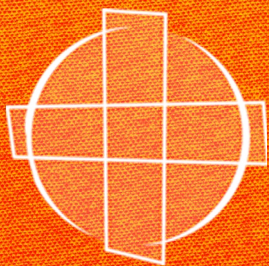


Donald J. Wills
Senior Pastor

AUGUST
2018

TRANS*f***ORMED2018**
MATTHEW 5:7-32
IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS



ADULT CONNECT
CLASS CURRICULUM

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

Throughout this year, our theme has been “Transformed.” Now, as we go through this study in Matthew we will observe different areas and ways that God wants to transform our lives. It is great to know that God is interested in each of us to the point that He works through us to show us the way to live and shape us into what He desires. He does not leave things to “chance.” We have His Word to study and guide us in all aspects of life, but we have to apply it and allow it to transform us.

This month we will look at being “Transformed in our Relationships.” Many of our relationships could probably use a little work. However, I am reminded that in any relationship I have control over only one party—and that is myself. It is the same for you! In these next few lessons, we will learn from Scripture how we as followers of Christ can impact our relationships for the good, especially with the Light of Christ that should be evident in us.

Through this study, stop and ponder: “How are my relationships?” I encourage you to begin by examining your own relationship with Christ and then your relationship with others. Do you shine in each as a true follower of Christ? Our prayer—and goal as a disciple—is to do just that.

-Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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August 5, 2018



*Transformed in our
Relationships to be Pure
Matthew 5:7-12*

Focal Verse:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Matthew 5:8

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Introduce

For anyone who's ever frequented the Texas coast on Galveston Island near the entrance to the bay and ship channel, we recall images of brown, muddy water as it laps against the shoreline. Due to currents and several other environmental factors, the silt and sand from the Gulf of Mexico congregates in this one spot, giving us the visible impression that it lacks pristine purity. However, other places in the Caribbean and Gulf have brilliant blue water which is crystal clear, allowing visitors to view the reefs and abundant sea life. Yet, this past Memorial Day a unique phenomenon occurred where the currents shifted and brought that clear, seemingly pure water into Galveston Bay to the surprise of both tourists and long-time residents. Unfortunately, this clear water didn't last long, but it merely gave a fleeting glimpse of what could be.

Despite the bay's clear appearance for those scant few days, it still was not entirely "pure."

Microscopic pollutants and bacteria undoubtedly still inhabited even this crystal-clear water. Thus, the outward appearance of purity can at times be deceiving. To put this into perspective, those of us who enjoy the beauty and serenity of the mountains still know the danger of drinking from a bubbling, rushing mountain stream that looks free from contaminants. We know that



drinking any such unpurified water poses a danger because bacteria hidden to the naked eye lurks even in this seemingly "pure" water. By some lucky chance, we may not become deathly ill if we drink from such a stream, but we are still ingesting impurities into our bodies no matter how clean and clear it may look.

Purity comes from within, not merely an outward appearance that can be somewhat deceptive and shift according to the prevailing conditions in life. Certainly, purity ought to be manifested outwardly, but it begins with an inner change. For this reason, after committing adultery with Bathsheba, David cries to the Lord to "create in [him] a clean heart . . . and steadfast spirit" ([Psalm 51:10](#)). In our current text of study as Jesus teaches His disciples the last four Beatitudes which deal with our relationships with others, He emphasizes the need to remain "pure in heart" ([Matt 5:8](#)). When Christ has transformed

Introduce

us inwardly, the purity and righteousness which He has instilled in our hearts become outwardly manifested in our actions toward others. This will not be a temporary change, like the water in Galveston Bay, but it will be permanent; neither will it be deceptive with impure motives because we will seek to glorify the Lord with our lives. Therefore, let us pray that Christ will transform all our relationships to be pure so that He may receive glory and others may be pointed into a relationship with Him through us!

Key
Question

In what ways should we display purity in all our relationships?

Matthew 5:7

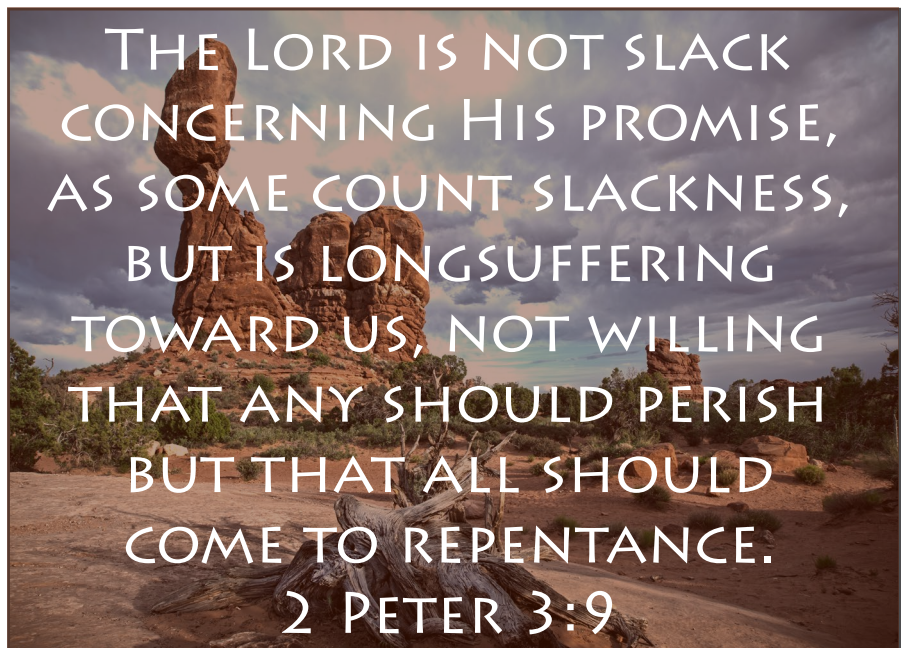
PRACTICE PATIENCE:

In this second set of four Beatitudes which deals with the transformation in our relationship with other people, Jesus points out to the disciples that those who show **mercy** will also receive **mercy** themselves (v. 7). Perhaps other than His holiness and love, the trait of **mercy** best describes God's character and His disposition toward mankind. In fact, He displays **mercy** in several ways: through the forgiveness He offers, through the compassion He extends, and through the patience He endures.

The primary way in which God has shown **mercy** to us is through the salvation He offers in the sacrificial death of Christ. Therefore, Paul reminds us, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His **mercy** He saved us" ([Titus 3:4-5](#)).

As a result of coming in physical flesh and dying in our place, Jesus mercifully took the wrath of sin we incurred upon Himself so that we would not receive the punishment of death which we rightfully deserved.

In dealing with stubborn, obstinate people like us, God exercises tremendous restraint and compassion as expressed in His patience with us; fortunately, He gives us numerous chances when we err to ask for forgiveness and seek reconciliation with Him. David, who made many mistakes in his life, recalls, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in **mercy**" ([Psalm 103:8](#)). This doesn't mean that we can abuse God's **mercy** by sinning repeatedly, but it does reinforce the fact that we have a compassionate and patient Father who desires to have a relationship with us and to whom we can turn and seek forgiveness even when we have gone astray. Not only does God extend **mercy** through salvation, but He also displays it through His faithfulness to



Instruct

His promises, His unceasing provision, His help in times of distress, and His comfort in times of mourning.

In what ways does God show mercy to His people? In what ways in particular has God shown mercy to you?

Question
1

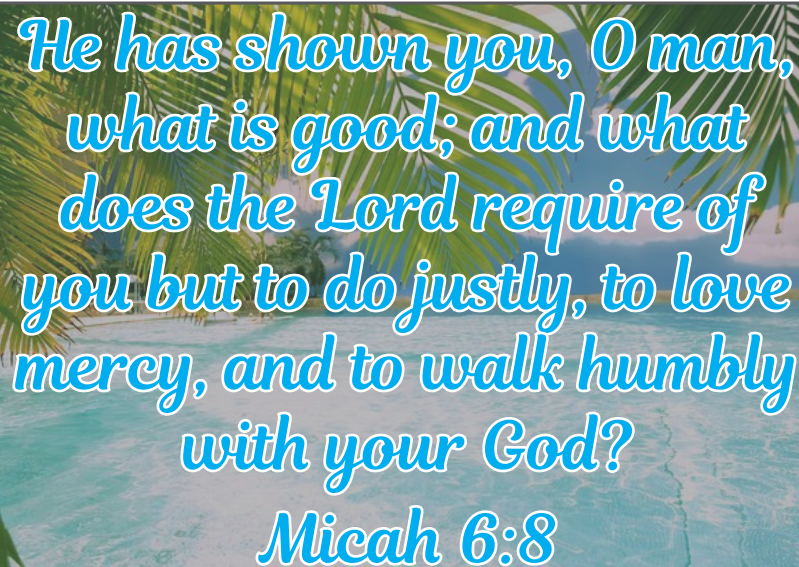
Here in Matthew 5:7, Jesus calls us to adopt and imitate this same type of **mercy** that God has lavished upon us. During a similar time of teaching recorded in [Luke 6:36](#), Jesus even makes it clearer by stating it in the form of a command: “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” This principle that Jesus espouses both in Matthew and Luke comes from [Proverbs 14:21](#) which declares, “He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has **mercy** on the poor, happy is he.” Certainly, we shouldn’t *just* show **mercy** to the financially poor, but point all people to Christ. We can show **mercy** to others by proactively seeking to initiate reconciliation and forgiveness and through acts of kindness and compassion which help other people during times of struggle—whether being a friend to the lonely, lending an ear to the troubled, encouraging the depressed, comforting the mourning, or assisting the needy. However, the greatest way we can ever show **mercy** and compassion is to share the gospel and introduce people to our Savior who has been merciful and gracious to us!

In what ways can we specifically show mercy to others?

Question
2

Mercy often stands in stark contrast to the bitterness and judgmental attitude of the secular world which seeks revenge under the auspices of justice. In England, District Judge Tim Devas presided over the case of a Christmas card thief who had stolen two cards from his neighbor’s mailbox in their apartment complex in hope of finding cash. Although the judge sentenced the admittedly guilty man who had prior records of theft to six months of community service, the law also required a monetary settlement. Taking pity on the thief, the judge made the fine a mere £ 1—which the crook still could not pay. Seeing the thief struggle in his poverty, the judge had **mercy** and paid the fine out of his own pocket. An act which hopefully would have had a profound positive impact upon this criminal was lambasted and criticized by most other people. Instead of celebrating the judge’s **mercy**, one person laments, “This thief is going to be a hero and a role model

to his peers when he boasts that the judge paid his fine for him. This typifies the way the country and criminal justice system is being run. Soft on crime, soft on the causes of crime.”* Imagine, however, if the Lord had this attitude with us rather than paying our “fine” through Christ’s death; therefore, let us imitate His **mercy** and demonstrate to the world that in Christ there is a better way to live.



He has shown you, O man,
what is good; and what
does the Lord require of
you but to do justly, to love
mercy, and to walk humbly
with your God?
Micah 6:8

In Reference



Paul Jeeves, “Outcry as Judge Pays Thief’s Fine,” *Express* (January 31, 2013).

