

Sermon on the Mount - Part 8

by David Servant

Jesus teaches his disciples to avoid lust and to guard their hearts and minds against the dangers of impurity, emphasizing the importance of purity in thought and action for living a life of righteousness.

Duration: 28:30

Scripture: Matthew 5:27

Topics: "Marriage And Divorce", "Purity Of Heart"

Description

This sermon delves into Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount, focusing on the topics of adultery, lust, divorce, and remarriage. Jesus emphasizes the importance of purity in heart and mind, warning against lustful thoughts and actions that lead to sin. The sermon highlights the need to guard against temptation and avoid situations that may lead to stumbling. It also addresses the misconceptions surrounding divorce and remarriage, urging a deeper understanding of Christ's teachings in the context of the entire Bible.

Transcript

Well, hello and welcome to our program. Thanks so much for joining me today. I am once again sitting here not very far from the very place that Jesus originally gave the Sermon on the Mount.

And so we thought that would be an appropriate place for us to go through the Sermon on the Mount. And I'm so glad that you've joined me on this journey. We've already gone through a major portion of Matthew chapter five.

And I'd like to say that this portion of Matthew five is introductory material where Christ lays the foundation. That it's absolutely essential to understand that foundation to understand really what Christ continues to say. And although you can go ahead and break in at the middle at any point in time, you're just not going to get as much out of it as if you would if you had started with us at the beginning.

Jesus did not give this sermon in segments. He gave this sermon in one sitting while people heard him from the beginning until the end. All right.

So if you've got your Bible, can you open to Matthew chapter five and verse number 27. And remember Jesus has told his disciples just a few sentences earlier, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. We have elaborated on that verse in

previous programs.

I won't belabor that point now, but that's what he's building on. That's what he's elaborating on now. He often says, you have heard it was said, and that was always true.

They had heard these things said, either read by the rulers of the synagogues or the scribes and Pharisees, or they had heard them said by the same people in those same places because the rulers of the synagogues would give sermons just like preachers give sermons today in churches. And so he'd say, you've heard it said, and then he would say, but I say to you. Now don't make the mistake that some make in thinking that Jesus is changing what God said in the old covenant.

No, that never happens here. And I'll point that out as we go through. In the first one, Jesus said, you have heard it said, you shall not commit murder.

That's a verbatim quote. It's in capital letters in my Bible. And then he goes on and gives a second quote, whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.

That's not in all caps in my Bible. Why? Because it's not a quote from the old Testament. It's a commentary by some ruler or scribe in the synagogue.

Okay. And so now the second one is you have heard that it was said, this is verse 27, you shall not commit adultery in my Bible. That is a verbatim quote, of course, of the one of the 10 commandments.

It's all capitalized here. And so what, what Jesus is saying is, is you've heard this and I didn't come to abolish the law. I came to fill the law to the full.

You've heard this said when this, when the scribes or Pharisees, the rulers of the synagogue have preached to you, don't commit adultery. He said, but the life that they're living, the example that your spiritual leaders are setting in front of you is not a good example of following this commandment. Because although they may not be physically committing adultery, they're guilty of adultery in at least two other ways.

And he's going to elaborate on those two other ways, which these spiritual leaders whom his disciples must exceed in their righteousness, if they hope to get in heaven are breaking that very important commandment. One of the 10, thou shall not commit adultery. So then Jesus elaborates and he says, but I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Now remember when we talked about murder, the previous broadcast, how Jesus said, listen, God's not just opposed to the physical act of murder. God is a holy, pure God and blessed are those who are pure in heart for they shall see God. The scribes and Pharisees were not pure in heart.

They didn't physically murder people, but they verbally murdered them and they had hearts of murderers. And so they're going to hell. Same thing here.

They weren't physically committing adultery, the scribes and Pharisees for the most part, but yet they're still guilty in God's eyes of committing adultery. And one of those ways is they've got lust in their heart. So what is that? They're dreaming about what they'd like to do.

They're mentally undressing women who are not their wives. And to whatever degree that they can be guilty of what we would call pornography today, they didn't have it like we have it, but pornography is a sin that can be committed right in your mind, obviously. Now, see how Jesus is raising the bar so much here for us.

He's saying, I'm not just opposed to the physical act of adultery. I'm opposed to the thoughts that lead to adultery because listen, no one ever yet committed adultery who didn't first commit the sin of lust. Isn't that true? Adultery begins with lust.

And so the sin doesn't take place at the point of adultery. The sin starts to take place at the point of lust. And so Christ's saying, my disciples, I want them to be pure in their hearts and not even think about adultery, not be mentally undressing women who are not their wives.

