

10 HABITS of Highly Healthy Homes



Habit 7: Protect Your Marriage

Sunday, July 9, 2000

Exodus 20:14 (NLT) Do not commit adultery.

*You are cordially invited to join us for **The Re-Wedding** on Sunday Evening, July 30 at 6:30, as dozens of couples renew their marriage vows in the biggest wedding in the history of Saint John.*

Ten Habits of Highly Healthy Homes

**Examine Your
Priorities**

**Avoid The
Counterfeits**

Take God Seriously

**Renew Your
Relationships**

**Respect Your
Heritage**

**Value The
Individual**

**Protect Your
Marriage**

**Maintain Your
Integrity**

Speak The Truth

**Discover Real
Contentment**

- If you were driving on a busy highway and saw an off-ramp sign that said, "DO NOT ENTER," would you resent it or would you appreciate it? That sign is there to keep you from danger – it is a negative command with a positive result. That's the way it is with the Ten Commandments; they are given not to produce pain, but to provide protection. When you play by God's rules, you always win in the end!
- Nothing destroys the family faster than adultery. But there is no question that our culture now glamorizes, defends, and even promotes adultery. "Women's magazines practically recommend adultery to their readers as a fun and healthy activity ..." (Katie Roiphe, New York Times Magazine) "An affair can be a sexual recharging, an escape from a worn-out relationship, a way into something better." (Elle Magazine) "[Women's] marriages are improved by their affairs. Because they get their fill of rapture elsewhere ..." (Harper's Bazaar)
- While we try to lead a decent, restrained life, TV, movies and magazines propagate the notion that everybody else is having a wild, debauched time and that we may be missing out. **The true power of mass media is the power to redefine normal.** The harmful behavior that we see glamorized not only conveys powerful messages of what's ACCEPTED, but what is EXPECTED. The unreal world of the media becomes, over time, a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Every year on prime-time TV, there are 65,000 sexual references. Seven out of eight of the sexual encounters in TV dramas involve extra-marital relations. Reality? A 1994 University of Chicago study showed that both sexual satisfaction and frequency is greater among married people. But in Hollywood, the only kind of sex that seems to be banned is intimacy between husband and wife!
- **The media is a seducer!** In the film "Indecent Proposal," a character is offered a million dollars to spend one night with a billionaire. It became the topic of conversation on talk shows, in offices and schools. The film implied that everyone has a price! BUT THAT IS NOT TRUE!

- Due to the increasingly permissive views towards sex today, over 40% of married women and nearly 50% of married men have had an extramarital affair (researchers Gilbert Nass and Roger Libby). And this has a direct effect on our teenagers who are not finding an example of faithfulness to follow. 1/5 of North American children have lost their virginity by the age of 13! And these statistics are only slightly lower in the church world! Christianity Today found that 23% of its subscribers have committed adultery and 45% have acted inappropriately toward someone of the opposite sex.
- BUT THE “GLAMOUR” HOLLYWOOD PORTRAYS WITH ADULTERY IS A BLATANT LIE! Adultery causes pain – everyone loses, and everyone is scarred! It is the supreme act of selfishness. Adultery not only violates your marriage vows, it violates another person – your spouse.
- The English word “adultery” comes from the same root as the word “adulterate,” which means “to contaminate or make impure.” The Hebrew phrase is “Lo Na’aph,” which also means “no apostatizing.” To apostatize means to abandon one’s principles or promises.
- Thus, the seventh commandment also includes the sexual sins of **fornication, homosexuality, masturbation** and **lust** in its prohibition, for these also cause us to abandon the principles of holiness taught by God’s Word. While we will not deal specifically with these sins in this lesson, the principles taught will apply universally.
- **Colossians 3:5 (CEV)** *Don’t be controlled by your body. Kill every desire for the wrong kind of sex. Don’t be immoral or indecent or have evil thoughts ...*
- Many people attempt to validate adultery with the belief that it is permissible for a “higher cause.” People have countless rationales for setting aside the moral implications of their actions, such as:
 - I love my wife and children and do not want a divorce, so it is better that I have an affair for the sake of my family.
 - My husband is not fulfilling me sexually, so it is okay to find sexual satisfaction instead of divorcing my husband.
 - I think my husband is being unfaithful, so there is nothing wrong with me having an affair.
 - I wasn’t looking for an affair – it just happened.
 - We are soul mates.
 - I have needs my spouse can’t fulfill.
 - I thought I was in love when I married – but this is really the real thing.
 - I’ve been under a lot of stress.
 - She really understands me.