Matthew 5:8

PERSIST IN PURITY:

Next, Jesus emphasizes the need for purity of **heart** which comes from a relationship with Him and results in eternal life (i.e. **they shall see God**). Jesus probably appeals to Psalm 24:3-4 here in this context to emphasize our need for a **pure** relationship with the Father: “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.” According to this psalm by David, we ought to exercise purity in three areas of our lives. First, we ought to seek forgiveness and turn from our sin (i.e. clean hands and a pure heart). Without a relationship with Christ, we cannot enter into heaven because we will remain in our sin; therefore, before anything else, we must be made clean and **pure** through His death and resurrection. Second, we ought to surrender fully to the Lord and painstakingly strengthen our relationship with Him each day (i.e. not lift up his soul to an idol). Finally, we ought to maintain integrity with others and in so doing bring honor to the Lord (i.e. nor swear deceitfully). We can only achieve purity through Christ who can thoroughly transform us to follow God’s

standards. In Christ, therefore, our motivation should change from self-serving to honoring the Father in everything that we do!

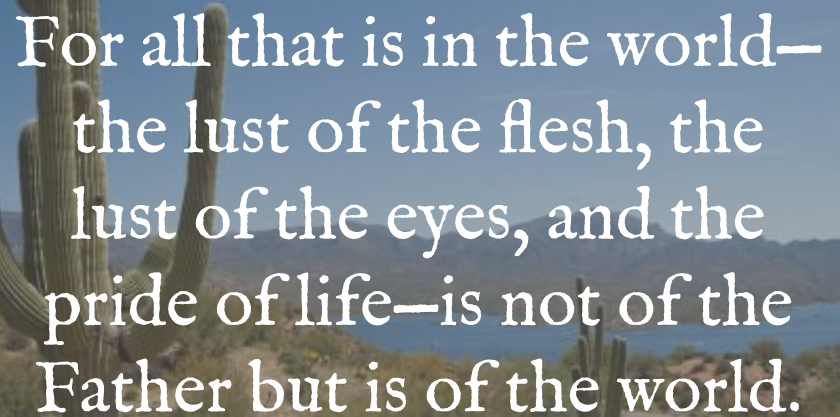
What does it mean to have a pure heart in Christ?

Question
3

When we have a relationship through Christ, therefore, we ought to exercise purity in every area of our lives: we should be **pure** in our thoughts, in our speech, and in our actions. In [Proverbs 4:23](#), a father relates instruction to his son in which he tells him to “keep [his] heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” In more modern terms, the father pleads with his son to guard his heart against all forms of wickedness so that he may have a successful life. First, he explains how the son must not participate in “deceitful” or “perverse” talk ([Prov 4:24](#)). In other words, the son should not engage in malicious lies (including white lies), slander or defamation of others’ character, gossip, offensive or vulgar language, suggestive jokes or innuendos, reckless speech without thinking about consequences, or impure thoughts expressed in careless words about hatred or revenge against other people.

Second, the father urges the son to protect his “eyes” and “look straight ahead” ([Prov 4:25](#)). We ought to be careful what we see and view because sin primarily entices us through our eyes. After all, Eve was deceived by her eyes and “saw that the tree was good for food [and] that it was pleasant to the eyes” ([Gen 3:6](#)). For example, coveting involves

the eyes because we see something someone else has and desire it for our own. Outside of sexual immorality and lust, perhaps the most dangerous form of coveting comes in the form of possessions. Rather than having contentment in Christ, people see possessions and money as their key to happiness; this has caused people to become even more self-centered and highly



For all that is in the world—
the lust of the flesh, the
lust of the eyes, and the
pride of life—is not of the
Father but is of the world.

1 John 2:16

demanding in their daily lives. Rather than working hard to achieve what they desire and relying on God to meet their needs, many people feel that they are owed and are indeed

justified in not working at all; they simply want it handed to them. Sinfulness through the eyes comes in many forms: lust (sexual immorality), greed (lust for money), exploitation and misuse of power or authority, and stinginess or lack of giving.

How can we maintain purity in our speech and sight (i.e. eyes)?

Question
4

Next, the father warns the son to “ponder the path of [his] feet” followed by a warning to “remove evil from [his] foot” and not to stray “to the right or left” ([Prov 24:6-7](#)). Through these two statements, we have two principles that we can observe: 1) we should be **pure** in our thoughts and 2) we should be **pure** in our actions. First, we are to think about (i.e. ponder) the consequences of our actions. Sin always begins in the mind—with a thought—so we must guard our minds which tend to dwell upon fleshly things and cause us to yield to temptation. Paul, for example, urges the Philippians to think about godly things ([Phil 4:8](#)). We must be careful what thoughts we entertain and what we do with the thoughts when we initially think them. Second, we must be extremely careful with what we consume: listening to inappropriate television shows or movies, vulgar or suggestive music, or unwholesome conversations greatly increases the odds that we will find ourselves participating in these very same activities ourselves. Therefore, the proverb warns that we ought to be careful with what we do and where we go. We ought to make sure our actions glorify the Lord and represent Him well!

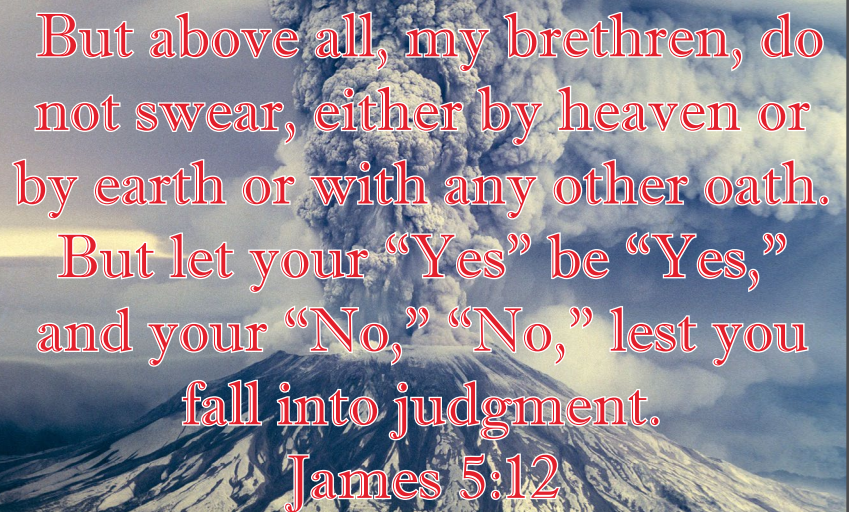
Why is it so important to protect our minds and guard our thoughts from the enemy?

Question
5

Above all, we need to maintain purity in our relationships with others by exercising integrity at all times—whether we think people can see us or not. We must have integrity at all times because God indeed sees us and knows our hearts ([1 Sam 16:7](#)). Even if we think that we have concealed our actions or that no one has seen us, people everywhere are watching and observing how we live—especially if we call ourselves followers of Christ ([Num 32:23](#)). During one of my mission trips to Nairobi, Kenya, I was attempting to find a bank in a local mall to exchange some money when I ran into someone that recognized me. It wasn’t a local, but a former student in a seminary class that I had taught. She was passing through Nairobi on her way home from mission work in India! What were the odds that in a city 8,721 miles from home with a population over three million in which I barely knew anyone that I would run into someone I knew?

Instruct

During my stay in Kenya, I could have thought that no one would see what I do or what I say so I can behave in any way that I desire because there would be few if any consequences! We ought to remain consistent in the way that we live in all areas of our lives so that we represent God well with honor and integrity. Consequently, we must learn to be consistent in every area of our lives. We must practice integrity in our promises by fulfilling our obligations and being faithful to our commitments. We need to be consistent in our speech and not talk one way around one group of people and another way around another group. Finally, we also need to be consistent in following God's Word and not allowing peer pressure to dictate what we do or where we go which could conflict with God's principles and the abundant life He desires for us to have. We need to remain pure in all circumstances!



But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.
James 5:12

Why is it important to maintain integrity in our lives?

Question
6

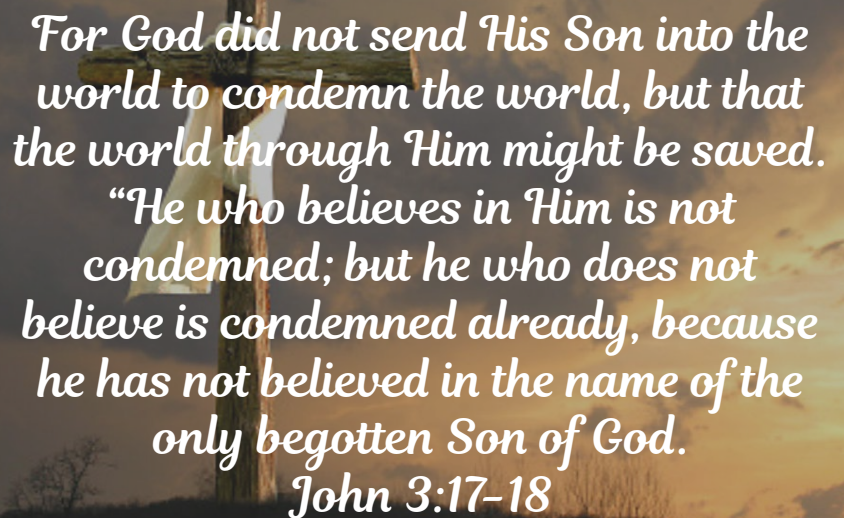
Matthew 5:9

PURSUE PEACE:

Jesus also tells those of us who have a relationship with Him that we should pursue peace; therefore, He announces **blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God**. First, to become children of God, we must have peace with our heavenly Father through the sacrifice of Jesus when we repent of our sins and surrender to Him. Paul expresses this concept very clearly in Romans 5:1: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Second, as children of God we actively pursue peace by extending forgiveness and maintaining civility even during times of disagreements. We may not be able to prevent disputes and disagreements with the secular world and persecution will inevitably come despite our best efforts to maintain peace, but as far as possible we should seek

to live peaceably with others (see [1 Tim 2:2](#)).

Before we fully explore the active pursuit of peace in a believer's life, let's begin by describing what a **peacemaker** is *not*. As a **peacemaker**, we *do not* compromise the truth of God's Word and we *do not* remain silent about sinful practices either in the secular world or especially in the church. Although we must speak out against sin while we ourselves seek to live according to God's holy standards, we should do so in a humble, loving way that attempts to lead a person to restoration. In condemning sin rather than the person, we don't do it in an arrogant and offensive way, but we point people to Scripture through which the Holy Spirit will move and convict them; it's what they choose to do with this conviction that dictates where they will spend eternity. God has summoned us as messengers of truth in this dark and depraved world—not to condemn or convict people.



For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:17-18

We simply present the truth and point them to Christ! The message, therefore, tends to offend, but we shouldn't be offensive messengers. Some people will naturally become "offended" at the truth because it requires them to admit that they have sinned; this type of confrontation, however, shouldn't lead us to compromise our moral standing founded upon the Bible. After all, Jesus confronted sin boldly and publicly, but He always offered a means of forgiveness and restoration through His sacrificial death!

