

A man and a woman are walking away from the camera down a path in a forest. The man is on the left, wearing a dark suit, and the woman is on the right, wearing a dark red dress. They are holding hands. The trees are covered in vibrant yellow and orange autumn leaves, and the ground is covered in fallen leaves. The lighting is soft and warm, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning setting.

Family Study Guides

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

7. "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY."

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Family Study Guide

7. "You shall not commit adultery."

[We suggest that as you use this Family Study Guide, select and focus on a main portion or two that you feel will help your family's study into the commandment. You do not need to cover every aspect, discussion or scripture presented in this guide. Select the aspects or principles most relevant or helpful to your family.]

The 7th Commandment is somewhat sensitive to discuss for a variety of reasons. Since Deuteronomy 6:1-6 places the responsibility for teaching these commandments upon parents, it is you who must decide what and how much to discuss with your children. It is not wise to discuss too much too soon with younger children, nor is it wise to avoid the tough questions with older children. We hope this Study Guide will provide you with enough suggested material help you approach the subject in the most relevant manner with your family.

Objectives:

- Help your family learn about the seventh commandment and identify its New Testament application.
- Help your children understand that there are consequences for breaking God's laws, but that God is also merciful and forgiving.
- Describe a negative and a positive biblical example of the Seventh Commandment.
- Explain how keeping God's laws involve our attitudes, thoughts, and feelings.

Memory Verse:

Hebrews 10:16-17 *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.'"*

The Basic Principle of Adultery

[Parents, an expanded version of this section is in the "Instructors" section below]

While "adultery" is a commandment for a husband and wife to be faithful to one another, the principle of this law is instructive to all of us in many ways.

Have you ever had a "BFF" (Best Friends Forever)? When we have a close friend, how do we treat them? We show them respect. We honor them by talking with them and sharing feelings. We say nice things and treat them well. We help them when they are feeling down or have other needs. We put their needs or wants before our own. We defend them and protect them from harm. When people declare themselves as BFFs—they make certain promises that each expects the other to keep.

God created an ultimate human BFF relationship—called marriage. **Genesis 2:24** *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."*

Cleave is an old-fashioned word, that means to adhere firmly, closely, loyally and unwaveringly. To marry is to promise to adhere (stick like glue!) to your spouse. All the things we apply to best friends apply even more to a marriage. Adultery breaks the promise of being a married best friend forever.

Jesus said, "But in the beginning God made a man and a woman. ⁷That's why a man leaves his father and mother and gets married. ⁸He becomes like one person with his wife. Then they are no longer two people, but one. ⁹And no one should separate a couple that God has joined together" **Mark 10:6-9 (CEV)**.

If you have ever had a good friend betray you in some way, you know how badly it hurts. This article expounds on the concept of betrayal (which related to adultery). <https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/betrayal-is-painful>

Because God wants married couples to be happy, He made the rule that they should treat each other well, be faithful to one another and not commit adultery.

Another application of the principle of not committing adultery is our relationship in the Church to Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:21-33 (CEV) "Honor Christ and put others first. ²²A wife should put her husband first, as she does the Lord. ²³A husband is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head and the Savior of the church, which is his own body. ²⁴Wives should always put their husbands first, as the church puts Christ first. ²⁵A husband should love his wife as much as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. ³¹As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother to get married, and he becomes like one person with his wife." ³²This is a great mystery, but I understand it to mean Christ and his church. ³³So each husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself, and each wife should respect her husband."

To have truly blessed relationships we should be trustworthy friends, be loyal to our family members, and be faithful to God. Adultery poisons the marriage relationship. When we get married we must be faithful to our mate. Likewise we must not look for happiness outside of our relationship with God. Learning to turn away from wrong behavior while young helps us gain the self-discipline which will protect us from committing adultery. This will keep our lives pure and in obedience to God.

Bible Stories as Examples:

God uses the lives of people in the Bible to teach lessons about how we should live our lives. Some of these lessons are about positive things people did or accomplished. Other times God gives Biblical lessons that we can learn from the sins and mistakes people made.

- ✓ Can you think of a lesson you learned from someone else's mistake?
- ✓ As a family discuss some examples and what each person might have learned.

Read the story of Joseph in Genesis 39:

Joseph is a good example of a young person who obeyed the seventh commandment even though he was not yet married. [Read and discuss Joseph's life while he was in Potiphar's household.]

Pharaoh was the ruler (King) of Egypt. Joseph was sold to an important person, Potiphar. Joseph was a good worker and became well liked in Potiphar's house. He did so well that Potiphar made him the head of his household. Because Joseph worked hard despite the fact that he was a slave, God blessed him. Joseph was very handsome and Potiphar's wife tried to get him to break the seventh commandment.