You hear what I'm saying? And that's so, so, so, so important. And in our day and age, when this sin is so rampant because there are so many visual images that are constantly bombarding us, that would lead us to lust, the disciple of Jesus Christ has a huge challenge before him. Just women's modern fashions, you know, stand in such opposition to the disciple of Christ who wants to keep a pure heart and a pure mind.

All right, so that's the standard. Christ raises the bar considerably now. And that's what we need to consider.

What's interesting, I think, about this portion of the Sermon on the Mount is the man who was talking to us is the man who invented sex. You know, he's the one who created them male and female. It was his idea that the opposite sexes would be attracted to each other.

Isn't that interesting? And so he's like the ultimate authority on this. He knows that men are interested in what women look like because he created them to be that way. You know, I remember when I was just a young boy, we used to go to a public swimming pool and I didn't notice everything that was going on around me back in those days.

I was just a young boy and we went there to get candy and play and chase each other and swim and dive and jump and splash and all that kind of stuff. And we had a blast. But I remember one summer, things suddenly changed.

I began to look around me and lo and behold, there were girls there and they were nice looking girls. And I was very interested in looking at those girls and they had bikinis. And, you know, so I remember, you know, I got myself a pair of sunglasses, really dark sunglasses so that I could appear like I'm looking in one direction but actually be looking in the other direction to see what I could see.

It became supremely interesting to me. Well, okay now, again, I was lusting and I'm not finding any excuse for that. I was not a Christian at that point in time.

But why was I suddenly interested in something I was not interested in before? Because I had matured, I had grown, and the God who created me shifted me into that phase where suddenly, you know, girls who used to be yucky suddenly were beautiful. And I was very interested. And so then it becomes a challenge.

Okay, so God understands that. And so if anyone understands sexual drive and sexual desire, it's God. He's the guy that thought of it in the first place, okay? And so Jesus is the authority on the subject.

Now look what the guy says. And I don't use that in a, please forgive me for saying, but the guy says, you know, the guy is Jesus Christ, the Son of God here. He said, if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you.

It is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, throw it from you. It is better that one of the parts of your body perish than for your whole body to perish in hell.

A couple of things that need to be pointed out about that. First of all, Jesus is warning his disciples of the possibility of them being thrown into hell if they yield to lust. And so again, that stands in direct contradiction to what so many are telling us today, that there's no possible way to forfeit your spiritual status before God.

If that is true, then why did Jesus warn his disciples of that very thing, that they could be cast into hell unless they did something to guard themselves against lust and what it inevitably would lead to. The second thing that needs to be said is this, that the one who placed within us this desire knows the only way to control it. That is, avoid what's causing you to stumble.

Avoid what's causing you to stumble. Now, he speaks very literally here and says if your eye caused you to stumble, pluck it out, throw it from you. Well, you know, if we all did that literally, I guess we wouldn't have any eyes.

But I've said this kind of humorously in the past, if a lustful person plucks out his eye, all that does is make him a one-eyed luster. Plucking out the eye does not cure the lust. You have to make a decision in your heart.

So what Christ is saying is get rid of what caused you to stumble. And so if, for example, if you are unable to control that desire within you to the degree that you find yourself pulled to pornography on the internet, then what should you do? You should unplug the internet cable and get rid of it. And, you know, people say, oh, no, I can't do without my internet.

You know, I use it for email and I get so much good information. Okay, keep your internet and go to hell. That's your choice.

You know, cling to your computer. I'm sure in hell you'll be holding your laptop saying, well, I'm in hell, but I'm sure had a lot of fun on the earth, got to see a lot of pretty women on my computer screen. No, you won't be saying that.

You'll be saying, I wish I got rid of that stuff that was causing me to stumble. And you see, once you yield to it at first, it gets a grip on you. Like all sin, it's addictive in nature.

You aren't satisfied. You want more and more and more. It's lust.

And so the way to beat it is at the beginning, nip it at the bud. Okay. If you don't want to ever commit adultery, I'll tell you how.

Don't commit lust. If you don't ever want to get drunk, I'll tell you how. Don't ever drink any alcohol.

You'll never get drunk. All right. So this is the advice from the lips of the man, the son of God, who invented sex.

Let's take his advice. Be right back after this short side trip. I'm sitting right here at the street level of a street that existed in Jesus' day.

And so he may well have walked the street right outside the western wall of the Temple Mount. This massive pile of rubble are actually former stones from the top of this wall. These stones, some of them are as many as 50 tons, particularly in the corners.

And they were 40 courses high from the street level. When the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD, they didn't stop there, but they also destroyed much of the retaining wall. And they've lain here now for almost 2,000 years.

Remember, Jesus did say that there would be one stone left upon another in the temple. And that startled the apostles who heard him say it that day. But it all came to pass, not just the temple, but the wall itself came crumbling down.