In what ways did Jesus confront and condemn sin publicly? How should we use these instances as examples to apply in our lives?

Question
7

Now that we have established that being a **peacemaker** doesn't mean we have to compromise our faith and cater to the world around us, we can understand what one must do in representing Christ. As a **peacemaker**, we initiate forgiveness whether we ask for it on our own behalf or extend it to others who have wronged us. After all, Jesus has called us to radical peace-making whereby He commands us to love our enemies, do good to those who curse us, and pray for those who persecute us ([Matt 5:44](#)). In addition, as humans we also need to seek peace when we make mistakes; therefore, we need to

Instruct

be willing to admit when we have erred and seek reconciliation as much as possible. Sometimes it is impossible to be reconciled to other obstinate and stubborn human beings. Consequently, we must avoid the temptation to hold grudges and retaliate against others; instead, we must love them, pray for them, and point them to the truth in Christ. Above all, we should seek to live harmoniously with others without compromising the truth.

What does it mean to be a peacemaker in the church and in the world around us? In what ways have you been a peacemaker in your life?

Question
8

Matthew 5:10-12

PREVAIL DESPITE PERSECUTION:

Finally, Jesus offers comfort and assurance to **those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake** (v. 10). Although we may seek to live peacefully with others, persecution for our faith in Christ will abound in the world who does not understand and will continually attempt to mock us. According to Jesus, we should expect persecution in our lives ([John 15:20](#)). In this last Beatitude, Jesus goes on to define exactly what this type of persecution will entail. First, Jesus says that they will **revile and persecute** us (v. 11); to **revile** means that they will strongly condemn and criticize us—whether for being intolerant, unloving, narrow-minded, or a whole host of other charges that they bring to incite the world against us. To be persecuted has a much broader definition and can include physical and emotional abuse as well as even death.



Second, Jesus points out that the world will speak **all kinds of evil against us falsely** when we stand for the truth. In our world today, we may be passed over for promotions, told we cannot proclaim our faith or pray in the workplace, school, or marketplace, and even charged with inaccurate and untrue statements which

the world portrays as “hate speech.” In some arenas we can’t share our faith openly without fear of mob brutality in being protested and shouted down. Unfortunately, the modern world is increasingly become anti-Christian and persecution is on the rise with this heightened antagonism. Almost every type of belief is tolerated and even accepted—except for the truth of the Bible. Persecution in our world against followers of Christ comes in many forms today from violence to discrimination to slander and libel to bullying to false and inflammatory portrayals to the dissemination of lies to personal attacks on one’s faith and even mental acuity. Nonetheless, Christ has called us to endure persecution because we have a greater **reward** awaiting us **in heaven** (v. 12). Regardless of whatever happens to us here on earth, those of us who have a relationship with Christ will spend eternity with Him **in heaven** where there is no more sorrow, no more sickness, no more separation by death, and no more persecution, but all will live in the righteousness of the Lord!

In what ways do you see persecution against Christians in our world today? How should we respond?

Question
9

As Texans, nothing beats a lunch at a Mexican restaurant with freshly made salsa and chips, but every dip literally drips with potential danger that some will fall and stain our shirt. Without fail, every time I have eaten chips with salsa I leave the restaurant with evidence of where I had dined advertised on my shirt. The clean, crisp shirt with which I entered the restaurant had now become soiled and impure with blotches of salsa dotting and streaming down the fabric. No matter how hard we try and how careful we are, some morsel of food always drops on our clothes and we direly need something with which to remove it. Usually, we take our shirt or pants home and daub stain-remover over the spots and then toss them in the hamper to wash later. Then, in a few days we wash the stained shirt and with the aid of the stain-remover the soiled spots of salsa disappear and the shirt becomes like new again.

Through the shed blood of Christ, we have a formula for removing sin stains in our life and being restored to purity. In Him, we become a new creation once again fulfilling our destiny for which we were created by having a relationship with Him. When Christ removes the stain of sin in our lives, He also provides a way that we can remain pure; He sent the Holy Spirit to guide us. No matter how hard we try and how careful we are, without Christ in our lives and without submitting to the Holy Spirit we cannot remain pure; we will always fail. As we submit to Christ daily, let us have a relationship in which we seek His guidance and help to remain pure in all that we say and do; let us look to Him to maintain purity in our relationships with others so that we can be effective witnesses for Him. There is no secret formula for maintaining purity, but rather God has given us the key in His Word which we should study diligently and through the example of His Son whom we should follow explicitly and through the leadership of the Holy Spirit to whom we ought to listen daily so that we can remain pure in every situation no matter the circumstance.

Incorporate

In what ways has God transformed you to become pure in your life? In what areas do you still need work?

How can you use the purity that God has manifested through your life to point others to Him?

How has God used you as a peacemaker to help others?

How has God helped you to endure persecution in your life and remain focused on Him?

August 12, 2018



*Transformed in our
Relationships to Proclaim
Matthew 5:13-16*

Focal Verse:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16

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Introduce

Perhaps one of the most useful and versatile substances on the planet today is salt. We may have never thought about its many uses and may have even taken it for granted at times, but in its absence we will certainly miss it! For most of us, we most commonly use it to flavor our food. Around the dinner table if we have been served bland food, we will almost always hear the phrase: “Would you pass the salt, please?” In some cases, however, as we grow older, our taste buds become less discerning and we can’t taste the salt as well as we once did. It



has become somewhat ineffective to flavor the food, so we end up adding more and more to our diet hopefully to enhance the taste; however, this creates numerous health problems, including high blood pressure and fluid retention—all due to the perceived ineffectiveness of the salt.

Not only do we use salt to flavor food, but in the Winter when ice and snow sometimes come to North Texas we use it to treat the roads and sidewalks and melt the wintry precipitation. In fact, this past February a brief ice storm hit while we were in our Connect Classes, so the deacons and watchmen sprang into action to treat the parking lot and sidewalks to melt the ice and reduce the risk of anyone falling and injuring themselves. Usually, such as this time in February, salt works expeditiously and effectively, but on rare occasions it becomes too cold for the salt to function properly. At that point, no matter how much salt road crews add to the highway they will remain slick and hazardous—just like in 2011 when we had a week-long cold spell in February that led to a thick layer of cobblestone ice forming on bridges and overpasses. Without snow plows and proper equipment, the salt wasn’t enough to avoid disaster!

Although salt has many uses, if it loses its power to act effectively it becomes absolutely worthless and it has no value at all! In Christ, we have been called to proclaim the good news of the gospel both verbally and through the way that we live consistently according to His righteousness. Consequently, Jesus teaches His disciples that we are both salt and light to the world around us. If we fail to live transformed lives on a consistent basis, like

Introduce

“salt which loses its flavor,” we become a hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel rather than a help. People will look at our inconsistent testimony as hypocritical and worthless. Instead, we are to demonstrate the value of our relationship with Christ visibly through our good works which glorify Him and point others into a relationship with Him rather than drive them away. Therefore, let us not be veiled or concealed in our proclamation of Christ behind an inconsistent lifestyle, but let us boldly demonstrate His transformation in us so that we can proclaim the truth effectively in all our relationships.

Key
Question

In what ways does an inconsistent relationship hurt our ability and effectiveness to share the *gospel*?

Matthew 5:13

DEMONSTRATE THE VALUE OF YOUR TRANSFORMATION:

Most of us probably view the value of our salvation in terms of what we have received—eternal life. Jesus, however, views salvation in terms of who we have become and what we can collectively achieve through His empowerment on behalf of the Father. Taken together, the metaphors of **salt** and **light** that Jesus uses in these verses depict our effectiveness as Christ's followers in the way we conduct ourselves to point people into a relationship with Him. Certainly, we ought to rejoice that when we have a relationship with Christ that we have received the guarantee of eternal life, but we must also recognize the responsibility that we now have to represent Him to others. Jesus illustrates this responsibility by calling us **the salt of the earth** (v. 13). However, He also emphasizes that those who fail to live according to God's holy standards and exhibit the transformation He has produced in their lives have become ineffective. In fact, He compares them to **salt** which has lost **its flavor**; it has become **good for nothing**—that is useless—only **to be thrown out and trampled by men**.

Why should we view our salvation in terms of what we can contribute rather than what we have received?

Question
1

Before we address the ineffectiveness of tainted **salt**, we will discuss the ways which God can use us effectively as believers by illustrating our responsibilities with the three

primary functions of **salt**: it *seasons*, *saves*, and *sanctifies*. First, **salt seasons** food in order to enhance the flavor and make the meal taste better. **Salt** doesn't change the molecular structure of the food, but it brings out or highlights certain flavors already present within it. In the same way, we as believers don't change the content of the gospel message to make it more



Instruct

acceptable to non-believers, but we enhance its attractiveness by living consistently by it! When we live as Christ has taught us and the Holy Spirit empowers us, people will notice a difference in the way we live versus the way the world lives. If we live according to the same principles by which the world lives and they see no difference, why would they want a relationship with Christ? We don't want to repel others from the gospel leaving them with a bitter taste because we live in sin and fail to demonstrate the transformation of Christ. On the contrary, we want to leave them with a good taste of the gospel whereby they see the work of Christ in our lives, transforming us daily.

In what ways specifically should we as believers live to produce a "good taste" for the gospel among non-believers in the world?

Question
2

Second, we apply **salt** to *save* or preserve food and keep it from spoiling. Before the days of refrigeration, people used **salt** to cure or preserve meat from becoming rancid; cured ham still uses this same technique today. People would take the meat and encase it in a thick layer of **salt** which would function as a preservative to give it a longer shelf-life. After the meat was cured and during its preparation, it would be washed thoroughly to remove any excess **salt** so that it wouldn't overpower the taste and make it inedible. As **salt of the earth**, God uses us as believers to carry His proclamation of salvation to the world. Although we can't save someone from their sins, we do know the Savior who can and we have the Message He has given us to proclaim. In [Romans 10:14](#), Paul underscores the responsibility that God has given us to proclaim the gospel: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" We aren't the means of salvation, but we are the messengers who bring the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ to the entire world.



How do you personally function as "salt" in sharing the message of salvation to the world?

Question
3

Third, in ancient days, as well as some situations today, we use **salt** to sterilize or clean wounds. Although today this would not be the most-preferred method, a solution of ordinary table **salt** mixed with water effectively kills germs and staves off infection by purifying the wounded region. In theological terms, we would say that **salt** *sanctifies* or cleanses. As believers, we participate in sanctification by dedicating and setting ourselves apart for a specific purpose. In this case, our purpose should be to imitate Christ and His holiness; therefore, it becomes a key component in discipleship whereby we grow and mature daily in our walk to become more like Christ which allows us to become more effective witnesses. Not only are we to live pure lives in Christ, we are also to challenge and encourage others to do the same by making disciples; therefore, we are ultimately accountable to Christ as well as each other in how we live. Just as we can't save people ourselves, we cannot purify them either; however, we can establish an environment which actively helps people to grow and mature as followers of Christ. As **the salt of the earth**, we should abstain from sinful practices that corrupt. In every circumstance, we should seek to conform our character to Christ and remain pure in an impure world. Although this is a difficult and even impossible task to accomplish on our own, God has sent the Holy Spirit to equip and empower us to live as effective witnesses in a dark and depraved generation.

