

A STUDY OF LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT –

“YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY”

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

WE SHOULD FEAR AND LOVE GOD THAT WE LEAD AND PURE AND DECENT LIFE IN WORDS AND ACTIONS, AND THAT HUSBAND AND WIFE LOVE AND HONOR EACH OTHER.

❖ *“Therefore I have always taught that we should not look down upon marriage or undervalue it as the blind world and the false clergy are doing. We are rather to view it in the light of the Word of God, which adorns and sanctifies it.” - Martin Luther*

➤ **Why don't we consider marriage a sacrament like the Catholic church?**

❖ The term “sacrament” is not defined in Scripture, so various definitions are possible. Lutherans have used both wider and narrower definitions. In the New Testament, however, we find two acts in a class by themselves—baptism and the Lord's Supper. These rites share three characteristics: 1) Christ commanded the church to observe them until he returns; 2) both offer forgiveness of sins; 3) both have visible, material elements (water, and bread and wine). No other acts share these characteristics. We have therefore chosen to reserve the word “sacrament” for these two acts...We cannot, however, accept Roman Catholicism's system of seven sacraments for the following reasons: They demand that everyone accept their definition, even though Scripture has not defined the term. They place human customs like confirmation on the same level as divine institutions like baptism. They use their sacraments as means of meriting forgiveness, rather than as channels for receiving God's free forgiveness. (*Forward in Christ*, December 1996. John Brug)

❖ **Sacrament:** a sacred act, instituted by Christ for his church, in which an earthly element is used together with God's Word as a means of offering, giving, and sealing to us the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Only Holy Communion and Baptism fit this definition. Marriage, however, does not. God instituted and gave marriage not only to the church, but to human beings in general. In addition, God has attached no promise of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation to marriage. (*Forward in Christ*, June 2005. Defining Religion)

➤ **Which sins against the Sixth Commandment does God condemn in the following verses?**

❖ *“Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6: 9,10)*

❖ *“I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:28)*

❖ *“ ‘I hate divorce,’ says the Lord God.” (Malachi 2:16)*

- **Does God always hate divorce?**
 - ❖ What if a husband or wife is infertile and cannot give their spouse a child?
 - ❖ What if a husband or wife is in a terrible car crash and they are permanently living in a vegetative state?
- **It would be hard to find a more dysfunctional family than Jacob's. Yet the Bible spends a section of Genesis outlining their problems in great detail. What is something God wants you to learn from this?**
- **Your son, daughter, relative, or friend is thinking about getting married and comes to you for advice. What counsel would you give to them?**
- **In Old Testament times, God warned his people not to intermarry with the pagan nations around them. Does that still apply? How would you advise someone close to you if they were thinking about marrying someone who was not of the same faith?**

Some final words of encouragement for any married couples...

³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

❖ *"In conclusion, let it be said that this commandment requires that everyone not only should live his life, particularly also his married life, in chastity of thought, word, and deed but also should love and treasure the wife or husband given by God. This is why St. Paul so diligently admonishes husbands and wives to love and honor each other." – Martin Luther*