



Protecting Your Marriage

I. INTRO

- A. Two blog posts this past week: 1) Discovering Your Holy Passions, 2) Sex and KHC (including some practical guides for internet safety).
- B. We are in a series looking at some key passages from the SOTM. Today we will be in Mat 5:27-37.
- C. By way of review we have said that Jesus is the most revolutionary person who has ever lived.
 1. Jesus came to launch a subversive and seditious revolution to overthrow a very broken world system and to establish the kingdom of God on the earth (which He did) – and the SOTM is His manifesto.¹
 2. As we have said, in the first coming of Jesus he established the KOG on the earth and in his second coming He will consummate the KOG on the earth – and we have the privilege (and the calling) to live in the in between period of time.
 3. “We live in the [tension of the] already and the not yet” --George Ladd
- D. But before we get into our text today I would like to put a chart up on the screen that describes the difference between moralism (i.e., religion) and the gospel (or good news) of the established KOG.
 1. As a “gospel centered” church it’s important to see the difference between “sharing the gospel” and keeping the gospel of the KOG at the center of all that we ARE and all that we DO.
 2. Many Christians understand grace for salvation but not grace for transformation (i.e., sanctification).
 3. We need to be clear that the chart will describe the resources available to the active intentional follower of Jesus:

¹ Like Marx & Lenin’s *Communist Manifesto*, or the *U.S. Declaration of Independence*, or Martin Luther King Jr’s *I Have A Dream Speech*.

- a. One whose heart has been awakened to the gospel call of salvation
- b. One who has repented of their sin, and received God’s gift of salvation
- c. One who has been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone

4. Let’s take a look...

Moralism (or, Religion)	The Gospel
I obey, therefore I’m accepted	I’m accepted by God; therefore I obey
Motivation is fear and insecurity	Motivation is grateful joy
I obey to get things from God	I obey to get God — to delight in God
When circumstances go wrong there is anger	When circumstances go wrong there is struggle but knowing God is in control
When criticized we are either furious or devastated	When criticized we struggle but know my identity is in God
Prayer life is primarily about petition	Prayer life is primarily about being present with God
Self view swings from confidence to lacking confidence	<u>Self view</u> understands our depraved nature, but that we are also accepted in Christ. Humility based confidence
Identity and self worth are achievement based	Identity is in Christ, who He is and what He has done
We produce idols to sustain our hope and confidence	No need for idols since Christ is all

E. So, with these gospel distinctives in mind we will be looking at Matthew 5:27-37.

- 1. Contained in these 11 verses are the second, third, and fourth illustrations of Jesus’ teaching, wherein He follows up the traditional (i.e., OT) teaching which supersedes² (or, surpasses) the Law of Moses.³

² In the SOTM Jesus shows us the eternal heart principles that undergird the Mosaic Law.

³ We see this in vs. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, and 43. *“You have heard it said...but I say to you...”*

It is radical It is revolutionary and it is new – it had never been heard before.

2. A key feature of the SOTM, and particularly our passage last week and today, is that Jesus dives into our innermost being, probing the heart and raising the question of motive. (The Pharisees and scribes had forgotten the spirit of the law.)

F. Matthew 5:27-37 (emphasis added):

Lust (vs. 27-30)

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Adultery (vs. 31-32)

³¹"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³²But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths⁴ (vs. 33-37)

³³"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' ³⁴But I say to you, 'Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.'" [pray]

II. BODY

- A. The title of the sermon today is, "Protecting Our Marriage." Another title could very well be, "Protecting Our Heart" because we will find that

⁴ Or promises or pledges.

protecting our heart IN marriage is the same as protecting our heart FOR marriage.

B. There are only two primary points that this passage is making. I will state them and then we will look at each one:

1. Deal radically with lust (5:27–32)

2. Honor your commitments (5:33-37)

C. Deal radically with lust (5:27-32)

1. The Christian view of sex is what undermines its credibility according to contemporary cultural critics, yet it is actually one of the most attractive aspects of Christianity. One of the reasons Christianity exploded within the Roman Empire during the 1st century was its radical views on sexuality and purity and the way they were expressed.

- a. Here's a common observation about Christians from the 1st century: "They share their table [i.e., resources] with all but not their bed with all."⁵
- b. This blew the mind of the Romans and the Greeks, who did the opposite – they opened their bed to anyone and anything, but tended to be stingy with their resources.
- c. This radical hospitality that served the poor and adopted orphans – and their radical sex ethic and purity was what set apart as different from the highly sexualized culture around them.

2. So, what are vs. 27-30 saying about dealing radically with lust?

- a. Let's consider two words from v. 28: "looks" and "lustful intent"
 - a) It is important to note the word "look" (*blepo*) is a present tense participle that can be translated "keeps looking" or "to contemplate."
 - b) Jesus is not talking about a glance; He is talking about a gaze.
 - c) Noticing and appreciating attractiveness is normal and God-given. It's the second look, the third look, the prolonged look that gets us in trouble.