His response to her is what all of us should think when someone wants us to do something wrong:

Genesis 39:9 (NLT) "...How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God." He had God's laws in his heart and wanted to please him. (See **Hebrews 10:16**)

Joseph not only did not want to do the wrong thing – he did not want to think the wrong thing:

- ✓ **Matthew 5:27 (GNT)** *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ 28 But now I tell you: anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her is guilty of committing adultery with her in his heart.”*

When she kept after him to do wrong—Joseph did the right thing again:

- ✓ **Genesis 39:12 (NIV)** *“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.”*
- ✓ He knew what he must do to avoid doing the wrong thing: **1 Corinthians 6:18-19 (NLT)** *“Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.”*

Joseph was then unfairly thrown in prison even though he was a good worker, and he obeyed God. Sometimes doing the right thing is hard to do, but we need to know that God will bless us in the end. We also need to understand that doing the wrong thing ends up bringing bad and long-lasting consequences.

- ✓ What blessings did Joseph ultimately receive by being faithful to God and His ways?
- ✓ What are some of the bad consequences or things that can happen as a result of sexual sins?

The story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11: Read and discuss this section of David’s life.

Another person to study is David, a great king, who was a man after God’s own heart. King David did many things that pleased God and he was a man whom God loved very much.

- ✓ What are some of the things that you know about the life of King David?
- ✓ Discuss several great stories such as: fighting Goliath; killing the lion and bear to protect the sheep; writing the Psalms; being a great warrior; being chosen by God to be King; etc.

God was very pleased with David and eventually chose David to be king of Israel. David was devoted to God, but despite this, he made some very bad decisions that he regretted the rest of his life. He made some choices that were contrary to God’s laws. For these mistakes, he had to suffer some difficult penalties. These wrong choices, the resulting consequences, and God’s ultimate mercy and forgiveness related to those events are recorded in the Bible for our instruction.

How David dealt with his sins is an important aspect of this lesson.

Two of the most critical mistakes of David’s life occurred while Israel was at war. From his palace balcony one night, he observed a very beautiful woman bathing. He had her brought to his palace and committed adultery with her. She was married to a man named Uriah, who was a soldier in Israel’s army. As a result of this sinful relationship between David and Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife became pregnant. David hoped to make Bathsheba his own wife in order to cover his mistake. Therefore, David as commander in chief, had Uriah sent to the front line of the battle and then had military support for him withdrawn. This resulted in Uriah’s death. So not only did David steal Uriah’s wife, but also had him killed.

- ✓ Read **2 Samuel 11:4-5**. Which of God’s commandments did David and Bathsheba break?
- ✓ Read **2 Samuel 11:14-17**. Which commandment did David break in this instance?
- ✓ How did God feel about what David had done? Read **2 Samuel 11:27** and **2 Samuel 12:1-7**.

List some ways the story might have turned out differently if David and/or Bathsheba had done what Joseph did!

God sent a prophet by the name of Nathan to David to expose his sins and confront him about them. Nathan told David a story about a rich man stealing a poor man's sheep and David condemns the rich man. Nathan told David that that is what he had done with Uriah.

God punished David because he had committed the sins of murder, stealing and adultery.

- ✓ What were some of the punishments that David received as the result of his sins?

It is important to know that sin always has penalties attached.

- ✓ Discuss with your older children what penalties or consequences can come from sexual sins.
- ✓ In light of current scandals related to adultery, this article can help drive the point home about the penalty of sin: <https://www.ucg.org/vertical-thought/dont-take-a-tiger-by-the-tail>

What was King David's response when he finally realized how badly he has been sinning?

- ✓ **2 Samuel 12:13 (GNT)** *"I have sinned against the Lord, David said. Nathan replied, 'The Lord forgives you; you will not die.'"*
- ✓ If you study the chapter of **Psalm 51**, you will see David's prayer of repentance and how he changed his whole attitude. As a result of David truly putting God's laws within his heart, God forgave him.
- ✓ What similarity is there between David's story and the woman in **John 8:1-11**?
- ✓ What are some of the lessons we can learn from these experiences in David's life?

God uses the story of David to demonstrate that except for Jesus Christ, all have sinned and broken God's laws.