In what way can we establish an environment that can promote purity and maturity with the help of the Holy Spirit?

Question
4

As His followers, Jesus expects us to fulfill these three responsibilities in our lives so that His name may be glorified among all men and that they may know how to have eternal life through Him. Yet, Jesus also warns against becoming bad examples and ineffective witnesses whereby we don't live transformed lives and haven't distinguished ourselves from the world around us. When Jesus describes the worthlessness of **salt** that has lost **its flavor**, He acknowledges that **men will throw it out and trample it underfoot** (v. 13). In other words, they will reject our testimony and label us as hypocrites. Take a moment to ponder how the world views believers today because of the actions of a few immoral people who have brought shame by committing acts of fraud or theft, participating in sexual immorality, expressing hatred and bitterness, being unwilling to forgive, holding grudges, seeking retaliation and revenge, and engaging in malicious gossip or slander—to name only a few areas. Christ has called us to be transformed from these sinful things and has given us the power to overcome them in the Holy Spirit. Although we may

Instruct

struggle with these vices from time to time, we should no longer be held captive by these sins. Instead, we should allow the character of Christ to shine through our lives to the world around us—an illustration to which Jesus now turns in His sermon.

In what ways do immorality and sinfulness bring reproach from the world upon both Christ and His church?

Question
5

Matthew 5:14-15

DON'T BE VEILED IN THE PROCLAMATION OF THE TRUTH:

The second symbol that Jesus uses to describe the impact that we as believers should have on the **world** is **light** (v. 14). In fact, He emphasizes that we should be **the light of the world**. In this context, **light** has three primary functions: 1) it *enlightens* or points people to the truth and 2) it *expels* sin and darkness, and 3) it *exposes* sin. First, as believers we *enlighten* others by proclaiming the truth of Scripture and pointing to salvation and eternal life through the gospel. To illustrate our responsibility to enlighten others by proclaiming the truth, Jesus describes how **a city built on a hill cannot be**



hidden. If you've ever driven out West where the plains transition to the Rocky Mountains, cities built upon the hills provide a reference point, especially at night, because they can be seen from a far distance. Imagine for a moment being lost in the plains in a remote, desolate area without any map or sense of direction in which you could go to

receive help. As night fell, you could see faint lights in the distance which were a fixed point of reference which would guide you back to civilization and safety. Functioning as a guide, the **light** from a **city on a hill** would provide a good reference because they remain constant and you could follow it to find rescue and refuge back in civilization.

In what ways do we function as light to enlighten the world around us to the gospel?

Question
6

From time to time, we hear stories about novice and unprepared hikers who have gotten lost in a remote area. They had set out on their hike without the proper provisions; they didn't have a map to guide them, a compass to point them in the right direction, or a flashlight to illuminate the path when it became dark. Such people who become stranded in the unforgiving wilderness typically wander hopelessly and aimlessly in circles—never to find their way back to civilization. Yet, there is hope that an experienced, properly-equipped rescue party will find them and lead them back to safety. As believers, we are the only hope that the world has to find them and lead them to the Savior who unconditionally grants eternal life to those who confess and repent of their sins! In our figurative backpack, we have a map (the Bible) that imparts God's plan for our lives, we have a compass (the gospel) that points to the sole source of eternal life, and we have a **light** (Jesus) who drives the darkness of sin and misunderstanding from our minds and shows us the way to attain eternal life through Him ([John 11:25-26](#)). Just as **salt** has a function to *save* or preserve, **light** illuminates the path of people so that they may find eternal life in Jesus Christ. For those of us who have a relationship with Christ, we must continually look for opportunities to enlighten people with the gospel and demonstrate to them the way they can have eternal life.

Light not only provides a good point of reference because it is both consistent and constant, but it also *expels* darkness and drives it away; therefore, we hang lights in prominent places to maximize the effect that they have on an entire room. Jesus points out that people don't **light a lamp**, such as a candle, and place **it under a basket** (v. 15) On the contrary, He states that they place it **on a lampstand to give light to all who are in the house**. Even what may seem like a small and insignificant source of **light** will brighten an entire room because it overpowers and expels darkness. On the Historical Tour in Mammoth Cave, a ranger will lead his group to a large, open room where they once mined saltpeter during the Civil War. After asking everyone to remain still, he will turn off all the artificial lights in the passage to demonstrate how pitch-black the cavern truly is. In the midst of the utter darkness, he will remove a flashlight from his pocket and flick it on to demonstrate the power of one tiny **light** to illuminate an entire room. This one, tiny light has enough power to pierce the darkness and **light** the room!

As **the light of the world**, Jesus has equipped us to *expel* darkness through the truth of Scripture and by consistently reflecting His righteousness in our lives. We don't have to cower and hide in fear of what the world may think or do, but we can live boldly in representing Christ because the victory has already been won. In fact, in his first letter John encourages believers by reminding us, "You are of God, little children, and have

overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” ([1 John 4:4](#)). We expel the darkness by proclaiming the truth in love; we don’t look down upon others and we aren’t haughty or prideful in our proclamation, but neither are we silent about sinfulness and its destructiveness. We must warn people that sin and unrepentance only lead to death, and tell them that a relationship with Christ leads to eternal life. We know this from experience because we once traveled that road which led to destruction, but Jesus saved us through His death and resurrection—transforming our lives radically in Him. In addition, we should live consistently with the truth in God’s Word so that others may see Christ in us. (We will discuss this more in verse 16.) Suffice it to say, we must always be cognizant of our testimony and make sure that it emits the best possible **light** so that God will be glorified rather than mocked or cursed. Therefore, let us always give **light** to the world by imitating Christ and putting Him first in our lives.

How are you functioning as a light of the world? How can you be a more effective light with the help of Christ?

Question
7

Finally, light also *exposes* sin and for this reason we have conflict with the world around us when we live consistently with the holy standards of Scripture. When we live according to the righteous principles in the Bible, it will expose the evil deeds of those around us; those who commit these evil acts desire to keep them hidden so that they don’t

**And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.
Ephesians 5:11**

look bad. For some, it may cause their associates or friends to mock them or put them down for being “spiritual” or a “goody-two-shoes.” With others, it may cause them to avoid that person altogether and even exclude them from activities and events because they don’t feel comfortable around them—not because the person was hateful or mean, but because they simply

stood for the truth and what is right. In [John 3:19-20](#), Jesus reveals, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather

than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” Although we shouldn’t have a judgmental and condemning spirit toward unbelievers, we should live a holy life in the Spirit so that others may see the transformation produced within us. More importantly, we must constantly seek to keep ourselves unstained by sin and separate ourselves from the evil in the world around us.

How should we as believers expose sin while serving as a light to point people to Christ?

Question
8

Matthew 5:16

MAINTAIN VISIBILITY THROUGH YOUR GOOD WORKS:

Finally, Jesus explains the purpose behind both metaphors through a command. He commands us to **let our light shine before men so that they may see our good works and glorify the Father** (v. 16). Most of us get joy from being recognized for doing something good; we want people to see the good things that we do so we can hear “job well done.” In Christ, however, our motivation should not be to receive accolades or praise for ourselves, but so that people will acknowledge the Lord—giving Him the honor and glory that He alone deserves. We reflect Christ and point others to Him! As followers of Christ, we must be visible in the community, helping and doing **good works** in order to have opportunities to share the gospel. Our main focus for doing **good works**, therefore, ought to be glorifying the Lord by leading people into a relationship with Him through His Son. Thus, we should point people to the Lord by telling them exactly why we are doing these **good works**—to share the love of Christ with them so that they too can have hope in Him. We have a number of ways to serve the community right here in Fort Worth. Take advantage of those opportunities each and every day so that **your light** may **shine before men** and God will grant you opportunities to make disciples and see His Kingdom grow right here in First Baptist Church of Fort Worth!

What are some ways that you can be involved in the community so that you have an opportunity to share the gospel with others?

Question
9

Several years ago, we had traveled to Maberu, Kenya on a mission trip. One night we showed the *Jesus Film* in an unfinished church building there in rural Kenya with no electricity and very few oil-powered lights. That night the moon was obscured by an approaching storm and the only light was the projector that flickered the inside of the building. Yet, outside of the church nothing could be seen in the still darkness of the night. Several of us stood a few yards away conversing about how incredibly dark the night had become while comparing how far our flashlights could penetrate the darkness. During the conversation, however, one of the team members interjected how he didn't need a flashlight and could see just fine on his own, so he took off around the side of the building to check on the progress of the movie. As he walked, Pastor Don shined his flashlight just in time to light the path as he fell into a gargantuan hole left by the construction people who had taken dirt to make the inside of the building level. Without a light, this man faced peril from obstacles that he couldn't see and he stumbled and fell into a pit. Fortunately, he wasn't physically injured; only the embarrassment of the fall hurt his pride.

Unfortunately, the world is like this gentleman whereby they believe that they can find spiritual peace and contentment on their own without any kind of help. Yet, in their spiritual darkness they have become blinded to obstacles they face; they have no hope of escape unless we who have the light of Christ show them the true way. Too often, however, we wait and miss opportunities to share the gospel; we never know when someone will fall into the great pit known as Hell where they will spend eternity when they pass from this life to the next without Christ. Often, we become consumed with our own daily business only to turn and shine the light upon someone who is already sliding down into a vast, unquenchable pit of fire. Obviously, we can't force people to accept the truth, but we still must attempt to warn them about the consequences of their actions by being salt and light in a world of darkness. Let us, therefore, be transformed in our relationships to proclaim the truth of the gospel both verbally and physically by living consistently with God's Word!

In Prayer



Pray and ask the Lord how effectively you have been salt and light to the world. Thank God for the opportunities He has given you to be an example. Ask Him for opportunities to let your light shine before men so that you may glorify Him and point others into a relationship with Him.

Incorporate

In what ways have you as a Connect Class functioned as the salt of the earth in sharing the gospel? What are other innovative ways that you can accomplish this as a group and individuals?

How does your Connect Class function as a light to the world? In other words, how do you live out the gospel and find opportunities to share it among unbelievers?

What good works can we as a church do in the community so that we can have opportunities to share the gospel? How are you as an individual participating?



