

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to oakhillpca.com/wsc

Q. 70. *Which is the seventh commandment?*

A. The seventh commandment is, *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

Q. 71. *What is required in the seventh commandment?*

A. The seventh commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behavior.

Q. 72. *What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?*

A. The seventh commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.

Much like the sixth commandment, we need to clarify the meaning of the seventh commandment.

"Adultery" has a narrow meaning in our culture: while married, engaging in sexual activity with someone who is not your spouse. As evidence from the unified teaching of Scripture, however, this commandment addresses more than this narrow application.

The root of this commandment is found in Genesis 2 in the marriage union of Adam and Eve. Verse 24 states, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." This "one flesh" union refers to the sexual union between a husband and wife. Jesus builds on this verse when he says, "So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:6). Sexual union in marriage is a sacred bond that God has designed. The seventh commandment seeks to protect that sacred bond. Any sexual activity outside of God's design for the one flesh union is a violation of the seventh commandment.

The Catechism explains that the scope of the command encompasses our "thoughts, words, and actions" (or "in heart, speech, and behavior").

1. Purity in Heart. Jesus explains the intent of this command when he says, "I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). The seventh commandment forbids impure thoughts and lust.

2. Purity in Speech. Paul links sexual immorality with our speech in Ephesians 5. "Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you... Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking... (Eph. 5:3-4). The seventh commandment ought to shape our speech.

3. Purity in Behavior. Purity is more than merely avoiding certain actions but includes the pursuit of holiness. As Paul explains, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor" (1 Thes. 4:3-4).

A high esteem for God's design for the sexual union leads to faithful obedience to the seventh commandment (Heb. 13:4).