- **BUT ADULTERY IS SIN!** It will eventually catch up with you and destroy your life and your home. But most of all, it is a sin that will take your soul to hell! Today, we want to talk about this crucial topic: how to prevent affairs and PROTECT YOUR MARRIAGE.
- **Hebrews 13:4 (NLT)** *Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.*

HOW TO AFFAIR-PROOF YOUR MARRIAGE:

1. Make a commitment.

- Some people are shocked to learn that God is “pro-sex.” After all, He created sex! But like everything else, if God can create it, man can distort it! **All of God’s gifts have limitations on them, and must be controlled rather than abused.** For example, you can’t live without water – but too much of it will drown you. Fire can either warm you or burn you – it’s all in how you handle it.
- God gave us a world filled with beauty, but in many cases man has stripped nature’s resources. God gave us an appetite for food, but in many cases people have abused it and suffered obesity as a result. God also gave us an appetite for sex, but in many cases man has perverted it by ignoring the parameters God has set.
- Properly controlled and expressed within a marriage, sex is beautiful and fantastic; but outside of marriage it is destructive and detrimental to your spiritual, emotional and even physical health.
- In our sex-saturated society, you don’t stand much of a chance of remaining pure unless you make a commitment to live by God’s guidelines regarding sex. **REGARDLESS OF YOUR FAILURES IN THE PAST, YOU NEED TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO LIVE BY GOD’S STANDARDS BEGINNING TODAY!** Sex is for marriage only – not outside marriage, and not before marriage.
- If you’re not already married, you need to decide right now that you’ll only marry another Christian – that is God’s standard for you! (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- **Psalms 119:9 (NLT)** *How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word and following its rules.*
- If you are married, you need to decide right now that adultery will NEVER be an option – that is God’s standard for you! It doesn’t matter what your spouse does, what needs they don’t meet, or what happens in your marriage – being faithful is God’s command!

- **Proverbs 5:15 (GN)** *Be faithful to your own wife and give your love to her alone.*

2. Magnify the consequences.

- You need to regularly remind yourself of the devastation and destruction that is caused by sexual sin. **SEXUAL SIN LEAVES PERMANENT SCARS!** You may be in a difficult marriage that is not satisfying; you're struggling and perhaps even looking around. Remember that no matter how high the cost of restoring and maintaining your marriage, the cost of adultery is always higher!
- **Here are SIX GOOD REASONS not to commit adultery:**
 - A. You do incredible damage to your spouse (1 Corinthians 6:16)
 - **1 Corinthians 6:16 (NLT)** *And don't you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one."*
 - B. You do incredible damage to yourself (Proverbs 6:32)
 - **Proverbs 6:32 (NLT)** *But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul.*
 - C. You do incredible damage to your children (Exodus 34:7)
 - **Exodus 34:7b (NLT)** *Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.*
 - D. You do incredible damage to the church (1 Corinthians 5:6)
 - **1 Corinthians 5:6b (NLT)** *Don't you realize that if even one person is allowed to go on sinning, soon all will be affected?*
 - E. You do incredible damage to your witness (2 Samuel 12:14)
 - **2 Samuel 12:14 (NLT)** *But you have given the enemies of the LORD great opportunity to despise and blaspheme him ...*
 - F. You sin against the Lord (Genesis 39:9)
 - **Genesis 39:9b (NLT)** *How could I ever do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God.*

3. Maximize your marriage.

- A growing relationship with your spouse will reduce the pull and attraction of adultery. The phrase "[he] knew his wife" is a Biblical euphemism for sexual intercourse (Genesis 4:1). A similar concept is found in the phrase "one flesh" (Matthew 19:6). For sex to be all God intended it to be, it must occur in a marriage relationship based on mutual devotion, respect, communication and absolute loyalty.

