

Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino, The Ten Commandments

Session 8: Commandment 7: No Adultery

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, 4) FAQs

1) Abstract:

Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino's lecture **explores the seventh commandment, "No Adultery,"** providing a comprehensive overview of its interpretation and implications. He **contrasts ancient Near Eastern views of marriage, primarily as a contractual agreement for property transfer and legitimate heirs, with modern romantic ideals.** The lecture **details the historical definitions of adultery, which predominantly focused on a man's sexual relations with a married or betrothed woman, not his engagements with prostitutes or concubines.** Tomasino then **discusses the biblical penalties for adultery, highlighting the surprising prevalence of grace and the rarity of the prescribed death penalty in practice.** Finally, he **examines Jesus' radical reinterpretation of adultery, shifting the focus from physical acts to the purity of the heart and the integrity of the marriage relationship.** This **spiritualized understanding emphasizes inner desires and attitudes as central to the commandment's true meaning.**

2) Briefing Document:

Briefing Document: The Seventh Commandment - "No Adultery"

Source: Excerpts from "Tomasino_10Commands_Ses08_English.pdf" by Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino.

I. Societal Perception of Adultery: Past vs. Present

Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino highlights a significant shift in societal attitudes towards adultery, noting a prevailing lack of seriousness in contemporary society compared to ancient times.

- **Modern Lackadaisical Attitude:** Adultery is often "played for laughs" in movies and TV shows, and "people just didn't seem to take it very seriously." The cuckolded husband is frequently the "object of much derision," rather than the situation being viewed as a "tragedy." There's a perception that

"variety is the spice of life," and "sexual morals of our day seem to be willing to tolerate a lot more adventure, you might say, a lot more cheating."

- **Ancient Horror and Severity:** In stark contrast, ancient peoples, including those in the Near East and Israel, viewed adultery with "horror." The prescribed penalty in the Bible and surrounding societies was "death by stoning of both parties that were involved." This severe understanding was deeply rooted in their societal structures and concept of marriage.

II. The Nature of Marriage in the Ancient Near East and Old Testament

Tomasino emphasizes that the ancient understanding of marriage, particularly in the Near East and Old Testament Israel, differed fundamentally from modern, romance-based ideals.

- **Contractual and Property-Focused:** "Romance was not the primary basis of marriage. Marriage in the ancient world was a contractual agreement. Typically, it was arranged by the fathers." The "main purpose of marriage was to ensure the proper transfer of the family property from one generation to the next."
- **Political Alliances:** Marriages were also "the basis for political alliances." The focus was on "the power or the clout that could be derived from those relationships," not romantic love.
- **Producing Legitimate Children:** "Producing legitimate children was considered the primary goal of the marriage relationship." This was crucial for continuing the family line, inheriting property, and, in a sense, securing "immortality" by having accomplishments "remembered and carried on from one generation to the next." Adultery laws were designed to prevent "illegitimate children to inherit their property," likening it to a "cuckoo in their nest."
- **Dowry and Bride Price:** Marriage involved financial arrangements. A "higher-class woman would be obtained with a bride price," and women would bring a "dowry into the relationship" to secure their future, often protected by "prenuptial agreements."

- **Polygamy and Concubinage:****Polygamy:** While not considered ideal ("The Bible clearly has an ideal for marriage. That ideal is found in the book of Genesis, chapter two, one man, one woman for life."), polygamy was "permitted in the Old Testament." It was often a sign of wealth ("Having more than one wife meant you had some money"). It also served a practical purpose in a society with "a lot of warfare, a lot of skirmishes, men doing very heavy labor and oftentimes dying young," leading to a surplus of women who might otherwise be destitute.
- **Concubinage:** A concubine was "sort of like a second-class wife," providing a home and the possibility of children, but her children "could not expect her children to inherit anything" and she lacked the "same kind of legal protections as a wife." A married man having a concubine was "not considered adultery."