Transformed in our Relationships in Private *Matthew 5:17-26*

Focal Verse:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

Matthew 5:17

Introduce

Bitterness, resentfulness, and anger have come to both characterize and dominate our society. Honoring the deceased through fitting obituaries and eulogies that highlight a person's accomplishments and legacy has given way to what some have called "revenge obituaries." On June 4, 2018, in the small-town newspaper called *Redwood Falls Gazette* in Minnesota, the children of Kathleen Dehmlow (Schunk) published a less-than-flattering picture of their mother along with a scathing rebuke in her obituary. Obviously, the affair that this woman had with her brother-



Kathleen Dehmlow (Schunk) was born on March 19, 1938 to Joseph and Gertrude Schunk of Wabasso. She married Dennis Dehmlow at St. Anne's in Wabasso in 1957 and had two children Gina and Jay. In 1962 she became pregnant by her husband's brother Lyle Dehmlow and moved to California. She abandoned her children, Gina and Jay who were then raised by her parents in Clements, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Schunk. She passed away on May 31, 2018 in Springfield and will now face judgement. She will not be missed by Gina and Jay, and they understand that this world is a better place without her.

in-law at the time and the abandonment of her two young children, Gina and Jay, were sinful and wrong in every aspect, so was the retaliation for her children after her death. Although the paper subsequently removed the obituary after multiple complaints, the children penned: "She [Kathleen] passed away on May 31, 2018 in Springfield and will now face judgment. She will not be missed by Gina and Jay and they understand that this world will be a better place without her." After reading this obituary, one can only shake his head at such blatant animosity and hatred.

Although the mother's actions were deplorable in every respect and caused irreparable harm to her children, the bitterness and hatred expressed by Gina and Jay also conflicts with Jesus' teaching. Manifold problems come in life when we don't allow Christ to transform our private relationships in the home. Unresolved anger can lead to stress which affects our health and ultimately other relationships because we become consumed with getting even or avoiding the other person. An uncontrolled thought-life, such as lust, can lead to addiction, discontentment, unrealistic expectations in relationships, and numerous other problems. Unfaithfulness in marriage, such as exhibited by Ms. Dehmlow, hurts not merely the spouse, but destroys the entire family; it creates a toxic environment of distrust and suspicion.

Christ, however, came so we could experience transformation in our relationships in private—whether in our homes or in our minds. Truly no relationship is "private," but these are intimate or close relationships outside of the most-intense public scrutiny. All our relationships, therefore, should honor the Lord and follow the example set by His

Introduce

Son. For Jesus did not come to earth to get rid of the Law, but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). In fulfilling it, He taught us its true meaning and how we ought to have high standards in all our relationships where we follow His pattern, forgive others, have fitting or appropriate thoughts, and remain faithful in marriage. This week we will deal with the first two of these principles in the two-part lesson.

Key
Question

Why is it important that Christ transform our relationships in the home and in the way we think?

Matthew 5:17-20

FOLLOW THE PATTERN OF CHRIST:

After identifying believers as salt and light, Jesus describes exactly how we ought to behave as His representatives and He upholds Himself as an example of how we ought to live in obedience. Jesus begins this next section of His sermon by explaining our relationship to the Old Testament (i.e. **Law** and **Prophets**) as His followers. In succession, He addresses the *pattern* fulfilled in the **Law** (v. 17), the *permanence* of the **Law** (v. 18), and the *punishment* for breaking the **Law** (vv. 19-20). To summarize a highly complex subject, God spoke through the **Law** and **Prophets** for four primary reasons: 1) to demonstrate the people's sinfulness and His righteousness ([Lev 19:2](#); [Rom 7:7](#)), 2) to establish boundaries to protect people and guarantee a more abundant life ([Deut 28](#)), 3) to separate His people from the rest of the world so that they would point others to Him ([Exod 19:5](#); [Isa 49:6](#)), and 4) to prepare His people for the coming of the only perfect sacrifice in Christ Jesus ([Isa 40:3](#)). Although Jesus likely has all four of these areas in mind, the immediate context deals primarily with the establishment of boundaries by which God has given us to live as His representatives.

Contrary to how many churches view the Old Testament today, Jesus announces that He did **not** come **to destroy the Law or the Prophets**, but rather **to fulfill** them (v. 17); therefore, He clearly demonstrates the *pattern* fulfilled in the **Law**. In this way, Jesus has come to provide a clear example of what it means to fulfill or abide by the Law so

that we can visually see how God intends us to live in relation to it with our renewed lives in Him. The Greek word translated **destroy** in this legal context means to "dissolve" or "abolish." In other words, Jesus didn't come to do away with the Old Testament (**Law** and **Prophets**), but to fulfill it and demonstrate how it should be applied correctly. In the United



States, the President has the authority to veto a bill proposed by Congress. When a bill

is vetoed, the legislation essentially dies and becomes irrelevant; no one can be held to its standards or tried by it. However, the President cannot ignore or abolish legislation arbitrarily that has already been signed into law. On the contrary, like every citizen he is legally bound to uphold it.

In the same way, Jesus didn't come to ignore or abolish the **Law** that the Father had already established, but He came to fulfill it and demonstrate its true intention. For example, Jesus did not come to negate or abolish the sacrificial system of Israel for then none of us would have hope of salvation. Instead, Jesus fulfilled it through His own sacrifice. Although the mode or method of sacrifice changed at His death, the principles for which the sacrifice was offered remain valid. [Hebrews 9:22](#) clearly states that "according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." In the Old Testament, animals were killed to take the place of human beings as an annual reminder of sins whereas in the New Testament Jesus willingly gave His life to take all our sins upon Himself. The principles behind the sacrificial system, therefore, remain valid through Jesus' death on the cross. No longer do we sacrifice bulls and goats as an annual reminder of sin, but rather the shedding of the blood of a willing Savior has become a once-and-for-all sacrifice. Even

today, that one specific act upon the cross remains effective so that we too can have life through His substitutionary death!

The assertion that He did **not** come to abolish **the Law** leads directly into His discussion about the *permanence* of **the Law** (v. 18). Jesus declares that **not one jot or tittle will pass away from the Law** until two conditions are met. According to Jesus' timeframe, the **Law** will remain until both **heaven and earth pass away** and **all is fulfilled**. Both of these phrases refer to a single event—Jesus' second coming when He will return to gather His followers and restore the world to its perfect, pre-fall condition before mankind destroyed it through his sin and disobedience. Clearly, Jesus has fulfilled some of the **Law** and



Prophets through His death and resurrection, as we have seen, but the complete restoration of the world at the Day of the Lord remains to be **fulfilled**; therefore, until that day the **Law** remains valid in its entirety to accomplish the intended purposes of the Lord. For this reason, Jesus emphasizes the *permanence* of the **Law** by describing how the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet (*iota*) and small strokes such as accents or breathing marks over the words would remain and not be removed. In other words, He specifies that the entire Old Testament remains valid and not one part of it will fail to speak to His day or even to ours.

In Reference



Literally, jot refers to the Greek letter iota while tittle represents small accents or breathing marks above the words to help with pronunciation.

As a result, the principles that God has espoused in His Word are good for all time! In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul interjects, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” In this case, Scripture refers to the entire Old Testament; therefore, both Jesus and Paul share the same perspective that every part of Scripture is useful. None of it is outdated or irrelevant, but all is profitable because it relates God’s holy instruction to us about how we should live. Although some of the applications may have changed, the principles still stay the same!

As a gracious gift from the Lord to Israel, the **Law** was always designed as a “blessing” for those who “diligently obey” it ([Deut 28:1-2](#)). Never does Scripture teach that we attain life by strictly adhering to the **Law** because every one of us will fall short ([Jas 2:10](#)). Today, however, God has sent His Holy Spirit to empower us to fulfill the “righteous requirement of the law” so that we conform to the pattern of Christ rather than that of our fleshly desires ([Rom 8:3-4](#)). Although we live under grace just as Israel always has, we shouldn’t view the **Law**

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.
James 1:17

legalistically as they did as a checklist to earn favor. Instead, we should allow the Spirit to guide us to change our desire to become holier like God—not out of a sense of duty, but as a joyous response to what Jesus has already done for us.

In what way is God's giving of the Law gracious to Israel?

Question
1

Some divide the Old Testament laws into three distinct categories: civil, ceremonial, and moral. They claim that only the moral laws, such as the Ten Commandments, apply today. However, this conflicts with both Jesus and Paul's teaching that every part of Scripture is valid and useful for instruction; it becomes even more dangerous because it can allow people to pick and choose what part of Scripture does or doesn't apply to them! We have already seen how the ceremonial laws, that is the sacrificial system, apply today through Christ. Many of the civil laws also contain simple rules for hygiene that we ought to practice so as not to spread communicable diseases. In addition, the food laws, for example, teach us that we ought to make healthy choices when we eat. They aren't legalistically applied with a checklist, but God cares about the cardiovascular health of His people enough to limit their intake of pork! When we understand the principle behind the **Law**, we will see how God intends us to practice it today so that we may have a more abundant life in Him!

What is the danger of seeing the Law as irrelevant or picking and choosing which ones apply today?

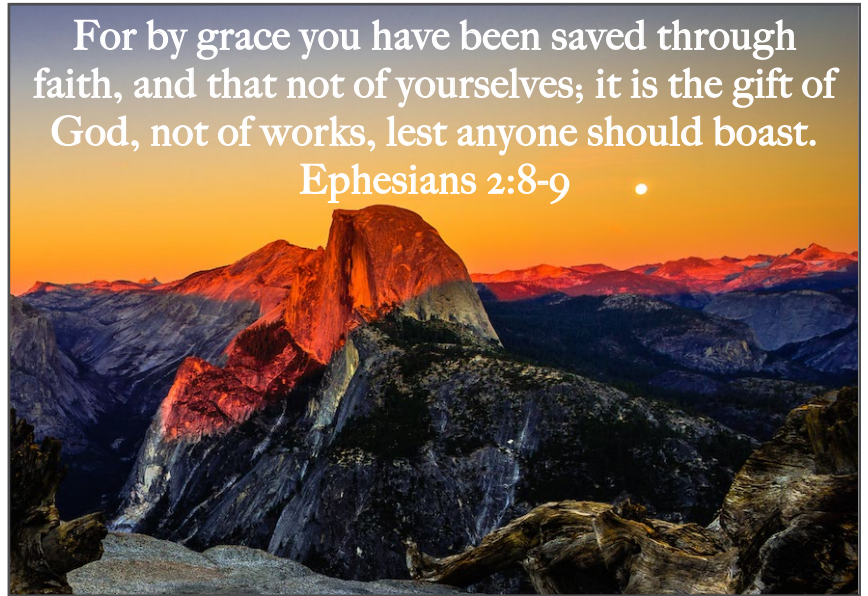
Question
2

Because the **Law** has not yet passed away, Jesus relates the *punishment* for failing to adhere to its principles. Consequently, He interjects that **whoever breaks even one of the least of these commandments or teaches others to do so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven** (v. 20). On the other hand, He outlines the reward for **whoever does them and teaches them**—he shall be **called great**. As a Christian, we ought to follow the pattern God has established in His Word and demonstrated through Christ—not for self-glorification and self-righteousness like the **scribes and Pharisees**—but because we love the Lord and have His Spirit to guide us ([John 14:15](#)). Jesus doesn't say here that one can lose his salvation because of disobedience, but rather He emphasizes that disobedience will lead to discipline and less honor in the **kingdom of heaven**. There

are consequences for sin and disobedience even for the Christian!

