

San Juan Church of Christ

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What does God's Word Say About...

Adultery and Fornication

In the news this past week, a website that encourages extra-martial relations was compromised. To the surprise of many, their spouses participated in this website, seeking relationships outside of their marriage. The term "adultery" has as its root the meaning, "to debase or make impure by the addition of an impure ingredient." A recipe can be adulterated by the addition of some seasoning or spice that is not called for.

In the scriptures we see the same principle applied in both the Old and New Testaments. In Jeremiah 3:6-9, Judah and Israel committed "...adultery with stones and trees," when they added idols to the worship of God. They did not "have sex" with these things, but they did debase their worship to God by adding the idols. In James 4:4 believers are warned, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God, and whoever makes themselves a friend of the world is an enemy of God." We adulterate our relationship with God when we add "worldliness" to our lives. We adulterate the marriage relationship when we add another person sexually to our lives. God condemns this in the strongest of terms, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge," (Hebrews 13:4). Any sexual relationship that a married individual has with someone to whom they are not married is adultery, and if not repented of will result in eternal damnation (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

From the beginning monogamy was initiated by God, when He said, "...a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh," (Gen. 2:24). Paul wrote, "For the married woman is bound by law to her husband... So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she will be called an adulteress," (Rom. 7:2-3). A husband is bound by the same law to his wife.

Many will try to use the excuse that God allowed men to have many wives in the Old Testament. The Pharisees also used this excuse while testing Jesus when they asked the question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" (Matt. 19:3). Jesus then quoted Gen. 2:24 to them indicating that husband and wife shall become "one flesh... What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." The Pharisees then asked, "Why did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus then said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman, commits adultery," (Matt. 19:4-9).

In 1 Cor. 7:2-3 Paul wrote, "...let each MAN [singular] have his own WIFE [singular], and let each WOMAN [singular] have her own HUSBAND [singular]." So the practice of many wives which Moses allowed in the Old Testament, God has now specifically legislated against in the New Testament.

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:
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