

You Shall Not Commit Adultery Part 1: Marriage and Sexuality

By
Peter Martin
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*“You shall not commit adultery.”
-Exodus 20:14*

For the next couple weeks we will be talking about the seventh commandment which forbids adultery. As many people know, the number seven has a special place in the word of God as well as in the general consciousness of mankind. We have seven days in the week, seven colors in the rainbow, the apostle John records seven miracles of Jesus, and seven “I am” statements, and so on and so forth. Therefore, as the seventh commandment it carries a special place within the ten commandments.

In some sense, this commandment represents the fullness of the law itself. We have to remember that the law that Israel is receiving is a part of the larger covenant that God is entering into with His people. And this covenant, or “agreement”, is reflected most in a marital covenant. Because of this, this commandment which guards the sacredness of marriage and commands the people of God to honor our spouses and remain faithful to them, also has implications for how we relate to God in our responsibilities toward Him. In order to understand this connection in greater detail we will break this commandment into two papers. This one will deal with the nature of marriage and our sexuality, and the next paper will deal with the nature of adultery and path to reconciliation.

The Covenant that God Loves

“Judah has dealt treacherously, And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, For Judah has profaned The LORD’s holy institution which He loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god. May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob The man who does this, being awake and aware, Yet who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts! And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why

one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. "For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

-Malachi 2:11-16

Beyond all other relationships, the institution of marriage is the one that God specifically says that He loves. Beyond that, He guards this relationship with zealousness, restricting our sexual practices with such specificity that it has made many people throughout time see the Bible as a prudish document that interferes with "normal" human sexual practices. More than this, it is the first human relationship that God establishes in the Garden of Eden, and it is this relationship that the Biblical writers continuously point to in order to represent God's love for His people.

"I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. "And it shall be, in that day," Says the LORD, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master...'"

-Hosea 2:15-16

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

-Ephesians 5:31-33

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

-Revelation 19:7-9

The Mystery of Unity

This is not to say that God doesn't relate to His people as their King, Father, and even their Friend, but that this relationship has a particular, sacred, place within the text of Scripture, with more numerous and vivid allusions to this relationship than any other. But the obvious question is why this relationship in particular? After all, it is fairly simple to imagine loving God as a Friend, a Father, and even a King, but the concept of loving

God in romantic terms feels wrong and inappropriate. While I won't completely dismiss this natural discomfort, we certainly don't want to take the metaphor too far, but the fact that the Biblical authors come back to this symbol so frequently and with such passion should cause us to search out this question of "why"? I believe the answer is given to us in the first passage I quoted from the book of Malachi:

"But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring."

-Malachi 2:15

Throughout the Scriptures, and even throughout pagan myths and philosophies, the mystery of unity has been one that entrances the imagination of mankind. This is present from the very beginning of creation:

"Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness."

-Genesis 1:3-4

When God creates, He creates things in perfect unity, and then creates distinction within the unity. However, these distinct parts are not separate from one another, but they are distinctions within a coherent whole.

"God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day."

-Genesis 1:5

The light and the dark are not opposites, but distinct parts of a single day, morning and night. This unity has been re-presented by many cultures throughout time, my personal favorite is the famous "Yin, Yang" symbol from China:



The light and the darkness aren't neatly divided in half, but they "swirl" together. Also, within each part, they contain the seed of the other. With the light side containing a dot of darkness and the dark side containing a dot of light. This same basic structure is represented by God in the wilderness in the book of Exodus. He appears to His people as a pillar of fire during the night, which is a "seed" of light within the darkness, and a pillar of cloud in the day, which is a "seed" of darkness within the day.

This pattern continues through creation and then takes on a more interesting element during the creation of mankind:

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

-Genesis 2:7

Man is formed from the dust, and then unified, and "animated", by the breath of God. All the disparate particles of earth find their harmony and identity within the body of Adam by the Spirit of God that gives man his breath and life. This mystery of unity is then expressed in the human body being made of many members yet maintaining its structure in a single body, the identity of man being made of many disparate parts yet unified in a single person, the family which contains many members but one identity, and even a nation which contains many citizens but is one national identity.

