

## Standard Building Codes

Matthew 5:27-28

The most nerve wracking part of building a house has got to be when the building inspector comes. We've never built a new house, but I have been a part of a couple of building projects in churches, and building inspector day was always a nervous day, because he would always find these things that didn't fit with code.

When you build a house, there are standard building codes you must follow. These building codes protect your family from things like tornadoes, earthquakes, and hurricanes. They insure your house doesn't burn down from shoddy electrical work, or that all your possessions aren't ruined when sloppy plumbing floods your house. You can sleep peacefully at night knowing that your children won't succumb during the night to noxious fumes from the heating and air system. The building codes may make it a little more difficult to build a house, but they are designed to insure that your house will be good and reliable and safe.

Likewise, God has certain building codes for building a home. These are standards that help insure that our marriages are happy and healthy. Remember, marriage is God's idea. He knows best how it works. He knows what leads to the most long lasting and most intimate relationship. Not only that, but sex was God's idea too. Yeah God! Not Hollywood's. Not Hugh Hefner's. Not Harlequin's. It's God's idea. God's not against sex. He's all for it. He's for great sex. That's why he's given us a standard building code, because he knows that only a relationship built according to code will be able to enjoy the intimacy and complete sexual fulfillment that he truly intended. He knows that when we build outside of code, it leads to nothing but hurt and brokenness and heartache. Oh, it's great in the short run, but it never lasts.

That's what happens when you build outside of the building code. The house looks great at first, but come back two years later. The siding is coming off. The paint is peeling. There're cracks in the foundation and wall. God doesn't want you to just have great sex for one night, or for one hormonally charged affair. He wants you to have it for the whole journey.

Sex, when you get it right, is wonderful, but when you get it wrong. . . Some of us have gotten it wrong. Some of us have gotten it very wrong. My hope is not to offer you condemnation for your mistakes, but like Jesus with the woman at the well, offer you living

water for your soul. Listen this morning with your head and with your heart. Listen for what God's Spirit might be saying to you. No matter who you are, no matter where your relationship is, no matter what you've done, there is help, there is hope, and there is healing beyond all of this. No matter how bad we may have messed up, and no matter how big our sin, and no matter how much we've been wronged, God's grace is always bigger.

If this sermon can keep one young couple from starting off on the wrong foot, if it can stop one affair, if it can prevent one divorce, or bring healing to one broken heart, or help one couple find the intimacy they thought they would never have again, it will be well worth our time this morning.

We're not talking about this, because Christians are against sex. Far from it. Sex is great. God's all for it. I'm all for it. But I want to show you a better way. We need to quit falling for the cheap imitations and shoddy substitutes of our culture. Sexual immorality is one of the greatest threats to the home. The world may tell us that sexual sin is victimless and harmless. "It doesn't hurt anybody." They say. The world couldn't be more wrong. There is nothing more devastating to a marriage than sexual immorality. There is nothing more damaging to the teenage psyche than sexual promiscuity. There is nothing more destructive to the home than sexual desire overflowing the banks of God's design. And frankly, it's destroys our ability to enjoy the best sex and have the most fulfilling and intimate relationships. If you want your marriage, your home and your family to be all that God wants them to be, you need to build according to these two building codes.

### **I. Code 1: Get the Truth**

In Matthew 5:27 Jesus says, *"You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery."* Jesus here is quoting from the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment. Let's just stop here for a bit, because this is the baseline for all that Jesus has to say about this. The word for adultery here forbids all kinds of sexual relations outside of marriage between a man and a woman. There is no Bill Clinton it depends on what the meaning of "is" is.

I Corinthians 6:9, 10 makes it even more clear, *"Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes nor homosexuals ...will inherit the kingdom of God."* Scripture is unequivocal. Within marriage, God says, "Go for it. It's great. Rejoice in it. It's

my gift to you.” But outside of marriage, God says, any sex for whatever the reason is wrong. We’re not just talking about what married people do outside of marriage; it’s about what anyone does outside of marriage.

When we first got married, Teresa’s dad gave me some books on marriage. Let me tell you there’s nothing more awkward than getting books about sex from your father-in-law. A couple of these books were by Walter Trobisch, a German missionary to central Africa. In the 1960s he wrote a couple of books on marriage: *I Married You* and *I Loved a Girl* which turned out to be some of the best stuff I’ve ever read on sex and marriage.

Trobisch was the first one I remember using the illustration of comparing sex to fire. We’re in the middle of winter, although yesterday was like 70 degrees, but when it’s cold my girls love a fire in fireplace. When there’s a fire in the fireplace it’s a beautiful thing. As long as the fire remains in the hearth it’s wonderful. It provides warmth. It provides light. If you’re camping in the woods, it provides safety. You can cook over its flames. However, if that fire ever escaped the fireplace it would be dangerous and destructive. It could burn our house down. It could destroy everything we have. It could kill us.

