

Matthew 5: Reconciling in the Spirit

Reconciliation, Betrayal- lust and adultery, divorce and adultery- concludes with covenant faithfulness

Matthew 5:21-26 ²¹ “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. ²³ Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. ²⁵ Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

Close relationships bring us the greatest joys and, because they are close, the deepest pains. All relationships are tested.

Matthew 5:9 ⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Did you know that God is a peacemaker? God would rather see reconciliation of enemies than vengeance on a foe.

The Spirit reveals the spirit of the Law: Murderous thoughts lose their power when we deal with the anger, the degradation, and the name-calling first.

The “do not” command becomes a “do” command. DO love others as God loves you- forgive, seek reconciliation, and never degrade- another person.

This principle is tested particularly when we experience betrayal and breaches of trust.

Matthew 5:27-32 ²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

Treat lust with a surgical seriousness, and you have prevented the adultery. Don’t underestimate sins of the heart!

Notice that Jesus speaks to the men about the lust of the eyes, and then presses them on an even more serious matter.

³¹ “It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; ³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Context

Matthew 19:3-10 ³ Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” ⁴ And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” ⁷ They *said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send *her* away?” ⁸ He *said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. ⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” ¹⁰ The disciples *said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.”

In Jesus' day, there was a very casual attitude toward divorce, a social stigma against divorcees (women especially), and a very negative view of marriage. Sound familiar?

Men were casually sending away their wives without justification, and the women were left husbandless, homeless, and helpless, with no way to rebuild their lives.

The certificate of divorce imposed by Moses was an act of compassion; it simply allowed a woman to prove she was not a runaway wife, that her husband had sent her away, and that she was free from obligation to him.

It also created accountability for these men. They had to sign their name to an official document acknowledging that they were breaking the Covenant they entered with God and this woman.

Seriousness of divorce. How do we get here? Back to the beginning of the passage

Offenses occur and are unresolved, anger and degradation ensue, a spouse starts looking at other women (or men) in a society where divorce is common and marriage devalued, the heart hardens toward the spouse, and divorce follows.

God hates divorce ALWAYS, and He permits it RARELY- in the case of immorality, where the covenant has been violated and reconciliation is, for one reason or another, not possible.

As for remarriage, God does not recognize unjustifiable divorces, so in those cases, He considers remarriage adultery. However, in the right situation, godly remarriages are new beginnings that demonstrate Christ's redemption.

Clearly, Jesus' teaching was meant to reestablish the sanctity of marriage, the rarity of divorce, and God's people as faithful covenant-keepers, just as He is.

Which leads us to...

Matthew 5: 33-37 ³³ "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.' ³⁴ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.

Deuteronomy 7:9 ⁹ Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments

Who have you given your word to? What have you committed to? Make good on your Word as God does.

Could you suffer an offense that is worse than what God has forgiven you of? Then forgive one another from the heart!