But, what every culture has understood, which is why they speak of sex so much, is that the romantic union of a man and woman perfectly consummates all of these symbols and reveals to us the mystery of unity in its totality. Even though he was an atheist, the Romantic Poet Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote about this in one of his poems:

"The fountains mingle with the river

*And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine?—*

*See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?"*

-Percy Bysshe Shelley - "Love's Philosophy"

Notice that he meditates on this mystery throughout the natural world, but then sees its "fulfillment" within romantic union. This also gives honor to the place of love. While unity can be achieved through brute force, Shelley notices that in nature there is an "ease" to unity that doesn't erase the identity of the other. The mountains remain mountains as they enter the heavens and the rivers maintain their body as they enter into the oceans, just as men and women maintain their own bodies and identities as they become one in romantic embrace.

But how does this happen? Percy's answer, which mirrors the Bible's answer, is love. He imagines the mountains "lifted" towards the heavens in admiration for their beauty. They are not taken from their roots in the earth, but instead "spring" upwards towards the heavens in affectionate desire, same with the river and the sunlight that falls to the earth. This is why we use the word "attraction" to describe romantic desire. Our desire to be one with another person is not to erase their being or identity, nor is it to disregard our own being, but instead to truly become one with another person and from that unity to create.

So this singular relationship contains the explanation for all unity in the universe, which explains why God guards it so jealously and venerates it so frequently. But it also explains why adultery is such a common theme throughout scripture. If marriage teaches us the mystery of unity and faithfulness, then adultery becomes the ultimate symbol of disunity, unfaithfulness, and separation.

The Body and the Spirit

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

-Galatians 5:17

Before we go into the specifics of marriage and sexuality to explain the nature of unity that is within God and the intended unity that God has for His people, we must first discuss the barrier that exists between the world of the flesh and the world of the Spirit. When God formed the world, it was meant to be a manifestation of Himself in a physical medium. This is why God creates with His “word”, notice He merely speaks things into existence.

This is the strangeness of the creation that is linked to the strangeness of language itself. Words are, themselves, spiritual reality given “form”. Take a word like “space” for example. The word itself is merely the concept of “space” taking form. But since the “concept” of space is not material, the words that give it shape can take different “forms”. In English we say “space” in Hebrew they would say “chahal” in Greek they would say “choros”, in Latin they would say “spas”, and there are almost an infinite amount of different iterations of the same concept throughout time and language. All the word does is “manifest” the concept in a way that we can collectively understand.

This is what God is doing with the creation itself. He is using “words” to manifest His spiritual nature in a material forum. But He has also “populated” the immaterial, or spiritual realm that He dwells with spiritual beings that we call angels, and the fallen angels being demons. And upon the earth He formed purely material entities ranging from non-living forms like water and earth, but also living beings ranging from plant life to animal life. But all of this matter is devoid of spirit. They are *simply* material beings that can reflect aspects of His spiritual being. Whereas mankind is different. We are spiritual in our composition, but we are also material in our composition. We aren’t just bodies, but we are also not spirits that inhabit bodies, we seem to be a perfect harmony between the two.

As such, our very being, our very existence and our bodies are the “words” of our spirits, they are the manifestations of our spiritual being. And prior to the fall, the harmony of heaven and earth was completed and fulfilled in the harmony within mankind. Our every action was a perfect manifestation of the state of our souls, there was no disharmony between these two things. But that harmony was only possible by perfect submission to the God of flesh and spirit, once we rebelled against Him, there was now a disharmony in the cosmos. The world of spirit was thrown into conflict

through the rebellion of Satan and his demons, the world of flesh was thrown into conflict by life and death, and our own internal worlds were thrown into conflict.

Now, instead of our bodies being a perfect expression of our souls, our bodies are held in constant turmoil between the *differing* desires of our souls. To make our own determinations between good and evil means that we are in constant conflict between the world of the spirit that speaks of God and the world of the flesh that seeks pleasure at the cost of the spirit, and our sexuality is the ultimate expression of this conflict.