Family Discussions or Questions:

- ✓ What is the Seventh commandment? What is keeping of the spirit of this law?
- ✓ What does it mean to have God's covenant (laws) in our hearts and minds? **Hebrews 10:16**
- ✓ While **Matthew 5:29** is not to be taken literally—how can we apply the principle involved to avoid sin?
- ✓ Review the Ten Commandments and select three to discuss in terms of how a person might show outward signs of obedience to a commandment, but inwardly have a wrong attitude, feelings or thoughts connected to that commandment.
- ✓ As a family, make a list of the things that God desires from us. The list should include our actions, attitudes and inward qualities. **Psalm 51** contains some of these.
- ✓ Discuss how having a bad attitude affects our relationship with God. What are things each family member can do to stay close to God?
- ✓ As a family make a list of the changes that will occur as a result of everyone keeping God's laws. Post the list of ideas on poster board or somewhere so everyone can see them.

Challenge Activity:

Discuss how adultery - in principle breaks - every other commandment.

James 2:10 *“Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all.”*

Example: A person committing adultery is **stealing** someone else’s spouse

Challenging Conversations:

- LGBT is an initialism to collectively refer to "lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender" people
 - What does God have to say about these kinds of behaviors?
 - How should we treat people who are practicing homosexuals?
 - What does God say about homosexuals who have repented of their past actions?
 - Is someone committing adultery less sinful than someone involved in LGBT relationships?
- Sexting
 - What is it?
 - Have you done any or have your friends?
 - How does this lead to Bullying
 - Read and discuss the Redbook Magazine article pages 111-114.
<http://www.redbookmag.com/life/mom-kids/advice/a12892/teenage-sexting/>
- Rape
 - What is the definition? What should you do if it happens to you or your friend?
 - Review the OT examples: Dinah in **Genesis 34**; Tamar, Ammon and Absalom in **2 Samuel 13**.

Additional Family Resources:

- **UCG Study Booklet “The Ten Commandments”** <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/the-ten-commandments>
- **Sex Has a Price Tag** – Video / Stats on teens who don’t have sex before marriage. This is an excellent presentation that has been used by the United Church of God as a great resource to help teens see the importance of sexual purity.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhORvXRDENo>
- For your older children—these three articles are an excellent resource for discussions on sex.
 - <https://www.ucg.org/members/united-news/good-sex-bad-sex>
 - <https://www.ucg.org/united-news/heart-to-heart-talk-with-men-and-teen-boys>
 - <https://www.ucg.org/united-news/heart-to-heart-talk-with-women-and-teen-girls>

Lessons for Youth Instructors

[Instructors, the following is an expansion of the principles found at the beginning of this Family Study Guide. The lesson should be adjusted to be sure the content is age-appropriate. Additionally, be sensitive about the way material is presented in youth instruction classes, and be mindful of parents' role on this topic versus the instructor role.]

It is a good thing to have a lot of friends and to be kind to everyone. While we might have a lot of friends—most of us have a special friend. Sometimes we say they are BFFs (Best Friends Forever). When you have a close friend, how do you treat them? We show them respect. We honor them by talking with them and sharing feelings. We say nice things and treat them well. We help them when they are feeling down or have other needs. We put their needs or wants before our own. We defend them and protect them from harm. When we declare ourselves as BFFs—we make certain promises that each expects the other to keep.

Do you have a special friend? How does it make you feel to have someone you feel very close to? What things do you do to make the friendship special? (Call them on phone, write notes, study together, buy or make them a gift, want to play together, etc.)

Do any of you have a pet that is “your” very own? Maybe cat that only comes to you, and not the rest of the family? How does it make you feel to be special to your pet? How does it make you feel if your pet goes to somebody else instead of to you? You feel a bit jealous right? He’s YOUR pet!

There is a kind of funny story in the Bible where a man named Balaam had a long-time animal friend—and they got mad at each other because they felt the other one was not treating them well. Read the story in **Numbers 22**: Think about how each felt betrayed by the other one and how it made them feel.

Numbers 22:27 (NCV) *“When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam. This made him so angry that he hit her with his stick. Then the Lord made the donkey talk, and she said to Balaam, ‘What have I done to make you hit me three times?’ Balaam answered the donkey, ‘You have made me look foolish! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!’ But the donkey said to Balaam, ‘I am your very own donkey, which you have ridden for years. Have I ever done this to you before?’ ‘No,’ Balaam said.”*

Have you ever had a good friend that stopped hanging out with you? They said or did something that hurt you—and maybe started being friends with somebody else.

✓ How did it make you feel? (Betrayed. Not loved. Disappointed. Hurt. Abandoned.)

King David in the Bible wrote about an experience he had.