By highlighting the false righteousness and religiosity of the **scribes and Pharisees**, Jesus shows the impossibility of fulfilling the requirements of the **Law** as a means to inherit eternal life (v. 21). He astonishingly tells His audience that unless their **righteousness** exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees they will **by no means enter the kingdom of heaven**. Jesus isn't upholding the Pharisees as an example extraordinaire here, but rather

He is emphasizing the impossibility of doing good works and following ritual as a means to go to heaven. Throughout the New Testament, the Pharisees depended upon their good works, their heritage, and ritual to cement their status with the Lord; however, they stood in condemnation because they rejected His Son! We have a relationship with the Lord by grace



through faith in Jesus Christ—just as Israel had a relationship with God characterized by grace! In the Old Testament, Israel could not keep the **Law** and failed numerous times—just look at the book of Judges. Yet, God acted graciously time and again to rescue and restore His people. In the same way, we can't keep the **Law** as a means of salvation and we too need God's grace. No longer do we stand under the condemnation and the curse of sin because Christ has paid the penalty for us ([Rom 8:1](#); [Gal 3:13](#)). Therefore, when we live according to His grace, we show our love and dedication to Him by faithfully following His teaching and the pattern He has set for our lives—not legalistically as if to show up other people like the Pharisees did.

How do we know that Jesus isn't saying someone can earn to eternal life through his righteousness or by being a good person?

Question
3

Matthew 5:21-26

BE FORGIVING OF OTHERS:

After explaining our relationship to the **Law** through the pattern He established, Jesus addresses its true intention with a specific case study. He clarifies that the prohibition

Instruct

against **murder** in [Exodus 20:13](#) also includes harboring hatred in our hearts against another person. We shouldn't be motivated to fulfill the **Law** legalistically as if we will receive a reward or commendation for doing the least we possibly can; instead, we should allow the Holy Spirit to lead us so that we might express our love for God by honoring and glorifying Him with complete surrender and obedience. According to staunch adherence to the letter of the **Law**, only physical murder constitutes sin, but Jesus asserts that hatred and unforgiveness are both just as bad!

First, Jesus chastises those who speak hatefully with abusive language by linking hatred



and **murder**. Introducing the sixth commandment with the phrase **you have heard that it was said to those of old**, He adds His own caveat to it by asserting: "**But I say to you**" (v. 21-22). Undoubtedly, the

audience would have been familiar with the traditional interpretation of the passage; however, here, Jesus appeals to His own authority to explain the correct interpretation of the text (see [Matt 7:28-29](#)). In those days, much like our own, teachers would not appeal to their own authority, but rather a long line of interpretive tradition which had preceded them. For example, the audience probably expected Jesus to say, "**You have heard it said . . .** but tradition or rabbi such and such also says this." Jesus, however, can speak with authority because as God He was the One who initiated the **Law** at Mount Sinai with Moses; therefore, as the One who gave the **Law**, He is best qualified to explain its true intention. For example, who would be most qualified to explain the inner-workings of a motor: the one who designed it or someone who simply received the instruction manual and tinkered with it? Obviously, the designer would be best qualified. In this case, as the author and giver of the **Law**, Jesus has the best qualification for explaining the proper interpretation and true intention.

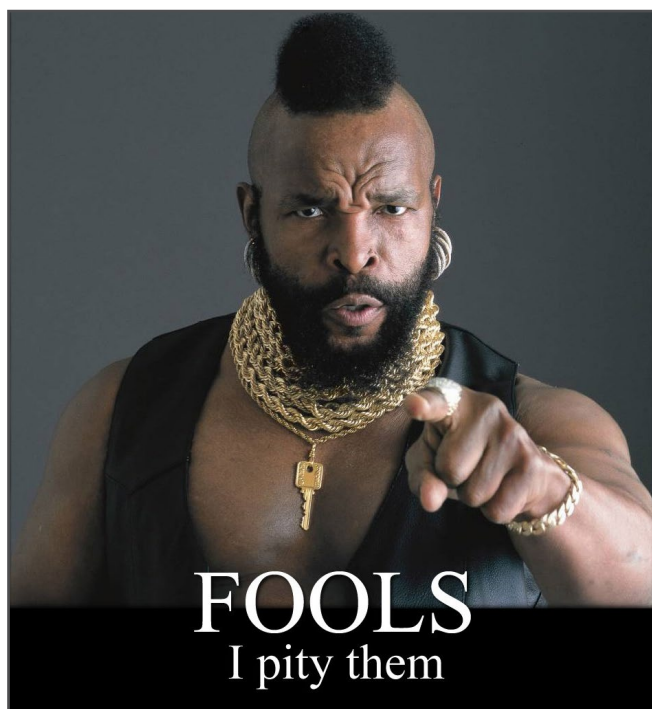
After citing His qualifications as the Interpreter, Jesus explains that both unrestrained anger and uncontrolled, hateful speech are tantamount to murder in God's eyes. Therefore, He points out that **whoever is angry with his brother without cause** has violated God's **law** and deserves **judgment**. In this setting, Jesus clarifies that unrestrained anger means to be **angry without a cause**. In some cases, such as against

sin, anger is an appropriate response, but anger should never be directed toward a person—only the sin. Moses, for example, was angry when he descended from Mount Sinai and found the people worshiping the golden calf ([Exod 32:19](#)). Yet, in another fit of rage, Moses committed an unrestrained act of anger when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it and incurred the wrath of God and was not permitted to cross over into the Promised Land ([Num 20:11-12](#)). Many times, we are like Moses when he struck the rock in disobedience to God’s command; we direct our anger toward others unjustifiably simply because our preferences and desires weren’t met. Instead of working out our anger in a constructive and reasonable way, we make the problem worse by flying off of the handle rather than taking time to assess the situation ([Eph 4:26](#)).

Why is anger directed toward sin an appropriate response? What are some instances of inappropriate anger that you have experienced in your life—either emanating from you or directed toward you?

Question
4

Not only does Jesus rebuke unrestrained anger **without a cause**, but He also condemns anger that leads to hurtful words and insults. To illustrate, He gives two examples of abusive speech—calling someone **Raca** or a **fool** (v. 22). The term **Raca** is an Aramaic word that means something similar to idiot or moron in our language today. He respectively adds that people who use such abusive language **are in danger of the council and hell fire**. Jesus isn’t saying that we can lose our salvation and **are in danger** of eternal damnation by calling someone names, but He does demonstrate the severity of the offense and how seriously He takes these insults. Abusive language and insults fly commonly today in arguments or even in discussions with people with whom one disagrees. Instead of calmly and civilly discussing a problem, people resort to name-calling and personal attacks. However, we ought not defame or demoralize people created in God’s image, but we ought to restore them gently through kind and loving words when we have a disagreement. At no point in any argument is there a reason to



Instruct

insult someone and their character even if he is in the wrong; we should treat them as the Lord treats us with dignity and respect.

How can we restrain ourselves from using abusive language when having a discussion or argument with someone no matter how intense it may be?

Question
5

Second, Jesus implores us to seek forgiveness for our wrongs and be willing to forgive others instead of expressing anger and hurling insults (vv. 23-24). Every one of us has made mistakes or has had someone who has wronged us in some way; therefore, Jesus urges us to take steps to reconcile the relationship. In fact, He emphasizes the need for reconciliation by instructing us to prepare for worship by **first** being **reconciled to** others. Even before we **bring** our offerings to the Lord (i.e. **gift**) **to the altar**, we need to be in right standing with others—not holding grudges, fostering bitterness, seeking revenge, or fomenting hatred which constitutes sin, but rather lovingly seeking restoration through forgiveness. In order for us to worship the Lord, we need to be in right standing with Him by removing any sin that hinders us and being in right standing with our fellow man. Although we can't force others **to be reconciled** to us, we can control how we respond. Even if they refuse to accept our apology or attempt to reconcile the relationship, we have done what God has challenged us to do; therefore, we will be in right standing with Him. However, if we refuse to forgive and seek forgiveness and continue to express animosity toward others, then we will be **in danger** of judgment as Jesus has clearly stated in verse 22.

Third, Jesus teaches that we ought to live with integrity and be reconciled to the community (vv. 25-26). To illustrate the integrity we ought to maintain, He uses an example of indebtedness. For example, He tells His audience to **agree quickly with their adversary** while they are negotiating restitution and repayment of debt **lest they be thrown into debtor's prison**. Jesus



further emphasizes the need for integrity by stating that they **will not** be released until they **have paid the last penny**. We must be careful not to take this statement out of context. Jesus doesn't say that we ought to **agree** with our adversaries in matters of immorality and untruth, so that we might not be persecuted and suffer. On the contrary, He instructs us to live with integrity and honor our deals and repay our debts, so that others might see His transformation in us and that we might represent Him well. Consequently, we ought not enter vain disputes and act dishonorably, but rather we ought to uphold the values that Christ has taught us in order to point others to a relationship with Him.

Why is it important for us to seek reconciliation and to act with integrity?

Question

6

When we have a right relationship with the Lord and understand our relationship to the Law as we live in the Spirit, we will follow the boundaries that God has established for our life. We won't legalistically adhere to the Law, but we will allow the Spirit to guide our actions and produce fruit in our lives that is consistent with the character of the Lord. When we live by the Spirit who enables us to fulfill the desires of that God has given us through His Word, we will bring honor and glory to the Lord and be an example for others to emulate. Regardless of what may happen to us in life, we should live according to the will of God because we love Him and are grateful for the salvation and transformation that He has brought in our lives.

The world, however, lives in such a way that they repay tit for tat—just look at Ms. Dehmlow's children, Gina and Jay, in the introduction. Certainly, they had been wronged by their mother and her sordid escapades; however, they have sinned by directing their animosity toward her as a person rather than the sin in which she engaged. Jesus has clearly instructed us in this sermon to abide by the principles in His Word because they are good for all time and do not change with the winds of the culture. We ought to follow His pattern and example and be forgiving of others—no matter what we have perceived they have done to us. Therefore, let us be transformed in our relationships in private, so that we might reflect the glory and goodness of our Savior in our lives and others might come to know Him and the power of His salvation as a result.

Incorporate

What is our relationship to the Law as a follower of Christ?

Why is it important to see the Old Testament as both valid and relevant today? How does the Old Testament apply to our lives? Why should we still follow the examples and principles taught therein—not legalistically, but in the Spirit?

How effectively have you exercised forgiveness and integrity in your life? Are there any areas in which you need to improve? If so, what are they?



Transformed in our Relationships in Private

Matthew 5:27-32

Focal Verse:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

Matthew 5:17

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Introduce

If we have a proven cure for an epidemic of a contagious, deadly disease sweeping our country, without hesitation every one of us would undoubtedly take the vaccine to prevent or minimize the affects—just look at the success of the vaccine that eradicated polio. The truth is, however, that we still have an epidemic of unprecedented proportions affecting our country in the form of unfettered violence and unrestrained sexual immorality. We even have a permanent cure for this debilitating disease, but not many acknowledge it or even participate



by taking the all-encompassing antidote. This cure doesn't come in the form of more human legislation; it doesn't involve philosophy and self-help; and it cannot be found through religion and ritual. Nothing will change if we merely rely on these failed methods. Instead, the only effective solution for human depravity and sin comes through Jesus who died and rose again, so that we might live a transformed life and have a renewed mind in Him.