III. Definition and Punishment of Adultery in Ancient Law

The definition of adultery in the ancient Near East and Old Testament reveals a significant gender disparity and focus on marital status.

- **Gendered Definition:** "Adultery is essentially defined as a man having sexual relations with either a married or a betrothed woman." It was *not* considered adultery "if the woman was a prostitute," or if a married man "had a concubine." However, a woman "who had relations with anybody who was not her husband, was guilty of adultery."
- While the law had a "double standard," Tomasino notes that God, as depicted in the prophets like Hosea, "makes it clear that that is not his ideal."
- **Penalty: Death (with Nuance):** The prescribed penalty for adultery in both the Old Testament and Assyrian law codes was "death" for both parties.
- However, ancient law codes often included "caveats," allowing the husband options other than death for his adulterous wife, such as "cutting off the nose," "cutting off the ears," or "sell[ing] his wife into slavery."
- Despite the written law, Tomasino suggests that in the Old Testament, "Grace, on the other hand, was abundant toward adulterers." He states, "How many people in the Old Testament were killed for committing adultery? Well, you

look at it, you can't really think, I can't think of any." Divorce and enslavement were "likely the typical punishments."

IV. Jesus' Radical Reinterpretation of Adultery and Marriage

Jesus fundamentally redefines marriage and the concept of adultery, moving beyond external actions and legalistic interpretations to focus on the internal state and the nature of the relationship.

- **Marriage as a Divine Union:** Jesus defines marriage not by property or custom, but by God's original creation: "at the beginning, the creator made them male and female. And he said, for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. And the two... shall become one flesh." This emphasizes "one man, one woman, together for life" as the "ideal."
- **Adultery as Undermining the Relationship:** For Jesus, "adultery is about the breakdown of the marriage relationship. Not about who is cheating on whom. It's how the relationship has been undermined, how the relationship has been broken." It is "undermining a God-ordained relationship, which is meant to last forever."
- **Divorce and Hardness of Heart:** Jesus acknowledges that "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." While recognizing that divorce happens, Jesus maintains it's not the ideal and "adulterates the institution of marriage and what it was intended to be."
- **Adultery of the Heart:** This is Jesus' most radical reinterpretation: "anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart."
- This moves the definition of adultery "from the body to the heart."
- "Lust" is defined not as a "passing fancy" or simply finding someone attractive, but as "epithumeo," a "burning desire to possess something or someone," or "infatuation."
- The issue lies in "the thought process that gives rise to the action."

- The "heart" in Hebrew thought is the "seed of the will," meaning "engaging your will in an act that undermines your relationship."
- **Hyperbole and Sacrifices for Purity:** Jesus uses hyperbole, such as plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand, to emphasize the need to "make sacrifices in order to maintain our purity, the purity of our relationships." This could mean avoiding certain media or social interactions that lead to temptation.
- **Spiritual Adultery (James):** The imagery of adultery is also spiritualized in the New Testament to describe unfaithfulness to God. James states, "friendship with the world means enmity against God," meaning "loving the world... constitutes cheating on the Lord." This further emphasizes that "adultery in the heart, in the attitudes, rather than the actions."

V. Key Takeaways and Implications for Christian Living

Tomasino concludes by synthesizing these points into a call for internal purity.

- **Purity of Mind:** "Purity is a matter of the mind, rather than a matter of the body." The focus is on "having a heart that is devoted to God and not being torn by other desires."
- **Controlling Temptation:** Drawing on the attributed Luther quote ("you can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you don't have to let them build nests in your hair"), Tomasino encourages acknowledging temptations but taking steps to prevent them from becoming "obsessions."
- **Vulnerability and Community Support:** The church should be a place where individuals can openly discuss their struggles with temptation without fear of judgment, as "it is in the thought lives where the sin begins."
- **Striving for Purity:** Christians are called to "strive to be pure from the inside, and then let the outside take care of itself." This is an ongoing process, not an immediate attainment.

