what we watch, and read, and surf - and with whom we hang out, and chat, and converse. We'll nurture a strong marital commitment. We won't take chances, and drop our guard, and give the enemy an opportunity.

And if we've offended our spouse in the past, and given them reason to doubt our faithfulness, we'll do whatever it takes – *to their satisfaction* - to restore trust.

The world we live in today is anti-marriage. When Hollywood portrays a couple it's far more likely to be an unmarried couple living together than a husband and a wife. In fact, marriage is often ridiculed. This is why we need to make marriage a high priority item. Keeping the 7th commandment requires a proactive response.

We all have the tendency to view the people we love as "Yesterday's Ducks". We can take our spouse for granted... view our family obligations as a bother.

Every married person here today should take this opportunity – on the first Sunday of 2005 - to rededicate ourselves to the good work of building a stronger marriage. Renew your vows. Resolve to make your marriage the best it can be.

The old adage is true, “[The best defense is a good offence](#)”.

The surest way to avoid the boredom and humdrum that brings on an affair is to create a thrilling and fulfilling marriage... Hey, since fidelity in marriage matters to God, let's all make *guarding our marriage* a non-negotiable in this coming year!