Psalms 55:12-14 (NCV) *“It was not an enemy insulting me. I could stand that. It was not someone who hated me. I could hide from him. But it is you, a person like me, my companion and good friend. We had a good friendship and walked together to God's Temple. [We were in the church together].* **Psalms 55:20 (TLB)** *“This friend of mine betrayed me—I who was at peace with him. He broke his promises.”*

If these things have happened we might say that our pet—or our friend—is “unfaithful” to us. This is kind of what the seventh Commandment about adultery is about.

God created a man and woman to be able to have human “BFF” relationship—called marriage.

Genesis 2:24 *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”* Cleave is an old-fashioned word, that means to adhere firmly, closely, loyally and unwaveringly. To marry is to promise to adhere (stick like glue!) to your spouse. All the things we apply to best friends apply even more in a marriage. Adultery breaks the promise of being a married “best friend forever.”

Jesus said in **Mark 10:6-9 (CEV)**, *“But in the beginning God made a man and a woman. That’s why a man leaves his father and mother and gets married. He becomes like one person with his wife. Then they are no longer two people, but one. And no one should separate a couple that God has joined together.”*

When a man and woman commit themselves to marriage—they make promises to each other. In a wedding in the church this is what they say:

- Do you then [man’s name] faithfully promise and covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses, to take [her name] to be your lawful wedded wife—in sickness and in health, in good times and in difficult times, for as long as you both shall live—to love her, cherish her, honor her and provide for her?
- And do you [her name] faithfully promise and covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses, to take [his name] to be your lawful wedded husband—in sickness and in health, in good times and in difficult times, for as long as you both shall live—to love him, cherish him, honor him, and, as God has ordained, submit yourself to him?

Adultery involves doing things where the husband and/or wife break these promises.

If you have ever had a BFF betray you in some way, you know how badly it hurts. Because God wants married couples to be happy, He made the rule that they should treat each other well, be faithful to one another—and not commit adultery.

Another application of the principle of not committing adultery goes even further. God wants to be “Best Friends Forever” with each and every individual human that He created!

- Jesus said: **John 15:13-14** *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”*
- **Exodus 33:11 (ISV)** *“The Lord would speak to Moses face to face just as a man speaks with his friend.”*
- **James 2:23 (TLB)** *“...Abraham trusted God, and the Lord declared him good in God’s sight, and he was even called ‘the friend of God.’”*

The Bible shows that our spiritual friendship with Him is as important as the human relationship is between a husband and wife.

Ephesians 5:21-33 (CEV) *“Honor Christ and put others first. A wife should put her husband first, as she does the Lord. A husband is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head and the Savior of the church, which is his own body. Wives should always put their husbands first, as the church puts Christ first. A husband should love his wife as much as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. As the Scriptures say, ‘A man leaves his father and mother to get married, and he becomes like one person with his wife.’ This is a great mystery, but I understand it to mean Christ and his church. So each husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself, and each wife should respect her husband.”*

We are in the church because we love God and want to do what He says. He loves us and wants to bless us with good things. When a person is baptized, they make a promise to God to be loyal and faithful to

God and His word. We don't do what God wants just because we have to. We love Him so much that we really, really want to please Him. Whenever a person goes back on their word to obey God, they have broken a promise to Him. That is like committing adultery, giving our heart to someone else. When we make mistakes and sin, God wants us to do the right thing, and He forgives us when we do repent.

This is what the memory scripture is about:

Hebrews 10:16-17 *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*

To have truly blessed relationships we should be trustworthy friends, be loyal to our family members, and be faithful to God. Adultery poisons the marriage relationship. When we get married we must be faithful to our mate. Likewise we must not look for happiness outside of our relationship with God. Learning to turn away from wrong behavior while young helps us gain the self-discipline which will protect us from committing adultery. This will keep our lives pure and in obedience to God.

Possible Activities to Support Teaching the Seventh Commandment during Youth Instruction

