

Adulterating Marriage or Persons

Five years ago I introduced a concept about adulterating marriage which I thought was new. At least, in my limited educational box, I had never read or heard it expressed before. I expected some reaction to it but received none that I recall. So I would like to call your attention to it again.

The concept of *adultery* or *adulteration* is not just related to religion or sexual relations. In common usage, to adulterate means to corrupt, debase, or make impure by the addition of a foreign or inferior substance. We have federal agencies to protect the public against the adulteration of our food, drugs, and contracts. The scriptures give us guidelines for prevention and dealing with adulteration of marriages.

If a pharmacist adulterates the medication that he sells, he is an adulterer but it is the medication that is adulterated. He is not what is adulterated. In similar thought, a person who slanders is a slanderer but he is not the one slandered. Another person is slandered. Or, one who murders is a murderer but he is not the one murdered. Someone else is murdered.

In these cases, the action of each is unlawful and sinful. But we do not say the pharmacist is living in adultery, the slanderer is living in slander, or the murderer is living in murder. Neither do we say that the pharmacist and his victims are living in adultery, or the slanderer and the one he slandered are living in slander, or the murderer and the one he murdered are living in murder.

While it is true that the person may become the adulterer and sexual relations outside of the marriage by a married person may be the adulterant, the thing that is adulterated is the marriage itself. Our invented term "*living in adultery*" is neither found nor implied in the scriptures. Only the Lord knows, however, how many persons are unknowingly in an adulterated marriage because of the secret affairs of their spouses. Who will contend that such an innocent mate would be condemned because of it? Can an adulterous man be "*living in adultery*" while his innocent wife is not?

Even if a woman knows her husband has adulterated their marriage, there is no law or reason demanding that she divorce him. And especially, if he repents, asks for forgiveness, and is forgiven, he is no longer an adulterer, and their marriage is pure again (Consider 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Two people do not adulterate marriage by marrying.