The Ethics of Adultery, Fornication, Polygamy, and Birth Control

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Ethics
Adultery

- **Adultery**: Sexual relations by a married person with someone who is not their spouse
- Leviticus 20:10- “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.”
- Hebrews 13:4- “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”
Fornication

- **Fornication**: Any consensual sexual activity outside the bond of marriage (sexual immorality)
  - Greek, *porneía*
  - Mark 7:21 distinguishes it in a separate category than adultery

- Deuteronomy 22:20-29 makes it clear that such activity in the Old Testament was judged quite seriously
Fornication

• Ephesians 5:3-5 “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

• Such sexual immorality should never be seen in Christians
Fornication: Yes or No?

- Watching internet pornography?
- Making out?
- Above clothes groping?
- Kissing before marriage?
- French kissing?
- Premarital sex?
- Going to a strip club (just watching)?
Fornication: Yes or No?

My takes on the questions...

• Watching internet pornography? Yes
• Making out? Depends, but probably not
• Above clothes groping? Probably
• Kissing before marriage? Probably not
• French kissing? Gross... but probably not
• Premarital sex? Yes
• Going to a strip club (just watching)? Yes, or at least this is definitely lust

• Note: Disobeying or dishonoring your parents is sin, so on things like “making out” you still have to obey them!
Polygamy and Polyandry

- **The taking of more than one wife or husband**
- In Old Testament Israel, it was not encouraged but it was permitted (Exodus 21:10)
  - For kings, it was forbidden (Deuteronomy 17:17)
  - David (2 Samuel 3:2-5) and Solomon (1 Kings 11:3) were notable polygamists
  - It was not considered adultery (Deut. 21:15)
- In the New Testament, it is not explicitly forbidden, but it is implicitly banned (Mark 10:2-8)
Polygamy and Polyandry

• It is against the law in the United States, thus making it a violation of Romans 13
• It does violate the natural order that God created
• It is not wise
• However, if all the parties are consenting and the people are faithful within the marriages’ bonds, is it unethical for Christians? (discussion question)
Birth Control

• Birth control is condemned by some Christians as being unethical
  – It subverts God’s natural plan for sexuality (procreation)

• Argument against birth control: “Others point to Gen 1:28 (‘Be fruitful and multiply’) as a command which shows the purpose of sexuality. Of course, that command is deliberately disobeyed when contraceptive means are employed.”
Birth Control

• Response in favor of birth control
  – The command was unique to Adam and Eve since that was a new idea (reproduction) and the Earth was then empty (but is not now)
  – Reproduction is not the only Biblical role of sexuality
Birth Control

• Guiding Principles
  – Birth control does not make what is immoral to be moral (making premarital sex OK, for example)
  – Birth control that terminates life (‘morning-after pills’ or abortion) is murder
  – Make a decision that is within the conscience of you and your spouse
In Summary...

- The Christian ethical decision for sexual activity is for it to be restricted to within the bounds of marriage.
- As we have seen in previous lessons and here, sexual sins of the heart and mind are as legitimately sin as those physically committed.
- There are some grey areas where the Christian should exercise wise discretion, almost certainly erring on the side of caution.
- Christian teens need to obey and honor their parents!