In order to keep ourselves healthy, we take steps to control the spread of disease whether by washing our hands, wearing a mask, or even avoiding others who have been affected. Yet, why don't we take these same precautions to keep our minds pure and healthy by avoiding coming into contact with sinful situations? With the easy access we have to media, television programs, movies, video games and music today, we have become bombarded with tempting and salacious situations on a daily basis. Most people, including many Christians, have become desensitized to the violence and sexual immorality in the media. In their minds, they don't see the harm of consuming these degrading images; after all, they will never influence the way they think and act—or at least so they think! On the contrary, viewing harmful images of violence, immorality, and pornography (whether explicit or implied) influences the way we think and ultimately influences the way we act. We cannot expect to consume these immoral images and thoughts, as Hollywood and society would have us to believe, without repercussions. We must take deliberate steps to extricate ourselves from these images that society both

Introduce

accepts and even glorifies by guarding our minds and focusing our hearts on Christ. This week's lesson continues the theme that we began last week whereby we discussed being transformed in our relationships in private. In Christ, we have a responsibility to represent Him by conforming our thoughts and actions according to His righteousness. Last week, we established that Jesus represents the pattern for our lives that we ought to follow and saw how we should imitate His forgiveness and integrity in our lives. This week we will examine how Christ has transformed our private relationships and encouraged us to be fitting in our thoughts and faithful in our marriage. Let's shine as examples in this dark and depraved world by having healthy relationships that place Christ first and seek to honor Him.

Key
Question

Why is it important to guard our thoughts?

Matthew 5:27-30

BE FITTING IN YOUR THOUGHTS:

Continuing His teaching on the correct interpretation of the Law which we began studying last week, Jesus urges us to remain pure in our thoughts and not to engage in **lust** (vv. 27-28). He directs our attention to the seventh commandment which prohibits **adultery** by reminding us that we **have heard that it was said to those of old** (Exod 20:14). Just as He did with murder and anger (vv. 21-22), He equates **lust** with **adultery**. According to the true intention and interpretation of the commandment, Jesus states that **whoever looks at a woman to lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart** (v. 28). The problem with **lust** lies with the fact that when we objectify someone in our thoughts he or she becomes an object solely used for our pleasure rather than a valuable human being who is created in God's image! Consequently, entertaining lustful thoughts almost always leads to some type of action because we will seek to gratify our desires regardless of what the cost may be to others.

How does dwelling upon lustful thoughts increase the likelihood of acting upon them?

Question
1

In the Bible, we don't have to look far to find people who have dwelt upon lustful thoughts and failed by committing sexually immoral acts. Perhaps, King David is the most-prominent example who comes to mind. Instead of being in the field with his troops as their commander, he stayed at home and lingered on his roof when he noticed a beautiful married woman by the name of Bathsheba bathing ([2 Sam 11:2](#)). Rather than fleeing this tempting situation, David actually ran toward it by commanding the woman be brought to him. When she conceived, he desperately tried to conceal it by sending for her husband in the field and getting him drunk in order that he might visit with her during the evening. When that failed,

Flee sexual immorality.

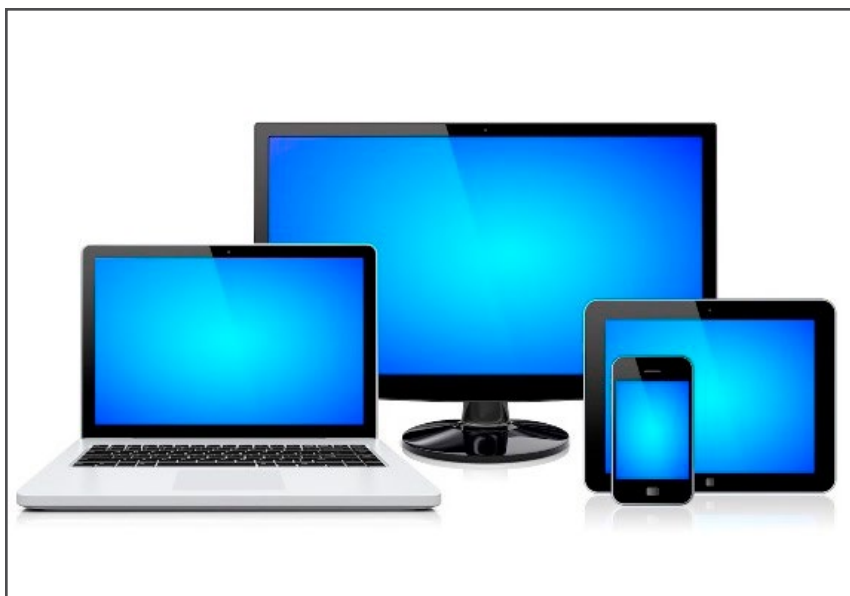
Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

1 Corinthians 6:18

however, David issued a death sentence for Uriah and had him killed by placing him on the front line of the battlefield. If a man identified as being after God's own heart can fail ([1 Sam 14:13](#); [Acts 13:22](#)), how much more vulnerable are others to participate in such immorality?

Unfortunately, culture has a casual attitude toward sexual immorality and presents us with many opportunities to engage in acts which dishonor the Lord by attempting to remove guilt and shame. In fact, culture tries to engrain these thoughts and images in our minds so that the burden to act according to our desires becomes overwhelming and we succumb to temptation. In the sordid tale of Amnon and Tamar, David's son and daughter, we see how culture can press us to fulfill our desires ([2 Sam 13](#)). Amnon was embroiled with so much **lust** for his sister that he couldn't eat and subsequently lost weight—which his friend Jonadab noticed and asked why he had become so sickly and frail. After Amnon told him about his inappropriate love for his sister, Jonadab proposed that he act upon his desires by pretending to be sick and asking Tamar to come and cook for him. Upon hearing this advice, Amnon sprang into action and set the plan in motion. When Tamar graciously came to cook for him, he forced himself upon her, but she pleaded with him not to do such a detestable thing in the sight of the Lord. Yet, after Amnon perpetrated this heinous act he kicked her from the house and wanted nothing more to do with her because he never truly loved her. She had only become an object of gratification to him and useless to him after he had fulfilled his initial desires.

Our society has become a cheerleader and enabler like Jonadab, encouraging us to



act freely on our desires and desensitizing us to immorality. Almost every television show and movie have inappropriate dialogue about intimacy whether in the form of jokes or serious discussion; many also leave nothing to the imagination about intimate activities that should occur only between a husband and wife in private. In addition, commercials in

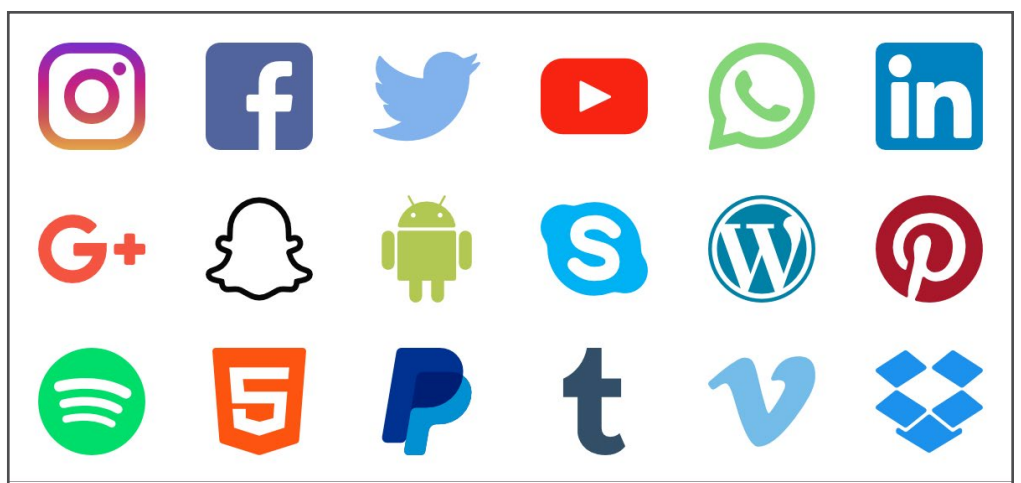
primetime have become increasingly graphic in their content and reference to immoral

practices. Sexual innuendo and pornography have come to dominate our society because they have become more easily accessible through different forms of media. Because of our unfiltered and uninhibited society, people have become confused about what is right and wrong concerning intimacy in relationships. The Bible, however, remains perfectly clear: any physical relationship outside or before marriage and any type of lustful thought are wrong!

In a 2016 survey conducted by George Barna about the societal view of pornography, the statistics reveal a troubling and destructive trend. Shockingly, the survey reports that only 32% of teens and young adults believe pornography is “morally wrong” whereas 56% assert that “not recycling” is “morally wrong.” Among adults over the age of twenty-five, only 54% state that “viewing porn is wrong” and nearly one-third of all Americans actively search and view such perversion at least once a month. Because many people today don’t see viewing these images as wrong, the majority of teens and young adults have not only come to accept it as moral, but they also speak positively about its benefits! In fact, 53% of all teens either accept or speak positively about the topic while 60% of young adults do. Such attitudes have led to a pandemic in our society where 57% of young adults view it “daily, weekly, or monthly” along with 37% of teens and 29% of adults over twenty-five. For us as believers, we certainly ought to avoid depictions of intimacy in pornography, but also programs that portray infidelity, premarital relations, living together before marriage, raunchy and bawdy jokes, and implied as well as explicit activities showing all forms of immorality. When we view these things repeatedly, we become desensitized to them and often find ourselves either participating in them or condoning them.

The casual attitude of society about this topic along with saturation by the modern media

has led to unhealthy relationships. For example, today people have begun to use social media, such as Instagram and Snap Chat, and texting on cell phones to send and receive graphic images. In a second part to his 2016



survey, George Barna notes, “Fully 62% of teens and young adults say they have received a nude image—generally from a boyfriend or girlfriend. 40% have sent a nude image.”

Instruct

He goes on to say, “Sexting often happens well before a relationship begins. In those early ‘get to know you stages’ and it’s not at all unlike [sic] that a person is sexting with multiple potential partners at one time.” Although we may see this as an uncomfortable subject which we wish we could bury and forget, the reality is that we must face it boldly—whether we deal with it personally or our children do. No one is immune to the fact that immorality surrounds us and every day we see people who have succumbed to temptation and fallen. Parents need to take steps to monitor their children’s online activities—no matter how invasive of their privacy it may seem or time consuming and inconvenient it may be! Parents are responsible for protecting and training their children to follow the right path. In addition, we all need to take steps to guard our hearts and minds against such perversion and not become desensitized to the scope of the problem.

How can you as a parent or individual take steps to avoid falling into such a trap of temptation?

Question
2

In Reference



For the research mentioned in the two paragraphs above, see George Barna, “[Porn in the Digital Age: New Research Reveals 10 Trends](#),” in *Culture and Media* (April 6, 2016) and “[Porn 2.0: The Sexting Crisis](#),” in *Culture and Media* (April 13, 2016). You can also access these statistics and others by visiting his website: <http://barna.com>.

