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You Have Heard That It Was Said: Do Not Commit Adultery
Matthew 5: 27-30

You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery" DIG: What is at the heart of this issue? What is it that Yeshua is trying to show? Why did Jesus have to address the situation of adultery, when the Ten Commandments had already dealt with it? What if you accidentally see something tempting? What can you do beforehand? What is the Lord's point in using such exaggerated language?

REFLECT: How has the change in culture affected your marriage? What things are accepted today that would have never been accepted in the past? Is this teaching for men only? Why the cultural change? What is lacking? What can you do to safeguard yourself and your marriage? How can you teach your children about this vital message in an appropriate way? How do you control your thought life?

Jesus continues to unmask the self-righteous externalism typified by the Pharisees and the Torah-teachers by showing that only the internal righteousness of the Torah is acceptable to **ADONAI**. Without internal righteousness, the outward life makes no difference. **God's** divine evaluation takes place in the **heart**. **He** judges the source and origin of sin, not its outward manifestation, or lack there of. **As [a person] thinks within himself, so he is (Proverbs 23:7), and so he is judged by God (First Samuel 16:7).**

In His second example of true righteousness, Jesus teaches about adultery and sexual sin in general, and how the Torah differed from pharisaic Judaism. As with the example relating to the sin of murder, this illustration begins with a quote from the Ten Commandments. In **Matthew 5:27 the Lord** said: **You have heard that it was said** in the Torah: **You shall not commit adultery** (I *strongly* suggest that you read my commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Dq – You Shall Not Commit Adultery). Once again, the rabbis took the plain language of what Moses wrote and came up with their own various**

interpretations. The sanctity of marriage in the Scriptures is obviously of great importance **(Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 18:22; Hebrews 13:4)**. It is called **a covenant** (Hebrew *brit*) between **a man** and **a woman** and **adultery** is an attack on this holy **covenant**; as a result, **Jesus** didn't waste any time addressing the issue early in **His** ministry.

The solution to sexual impurity cannot be external because the cause is not external. **Adultery** starts with a decision of **the heart**, and without biblical grounds for a divorce (see **Ij – Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?**), it actually leads **a person** into more **adultery**. **Job** said: **If my heart has been enticed toward a woman, and I have lain in wait at her door; then let my wife grind for another man, and let others keel on her. For that would be a heinous act, a criminal offense (Job 31:9-11). Job** knew that physical infidelity is first of all a matter of the **heart (James 1:13-15)**, and that **lusting** is just as sinful in the eyes of **God** as the act of **adultery**.

Yeshua is not talking about an unexpected or unavoidable exposure to sexual temptation. Your **eyes** see what they see. You can't do anything about that. But, once you see something provocative, you don't have to take that second look. It's the second look that will get you in trouble. **King David** was not at fault for seeing **Bathsheba** bathing. **He** could not have helped noticing **her**, because **she** was in plain view as **he** walked on the palace roof. **His** sin was taking that second look, dwelling on the sight, and in willingly giving in to the temptation. **He** could have looked away and occupied **his** mind in other ways. The fact that **he** had **her** brought to **his** chambers and committed **adultery** with **her** showed the immoral desire that already existed in **his heart (Second Samuel 11:1-4)**.

Just as the **adulterous heart** plans to expose itself to **lust**-satisfying situations, the godly **heart** plans to avoid them whenever possible and flee from them when unavoidable. When **Joseph** was enticed by **Potiphar's wife**, **she caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house (Genesis 39:11-12).** Just as the **adulterous heart** ponders itself in advance, so the godly **heart** protects itself in advance. **Job** said: **I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman . . . if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted (Job 31:1, 7-8).**[526]



In **His** classic style, then, **Messiah** brings out the deep, inward intention of the Torah when **He** said: **But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman [a man] lustfully has already committed adultery with her [him] in his [her] heart (Matthew 5:27-28).** When **a man** sees a beautiful **woman** or visa versa, **his** eyes see what they see. That first look cannot be helped, but, that second look is a decision. When anyone, **man** or **woman**, takes that second look, the righteousness of the commandment has already been broken by the internal **lust**. During the first century, the supposed penalty for **adultery** was stoning, even though the Jewish death penalty was rarely carried out. In fact, if a court (and judges were lifetime appointees) handed down even one death penalty conviction in the lifetime appointment of its members, it was called a "hanging court." If it were to hand down two convictions, it was immediately disbanded and all judges were thrown out and replaced for being too "bloodthirsty."

The Torah, however, portrayed **adultery** as one of the most despicable and heinous of sins, punishable by the Jewish capital punishment of being stoned to death **(Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22)**. The Torah sentenced death by stoning for touching Mount Sinai while **God** was giving Moses the Ten Commandments **(Exodus 19:12-13)**, for an ox goring someone to death **(Exodus 21:28)**, for breaking the Sabbath **(Numbers 15:32-36)**, for a girl not crying out when being raped **(Deuteronomy 22:24)**, for offering one's child to the god Molech by fire **(Leviticus 20:2-5)**, for having a "familiar spirit" or being a "wizard" **(Leviticus 20:27)**, for cursing **God (Leviticus 24:10-16)**, for engaging in idolatry **(Deuteronomy 17:2-7)** or seducing others to do so **(Deuteronomy 13:1-11)**, for rebellion against one's parents **(Deuteronomy 21:18-21)**, for **woman** lying to **a man** about her virginity when married **(Deuteronomy 22:13-21)**, and for sexual intercourse between **a man** and **a woman** engaged to another **man** (both should be stoned, **Deuteronomy 22:23-24**).

But, by the time **Yeshua** was born, there were virtually no capital trials. The

practice had, for all practical purposes, already been abandoned. But, even in theory, **a person** could not be stoned to death until the act was committed (see **Gq – The Woman Caught in the Act of Adultery**). So, many of the Jews were actually committing **adultery** in their **hearts** but didn't feel any need to **repent** because they hadn't actually committed the act. **Jesus** forcefully addressed that situation when **He** said: **If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And,** similarly**, if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell (Mt 5:29-30). This is classic hyperbole,** or exaggeration used for emphasis, **often used in rabbinic teaching.** Plucking **out your eye** or cutting **off your hand** doesn't have any effect on **your** sin because sin is a matter of the **heart**. Nevertheless, **Christ** clearly emphasized the seriousness of breaking **the covenant** and the vows that one had promised.

Within the four Gospels there are numerous examples of exaggeration from **Yeshua**. At times the exaggeration is hyperbole in the sense that what is commanded or portrayed is either literally impossible or inconceivable. At other times the exaggeration is more of an overstatement, but, a literal fulfillment would be contrary to the intention of **Jesus**.

That the sayings of the **right eye** and **right hand** are examples of overstatement (exaggeration which is literally possible) rather than hyperbole (exaggeration which is literally impossible) is evident from the tragic fact that in the history of the Church these words have on occasion been literally carried out! Yet, certainly **the Chief Shepherd** did not intend to actually do these horrendous acts, for the removal of the **right eye** does not prohibit the left **eye** from continuing to **look lustfully**. Indeed, even the removal of both **eyes** cannot prohibit lust. Such self-mutilation was not practiced by those who heard **Jesus**, for they knew that the language **He** used was meant to effect change and impress upon them the need to repent rather than to describe literally how repentance was to be carried out. On the other hand, the commands to repent in **Luke 13:3** and **5** are understood to be as literal commands, for **Jesus** continually preached: **Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Mattityahu 4:17).**[527] An unbelieving society may say otherwise, but so-called "sexual liberation" is actually sexual slavery – slavery to our own **lusts**.[528]