

Exodus 20:14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-20/exodus-2014/>

The seventh commandment prohibits sexual intercourse between a married person and another person, married or unmarried.

This second commandment (of the five that describe how to love your neighbor) was designed to protect the basic foundation of a self-governing society: marriage, family, and the home. It states *you shall not commit adultery*. Note that it applies to each person, including leaders. This commandment is also found in [Leviticus 20:10](#). Later, the Law stated that the punishment for adultery was death for both people involved, the goal being to remove evil from the Israelite community ([Deuteronomy 22:22](#)).

When the scribes and Pharisees presented Jesus with a woman caught in the act of adultery, they did not bring the man as well, as required by [Deuteronomy 22:22](#), so they were actually violating the law they feigned to uphold ([John 8:3](#)). It was also the case that Israel was under the authority of Rome, which prohibited Jewish rulers from executing capital punishment, which was likely the reason they brought this up to Jesus, to make Him choose between breaking the Mosaic Law or breaking Roman Law. However, Jesus simply asked whoever was without sin to throw the first stone. Of course whoever threw the first stone would be in violation of the Roman law themselves.

After the people left, Jesus then forgave the woman, but warned her to “go and sin no more.” The New Testament book of Galatians contains a list of “works of the flesh,” the first of which is the same Greek word translated “adultery” in the [John 8](#) passage of the woman caught in adultery ([Galatians 5:19](#)).

This serious penalty for adultery likely indicates that the degradation of the family poses a threat to the entire society. This makes sense for a self-governing society that depends on families to train children to exercise self-restraint.

Sexual activity was an integral part of pagan worship in almost every region of the Ancient Near East.

Leviticus 18 details a revolting list of sexual practices that were common in both Egypt as well as Canaan (the Promised Land), spanning from adultery to sex with animals. These practices included a vast array of forms of incest, which likely involved child abuse and a low view of children. This degradation of children is ultimately reflected in the practice of child sacrifice, which was not uncommon in the Ancient Near East, even in Israel under the reign of certain wicked kings.

These practices focus humans upon themselves and the satisfaction of their own appetites, rather than upon serving others and stewarding children and spouses. A self-governing society requires self-restraint and service, and is not compatible with unrestrained pursuit of pleasures. The starting place for such restraint is in marriage, and with the children who benefit from and are nurtured in the marriage.

This commandment assumed that a person has the authority and responsibility of stewardship of home and family, which included the responsibility to protect it.

Biblical Text:

¹⁴ **You shall not commit adultery.**