- **1 Corinthians 7:3 (GN)** *A man should fulfill his duty as a husband, a wife should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs.*

- Dr. Willard Harley, a marriage counselor from Minnesota, wrote a great book called "HIS NEEDS, HER NEEDS." Throughout the years of his practice, he interviewed thousands of couples and arrived at the top five needs of men and women in a marriage relationship:

FIVE NEEDS OF MEN	FIVE NEEDS OF WOMEN
1. Sexual fulfillment	1. Affection
2. Recreational companionship	2. Conversation
3. An attractive spouse	3. Honesty and openness
4. Domestic support	4. Financial support
5. Admiration	5. Family commitment

- Do you see any similarities between these two lists? NO! Is it any wonder we have so much trouble adjusting in marriage? We each try to meet the needs we have in another person, and end up frustrating them because their needs are completely different!
- The secret to a great marriage is to get serious about learning your spouse's needs and determine that you're going to meet them to the best of your ability, even if they're not the same as your needs!
- Marital breakups almost always occur when one or both partners lack the skills or awareness to meet each other's needs. And how is it that needs become so powerful and all-consuming? **NEEDS KEEP SCORE WITH RELENTLESS PRECISION!**
- **THE LOVE BANK:** Each of us has a "Love Bank" containing many different accounts, one for each person we know. Each person either makes deposits or withdrawals whenever we interact with him or her. Pleasurable interactions cause deposits, and painful interactions cause withdrawals. As life goes on, the accounts in your Love Bank fluctuate, with some of your acquaintances building sizable deposits, some remaining marginally in the black, and some going in the red (the people who cause more pain than pleasure). This accumulation determines our emotional response to everyone we know, even though we are not actively aware of any of it! **AND IN MARRIAGE THERE ARE TWO LOVE BANKS: HIS AND HERS.**
- **A person's five basic emotional needs are so demanding that, if any of them go unmet at home, that spouse becomes vulnerable to the temptation of an affair.**

That tragic result is almost certain if someone outside the marriage begins to fulfill the need that is not being met within the marriage.

- Because of a lack of understanding, many couples unknowingly work at cross-purposes, each trying to fulfill the needs he or she feels, not the needs their mate feels. For example, wives often easily shower their husbands with affection because they appreciate it and want it so much themselves. On the other hand, husbands smother their wives with sexual advances, because sex is their most pressing need. Each becomes confused when at best their mate responds with only mild pleasure and at worst becomes irritated.
- WE DO NOT HAVE TIME TO DEAL WITH ALL OF THESE NEEDS, BUT WE WILL LOOK AT THE MOST TROUBLESOME ONE IN MOST MARRIAGES: **THE PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP, THE CONFLICT BETWEEN "SEX" AND "AFFECTION."** THIS IS THE CONFLICT THAT MOST OFTEN LEADS TO AN AFFAIR. (We will look at it mostly from the man's perspective – because of the speaker!)
- One popular minister recently asked an audience of men what they felt were the three biggest temptations men face today. A man in the first row instantly called out: "#1: Sex! #2: Sex! #3: Sex!" But he was just about right: In a recent survey, Christian men were asked to list the sins they struggled with most. When the results were compiled, sexual immorality of one type or another represented 62% of all the sins listed. The next most frequently named sin only garnered 12%. For men, the problem of sexual immorality is FIVE TIMES greater than the next biggest sin problem. Blatant sexuality in the media, our culture's permissive attitudes toward nudity and immorality, high stress lifestyles, frequent solo business travel, and easy access to pornography on the internet are just a few factors that contribute to the problem.
- **Here is the Lord's primary provision for sexual temptations:**
- **1 Corinthians 7:2-5 (NLT)** ² But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. ³ The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy, which is her right as a married woman, nor should the wife deprive her husband. ⁴ The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband also gives authority over his body to his wife. ⁵ So do not deprive each other of sexual relations. The only exception to this rule would be the agreement of both husband and wife to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time, * so they can give themselves more completely to prayer. Afterward they should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt them because of their lack of self-control.

A. Due to sexual immorality, each person should MARRY

- What would you say is the answer to sexual immorality? To pray? To use self-control? God says to GET MARRIED!
- Sexual immoralities are simply the multiple ways you seek to have your sex drive fulfilled; when your sex drive is satisfied, immoralities are relieved. And marriage is God's plan to provide for our sex drives in a way that pleases Him. Therefore, He considers marriage to be "HOLY."
- In New Testament times, marriages occurred around the age of puberty, permitting the blossoming sex drive to be fulfilled and not frustrated. Today, however, marriage is normally postponed until later in life. The longer a person postpones marriage past puberty, the more sexual temptations he or she will naturally have to face. This postponement is why the MAJORITY of young people – including Christians – commit fornication before marriage. But God does not prefer fornication to getting an education!

