

Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 77

Sunday AM-August 9, 2026

Executive Summary

This document analyzes a teaching on Matthew 5:27-30, focusing on Jesus' explanation of adultery and the true standard of God's Law. The central theme is that Jesus did not come to change or lower the Law of Moses, but to restore it to its original, internal intent. While the religious leaders of the time—the scribes and Pharisees—focused only on outward actions, Jesus taught that God judges the thoughts and desires of the heart. By equating lust with adultery, Jesus sets a standard of righteousness that is impossible to meet through human effort alone. This teaching is designed to expose human sinfulness and destroy the "self-righteousness" that leads people to believe they can earn their way into heaven.

The Messiah and the Law of Moses

The people following Jesus were curious about his relationship with the Law. They wondered if this miracle worker would change the rules established by Moses or if he would bring a new standard for the Kingdom of God.

- **Fulfillment, Not Alteration:** Jesus stated clearly that his message was the same as the one given by Moses. He did not come to destroy or alter the Law, but to fulfill it.
 - **A Higher Standard:** In Matthew 5:20, Jesus issued a challenging requirement: *"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."*
 - **Correcting Misinterpretations:** The scribes and Pharisees were considered the most religious people of the day. However, they had lowered God's Law to a level they could physically achieve. Jesus sought to lift the standard back to where God originally placed it.
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Internal Righteousness vs. External Behavior

Jesus used several illustrations to show that God is concerned with a person's inner life, not just their public actions. He aimed to show that everyone falls short of God's absolute standard.

The Comparison of Murder and Adultery

Jesus drew a parallel between the Sixth Commandment (murder) and the Seventh Commandment (adultery) to show how sin starts in the mind.

Commandment	Outward Sin	Inward Root (The Heart)	Underlying Principle
Sixth	Murder	Anger / Hatred	Sacredness of Life
Seventh	Adultery	Lust / Desire	Sacredness of Marriage

Defining Adultery of the Heart

The source text emphasizes that a person cannot claim to be righteous simply because they have not committed the physical act of adultery. Jesus taught that the desire is as sinful as the act.

- *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).*
- Lust and anger are described as powerful forces that reach deep into the human experience and prove that all people are sinners.

The Problem of Self-Righteousness

A major theme in the teaching is the human tendency to create "self-righteous" systems. When people do not want to follow God's true way, they often invent their own religious standards.

- **Inventing a "Good" Self:** People often believe they will go to heaven because they are "pretty good" or have lived a decent life. This is described as inventing a god with a standard that is easy to keep.
- **The Purpose of the High Standard:** By setting the bar so high—equating a look with an act—Jesus destroys the idea that anyone can be "good enough" on their own.
- **The Radical Solution:** Jesus suggests that it is better to lose a limb or an eye than to let those parts of the body lead a person into sin. This illustrates the seriousness of sin and the need to be rescued from it.

Modern Societal Challenges

The document outlines how current Western society has moved away from the sanctity of marriage and toward "unbridled indulgence."

- **The Loss of Privacy:** Sexual intimacy was designed by God to be a private, special discovery within marriage. Today, it is "plastered all over billboards" and sold through mass media.

- **Situational Ethics:** Modern society often follows a "pleasure-first" philosophy. This "new morality" suggests that anything is acceptable as long as it "feels good" and does not obviously hurt others.
 - **Rampant Temptation:** While temptation has always existed, the current "virtueless society" makes it more visible and common. The text argues that the constant public discussion and propagation of sex only elicits evil responses from the heart.
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Conclusion: The Call to Salvation

The ultimate goal of Jesus' sermon is to bring listeners to a point of humility. By realizing that even their thoughts condemn them, people are forced to look away from their own "goodness" and toward God for mercy.

- **Humility:** Recognizing that you can do nothing to earn righteousness.
- **Repentance:** Seeking to be rescued and forgiven for both internal and external sins.
- **Belief:** Accepting the Gospel as the only way to meet God's perfect standard.