Walter Trobisch writes, “Marriage means for love what the hearth means for the fire.”<sup>i</sup> It turns out though he was not the first to compare sex to fire. In Proverbs 6, Solomon is warning against the dangers of adultery. Listen to what he says in verses 26-27:

*27 Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?  
28 Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?  
29 So is he who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.*

Solomon is saying you can’t just scoop the hot coals of sex out of the marriage hearth and not get burned. Inside of the hearth make the fire as hot as you want to make it. Inside the hearth of marriage the fire of sex provides warmth, comfort, light, and security, but as soon as you take those burning embers outside they damage and destroy.

This all goes back to God’s original design for marriage in the Garden of Eden. We must not forget that Marriage and sex were both God’s ideas. His rules aren’t designed to keep good things from you, but to show you the way to enjoy them the most and get the most out of them. This is the pattern for marriage throughout all of the Bible. The Bible doesn’t say a whole

lot about marriage, but this one thing is repeated four times in Scripture. I did a whole sermon on this passage last year, but let's revisit it briefly this morning.

Here's the pattern from Genesis 2, and let me add, it's the very pattern that Jesus himself endorses in Matthew and Mark, and the apostle Paul gives to the church, "*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*" This says that a divinely ordained marriage is based on three basic steps:

1. A man leaves his father and mother – The relationship is set apart, made exclusive. This is the public and social aspect to marriage.
2. He is united to his wife. – This is a union on all levels. This is the strongest Hebrew word that could be used for joining two things together. Glued together
3. One flesh – This is a common Hebraic expression for sex. This is the physical side.

What have we done to this order? We've turned it upside down. We do it backwards. We start off hopping in sack and dropping our drawers for whoever floats our boat. Then, if it gets serious, we move in together to see how we like it, then sometime down the road, when we get around to it, we make it official, and get married.

And we wonder why things don't work out. We're doing everything the opposite of the manufacturer's instructions, and we wonder why God doesn't bless our relationships. We wonder why are marriages are so unfulfilling. We wonder why we can't find true love. It's like getting in your car with a map to New York City, and then you drive to Los Angeles and wonder why you're not a Times Square.

Let me just say a word to all you husbands and wives out there who are struggling to remain in your marriage. The grass on the other side of the fence may start off looking so much greener than what's in your own yard. But you know what they say about greener grass? The grass is greener because it's over a septic tank. 80% of all men who have had an affair end up staying with or returning to their wives and of those who do divorce their wives, only 10% married the woman with whom they had the affair.

Keep one other thing in mind. Of the 10% of men who actually do marry the person with whom they have an affair, 70% of them get another divorce. They weren't faithful to their first spouse. What makes you think you're so special? Fantasy relationship. can't won't. doesn't.

Let me just say a word to the teenagers here. High school is frequently the stage of life when people forfeit their sexual purity. If you understand two important facts about teenage relationships, you might not be so casual about sex. Only 1 out of 1,000 high school relationships will end up in marriage. The average person will fall in love 7 times before they get married. If you were to have sex with each person that you said you were in love with, on average, your spouse would be the 7th person with whom you would share life's most intimate experience, and that's a lot of baggage to bring into a marriage.

Our culture is full of cheap imitations and shoddy substitutes. They might be red-hot coals, but they are all fire that has left the protection of the hearth. They don't provide the warmth, comfort and protection of the fireplace. They promise but they don't deliver. Our culture offers you the fantasy of porn, the imaginary love of a pretend woman in a ludicrous situation that would never happen in real life. God offers you the real love of a real woman who really wants you. The world offers you the conditional love and convenient sex of living together, but God offers you the security of commitment and unconditional love. Our culture offers you the cheap thrills of teenage hookups and premarital sex, but God offers you the chance of going into marriage with no baggage, no comparisons, and no competition so that you and your spouse can form fully and completely around each other. Our culture offers the unnatural passions of homosexuality, but God offers someone created to be your counterpart and compliment you in every way.

God offers you the real thing, not some cheap knock-off. If you build your home according to his standard building code you can have that real thing.

## **II. Code II: Guard Your Heart**

Jesus doesn't stop with just quoting the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment here. As he always does, Jesus probes deeper to get to the heart of the matter, which, in this case, is the heart. *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

The Bible calls the soul of our being—our innermost thoughts—the heart. The Bible talks of all kinds of hearts— a pure heart, a contrite heart, a deceitful heart, and a proud heart. The heart is where the core of the problem of adultery begins. That is why Jesus did something no

one else had ever done concerning adultery. Jesus said long before adultery takes place in the bed; it has already taken place in the head.

One of the best ways you can assure a lasting, loving marriage and assure that you stay out of sexual immorality is to guard your heart. Maintain pure thoughts. Don't give Satan a foot-hold in fantasy.

The word for "look" in verse 28 is in the present tense. It is talking about a continuous look, not a glance, but a gaze. Jesus said the problem with lust is not the sight of a beautiful woman or a good looking man, but the stare.