B. Married partners are to fulfill their SEXUAL DUTIES

- Just MARRIAGE is not the answer to immorality – SEX WITHIN MARRIAGE is the answer! The Bible teaches that marriage is both a delight and a DUTY (a moral obligation).
- The DUTY does not belong to the person who INITIATES sex, but to the person who RESPONDS to the advances. Your spouse has a sex drive seeking fulfillment, and it's YOUR responsibility to make sure their needs are met!
- We are also instructed to FULFILL ("completely satisfy") our sexual duties in marriage. Which of the two partners must be the one to decide if the sexual desires are completely satisfied – the one initiating sex! The "duty of sex" is never for yourself but always for your spouse.
- A "scientific survey" was done to discover what days of the week men like to make love. They discovered that men like days that begin with a T ... Tuesday, Thursday, Tonday, Tednesday, Triday, Taturday, Tunday, Today, Tomorrow. We get tongue-tied just "tinking" about it! And that's great ... if men confine their sexual affections to their wife!
- Your husband made a commitment to be faithful to you, because he trusted you to be as sexually interested in him as he is in you. Unfortunately, in many marriages the man finds that this is one of the biggest mistakes of his life.

He has agreed to limit his sexual experience to a wife who is unwilling to meet that vital need. He is up the proverbial creek without a paddle! Don't withhold from your partner the only acceptable means of fulfilling their sexual needs!

- When you get married, God sovereignly takes something away from you and gives it as a heavenly wedding present to your spouse – the authority you had over your own body. Your spouse shouldn't have to beg for your body!
- Success in marriage is always the result of following the clear teachings of the Bible! The Bible teaches: (1) that sex is not dirty or sinful, (2) that it is given for pleasure and not just to produce children, (3) that it is not to be used as a reward or a punishment, and (4) that it is not an optional part of marriage depending on one's moods or preferences.
- The reason that sexual immorality is so widespread is that God's solution has been so widely abandoned!

C. God commands you to stop depriving each other of SEX

- Imagine this: A man arrives home from work and announces, "Wow, am I hungry!" The wife says, "What are you talking about? I made you breakfast and you ate it, then you went out for lunch and you ate again. Now you want me to make dinner for you. What are you, some kind of glutton? And besides that, you're always thinking of yourself. Your hunger, your timetable. You are so selfish!"
- No one would call your God-given desire for food at meal times selfish, would they? So why would any wife call her husband's God-given desire for sex selfish? The only reason there is so much confusion about the sex drive and none about the food drive is that the food drive can be fulfilled without anyone else's participation. The sex drive, on the other hand, requires the active participation of another person every single time it is to be fulfilled according to God's Word. Also, the food drive is roughly the same for everyone, but the sex drive has been placed into most men at a much higher frequency than women.
- The Bible doesn't teach that a married person should exercise considerable SELF-CONTROL, deprive yourself frequently, and have sex as often as your spouse is open to it. The Bible teaches that you should exercise considerable SELF-FULFILLMENT, deprive yourself very infrequently (i.e. travel or sickness), and have sex as often as you would like.

- Biblically, you may only "deprive each other" of sex under four conditions: (1) when you both agree, (2) when it is for a limited time, (3) when you are temporarily devoting yourself more fully to prayer, (4) when you agree to come together again soon. Sexual intimacy is to be the NORM, never the EXCEPTION in a marriage.
- If you do deprive each other, the Bible warns that you open yourself (and your marriage) to an attack of Satan in sexual areas because of your lack of self-control. Continued postponement or withholding of sexual relations within marriage places VERY REAL and VERY UNNECESSARY pressure on your mate.
- **A WORD TO MEN: The typical husband doesn't understand his wife's need for affection any more than the typical wife understands her husband's deep need for sex. But, when it comes to sex and affection, you can't have one without the other. AFFECTION IS THE ENVIRONMENT, SEX IS THE EVENT. Husbands, you need to meet your spouse's needs for affection as you want them to meet your needs for sex!**
- Mary Alda (wife of actor Alan Alda): "It's real easy to leave your spouse. It's not easy to leave your best friend."
- How do you build a friendship? 3 ways: time, time, time.
- MEET EACH OTHER'S NEEDS IN SUCH A WAY THAT YOUR SPOUSE WOULD BE A FOOL TO EVER BE INTERESTED IN SOMEBODY ELSE. Keep the grass so green on your side of the fence that the grass on the other side of the fence looks brown by comparison!
- **1 Corinthians 7:3 (JB)** *The husband must give his wife what she has the right to expect, and so too the wife to the husband.*

4. Manage your mind.

- People don't just fall into immorality; there is really no such thing as a one-night stand. There is a process, a whole series of events. Here are the four steps that lead to an affair:
 - A. Accepting sinful thoughts in your mind
 - We have garbage disposals in our kitchens and garbage dispensers in our living rooms. Watch what you watch!
 - B. Emotional non-physical involvement
 - Unbelievers don't spend a lot of time here, but Christians "camp out" here, refusing to deal with reality!

