

***Temptations to Avoid: Disregarding the Sanctity of Marriage and False Commitments (Mt. 5:31-37)***

**I. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW TO AVOIDING SIX TEMPTATIONS**

- A. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' most comprehensive statement about our role in cooperating with grace. We need faith teaching to equip us to experience grace to walk in the 8 Beatitudes. The promise of being blessed includes living with a vibrant heart by the Spirit's activity in us.
- B. Jesus identifies six temptations to avoid: ***anger*** (spirit of murder, Mt. 5:21-26), ***adultery*** (spirit of immorality, Mt. 5:27-30), ***disregarding the sanctity of marriage*** (disloyalty in relationships, Mt. 5:31-32), ***false commitments*** (spirit of manipulation for self-promotion, Mt. 5:33-37), ***retaliation*** for personal inconveniences (spirit of revenge Mt. 5:38-42), and ***inactivity*** when mistreated (refusing active love, Mt. 5:43-47).
- C. Allowing these temptations growth, poisons our hearts (1 Pet. 2:11), keeps us from enjoying our life in the Kingdom and hinders us from reaping internal, external and eternal rewards. In each of these temptations Jesus references the Law of Moses, teaching God's original intent meant to liberate the human heart in obedience.

**II. TEMPTATION #3 - DISREGARDING THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE (RELATIONAL DISLOYALTY)**

- A. Jesus taught on the sanctity of marriage by *highlighting the importance of the physical union* created in marriage before God *over the legal certificate*. The Pharisees were focused on the legal document that allowing divorce for any reason. We resist the temptation to disregarding the sanctity of marriage before God by being disloyal in our marriages.  
***<sup>31</sup>Furthermore it has been said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce." <sup>32</sup>But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." (Mt. 5:31-32)***
- B. In Matthew 5, Jesus does not give a comprehensive teaching on divorce and remarriage or address the many pastoral issues related to divorce and remarriage. Instead He focuses on the foundational principle related to the sanctity of the physical bond of marriage. When we do not honor the marriage covenant, we grieve the Holy Spirit, defile ourselves and others, while preventing ourselves from walking in a vibrant heart.
- C. The main passages regarding the sanctity of marriage are found in Mal. 2:14-16; Mt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mk. 10:11-12; Lk. 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:10-15, 27, 39.
- D. According the Jesus, there are two components in establishing a marriage or in ending one.
  - 1. First, *in public*, a legal covenant is made between a man and a woman authorized by the state.
  - 2. Second, *in private*, the couple physically consummate the marriage, becoming one flesh.

- E. Therefore, sexual union alone does not constitute marriage without a public exchange of vows that is documented legally. Furthermore, a legal divorce alone does not dissolve a marriage in God's eyes as the couple was united through physical union. A marriage is ended in God's eyes only when both the legal contract is ended and the physical bond is broken.
- F. In this command, Jesus is protecting women, who if divorced, were cast from the home. In that day, women were economically, politically disadvantaged so that they could not independently provide for themselves. In essence, if a woman was divorced, it would cause her to remarry, and if no adultery in her previous marriage occurred, break of the physical bond of marriage and commit adultery. Jesus is rebuking those who could divorce their wife but suffer no immediate physical, legal or financial consequence under the religious leader's interpretation of the Law of Moses.
- G. ***The Biblical View of Marriage and Divorce:*** The sanctity of marriage is a very important kingdom value. Therefore, divorce and remarriage are only permitted for two reasons—adultery (immorality) and desertion. This is the prevailing Protestant view which is supported in the Westminster Confession of Faith.
- H. ***Immorality:*** in Matthew 19:8-9, Jesus states that whoever commits acts of sexual immorality to someone outside of their marriage has violated the marriage covenant. While viewing pornography is destructive and hurtful, this relates to the act of sexual immorality, not just the thoughts. Whoever **first** commits sexual immorality has violated the marriage covenant by making a new physical and spiritual bond with another (adultery). Jesus teaches that whoever divorces someone and remarries *without there being a violation*, commits adultery. Their second marriage is an act of adultery, because in God's eyes the first marriage still stands.
- <sup>8</sup>He said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives...<sup>9</sup>Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." (Mt. 19:8-9)***
- I. ***Desertion from the Faith:*** Paul encountered another issue amidst Gentile conversions: Only one member of the marriage would convert to Christianity. What was to be done then? Paul stressed that the believing spouse was not to leave the unbelieving spouse. The converted spouse **sanctifies** the family by influencing them through being a vessel of grace in their home (1 Cor. 7:12-14). However if the unbelieving spouse left the converted spouse on the basis of their refusal to renounce Jesus, the believer was no longer bound in the marriage covenant and could remarry.
- <sup>15</sup>But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. (1 Cor. 7:15)***
- J. God gives grace to divorced believers to live fulfilling lives in purity with a vibrant heart before Him. It is much better for a divorced believer to wrestle with their singleness than commit adultery by remarrying.
- K. Believers who violate biblical principles in remarriage must continue in the marriage, but should acknowledge that the new marriage involved an act of adultery. It should be confessed to God with the assurance of His forgiveness. Staying in the marriage is God's will for the couple. A physical union has been formed and it is now sacred to God and He can still bless them.