3) Study Guide:

Study Guide: The Seventh Commandment – No Adultery

I. Overview of Commandment 7: "You Shall Not Commit Adultery"

- **Societal Perception:** Adultery is often trivialized in modern society, viewed as a source of comedy rather than tragedy. The cuckolded husband is frequently the target of derision.
- **Historical Context - Ancient Near East (ANE):Severity:** Adultery was taken extremely seriously, often punishable by death (stoning) for both parties involved. This was common across Israel and neighboring societies.
- **Marriage in ANE:Basis:** Primarily a contractual agreement, arranged by fathers, focused on property transfer and political alliances, not romantic love.
- **Purpose:** To produce legitimate children to ensure the continuation of family property and "immortality" through legacy.
- **Definition of Adultery:** A man having sexual relations with a married or betrothed woman.
- **Not Adultery:** A man frequenting prostitutes, having relations with an unattached woman (though potentially with ramifications from her father), or having a concubine.
- **Concubinage:** A concubine was a "second-class wife" providing sexual partnership and the possibility of children, but her children typically had no inheritance rights and she lacked the full legal protections of a wife.
- **Penalties (ANE Law Codes):** Often prescribed death for both parties, but with various caveats allowing for lesser punishments like disfigurement (nose/ear cutting) or enslavement for the wife and the man with whom she committed adultery. These variations indicate a degree of judicial discretion and attempts at balance.

II. Adultery in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

- **Similarity to ANE:** The Israelite understanding of marriage and adultery was very similar to surrounding cultures (Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites).

- **Marriage Purpose:** Primarily about producing children for inheritance.
- **Arranged Marriages & Property:** Common for families, involving bride price (for upper-class women) and dowry (for women to secure their future and provide for them in case of divorce). Prenuptial agreements were common.
- **Betrothal:** Considered as binding as marriage; violation was treated as adultery (e.g., Mary and Joseph). Joseph had the legal right to have Mary stoned but chose a private divorce.
- **Double Standard:Men:** Could have multiple partners (polygamy was permitted but not ideal, and prostitution was discouraged but not considered adultery for men). Engaging in "hanky panky" was not right but often not against the law.
- **Women:** Bound to their husbands; any sexual relations with a man not her husband constituted adultery.
- **Polygamy:** Permitted but not ideal (Genesis 2: one man, one woman for life is the ideal). Often a sign of wealth and a practical solution for women in a society with fewer men due to warfare and short lifespans, offering security and the chance for children.
- **Divorce:** Men could divorce wives for "indecentcy" (meaning debated by rabbis Hillel and Shammai). Later textual discoveries from the Persian period suggest women also divorced husbands, sometimes with prenuptial agreements protecting them from poverty.
- **Definition of Adultery (OT):** A married woman having relations with a man not her husband, and a man having relations with a married woman. It worked both ways in definition, though the legal consequences often differed for men.
- **Law vs. Practice (Grace):Prescribed Penalty:** Death by stoning.
- **Actual Practice:** Rarely enforced. No instances of stoning for adultery are recorded in the Old Testament. Divorce or enslavement were more common punishments (e.g., Hosea and Gomer).
- **Law Codes as Ideals:** The prescribed penalties were more like guidelines or ideals for judges, allowing for grace and discretion.

- **Theological Metaphor:** God is frequently depicted as an aggrieved spouse of faithless Israel, who, despite Israel's "adultery" (worship of other gods like Baal), continues to offer mercy and the possibility of return (e.g., Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel). This highlights God's grace and willingness to take Israel back.
- **Adultery Laws' Purpose:** Primarily to protect the family legacy and ensure property inheritance by biological offspring ("no cuckoo in the nest").