- C. Physical involvement
 - Once you've crossed the line into physical contact, the pull of the sin is horrendous. Don't ever cross the line!
- D. Rationalizing the affair
 - Human beings are great at convincing themselves that anything is okay due to the "circumstances."
- ***James 1:14-15 (LB)*** *Temptation is the pull of a person's own evil thoughts and wishes. These evil thoughts lead to evil actions and afterwards to death.*
- ***Romans 16:19 (GN)*** *I want you to be wise about what is good and innocent in what is evil.*

5. Maintain proper relationships.

- Most affairs occur between close personal friends, coworkers or family members. Since we have to deal with these people every day of our lives, how do you maintain proper relationships?
 - A. Don't listen to a member of the opposite sex tell you about their marriage problems.
 - B. Don't go fishing for compliments, and be cautious in the kind of compliments you give to members of the opposite sex.
 - C. Be aware of a sense of electricity between you and a member of the opposite sex.
 - D. Avoid a prolonged stare or a lingering touch, which give off a signal of interest. Flirting is OVER outside of your marriage!
- ***Ephesians 5:3 (NIV)*** *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity ...*

6. Minimize the opportunity.

- Don't place yourself in situations where you know you're going to be tempted. Recognize the circumstances that turn you on, weaken your standards, and cause you to be aroused or stimulated sexually.
- ***1 Corinthians 10:12 (LB)*** *So be careful! If you are thinking, "Oh, I would never behave like that" – let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin.*
- "But I've been married so many years it could never happen to me" – who are you kidding? The Bible says that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. NOBODY IS IMMUNE!

- Since most affairs occur between couples that already know each other, you need to make sure that your best friends are as strongly committed to their marriage as you are to yours.
- ***1 Corinthians 15:33 (NLT)*** *Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character."*
- Establish some guidelines for your life and live by them – without exception! I would rather go overboard in this area than be washed overboard! Minimize the opportunity for sin!
- ***Malachi 2:15 (GN)*** *Guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with your wife.*

THE PATHWAY BACK TO PURITY:

- If you've been unfaithful to your mate, there is still hope. You can come to Jesus for a cleansing, and He will say, "Neither do I condemn thee," as He did to the woman caught in adultery in John 8:11. However, He will also say, "Go, and sin no more!" I can't guarantee that your spouse will be as forgiving as God, but marriages CAN be rebuilt. Here are three things you MUST do if you want forgiveness:
 1. **Acknowledge the sin.** Stop rationalizing it and call it what it is – SIN! Make a commitment to be morally pure, starting NOW.
 2. **End the relationship immediately.** Don't delay – it is impossible to "wean yourself" from adultery. Quit "cold turkey!"
 3. **Avoid all contact with that person from now on.** You can't be friends after you've been lovers. Do whatever it takes to end it!
- During this message, maybe you've realized that some of your thoughts weren't harmless after all. Maybe you've been involved in an emotional attachment and thought that since no sex was involved it was okay. Maybe you've had the heartbreak of an affair in your marriage, or you yourself are struggling with the strong pull of adultery. **REPENT!**
- A woman wrote in to Dr. Laura Schlessinger's radio program: "After thirteen years of marriage, my husband's lunches with a woman he had met ended him up in a hotel room. Only by the grace of God did he come to his senses and not go 'all the way.' I found a card, and after questioning him he admitted what had been going on over the past couple of months. He ended the affair immediately and we entered counseling. It has been two years later and I have to tell all the would-be innocent-lunchers out there: NOT A DAY has gone by without my paying the price for my husband's selfishness. His ego needed the gratification and our marriage will NEVER be the same. It saddens me to think I may never trust the man that I, under the covenant of marriage, have nonetheless decided to work this out with for the sake of the children. I hope I will trust him again someday. Our lives will never be the same due to that first (so-called) innocent little lunch."