

You shall not commit adultery (continued)
Steps toward “divorce-proofing” a marriage

Men’s Bible Study at Park View

December 6, 2005

Scriptures: Exodus 20:14; I Corinthians 7:2-5

Our lesson today makes practical, positive applications relating to the seventh commandment. It seeks to answer the question, “What can be done to “divorce-proof” a marriage?” To answer the question, we will briefly exam three concepts regarding sexuality in marriage: 1) rights, 2) responsibilities, and 3) relationships.

Rights -- Particularly in a democratic society, the government must work to guarantee each citizen’s rights. What should be an individual’s marital rights or sexual rights? Various groups have attempted to set forth a “bill of rights” that applies to all people in all societies. On the reverse side of this sheet is one widely circulated example.

There is little material in scripture to support an emphasis on sexual rights. However, the Apostle Paul hints at one basic right in I Corinthians 7:2-5. Here he teaches that Christian men and women must not deprive each other of sexual intercourse, because in some sense, their bodies actually belong to each other.

Questions to ponder: What are the basic rights of a man in marriage? In what ways are these basic rights the same or different for women? In what ways might an emphasis on rights help to prevent adultery or help to divorce-proof a marriage?

Responsibilities -- The flipside of rights is responsibilities, or a commitment to protect the rights of others. An overemphasis on one’s own rights will surely strain a marriage. But a proper focus on the other’s rights and wellbeing will help to strengthen a marriage. The “Golden Rule” certainly applies here: “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12.TNIV).

A question to ponder: What basic responsibilities does a husband have to make a healthy marriage?

Relationships – Most adulterous relationships begin with a weakness in the relationship between a husband and wife. Therefore, the best way to “divorce-proof” a marriage is to strengthen the relationship. Someone has quipped: “If the grass is greener on the other side, water your side.” The best way to nurture a relationship with a spouse is to love. This is the essence of the Apostle Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 5:22-31. To love one’s wife as Christ loved the church is a life-long endeavor.

A question to ponder: In what ways might the church be more supportive to couples who desire to strengthen their marriage relationship?

The following Bill of Rights is available on the web at http://sexuality.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=sexuality&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.worldsexology.org%2Fabout_sexualrights.asp

It is a respectable example of a sexual bill of rights. Nevertheless, it reveals more of the spirit of the age than of a scriptural ethic. It begs the question of what a truly Christian “sexual bill of rights” might look like.

- 1. The right to sexual freedom.** Sexual freedom encompasses the possibility for individuals to express their full sexual potential. However, this excludes all forms of sexual coercion, exploitation and abuse at any time and situations in life.
- 2. The right to sexual autonomy, sexual integrity, and safety of the sexual body.** This right involves the ability to make autonomous decisions about one's sexual life within a context of one's own personal and social ethics. It also encompasses control and enjoyment of our own bodies free from torture, mutilation and violence of any sort.
- 3. The right to sexual privacy.** This involves the right for individual decisions and behaviors about intimacy as long as they do not intrude on the sexual rights of others.
- 4. The right to sexual equity.** This refers to freedom from all forms of discrimination regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, race, social class, religion, or physical and emotional disability.
- 5. The right to sexual pleasure.** Sexual pleasure, including autoeroticism, is a source of physical, psychological, intellectual and spiritual well being.
- 6. The right to emotional sexual expression.** Sexual expression is more than erotic pleasure or sexual acts. Individuals have a right to express their sexuality through communication, touch, emotional expression and love.
- 7. The right to sexually associate freely.** This means the possibility to marry or not, to divorce, and to establish other types of responsible sexual associations.
- 8. The right to make free and responsible reproductive choices.** This encompasses the right to decide whether or not to have children, the number and spacing of children, and the right to full access to the means of fertility regulation.
- 9. The right to sexual information based upon scientific inquiry.** This right implies that sexual information should be generated through the process of unencumbered and yet scientifically ethical inquiry, and disseminated in appropriate ways at all societal levels.
- 10. The right to comprehensive sexuality education.** This is a lifelong process from birth throughout the life cycle and should involve all social institutions.
- 11. The right to sexual health care.** Sexual health care should be available for prevention and treatment of all sexual concerns, problems and disorders.

Sexual Rights are Fundamental and Universal Human Rights

Adopted in Hong Kong at the 14th World Congress of Sexology, August 26, 1999