Of all the various “appetites” that we possess in our bodies, many have argued that none are more powerful than our appetite for sex. As we have been talking about, and will continue to talk about, there is a purpose to why this drive within us is so powerful, since it is the one act that can make our bodies truly one with another person, but because this drive is so powerful, we have the most difficulty controlling it.

Our drive for sex is so potent that we can enter into, and even stay, in relationships that we *know* are bad for us. We are driven by lust for other people and ungratefulness for what we have. The unbelievable ubiquity of pornographic material in our world, for both men and women, should be all the proof that we need that this is the case. This is made most manifest in this particular sin, adultery. I like how a marriage counselor Esther Perel put this point:

“No aspect of a couple’s life elicits more fear, gossip, or fascination than an affair. Adultery has existed since marriage was invented, and so too has the taboo against it. It has been legislated, debated, politicized, and demonized throughout history. Yet despite its widespread denunciation, infidelity has a tenacity that marriage can only envy.”

-Esther Perel - “The State of Affairs”

When affairs occur, they are almost always performed by people who know that they are wrong. But our strong moral revulsion to this activity is not strong enough to resist the powerful pull of our bodies. It is this long struggle that has made the church struggle so much with sexuality, and why there have been various theologians throughout our history who have preached the benefits of celibacy to try to live above this powerful carnal desire. But to live “above” our bodies was never the intent of God:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

-John 1:14

The eternal Word of God that created the material universe, came in the form of matter by “incarnating” Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel is not the denial of the flesh, but the redemption of the flesh into the economy of the Spirit. The Christian is not to deny our desire for sex, but to learn to “speak” that desire through the “word” of the Spirit. In other words, to re-unify our bodies to the spirit means seeing the act of sex itself, along with the romantic drive that is a part of it, to not be a bad thing, but an expression of this spiritual concept of unity and love. This is how the Christian author Andrew Klavan put this point:

“Why can’t sex be as simple as it is in pornography?... You do certain things with your body and there is pleasure. Why should there be more to it than that? But it is not that simple. We all know it’s not. It does mean something more than itself. We all know it does when we are honest with ourselves. For a worldlying like me then, the question is this: can you take joy in the things of the flesh and yet hear the language of the spirit in them? Nothing comes to us in the world but through the body. Can you love the pleasures of the body and yet not become the body alone?”

Andrew Klavan - “The Kingdom of Cain”

Not becoming “the body alone” is the true mission of the Spirit of God entering into the Christian. But this is no easy task, it is a lifelong pursuit that the Christian struggles towards. Each and every day learning to align our desires, and express our desires in a way that communicates the world of the Spirit. The above author says that one of the ways that we do this is through the church itself, which is why our faith is “incarnational”. Meaning that we go to church in person, we sing in the fellowship, and we partake of the sacraments, all as an attempt to reunify the spirit and the body in the way we worship our God. But that is a topic of another more full conversion. For our purposes today let’s merely look at what the intimacy of marriage is supposed to manifest.

The Two Become One

“And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

-Genesis 2:18-25

That being said, let's look at the different elements of marital union in order to understand the other unions that it was designed to teach us about. Like God's creation of light, space, the earth, and so on, God begins by creating mankind in a unity and then He creates distinction by forming different genders. While there are interesting conversations within the people of God as to what Adam's nature was before God drew Eve out of him, for our purposes today let's merely focus on the creation of Eve and the nature of Adam's attraction to her.

Companionship and Commitment

We are told that, like Adam, the other creatures of the earth are formed from the dust, but none were "comparable" to Adam. This detail not only denotes the unique nature of mankind within the creation, but also the nature of attraction and what we will call "unifying love". As we have spoken about before, the English language is unfortunately pretty lacking in our words for "love", being that we really only have one word; whereas other languages utilize multiple words to describe different facets of love.

For our purposes today, let's take the Greek language. For the Greeks there were four primary words that can all be translated as "love" in the English language and they all denote different kinds of relationships. There is "phileo" which describes the love shared between friends "storge" which describes the love of parents, "eros" which describes romantic love, and "agape" which is divine love. While all these loves are powerful, only one of these words actually describes what we are talking about today and that is the love that makes things one and that is "eros".