### III. TEMPTATION #4 - FALSE COMMITMENTS

- A. Jesus taught the importance of resisting the temptation to not keep our word and agreements—commitment breaking (Mat. 5:33-37). He did not quote a specific law, but referred to the Pharisees' summary of several laws (Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 10:20; 23:21-24). Jesus was not correcting or changing a Mosaic law, but was restoring its original meaning.

*<sup>33</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ <sup>34</sup>But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; <sup>35</sup>nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup>Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (Mt. 5:33-37)*

- B. The Pharisees distorted their application of the third commandment (Ex. 20:7). They taught that the main issue was to keep oaths *in God’s name* instead of keeping all of our commitments. They argued that the law forbade using *God’s name* in vain, but not in making commitments in vain.

*<sup>7</sup>You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain... (Ex. 20:7)*

- C. The Pharisees developed a new system for making vows, allowing them to be dishonest. In essence, only vows made to the Lord were binding, but if they were made in something else, they were only as binding as the value of the thing itself. Depending on the value of the object which they swore upon (the city of Jerusalem or their own head), required them to keep their word. Of course the evaluation was subjective and gave them room to break their word without breaking the Law of Moses. The Pharisees had distorted God’s original desire for His people to be truthful in all things, accurately representing Him and living lives of integrity with their speech, lifestyle and doctrine. Instead they devalued God by being poor witnesses of Him.

- D. In this teaching, Jesus did not inhibit oaths. In fact Jesus answered under oath before the Sanhedrin (Mt. 26:63-64). Paul used oaths when calling God as witness (Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20; 1 Thes. 2:5, 10; Phil. 1:8). Oaths are permitted on solemn, public occasions to protect all participating parties from dishonesty.

- E. However, in private settings and in ordinary conversations, Jesus is saying oaths should not be used, simply our own spoken word. Following Jesus teaching in this area includes:

1. Not ***promoting ourselves in a false way*** by exaggerating our commitment level. We should not extend our selves regarding our work, our money, or service our involvement only later to not do what we said. This involves meeting a friend for coffee, our commitments to our spouse or children and our commitments to leaders at our work place or church.
2. When we promote ourselves beyond our abilities, we operate in ***a spirit of manipulation***, portraying ourselves beyond what we can do. We are using our words to create an image of ourselves that does not exist in return for a favorable opinion or situation to occur.

# **TRANSMISSION CHURCH CONFERENCE - SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

**SESSION 5 - SIX TEMPTATIONS TO AVOID, PART TWO (MAT. 5:31-37)**

**—BRIAN BEESON**

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F. When we operate in integrity, what do what we say we will do. We operate in truth as God is Truth (John 14:6). When Jesus said, ***Let your “Yes” be “Yes”***, He called for truthfulness and integrity in our commitments. People of integrity do not need oaths and should refuse them unless required by an authority.

***<sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life... (John 14:6)***

G. When we fail in following through with our commitments, integrity demands we acknowledge it, whether big or small. This applies to our marriage, children, workplace, friends, financial obligations, ministry situations, etc. This is to walk out a Sermon on the Mount lifestyle.

H. Jesus teaches truthful speech because it permits us to experience God to a greater degree (Ps. 15:1-4; 24:3-4)

***<sup>3</sup>Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? <sup>4</sup>He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not...sworn deceitfully. (Ps. 24:3-4)***

***<sup>1</sup> Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? <sup>2</sup> He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart. (Ps. 15:1-2)***