III. Adultery in the New Testament (Jesus' Teachings)

- **Continuity with OT Practice:** By Jesus' time, adultery laws were institutionalized but often treated lightly or overlooked unless powerful individuals (like Herod) were involved. Stoning was rare and potentially required judicial approval.
- **Jesus and the Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8):****Context:** Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus, forcing him to either repudiate Mosaic Law (by not condemning her) or violate prevailing practice (by endorsing stoning).
- **Jesus' Response:** "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone." This shifts the focus from legalistic condemnation to individual sin and hypocrisy, showing grace.
- **Jesus' Re-definition of Marriage (Matthew 19):****Pharisaic Debate:** Asked about lawful divorce for "any and every reason" (Hillel vs. Shammai debate).
- **Jesus' Appeal to Creation:** Jesus goes back to Genesis 2, defining marriage as one man and one woman becoming "one flesh" for life—God's ideal.
- **Moses' Concession:** Moses allowed divorce "because your hearts were hard," acknowledging human failings but reiterating that it "was not this way from the beginning."
- **Adultery as Breakdown of Relationship:** For Jesus, adultery is not just about property or legal status, but the undermining of a God-ordained, lifelong relationship. Divorce (except for "sexual immorality," a debated textual inclusion) and remarriage is also considered adultery in this context.

- **Grace for the Divorced:** Tomasino emphasizes that Jesus' ideal doesn't mean condemning divorced or remarried individuals, but rather setting a standard to aspire to.
- **Adultery of the Heart (Matthew 5 - Sermon on the Mount):Shift in Focus:** Jesus moves the issue of adultery from physical acts to internal desire and intention. "Anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart."
- **Definition of "Lust" (Epithumeo):** Not a passing fancy or finding someone attractive, but a "burning desire to possess something or someone"—an infatuation or obsession that undermines the marital relationship.
- **Heart as Seat of Will:** In ancient Hebrew thought, the heart was the seat of the will, not just emotions. So, "adultery in the heart" means engaging one's will in an act that undermines the relationship.
- **Beyond Rabbinic Debate:** Unlike rabbis who obsessed over defining physical adulterous acts, Jesus emphasizes purity of mind and heart.
- **Radical Measures (Hyperbole):"Pluck out your eye," "cut off your hand":** Hyperbolic language emphasizing the need to make drastic sacrifices to maintain purity and the integrity of relationships.
- **Practical Application:** Removing temptations (e.g., giving up TV, certain websites, even job situations) that threaten marital fidelity.
- **Spiritual Adultery (James):Expanded Metaphor:** James (like the Old Testament prophets) uses the imagery of adultery to describe "friendship with the world" as "enmity against God," meaning spiritual unfaithfulness.
- **Focus on Attitude:** Reinforces the New Testament focus on "adulterous attitudes" and "purity of mind" over mere actions.
- **Martin Luther Quote:** "You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you don't have to let them build nests in your hair." This emphasizes that while temptations may arise, one has the power to prevent them from becoming obsessions through conscious effort and seeking support.
- **Conclusion:** The New Testament emphasizes purity of mind and heart, a complete devotion to one's spouse and to God, acknowledging human

struggle but encouraging reliance on the Holy Spirit, community, and common sense.