There is a difference between a look and a lustful look. C. S. Lewis once said, "If you look upon ham and eggs and lust, you have already committed breakfast in your heart!" His point was simple. There is a difference between looking and looking with lust. Lust is looking at a person for the purpose of deliberately stimulating desire. It is not just appreciating someone's beauty.

The world lies to us and says, there's nothing wrong with fantasy. Lust is only natural. In fact, our culture has turned lust into big business. Porn has gone from behind the counter straight to our homes. Porn has gone mainstream. One of the big movies this weekend is really nothing more than a porn flick designed for dissatisfied housewives. Did you know that Dakota Johnson, the actress in 50 Shades of Gratuitous Sex had to down shots of Whiskey just to film the sex scenes of that movie?

- Over \$10 billion dollars is spent on porn annually.
- The revenue of pornography is larger than the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball combined.
- There are over 2 million known porn site URL's on the internet.
- More than 2, 500 new sites are coming online every week.
- 93% of boys and 62% of girls will be exposed to online porn during their teenage years.
- 25 million Americans visit cyber-sex sites between 1-10 hours per week.

But again the world is lying to us. Lust is not harmless. God says it is a poison, a cancer. It spreads. It pollutes. It corrodes. It corrupts. The more lust is fed the more it consumes. It infects relationships. It robs us of our ability to truly enjoy sex. When men would rather look at an image on a screen, or women would rather chat with someone in a chatroom, than actually be with their real live spouse, something is wrong. Sadly though, Christians in huge numbers are

buying into the lie. A recent study found that more than 70% of all Christian men use pornography on a monthly basis. 60% of Christian women admit to having significant struggles with lust, and 40% say they have been involved in sexual sin within the last year. These are pastors, and elders and Sunday School teachers. No wonder our marriages are failing at almost the same rate as the culture.

Like a drug, lust demands more and more, but delivers less and less. Lust doesn't stay lust. It will eventually be acted on in some way, and it is that act that hurts and harms. It harms the spouse who cries herself to sleep because she wonders why she is no longer beautiful to her husband, and why she can never measure up to his airbrushed, makeup artist expectations. It harms the children who accidentally find the porn on the computer. It harms the children who wonder why mom and dad aren't together anymore. It harms the family who loses their home in foreclosure because they couldn't make house payment because the money was going to feed porn subscriptions and strip clubs. It harms the lonely porn star as she does porn to pay for the \$800 dollar a day drug habit she does to film the disgusting scenes she has to act out.

Adultery begins in the head, but did you know that most people who commit adultery didn't think it would happen to them, but there was something that allowed it to jump from the head to the bed. Whether it is your computer, Facebook or how you interact with that attractive coworker, I want you to remember this. Adultery requires being in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong person. I can make that negative into a positive. You cannot make a wrong move if you are not in the wrong place with the wrong person at the wrong time. You cannot get hooked on cocaine if you never use it. You cannot become an alcoholic if you never drink it. You cannot commit sexual sin if you do not allow yourself to get into the wrong situation.

What goes for the parents goes for the kids. Psychologist Henry Brandt tells the story of his son getting upset with him when he would not permit him to go out alone in a car with a girl down to the lake after dark. The son said, "What's wrong dad? Don't you trust me?"

Dr. Brandt said, "In a car, alone at night, in front of a lake, with a beautiful girl?" He said, "I wouldn't trust me. Why should I trust you?" Above all else, guard your heart. Please hear these next 4 words. DON'T BUY THE LIE! You say, "What lie?" Here are a few of

them.

1. **Everybody is doing it.** That simply isn't true. A recent study from the Department of Health and Human Services showed that 50% of girls between 15-19 have never had sex. Even if most everybody was doing, it doesn't change God's standard. A lot of people do lots of stupid stuff, but that doesn't mean their foolishness should define your life.

2. Here is lie number two. **I can handle it.** The lie here is that if you can't see the harm in doing something, it must not be harmful. If you think about it, that simply isn't true.

3. The next lie. **One time won't hurt.** Only a person who believes that there are no consequences for sins that are committed only once, would believe that. It only takes one time to get venereal disease. It only takes one time to get someone pregnant. It only takes one time to lose your purity forever.

4. Here is lie #3. **Nobody will know.** There are always at least two who will know. You will know and God will know. Furthermore, that implies that what God says is right and wrong, is only right and wrong, if someone else is watching, but we also know that is not true.

5. The final lie is - **But we love each other.** The only thing wrong with that is: you can never use love to justify sin. Love is the polar opposite of sin. Don't ever mistake love for lust.

If you are here today and you are living together out of wedlock or you, you began your marriage following the wrong set of blueprints and are dealing with some of the consequences now, if you are in the middle of an affair, or you have had an affair, or you are thinking about having an affair, let me give you some good news, because of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, not only can any past sin be forgiven, but any present sin can be overcome. Your future can be changed. What matters is not where you've been, or even where you are. It's where you're going.

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<sup>i</sup> Trobisch, Walter, (1971) I Married You, New York, NY. Harper and Row. P. 54