While parental love and friendship love do move us towards unity, they do not make us become "one" in an ultimate sense which is why these loves are not really "jealous". The unity that I have with a parent or a friend is not total, these relationships can sustain a lot of disagreement and they do not form a foundation for constructing a home or family the way that marriage does. This means that these loves aren't jealous in the sense that we can have multiple parents, or parental figures, that we love equally, as well as numerous friends that we love equally. Whereas romantic love, since it unifies fully, is a jealous love. In order to become "one" with someone else requires dividing ourselves. So if I become "one" with multiple women, none of them are receiving "all" of me, only a part or fraction of me.

This is why the law forbids premarital sex, but prescribes an interesting penalty:

“If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife. “If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins.”

-Exodus 22:16-17

For most sexual sins the penalty is death, but for premarital sex the penalty is to have the two consenting parties marry one another, as long as the father of the bride agrees. What the Law is showing here is the importance of exclusivity when it comes to unity. To be fully one with another person requires absolute exclusivity, to make ourselves “one” with multiple people dilutes the unity.

This passage also demonstrates the need for commitment to guard unity. True oneness and harmony can't, definitionally, be casual. It has to be intentional, and it must be guarded to maintain its safety and sanctity. This is what it means in Genesis 2 when it tells us that Adam and Eve were “naked and unashamed.” While the literal nature of this passage is debateable, its underlying meaning is fairly clear. To be “naked” is to be vulnerable, and to have that vulnerability exposed without safety is to feel violated, exposed, and ashamed. This is why the majority of nightmares that people have that express fear of vulnerability or public embarrassment has something to do with public nudity.

Once again, we will talk more about this later, but for now, the function of marriage is to bind two people together by more than emotions, but with vows of commitment. These public vows hold this couple together and allow for intimacy and vulnerability to be explored without “shame”, without this protection, our “nakedness”, our vulnerability, is on display and exposed in some sense. This helps us understand the apostle Paul's rebuke of the Corinthian church when they continued to go to temple prostitutes after they were saved:

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

-1 Corinthians 6:12-17

The monstrosity for Paul is that they were polluting the reality of God's Spirit by disrespecting the body of another. To put this another way, just as Christ has made us One with Himself through eternal commitment and love, so we should not become one with another person in our bodies if we haven't fully devoted ourselves to them in our soul. This is why marriage is important, we act out this deeper unity through the ceremony itself and commit ourselves publicly to another person.

The groom waits at the altar for his bride as a picture of Christ awaiting His bride in heaven. The "audience" represents the two families who are becoming one through the vows of the couple. This is why the bridal party walks in pairs, the bridesmaids and the groomsmen who are linked arm in arm as they move up the aisle to the marriage altar. The bride wears white as a symbol of her devotion to keep herself pure for her husband and the husband stands at the altar as a symbol of his commitment to sacrifice himself for her betterment.

This is all fully consummated in the bedroom when the couple stands before each other, "naked and unashamed". Like Adam and Eve before them, they are, for all intents and purposes, the only people on earth, ready to tend the garden of their marriage from this point onwards. They are completely devoted to one another and completely alone in the safety of their bedroom. This is the "word" that their bodies now can speak to each other, and will continue to speak to each other every time they pursue intimacy, both inside and outside the bedroom. I'm truly sorry if you don't like poetry, but I absolutely love John Milton's description of Adam and Eve's intimacy in Eden before the fall in his epic poem "Paradise Lost":

*"into thir inmost bower
Handed they went; and eas'd the putting off
These troublesom disguises which wee wear,
Strait side by side were laid, nor turnd I weene
Adam from his fair Spouse, nor Eve the Rites
Mysterious of connubial Love refus'd:
Whatever Hypocrites austerely talk Of puritie and place and innocence,
Defaming as impure what God declares Pure, and commands to som, leaves free to all.
Our Maker bids increase, who bids abstain But our Destroyer, foe to God and Man?
Haile wedded Love, mysterious Law, true source Of human ofspring, sole proprietie,
In Paradise of all things common else.
By thee adulterous lust was driv'n from men..*