Quiz: Commandment 7 – No Adultery

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. How did the ancient Near Eastern understanding of marriage differ from a modern, Western understanding, and what was its primary purpose?
2. In the ancient Near East, what specific conditions defined adultery for a man, and what actions were *not* considered adultery for him?
3. Explain the concept of "concubinage" in the ancient world. How did the status and expectations for a concubine differ from a wife?
4. According to the Old Testament, what was the prescribed legal penalty for adultery? How did actual practice often differ from this prescribed penalty, and why?
5. What was the primary reason that adultery laws in the ancient world (including the Bible) were so harsh? Provide an analogy used in the text to explain this.
6. How does Jesus' teaching on divorce in Matthew 19 reinterpret the Mosaic Law's allowance for divorce?
7. Explain what Jesus meant by "adultery in the heart" in Matthew 5. What is the significance of understanding "heart" as the "seed of the will" in this context?
8. How does Jesus use hyperbole when discussing how to deal with temptation related to adultery? What practical principle is he conveying?
9. Beyond physical acts, how does the New Testament (specifically James) broaden the concept of "adultery" in a spiritual sense?
10. The text suggests a quote attributed to Martin Luther: "You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you don't have to let them build nests in your hair." What does this quote mean in the context of battling lust and temptation?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Ancient Near Eastern marriage was primarily a contractual agreement, often arranged by fathers, focused on property transfer and political alliances. Its main purpose was to produce legitimate children to ensure the proper inheritance of family property and the continuation of the family line, rather than romantic love.
2. For a man, adultery was defined as having sexual relations with a married or betrothed woman. It was *not* considered adultery for a man to frequent prostitutes, have relations with an otherwise unattached woman (though potentially problematic), or to keep a concubine.
3. A concubine was essentially a "second-class wife" who provided a sexual partner and the possibility of children but did not have the same legal protections or inheritance rights for her children as a formal wife. While she might receive a home, her status was generally inferior and varied widely in practice.
4. The Old Testament legally prescribed death by stoning for both the adulterer and adulteress. However, in practice, this punishment was rarely, if ever, carried out; more common consequences included divorce or enslavement, indicating a degree of judicial discretion and grace.
5. Adultery laws were primarily harsh to protect the family legacy and ensure that only biological offspring inherited property, preventing "confusion" or "cheating" regarding inheritance. The text uses the analogy of a "cuckoo bird" pushing other eggs out of the nest to describe the fear of an illegitimate child inheriting family wealth.
6. Jesus reinterprets Moses' allowance for divorce, stating that it was permitted only "because your hearts were hard," not because it was God's original ideal. He emphasizes that from creation, marriage was intended to be a lifelong union of one man and one woman becoming "one flesh," highlighting the relational integrity over legalistic loopholes.
7. By "adultery in the heart," Jesus means engaging one's will in a burning desire to possess another person, which undermines the marital relationship.

Understanding the heart as the "seed of the will" implies that the sin lies in the deliberate thought process and intent, not merely a fleeting attraction or physical act.

8. Jesus uses hyperbole by suggesting one should "pluck out your eye" or "cut off your hand" if they cause sin. He is not advocating self-mutilation but rather conveying the radical principle that individuals should be willing to make severe sacrifices (e.g., removing temptations or harmful influences) to maintain the purity and integrity of their relationships.
9. James broadens the concept of adultery by applying it spiritually, stating that "friendship with the world means enmity against God." This means that loving worldly things or priorities constitutes "cheating" on God, symbolizing a lack of devotion and purity of mind towards Him.
10. This quote means that while external temptations or fleeting attractions ("birds flying over your head") may be inevitable, one has the power and responsibility to prevent them from becoming entrenched desires or obsessions ("building nests in your hair"). It encourages conscious effort and proactive measures to guard one's thoughts and maintain purity.

Essay Format Questions

1. Compare and contrast the ancient Near Eastern understanding of marriage and adultery with Jesus' teachings on the same topics. Discuss how Jesus' approach represents a significant shift in focus and values.
2. Analyze the role of "property" and "legacy" in defining marriage and adultery in the ancient world (including the Old Testament). How did this influence the legal definitions and prescribed punishments for adultery?
3. Discuss the concept of grace as it applies to the Old Testament's understanding and application of adultery laws. Provide specific examples from the text to support your argument that legal prescriptions were often tempered by practice.
4. Examine Jesus' reinterpretation of the Seventh Commandment, particularly his emphasis on "adultery of the heart." How does this teaching challenge

traditional legalistic interpretations and what are its implications for personal ethics and spiritual purity?