All righty. Welcome back. And we're looking at Jesus' words there about guarding our hearts and our minds against lust.

You know, it was God who created men to be sexually stimulated by what they see. And for that reason, scripture admonishes Christian women to dress modestly. Well, that's important.

And Jesus said, woe to those who cause others to stumble. Well, see, if lust, as Jesus warned, can ultimately result in someone going to hell, then a Christian woman would not want to do anything that would cause a brother in Christ, or anyone for that matter, to stumble into sin that might ultimately cause him to land in hell. All right, so there's nothing wrong with Christian women looking their best, but don't make a sexual statement by your dress.

And so much of fashion today, you know, they're making a sexual statement because their clothing is like skin. And the clothing is smaller and smaller, so there's more and more skin. It's so revealing.

There's nothing left to anyone's, even their imagination, you know, those who would lust in that way. And so dress modestly. Yes, be attractive, but dress modestly.

Don't cause anyone to stumble. Woe to you if you cause people to stumble, Christ said. As I said in the last segment, Jesus knows everything about the human sexual drive.

He's the one that invented it. And that's why he said, here's how you control it. You avoid what causes you to stumble.

And so if television caused you to stumble, and look, there's a lot of stuff on television that causes people to stumble. There's so much sexual content on there that could lead to lust. Get rid of your television.

And I'm not telling you to do something I haven't done. We got rid of our television set, I guess probably about two decades ago, and somehow we've survived without it. Now we do have a TV-VCR monitor combination.

We can rent a movie of our choosing and show it that way. And we do have access to other people's television sets. We can watch them if we want to.

But I made a decision about 19 years ago to get the television out of our house. And when I see it these days, the content to me is so shocking, because I don't watch it that much. I just cannot believe.

Well, that's just how it is. It's like the proverbial frog in the kettle. The temperature keeps going up and up before long the water is boiling.

But because it was a gradual increase in temperature, the frog never realized it. He never hops out. He never realizes the danger.

And he's become desensitized to what's going on around him, and he's boiled to death. The same thing has happened in our culture today, where what would shock non-Christians 20 years ago is commonplace, and Christians are watching it as regular affair and talking about it in church. Oh, did you see such and such a program in church? Oh, my goodness.

What is wrong with you? Turn that slush off and get it out of your life before it drags you straight to hell. We read it. We read it.

Jesus said, if your eye caused you to stumble, cut it off. He said this to his disciples, to Christians. If your eye caused you to stumble, cut off.

It's better to go to heaven missing an eye than go to hell with both your eyes. He's warning his people, you could go to hell over this. You know, Paul said this in his epistles, do not be deceived, my brethren.

He lists various categories of people who will not inherit God's kingdom. Don't be deceived, adulterers, fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God. And so God wants his people, Jesus wants his disciples to be sexually pure to their heart, to their minds.

Well, you'll find it's a lot easier to get victory in this regard, and I'm talking particularly to men, because men stumble so much over this because of all the visual stuff that's out there. If you get rid of what's causing you to stumble, get rid of what is stimulating you to stumble, get rid of it. Get rid of lust from your life, okay? You know, Paul knew how strong this desire was.

He said in his epistle to the Corinthians, he said, it's better to marry than it is to burn. Now, he was recommending you don't get married at the time. Think about this.

He's saying, don't get married. Things are tough. But he says, but listen, some of you need to get married because it's better to marry than it is to burn.

He's speaking of burning with passion. You're struggling so much in this regard because of that strong desire, well, then you just better get married. That's the solution.

Okay. And that desire is so strong, it's so obvious because, and I have seen pastors, well-established pastors who had been ministers for years, who had respectable ministries, were making a good living, great family, great reputation in their community. They threw it all away for a one-night stand, a sexual experience with somebody who wasn't their wife, and it was discovered, and they lost their ministry, they lost their salary, they lost their family, they lost their reputation.

They lost everything because of that. Now, do you think if that guy would have been thinking in his right mind, he would have done differently? Oh, he would have done differently if he'd have been thinking in his right mind. But you see, this desire can take you out of your right mind.

I was reading an article in a pretty respectable magazine some time ago, National Geographic. They did an article on people who fall in love, and scientists have done studies about the chemical things that are going on in their brains, and they said, you know, what we see in the brains of people that are falling in love is very similar to what we see in the brains of people who are going out of their minds. People that have mental illness, the same sort of stuff we're seeing happening in the brains of the people who are falling in love.

So you see, it takes you over, and so you gotta guard yourself from even getting to the place where it could take you over a little bit. You know, pastors who make the foolish mistake of counseling women privately in their offices, you know, week after week, same old story, you know, before long, they've stumbled into sin and lost everything. You see, so avoid the temptation.