*by thee Founded in Reason, Loyal, Just, and Pure, Relations dear, and all the Charities
Of Father, Son, and Brother first were known.*

*Farr be it, that I should write thee sin or blame, Or think thee unbefitting holiest place,
Perpetual Fountain of Domestic sweets, Whose Bed is undefil'd and chast pronounc't,"
John Milton - "Paradise Lost"*

A Helper Comparable

But this love is also mutual. Parental love is affectionate and powerful, but it, by nature, is not mutual. This relationship is hierarchical and has vastly different requirements on the parents as opposed to the child. While mutuality is more expected in friendships, it isn't always that way. After all, it is possible to be friends with someone who is younger and less mature than we are, and to act as an "older sibling" to someone else.

Romantic love is not this way. When Eve is called a "helper" to Adam, the word in Hebrew is a word that denotes equality. Not equal in terms of ability or role, but equal in terms of dignity and worth. This is why the modern term "partner" when speaking about a spouse isn't totally inaccurate. The unity that we seek in marriage is not that of a master and servant, but of a "partnership". This doesn't mean that there isn't a type of hierarchy in marriage, for we are told that the husband is the "head" of the wife.

But even within this hierarchy, there is a mutuality and a unity based on oneness not on oppression or force. Think about the act of sex itself. The man, usually, lies on top of the woman and enters into her. This, in itself, represents a type of hierarchy, but a hierarchy of equality and mutuality. The symbol is degraded and abused if this act is done by force, the woman must lie down of her own accord and "allow" the man to enter into her to make the symbol correct. As spoken before, our bodies are meant to express the world of the spirit. Our unity in bed is supposed to express the love and mutuality that our spirits are supposed to be experiencing.

This is one reason why the law specifically forbids bestiality:

"Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion."

-Leviticus 18:23

This is not only for the purpose of hygiene and general purity, but it is also due to the purpose of sex and the purpose of unity. Animals are not comparable to us as humans, any unity that we have with an animal is a subordination of the animal, we can't rightly partner with them in any meaningful way.

This pattern then shows up in our relationship with God. Just as Eve is “drawn” out of Adam, so mankind, being in the image of God, is formed by God to be a reflection of His divine nature. But God’s desire to be unified to man was never to subordinate us to Himself in a master slave type of relationship, but always to be a type of partnership that contains a hierarchy similar to what is found in marriage, but also what is found in God’s being:

“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

-1 Corinthians 11:3

Once mankind fell from glory, it was impossible for man to be partnered with God, both due to our sin, but also due to our fallen status. In order to be one with us, man would either have to become like God in our character, which the law proved we couldn’t do, or God would have to become like man in His nature, which is exactly what He did.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.”

-Philippians 2:5-7

The humility of God is what has allowed for mankind to be united to God in a way that we were barred from since the Garden of Eden. A way to understand the tree of life that God shut us out from after the fall, is that the tree of life bore the fruit of life itself, in other words, it bore the “seed” of God’s divine essence that He wanted us to partake of. The fall made us incapable of partaking of God’s divine nature, but once God partook of man’s nature, and then glorified that nature through the Resurrection, through faith, we can now partake of that “tree” once again.

“...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

-2 Peter 1:4

This is one reason why Christ had to be killed on a “tree”, namely the cross. This wasn’t an accident, but a re-establishment of the tree of life that we were cut off from. We can now partake of its “fruit”, which we do spiritually through the sacrament of communion, and have now become “one” with our God. Again, we shouldn’t push the sexual metaphor too far, but this is a way to understand our present unity with God and why,

while not a completely perfect symbol, marital intimacy is the best symbol we have of God's intimacy with His own people.