5. The text argues that modern society often trivializes adultery, while ancient societies viewed it with horror. Discuss the reasons behind this difference in perception, drawing on the historical and cultural context provided in the source material.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Adultery:** In the ancient Near East, typically defined as a man having sexual relations with a married or betrothed woman. In the Hebrew Bible, it also applied to a married woman having relations with a man not her husband. Jesus redefines it to include lustful intent in the heart and as the undermining of a God-ordained relationship.
- **Ancient Near East (ANE):** The geographical and cultural region of Western Asia and Northeast Africa in ancient times, including civilizations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, Babylon, and Assyria. The context for the historical understanding of marriage and law.
- **Betrothal:** A formal and binding engagement to be married, considered legally equivalent to marriage in the ancient world. Violation of betrothal was treated as adultery.
- **Bride Price:** A payment made by the groom's family to the bride's family in exchange for the right to marry the woman, common for higher-class women in the ancient world.
- **Canaanites:** An ancient people inhabiting the region of Canaan (modern-day Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and parts of Syria and Jordan), whose cultural practices (including marriage and law) were similar to those of ancient Israel.
- **Concubine:** A woman who lives with a man but has lower status than a wife, often without the same legal protections or inheritance rights for her children. In the ANE, a man having a concubine was not considered adultery.
- **Cuckolded Husband:** A man whose wife is unfaithful. In ancient society, and sometimes still today, he was often the object of derision or comedy.

- **Dowry:** Property or money brought by a bride to her husband on their marriage. In the ancient world, it provided a woman with security and a means of living if she were divorced.
- **Epithumeo:** The Greek word translated as "lust" in Matthew 5:28, meaning a "burning desire to possess something or someone," an intense craving or infatuation, not merely a fleeting attraction.
- **Hillel and Shammai:** Two prominent schools of thought among Jewish rabbis in Jesus' time, who debated various interpretations of Mosaic Law, including the permissible grounds for divorce.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally, used by Jesus (e.g., "pluck out your eye") to emphasize a strong point or principle.
- **Immortality (Ancient Concept):** In the ancient world, where afterlife beliefs were less developed, "immortality" was often achieved through having legitimate children to carry on the family name, property, and accomplishments.
- **Legitimate Children:** Children born within a formal marriage, who had the legal right to inherit family property and continue the family line. Adultery laws primarily aimed to ensure the paternity and legitimacy of heirs.
- **Lotinoth:** The Hebrew term for "You shall not commit adultery," as found in the Ten Commandments.
- **Middle Assyrian Law Codes:** A collection of ancient laws from the Middle Assyrian Empire, known for their strict and detailed regulations concerning adultery and its permutations, often showing an "obsession" with the topic.
- **Polygamy:** The practice of having more than one spouse at the same time. Permitted in the Old Testament but not considered the ideal for marriage (Genesis 2).
- **Prenuptial Agreements:** Legal contracts entered into by a couple before marriage, outlining property and financial arrangements. Common in the ancient world to protect both parties, especially women.

- **Rabbinic Figures/Rabbis:** Jewish scholars and teachers who interpreted and debated Jewish law, common in Jesus' time.
- **Seed of the Will:** In ancient Hebrew thought, the "heart" was often understood as the core of a person's volitional choices and intentions, rather than solely the seat of emotions.
- **Torah:** The first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Pentateuch), containing the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments.

4) FAQs:

How was marriage understood in the ancient Near East, including ancient Israel, and what was its primary purpose?

In the ancient Near East, marriage was primarily a contractual agreement, typically arranged by fathers, and focused on practical considerations rather than romantic love. Its main purpose was to ensure the proper transfer of family property and wealth from one generation to the next, guaranteeing legitimate heirs. Marriages also served as a basis for political alliances, demonstrating power and influence. While romantic love was not unheard of, it was not the primary foundation of marriage as understood in modern Western societies. This understanding was largely consistent across various ancient Near Eastern cultures, including ancient Israel.

How was adultery defined and treated in ancient Near Eastern societies, including ancient Israel?