- **Your Body Belongs to God.** Before the lesson, ask a student to hold a pencil or similar item you give them until you ask for it. Once the lesson begins, ask the student for the pencil. Then, break it into several pieces and throw it on the floor. Ask the students, “Why was that a bad idea?” Possible responses will be “because that was a perfectly good pencil and now you can’t use it” or “the pencil wasn’t yours”. Talk about how we are God’s children, and our body is not our own (**1 Corinthians 6:20**). The way we act and the way we treat others is the way we are treating God’s children. We do not have a right to do whatever we want with what belongs to God. God expects us to be honorable and treat others with honor. (**1 Timothy 5:2**)
- **Be Self-controlled and Alert.** Provide a challenge for each student to carry an egg (can be hard-boiled) for the entire class without damaging it. (Modified version: bring one egg as a point for discussion if you are concerned about mess.) Make sure there is some movement during the lesson that requires them to carry the egg. Toward the end of the lesson, compare eggs. Some may be cracked or dropped or lost. Discuss what happened with the eggs. What if the egg is passed or tossed around from one person to another? What is likely to happen? Those who were more careful and watchful will probably have the more intact egg. How does this compare with the way we are with our minds and bodies? We need to be careful and alert with our minds and bodies, and also how we treat others. (**1 Peter 5:8**)
- **Pure Thoughts and Actions.** Bring two clear disposable bottles of water (half full) to the class. Have students brainstorm the types of thoughts or actions that God would not be pleased with. Then, pass around a bottle of water. For each impure thought or action, place a drop of blue food coloring into the water. At the end, compare the tainted water with the untainted water. Which would be better to drink? God wants us to think on pure things. Talk about things that are good for us and for others that we can think about or do. (Read from **Proverbs**; try to do an act of kindness for someone at least once a day; speak positive words using compliments and saying thank you). (**Proverbs 23:7; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 4:8**)

[If this exercise is done – it needs to be followed with this exercise. Sometimes people who have been “tainted” feel that it is too late to make positive changes in their lives.] Add bleach to the tainted water and it will become clear. God’s forgiveness and Christ’s sacrifice cleanses us from our sin. If we do make wrong choices, we must seek forgiveness from God. We still may have to live with the effects of our choices, but we can have a relationship with God when He forgives us (like the Prodigal Son in our lesson on the Fifth Commandment).

- **Human Knot Object Lesson on Commitment.** Have a group of students stand together in a circle (no more than 10 to keep it simple). Each student should take their right hand to join with another student (that is not right next to them), then do the same with the left. The goal is to “stick together” and not let go of each other’s hands while untangling the knot. Students may have to twist, step over and under, etc. to untangle the knot. This takes about 15-20 minutes. Talk about what it was like to stick together. Were you ever tired or not sure you would untangle the knot? Did you ever want to let go of the person’s hand? Why is it worth it to stick together? How do we stick together in our relationships? How does God “stick with us”? This is similar to the way a husband and wife should “cleave” to each other, or stick together and not let go. God also promises to never leave or forsake us. **(Mark 10:6-9)**
- **Marriage Panel Interviews.** Invite members of the congregation who are known to have strong, committed marriages to volunteer for a panel interview either among the youth group or in the congregation. The goal will be to have them answer questions from the youth about courtship and marriage in pursuit of honoring the seventh commandment. Be sure to have the youth submit their questions in advance. The questions can be from youth of *all ages*. Then, the panel can prepare their answers before the discussion. You’ll also probably want to have a moderator who can keep time and keep the questions and responses moving. At the end, encourage some of the youth to share a “take-away”, or notable lesson, from the interview.
- **Case Studies for Older Students.** Give students the opportunity to study examples from the Bible that demonstrate loyalty or disloyalty in relationships. Some possible questions to focus the study: What can we learn from this example to help us keep the Seventh Commandment? What was their relationship like with God throughout the example as far as you can tell? What choice was made that was loyal or disloyal? What impacted the choices of the people in the example?
- What were the results or consequences of their choices? What lessons can we apply to our lives today?
 - Joseph and Potiphar’s wife (see the Family Study Guide for resources)
 - Rahab (Challenge: How are Rahab and Boaz related?)
 - Ruth and Boaz (Challenge: How are Ruth and Boaz related?)
 - David and Bathsheba (see the Family Study Guide for resources)
 - Challenge: The nation of Israel and God
 - Challenge: Mary the mother of Jesus and Joseph
- **The List.** List the ways you hope to be treated in a loyal, committed relationship (family, friends, husband or wife). What kind of person do you want to have a close relationship with? Discuss how these attributes relate to the Seventh Commandment, and ways we can aspire to treat others with love **(Matthew 7:12; 1 Corinthians 13)**.

- **Scenarios for Discussion with Older Students (based on the principle in Proverbs 27:6).**
 - Your friend shares or posts a video that you know doesn't meet God's standards according to the Seventh Commandment. What are some ways to approach the situation that both keep you from violating the Seventh Commandment and may help your friend stay accountable for their thoughts or actions?
 - You have a friend who at times comes to church services in immodest clothing. How can you be a positive influence without being offensive to your friend in this sensitive issue?
 - Your friend seems to be gaining some attention from someone that you know has a reputation for taking their relationships "a little too far" according to the Seventh Commandment. Your friend also seems to be spending more time with this person. How can you be helpful to your friend in this situation?
 - A classroom discussion comes up that center around LGBT rights. How can you respectfully navigate your way through the discussion and uphold godly values?