A Union of Opposites

"She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

-Genesis 2:23

However, even though Eve must be comparable to Adam, she is in many ways an opposite. This is the full meaning of the term translated "helper comparable to him." The term helper is from the Hebrew word "ezer" and does denote unity and equality, but the other word translated "comparable" is the word "kenegdo" which comes from the Hebrew word "neged" which almost literally means a mirror reflection. A mirror reflects back to us an image that is like ourselves, but opposite.

This "mirror image" metaphor becomes most obvious in a romantic couple. C.S. Lewis put this point this way:

"Lovers are always talking to one another about their love; Friends hardly ever about their Friendship. Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; Friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest."

-C.S. Lewis - "The Four Loves"

This is why movies almost always depict romantic couples locking eyes when they first meet, dancing to be a symbol of falling in love, and even why sexual intimacy is, for the most part, done with the couple facing each other. This posture however, makes our activity necessarily opposite. Take dancing as a less intimate example. In order for two people to dance in harmony with one another, they have to move in opposite directions. If one partner wants to go forward, their partner has to retreat backwards, if one wants to go right, their partner has to go left. But this harmony of opposites is the center of God's love and true unity.

Even down to our genitalia, their union is dependent on opposites. In order for the man and woman to be one, the man must possess something that can enter into the woman, and the woman's body must be able to receive the man. This is important because it has something to do with our maturity and our understanding of this mystery. When we are children, we tend to only like people who are exactly like ourselves. Boys hang out with boys, girls hang out with girls, to the point where they will mock and harass the opposite gender.

But this desire for what is like ourselves goes beyond a preference of gender, even within our gender, we tend to gravitate towards those who share our exact interests and mock and ridicule those who don't. In other words, immature children tend to not have the virtue of tolerance. However, around the time when we are teenagers, our sexual desires start to blossom and we are attracted to those which repulsed us only a couple years prior.

What young boys find so annoying and weak in the feminine frame of girls, all of a sudden becomes alluring and attractive to them. What young girls found disgusting about young boys becomes rugged and handsome to them. This attraction is so powerful that it can cause tension and fights between long time friends, with many young people losing their identities in their sexual pursuits.

The end of this pursuit is supposed to be some sort of mature synthesis. The young boy becomes a man when he becomes one with a young girl and figures out how to draw out the more feminine parts of his character, while maintaining the more masculine parts of his character, and the same is supposed to happen to young girls. The grown man learns to be more sensitive, empathetic, compassionate, considerate, and kind, while the young girls learn to be more bold, assertive, confident, and casual. This is the necessary process of becoming one, both must learn to incorporate the other person while maintaining themselves.

This is how true intimacy is to work. True intimacy is not what we have with friends or our parents, which is more or less a struggle for conformity, but instead it is a mutual transformation that happens when two truly become one.

I think that sex and child-bearing are the clearest pictures of this principle. When a man and woman come together they create life that bears the image of both parents. The resulting children are not a tension between the parents, but a true synthesis, a harmony of opposites that creates something totally unique. And what we see in siblings is that this one union can create an almost infinite amount of different iterations of the same couple, two people can literally build a world upon their intimacy.

This is how unity is to express itself in every iteration. From whole countries, to small communities, to even a person's identity, this is what it means to be unified. It isn't an attempt to make everything the same, but it also isn't an attempt to keep everything separate, but instead an exercise to explore infinite expressions of a singular unity. This is even true of God.

God is a union of opposites. In order for the Son to be incarnate, the Father must send Him to earth. In order for God to remain enthroned during the incarnation, the Son must be sent “away” from His Father and the Holy Spirit. And in order for the people of God to be made one with God, the Son of God must take on flesh, and the Father must judge and vindicate the Son, and the Spirit must be sent to fill and unify the people of God. In the incarnation we not only see the roles of the Godhead, but we also see how these roles bring perfect harmony to God’s, seemingly, opposite qualities of justice and mercy, love and wrath, holiness and accessibility. And upon this perfect unity, a world of union is built in the infinite iterations of Christians who accept the gospel and become children of the living God:

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

-John 17:20-23

Remember that our sexuality is a “word” that speaks of the reality of the Spirit. This truth will help us understand the various other sexual prohibitions given to us in the Law:

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother’s sister, for she is near of kin to your mother. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s brother. You shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law—she is your son’s wife—you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother’s wife; it is your brother’s nakedness.”