In ancient Near Eastern law codes, including those of ancient Israel, adultery was essentially defined as a man having sexual relations with either a married or a betrothed woman. It was not considered adultery if a man had relations with a prostitute, an unattached woman, a mistress, or a concubine. The primary concern was the disruption of a legitimate family's lineage and property inheritance, to prevent "a cuckoo in the nest"—meaning an illegitimate child inheriting family assets. The prescribed penalty for adultery was typically death for both parties,

often by stoning. However, practical application varied, and punishments like divorce, enslavement, or mutilation (e.g., cutting off noses or ears, as seen in Middle Assyrian law) were also possible, often at the discretion of the aggrieved husband.

What was the typical legal penalty for adultery in ancient Israel, and how often was it actually enforced?

The Old Testament law prescribed death by stoning for both the man and the woman involved in adultery. However, despite this severe legal provision, there is little evidence in the biblical narratives to suggest that this penalty was frequently enforced. Examples like Hosea's wife Gomer and King David (who committed adultery and murder) show that grace and alternative punishments like divorce or enslavement were more commonly applied. It appears that the written laws served more as ideals or guidelines for judges rather than rigidly enforced mandates, and there was often more leniency in practice than the letter of the law suggested.

How did the concept of marriage and adultery shift with Jesus' teachings in the New Testament?

Jesus fundamentally redefines marriage and adultery, moving away from the ancient world's property-based, contractual understanding to emphasize a God-ordained relationship of "one flesh" between a man and a woman, intended to last for life. He appeals to the creation narrative in Genesis as the ideal. Consequently, Jesus views adultery not merely as a legal or physical act but as a breakdown or undermining of this sacred relational integrity. He states that divorce, except for "sexual immorality" (a debated phrase), constitutes adultery, attributing Moses' allowance for divorce to humanity's "hard hearts."

How did Jesus deepen the understanding of adultery by extending it to the "heart"?

Jesus dramatically expands the scope of adultery beyond physical acts to include intentions and desires of the heart. In the Sermon on the Mount, he declares that "anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart." This redefinition shifts the focus from external actions, which rabbis often meticulously debated, to internal purity of will and desire. "Lusting" is understood as a "burning desire to possess" or an infatuation that undermines one's commitment to their spouse, rather than merely finding someone attractive. This

means that engaging the will in thoughts or fantasies that betray one's spouse is considered adultery in God's eyes.

What practical advice or principles did Jesus offer for dealing with temptation and maintaining purity of heart?

Jesus uses hyperbole, like plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand, to emphasize the radical sacrifices one should be willing to make to maintain purity and protect marital integrity. This is not meant literally but symbolically, urging individuals to remove anything from their lives that leads to temptation or fosters adulterous thoughts. Examples given include avoiding certain websites, giving up television, or even changing professional environments if they consistently lead to temptation. The core principle is proactive self-discipline and a commitment to address the source of impure thoughts before they escalate into actions or obsessions, aiming for purity of mind and devotion.

How does the New Testament, particularly James, broaden the concept of adultery beyond marital infidelity?

The New Testament, specifically the book of James, spiritualizes the concept of adultery, extending its meaning beyond marital infidelity to describe unfaithfulness to God. James states, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God?" This imagery draws on Old Testament prophets like Hosea and Ezekiel, where Israel's unfaithfulness to God through idol worship is depicted as spiritual adultery. Thus, loving the world or pursuing worldly desires instead of God is considered "cheating on the Lord," highlighting that adultery is ultimately about a lack of singular devotion in one's primary relationship, whether with a spouse or with God.

What is the overarching theme regarding adultery in Christian teaching, as derived from these sources?

The overarching theme is a shift from a legalistic, action-focused understanding of adultery—which primarily protected property and lineage in ancient societies—to a relational and heart-focused perspective centered on purity, singular devotion, and the sanctity of the marital bond as intended by God. While ancient laws were strict on paper, grace was often practiced. Jesus' teachings intensify this by emphasizing internal purity and the prevention of adulterous thoughts and desires, thereby

getting to the "heart of the matter." Ultimately, adultery is understood as undermining a God-ordained relationship, whether between spouses or between humanity and God, and maintaining purity of mind and will is paramount.