Don't put yourself in a position where you're gonna stumble and fall. Stay away from that stuff. Flee from these things, Paul said to Timothy.

Flee, youthful us. Get away from it altogether. And it's so tough in our culture, you know, you can hardly go to a grocery store without being subject to these images and so forth on the magazines on your way out and so forth.

We're just living in a sick world. Pray that Jesus would come quickly, right? So that's what the Lord Jesus Christ said we should do, and that's a form of adultery according to Christ. So now he continues his elaboration, and he equates, in one sense, divorce and remarriage with adultery.

And we're not gonna have time in this program to go into this in detail. We will in our very next program, and we'll go into as much detail as we can, but I want you just to start to begin to think about this a little bit. How is it possible that divorce and remarriage could be equivalent to adultery? Well I can think of some senses, some cases of divorce and remarriage that would be absolutely no different than adultery, purely from a logical, observational standpoint.

And I can think of other cases of divorce and remarriage that, from a logical point of view, they're not as much, at least, like adultery. In fact, in some cases I'm tempted to think it doesn't resemble adultery at all. Now what am I saying? Well, like for example, in the case of, here's a guy that's married, and he sees a woman who is very attractive, and he says, you know, I want her, and he's lusting after her, and so he quickly divorces his wife and marries that woman.

If he thinks he's guiltless, because, oh, you know, I didn't commit adultery, can you understand that this guy's fooling himself, but he's not fooling God? What he's done is really no different than adultery, because he lusted after someone who was not his wife, and he went to bed with her. Well, yeah, he went through a formality, he had divorced his wife, and he married this other gal, but that's just a formality. What he did was equivalent.

The same thing was going on in his heart that is going on in the heart of the person who commits adultery. You see that. But in some cases, when I think of people that I know who are wonderful, wonderful followers of Christ, committed followers of Christ, who, like all of us, before we got saved were absolute wretches.

Were you not a wretch before you got saved? I bet you were. We're horrible before we get saved. Well, people get married before they get saved.

People get divorced before they get saved. So I've got lots of people like that that I know, and they're wonderful followers of Christ now. Since their conversion to Christ, they've gotten remarried, so they've got a second spouse now who is also a true follower of Christ.

Again, their divorce and their remarriage were separated many times by years, so they weren't divorcing their former spouse to get the new spouse. They had problems in their relationship. They worked as hard as they could to try to make it work.

It didn't work, and so reluctantly, as in every case, they go through the agony of divorce. Then two years later, they get saved. Their whole life changes.

Then one day at church, they look across a crowded congregation, and they see the woman or the man of their dreams, and they get to know each other and so forth. In a godly relationship, they pray and so forth, and they feel that they're right for each other, and they get remarried. It's hard to understand how that is the equivalent of adultery.

I want you just to think about this as we close this broadcast and as we prepare for our next program, because Jesus is talking about what constitutes adultery. He made some statements here about divorce and remarriage that I think have been misunderstood because they have been interpreted outside of the immediate context. That is, he's redefining adultery.

Not redefining it, he's defining adultery. He knows what adultery is. Secondly, they've been misinterpreted because they've been removed from the context of the whole Bible.

We'll go into this in detail in our next program and consider exactly what Jesus is saying about divorce and remarriage. I think it's going to bring a lot of freedom. Again, we're not trying to give anyone any excuse to sin.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. But I think that as Christians have struggled with these words that we're about to read regarding divorce and remarriage, trying to interpret them and trying to apply them sincerely. Many ministries, ministers, denominations, everyone has an opinion as to what Christ meant, and everybody interprets Christ's words to some degree in light of the rest of the scripture.

But I don't think that all of them go far enough, and so that's exactly what we're going to try to do. We'll be looking in the Old Testament what God says about divorce and remarriage. We'll be looking at what the New Testament says about divorce and remarriage, and we're not going to just take one verse out and say, here's what the Bible says.

No, we're going to look at the whole Bible. I look forward to being with you very much during the next program. I hope that you'll join us.

Until then, keep following Jesus with all your heart. God bless you. Hey, there's a whole lot more happening through the ministry of Heaven's Family than just this teaching broadcast.

Heaven's Family consists of three divisions, the first of which is Shepherd Serve. And through the ministry of Shepherd Serve, we are literally equipping thousands of hungry pastors around the world with vital biblical truth every single year. We do that in two ways.

First of all, by pastors conferences. They're happening almost every single month somewhere in the world. And secondly, through the translation and publication and distribution of a 500-page equipping manual called The Disciple-Making Minister.

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You can read about it at all three of our websites. Thanks so much. God bless you.

God bless you.

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