-Leviticus 18:13-16

These commands, and there are more like it, are not merely a prohibition on incest, but even marriage within a family, like our brother’s wife, which would intimate that the people of God shouldn’t even marry the brother’s wife if they are divorced. These commands are prohibitions over, what we can call, a union of “sameness”. That we aren’t becoming one with someone who is opposite, but someone who is within the same family, and in the case of a woman marrying brothers, marrying two different men who are products of the same union.

It is for this reason why people are a little too simplistic when they say that these commandments are there to prevent defects in children due to incest. I would say that this natural law does speak of God’s divine law, but it isn’t *why* God commands this.

God commands this, once again, to speak to the same divine, spiritual truth that we have been speaking of. Our sexuality is supposed to speak of something higher than itself, and part of its articulation is this union of opposites. It is for this same reason that homosexuality, and confusing genders, is forbidden:

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.”

-Leviticus 18:22

“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.”

-Deuteronomy 22:5

Both commandments use the word “abomination”, which carries the idea of uncleanness, or even revulsion. Why is God using such a strong word to describe these practices? It is for the simple reason of what our gender and sexuality are meant to convey. The “word” that they speak is so pure and important, that to pollute it is “revolting” to God’s sensibilities. This doesn’t make this behavior malicious or “evil” in the common sense. Merely that these activities pollute or distort this part of our sexuality that is supposed to manifest the union of opposites.

I do want to point out that, since the sex drive is so powerful, it makes sense to me why our culture has associated identity with sexual attraction. And it also makes sense to me that these feelings seem intransigent, and seem too powerful to deny or resist. There have been some Christians who deny this reality and claim that sexual preference is a simple matter of choice, but this is clearly not true. Our sexuality is a powerful force and it has, as a part of it, a type of preference that is hard to resist or deny.

Once again, even though natural law reifies this law, being that homosexual couples can’t procreate, and no matter how much we confuse gender, women are the only ones who can get pregnant, the natural law is not the point, it merely reflects the primary spiritual point. But since the desire is innate and powerful, full repression of these sexual desires is not possible, nor would I say that it would be helpful, but obviously indulging these sexual desires is prohibited by the law. So what are people in this position to do?

“For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”

-Matthew 19:12

I would like to dive into this more but for the sake of brevity I can't. To put this point as simply as I can, the importance of sex can't be overstated, but it is not an act that involves the body, it is meant to be an expression of a spiritual truth. And there are some people throughout history who, for one reason or another, can't express this spiritual truth with their bodies.

Some, like Jeremiah, couldn't do this because his nation was crumbling and he wasn't able to be a devoted husband and father. Others, like Daniel, were biologically damaged so they couldn't physically have a family. And still many others, like Paul, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist had callings and personalities so extreme that they couldn't fit a family into their lives. This is why Jesus says "He who is able to accept it, let him accept it." which He says in reference to His depiction of Biblical marriage. He is saying that if we can't, for whatever reason, fulfill the spiritual truth that marriage and sexuality are supposed to speak, then we are to devote ourselves to find this unity, not in our bodies through sex, but instead to experience this unity through the spiritual unity of the church itself.

While I have some problems with the way that monasteries and convents have been run in the past, I genuinely think that they serve a vital purpose in the body of Christ that Protestants haven't fully acknowledged or dealt with properly. The people who can't express this mystery in their sexuality need a place to be brought into so that they may partake of this mystery in a different way. Again, I could say more, but for today, I merely want to come back to the point of this Law.

Though it is formulated as a prohibition from adultery, the purpose is to protect the sanctity and importance of marriage itself. But in order for us to truly appreciate and want to protect this sacred institution, we must also gain an admiration for it that many in our culture today lack. And in order to do that, we must always seek to see the meaning that lies behind marriage itself. We must meditate on this great mystery and seek the God who made it this way to reflect His holy nature.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no

one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

-Ephesians 5:22-33