⁵ James Davison Hunter. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, Oxford University Press 2010: 284.

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d) “You can’t stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop that bird from building a nest in your hair.”
--Martin Luther

2) The Greek word for “lustful intent” (*epithumeō*) is used both positively and negatively in the NT and means to set the heart upon, to long for (rightfully or otherwise), to strongly desire.

a) It is a compound of *epi* [intensifier] and *thumos* [passion].

b) In this context Jesus is saying we are not to set our hearts on another person and sexually desire him or her because it breaks the bond of oneness in a marriage.

b. To sum up this section I would make two points:

1) Simply stated, Lust is all about GETTING while love is all about GIVING.

2) I want to stress that the Bible makes a very clear distinction between *lustful intent* and strong sexual desire. The Bible is very straightforward regarding sexual desire as being a gift from God.

3) In Gen 2 we find a naked Adam singing poetic, rapturous love songs to a naked Eve in the presence of God.⁶

4) And, of course, Song of Solomon is an extended love song – an explicit celebration of sexual love between a husband and a wife.

3. In 5:31–32, Jesus continues His sermon with what constitutes adultery.⁷

a. Many people assume that Jesus transitions to focusing on divorce; however, Jesus’ real point is that an unbiblical divorce is the moral equivalent of adultery.

b. We often quote Malachi 2:16 that God hates divorce, yet many so-called Christians fail to recognize the context of vs. 13-17 are a rebuke to men who divorce their wives for unbiblical reasons.

⁶ This is the first poetic couplet (a pair of end-rhymed lines of verses that is self-contained in grammatical structure and meaning) in the Bible.

⁷ The introductory Greek formula, *Errethe* (“It was said”) is shorter than all the others in this chapter and is linked to the preceding by the Greek connective *de* (“and”).

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- c. Here's the take-away: While divorce under most circumstances is sin, it is not unforgivable. Our hope rests in God's faithfulness, which always trumps our unfaithfulness.⁸

D. This brings us to the call in Matthew 5:33-37, charging us to Honor our commitments.

1. It's not a coincidence that Jesus' words on subduing our unholy passions, committing adultery, and divorcing involve breaking the most solemn vow of all, which is marriage.
2. Jesus is addressing the need for us honor our commitments.
3. Jesus is not suggesting that all oaths are wrong,⁹ Jesus is asserting that casual oaths are wrong.
4. If we have to use an oath to convince someone of our integrity, we are already in some pretty deep weeds.
5. "Oaths arise because men are so often liars" --John Stott¹⁰

III. CONCLUSION

A. I want to conclude today on a very positive note. I want to take you to a passage that Linda and I would say this is the very best way to protect your heart – whether you are married or single.

B. Please turn to Hosea 2:19-20 (I prefer it in the NASB). This a little known passage in the Bible where God speaks His marriage vow to His bride.

*"I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes,
I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,
In lovingkindness and in compassion,
²⁰And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.
Then you will know the Lord."* --Hosea 2:19-20 (NASB)

C. I want you to hear what God is saying to you – married or single. And if you are married, God is telling you how to nurture your marriage.

⁸ *Gospel Transformation Bible*, Malachi 2:10-16.

⁹ Some very conscientious believers have taken Jesus' words literally and have refused to take an oath of any kind even in court. However, Jesus' point was the importance of truthfulness. He probably would not have objected to the use of oaths as a formality in legal proceedings.

¹⁰ John Stott. *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, IVP Academic 2014, (a quote from A.M. Hunter).

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D. God has initiated six qualities that will grow a holy intimacy between you and God.

1. *The STRENGTH of Commitment.* [God] "...I will never leave you nor forsake you." --Hebrews 13:5 (NKJ)
2. *The SACRIFICE of Righteousness.* "For if by the transgression of the one [Adam], death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." --Romans 5:17 (NAS)
3. *The STABILITY of Justice.* "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace..." --Isaiah 9:7 (NAS)
4. *The SURRENDER of Lovingkindness.* "Who, although He [Jesus] existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." --Philippians 2:6-7 (NAS)
5. *The SENSITIVITY of Compassion.* "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits...Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion." Psalm 103:2,4 (NAS)
6. *The SECURITY of Faithfulness.* 3 categories defined in the original Hebrew text:
 - a. *The literal meaning is FIRMNESS/INTEGRITY* "Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no...." --James 5:12 (NIV)
 - b. *The figurative meaning is SECURITY* "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." --Matthew 6:33 (NIV)
 - c. *The moral meaning is FIDELITY [In infidelity]* "...You give your vigor to others, and your years to the cruel one." --Proverbs 5:9 (NAS)