As mentioned earlier, the problem of sexual immorality centers around viewing a person as an object of desire. Anyone who lusts will have an unhealthy view of relationships that is unrealistic, unfulfilling, and unsatisfying. First, a relationship built upon **lust** is only valuable as long as it benefits the person; therefore, these relationships become disposable when a person no longer sees the benefit in it. Moreover, benefits are often weighted upon physical attraction and fulfillment, so when a better opportunity arises the previous relationship no longer matters. Second, because **lust** is the same as being unfaithful it destroys trust in the relationship. Without trust, any relationship is doomed for failure. Third, **lust** often leads to inappropriate conduct both in and outside of a relationship: violence, coercion, harassment, and abuse. Fourth, **lust** creates unrealistic expectation in a relationship where a person can never live up to the standards about which another person fantasizes. Because society has diluted the consequences and

stigmatism of immorality, we see the results of inappropriate behavior in the workplace, in school, in homes, and even in the church. People have become desensitized to boundaries and relationships are almost always identified by what benefit a person can gain rather than what he can mutually give.

In what ways does lust destroy a relationship?

Question
3

After clarifying the intention of the prohibition against adultery, Jesus stresses the important of ridding ourselves of anything that may hinder our walk with Him. He tells His followers **if their right eye causes them to sin then they should pluck it out and cast it away** (v. 29). He then explains the reason for such a harsh statement by interjecting that **it is more profitable that one of our members perish than our whole body be cast into hell**. To emphasize the urgency of this action, Jesus then reiterates this same point in verse 30 using the **right hand** as another example. Here, Jesus uses hyperbole to

THEREFORE WE ALSO, SINCE WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES, LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT, AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENSNARES US, AND LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US.

HEBREWS 12:1

emphasize the serious nature of this particular sin. He isn't telling us literally to poke out an **eye** or cut off a **hand**, but to remove any type of **lust** at all cost. When we allow our eyes to guide our hearts and actions, we lose focus on Christ and every area of our lives suffer. Because we each have different personalities and preferences, what motivates us to lust differs from person to person; however, Jesus teaches us here to identify and get rid of any distraction in our lives which can cause us to stumble and seek us to honor Him by maintaining a pure mind which respects others and has a proper view of a healthy relationship according to God's standards.

Jesus also emphasizes the seriousness of the problem of lust by showing how **it is more profitable that one of our members perish than our whole body be cast into hell**. Although the consequences of **lust** are severe, we can't lose our salvation; yet, this doesn't give us the freedom to participate in lustful thoughts and simply ask forgiveness later. Here, Jesus is referring to the many people who allow the **lust** of the eyes to prevent them from coming to a relationship with Him. By allowing their eyes to guide them,

Instruct

these people enjoy sin too much and want instant gratification so desperately that they are unwilling to confess and repent to begin a relationship with Christ. Imagine going through life seeking satisfaction in relationship after relationship only to find them empty and devoid of contentment. The only true relationship that can satisfy is found in Christ. When we have a relationship with Him, He will transform our perspective and all our desires to conform to His so that all our relationship will glorify Him and be productive in the way that God originally intended them.

What are some areas or situations which tend to produce lustful thoughts? How can you take steps to avoid these areas in order to maintain a pure thought-life?

Question
4

Throughout this section, we have mentioned numerous examples, such as David, who engaged in lustful thoughts and failed. Regardless of what we may have done in the past, we can have hope in Christ our Lord. The same God who confronted David through Nathan the prophet and led him to restoration can also restore us. The One who rescued Rahab and Mary Magdalene from prostitution can also rescue us. The first step we must take if we have been engaged in impure thoughts is to repent—stop and turn from what we have done! When we repent, we must constantly read Scripture and pray that God will help us to overcome our fleshly desires. Second, we need to take practical steps to rid ourselves of anything that may hinder our walk with Him. We need to stop viewing certain TV shows, certain Internet sites, and listening to certain music. More importantly, we need to refrain from doing things in secrecy. This is easier when we are married because we have an accountability partner present in our lives already. To produce transparency and honesty, we need to have one set of passwords for both spouses, each should have access to cell phones and computers at any time to look at any app or history. We should also set limits on time for computer and television use and spend more time with our spouses and family members. If we are single, we should find an accountability partner of the same gender to help us when we struggle. Finally, we should replace the bad habit with something constructive. Doing these things won't guarantee success, but we must surrender our lives and remember that He sees and knows our inner-most thoughts.

What practical advice based on Scripture would you give someone struggling with lust?

Question
5

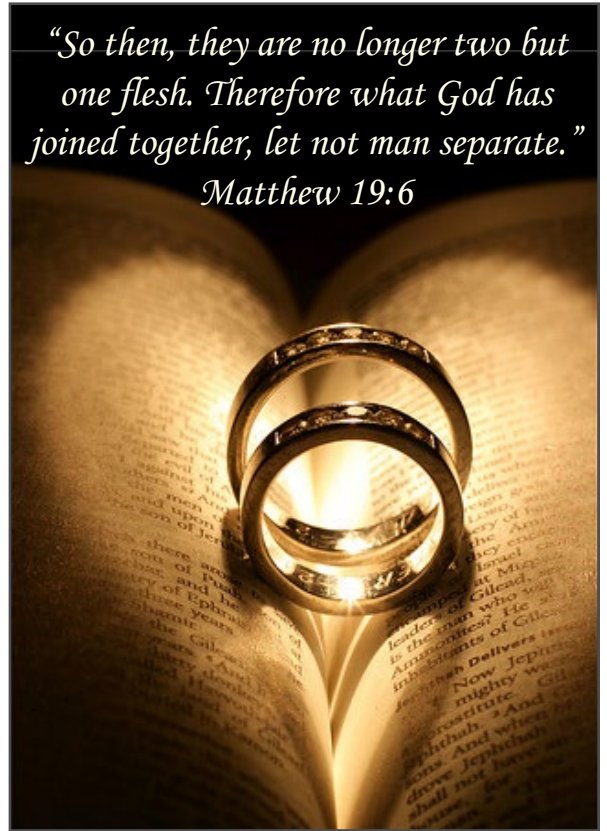
BE FAITHFUL IN MARRIAGE:

Not only should we honor God by being fitting with our thoughts, but we should also honor Him in our relationships, especially by being faithful in marriage. We spent the majority of this lesson overviewing the problem of entertaining impure thoughts because the way we think about and perceive relationships has much to do with remaining faithful and having a healthy marriage. Jesus defends the permanence of marriage by examining the permission in the Law that allows a husband to **divorce his wife** for “uncleanness” by issuing her a **certificate of divorce** (see [Deut 24:1-4](#)). Jesus defines this by asserting **whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery** (v. 32). He also adds that a person who marries a divorcée also **commits adultery**. From the beginning, God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman for life (see

[Gen 2:24; Matt 19:6](#)). However, when a couple doesn’t make God the center of their relationship problems will abound. Apart from God, we tend to focus on our own desires and become selfish in our outlook rather than seeing our spouse through the eyes of Christ. Often, selfishness and immaturity in marriage leads to irreparable rifts that end in divorce.

God never sanctions divorce, but because of man’s hard-heartedness and sinfulness, divorce could be permissible only under the auspices of infidelity. Even so, reconciliation and forgiveness should be the first response if we have a relationship with the Lord, but in some cases marriages cannot be reconciled because of serial infidelity. To understand this subject more fully, we must also make two more caveats about divorce and separation. First, the Bible also addresses the issue of a non-believing spouse abandoning or divorcing a believing spouse; if that is the case, the believer is also free to remarry ([1 Cor 7:15](#)). Second, a person cannot stay in an abusive situation, especially one that could lead to bodily injury or death. It’s best to separate from the situation entirely and pray for the person to be transformed through Christ.

“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”
Matthew 19:6



Instruct

God clearly condemns mental and physical abuse of any type in a relationship and we should not encourage someone to stay in a relationship that could lead to potential harm.

Although we must assess the cause of divorce on a case-by-case basis, we can make a few observations about it in general. During Jesus' day, divorce could occur for almost any reason—much like our own general assertion of irreconcilable differences. Some teachers in the first century taught that a husband could divorce his wife if she were a terrible cook or if a more attractive woman was found.* This shows the depth of humanity's depravity and a total misunderstanding about the true purpose of marriage. Most marriages today don't end for the biblical reasons we've identified, but because men and women are stubborn, selfish, and incapable of calmly and rationally resolving their differences. It takes two people to make marriage work uniting as one in Christ, but it also takes two people to make it fail when they are divided on personal preferences. God despises divorce for these reasons because they constitute sin and disobedience; therefore, Jesus urges us to remain faithful and resolve our differences by making Him the center of our marriage.

In Reference



For more information, see David L. Turner, Matthew, Baker Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 171.

We need to take practical steps to remain faithful in our marriage. First, regardless of how much self-control we think we may have we shouldn't be alone with the opposite gender. We don't need to put ourselves into potentially compromising situations or those which could be misconstrued. Second, we need to watch what we say and how we say it—especially in this day when so many things can be taken out of context. We don't want someone thinking that our jobs or language is meant as flirting. Third, we need to invest in our marriages by having a time of devotion as a couple as well as a family. Finally, spend time pursuing each other rather than going through the motions. When we practice these things with Christ at the center, our marriages and families will be strengthened no matter what obstacles or hurdles we may face.

What is some other practical advice that you could give to encourage faithfulness in marriage?

Question
6

We've dealt with some difficult and overwhelming topics these past two weeks in our lessons, but the Bible gives us a clear prescription for success: follow Christ daily by allowing His Spirit to cleanse and guide us. When we look at the world around us, we see an epidemic of sinfulness which enslaves and destroys. According to the very subjects on which Jesus has taught, we see instances of uncontrolled anger almost daily which leads to physical violence; we see an unwillingness to forgive which leads to retaliation; we see an unfiltered thought-life which leads to a whole host of problems, such as lust; and we see a lack of commitment and faithfulness to make marriage work. To us, it may look hopeless. Despite this picture of gloom, we have hope because we know the One who can cleanse the sinful and restore the broken. We simply must surrender to Him and allow Him to work in our lives to make us what we ought to be.

Moreover, God has placed us in His church to function as a community which helps and encourages one another. God hasn't left us to face our struggles alone, but has given us brothers and sisters in His body to walk along side of us. Because of the preponderance of lust and immorality in our society, we must help each other guard our thoughts and watch what we do. As a church, we have resources for family's to help facilitate good choices on our website, which you will find listed below. On this useful page, you will find Internet sites that will rate movies and warn of all inappropriate content from language to sexuality, Internet search engines that will help block potentially harmful pages, a link to "Family Watchdog" which highlights potential areas with sex offenders, and a whole host of other valuable resources that are updated constantly. God wants us to be equipped and prepared for battle in every way with the enemy desperately seeking to destroy families. Let us, therefore, be transformed in our relationships by remaining fitting and pure in our thoughts and faithful in our marriages.

In Reference



To access our family resources, go to

<http://www.fbcfw.org/building-blocks-for-the-family/>.

Incorporate

What biblical advice would you give someone who struggles with lust or sexual immorality of any kind, including pornography?

What biblical advice would you give someone who struggles with faithfulness in their marriage?

August 2018

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