

Series: From Israel to Everyone: Disciples who Demonstrate God's Presence (a study of Matthew).

Sermon Text: 5:27-32 Desire questions)

(**See App** for lesson, slides, and to ask

In 2018, Krista and I visited the Grand Canyon with Gary and Lisa where we found that “*dry heat*” is still heat. My wife geared up for this awesome adventure by downloading worship songs to help us commune with God as we marveled in His majestic views. Upon exiting the bus, though, her childlike excitement was interrupted when several tourists ran right to the edge, which for some reason lacked guard rails! We also saw a couple backing towards the edge while their picture was being taken. My pal thought it helpful to yell “*Hey!*” in his deep Gary voice, which surprisingly didn’t startle them back and over! Anyway, I’ve had all this in mind as we’ve studied Matthew 5. I’ve been pondering how people’s ignorance and lack of respect for beautiful and sacred things can confuse us, mess with our appreciation for them, or worse...it can lead us to diminish their importance and benefit. Take purity and marriage, for example. Like those Grand Canyon edge-testers, we act like young lovers who ask, “*How close can I get to the edge or indulge before it crosses God’s good boundaries?*” We measure the line coldly and physically, proud to have not crossed external boundaries. But here in **Matthew 5**, Jesus walks up to our self-made ledges and peers straight into the depths of our hearts. He says whenever we flirt with **lust** in our mind, we’ve already crossed the line in our **heart**. He calls us past legalistic border-testing to this...

BIG IDEA: Christ-like love values human hearts over selfish urges and legal loopholes.

Jesus addressed our **heart** desires in **verses 27-28**: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman (or a man) with lustful intent (literally: “to satisfy lustful desire”) has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” As we heard last week, the phrase “*You have heard it said*” points to popular rabbinic interpretations of God’s Law that missed its intent. Jesus wasn’t redefining or refining the 7th commandment, He was simply showing (as the original Lawgiver) how the 10th commandment (to not

covet/desire your neighbor's spouse and possessions) rounds out and informs the first 9. In other words, commandment 10 reveals that sins (e.g. idolatry, murder, **adultery**, lying) start in the **heart**! This may seem odd if we see logic as a “**head**” thing and emotions as a “**heart**” thing. But it's not that clean nor does this square with Scripture and science. [Technically](#), emotions come from a complex collaboration of the nervous system, brain networks, bodily signals and cognitive interpretations. Thus, related terms like “**heart, mind, soul and spirit**” overlap in Scripture. For example, various verses reveal the **heart** can think, desire, purpose, love, or be anxious, jealous and faithful (see notes below).

So, “***How can this help us battle sinful anger or lust?***” It mainly proves our need for the gospel! As Bill wisely reminded us, true transformation requires Christ's Spirit to renew us from the inside out (cf. Ezekiel 36:26–27). Why? Because sin isn't like surface scratches or a smudge we can buff out--it's more like a disease woven into our nature. It requires prayer, but it can't just be prayed away. It requires direct confrontation, but telling others to “*stop*” or “*quit cold turkey*” won't uproot it. Willpower is no match for the tug of our sin nature! Like Paul in Romans 7, we can truly intend to do right yet remain enslaved to our desires. So, we must not think that only “*sickos*” have **lustful desires**--even saints who love God deeply (think King David) have life-long struggles with desires and temptations, specifically self-denial. Instead of “*challenging their salvation*”, we should help them bring hidden battles into the light of God's grace and community--because pursuing purity and following Jesus requires Spirit-filled allies!

That means worship is an embodied experience, not a solitary mental exercise. Ancient philosophies like [Dualism](#) and [Gnosticism](#) falsely believed our physical acts are irrelevant, but Scripture refutes that. God aims to redeem our physical parts, not just our souls. The Corinthians were told our bodies will be resurrected and collectively form the Spirit's temple. So, our fight for heart-level purity always involves others, which is especially true **in verses 29-30** where Jesus called for **radical intervention**: ***If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw***

it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. To be clear, Jesus was not saying holiness requires [mutilating body parts](#), just that sin's deadliness warrants major lifestyle surgeries. Pursuing purity, for example, can feel like an amputation as we delete apps, set up digital accountability, cut off sources of temptation, or end secret relationships. Contrary to modern advice, Christ says we must say "no" to ourselves and accept responsibility like **Job (31:1 NIV) who said**, "*I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman (or man).*" Our **lust** reduces sacred image-bearers to commodities by objectifying and treating them like tools for personal satisfaction. During our Sunday-to-Monday connection, we'll hear from an agency that sees this a lot. Instead of taking responsibility, people prefer to victim-blame like Adam did with Eve. In the 1st century, Jewish writers labeled women "*dangerous*" because they could invite **lust** (see notes below). To prevent **lust**, their married women (but not their singles) were expected to wear head coverings. King David, on the other hand, knew Bathsheba's good looks and need to bathe didn't cause his sin--that came from his heart! His heir, Jesus shocked 1st century sensibilities by proposing a solution that starts with heart-level change, not controlling others and concealing beauty!

Instead of drawing more lines, Jesus directs us to the cross where grace meets our inability to achieve His Father's high standards, where He suffered the condemnation represented by **Gehenna** on our behalf and afterwards, sent His Spirit to empower our daily obedience and other Spirit-filled helpers to aid our good intentions! One such helper, the Apostle Paul, gave some great gospel advice 1 Timothy 5:2 NLT: "*Treat older women as you would your mother and treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters.*" Learning to see others as our literal "*sisters*" or "*brothers*" helps us treat people with the love and respect God says they deserve. Also, in your purity pursuit, remember Jesus came to break down barriers, including those between men and women. In our rejection of unhealthy relations between the sexes, we must also affirm healthy ones. **Here's my point: Jesus didn't say to avoid male and female relationships.** We're to love our neighbors in ways that inspire holiness, which means men can love men deeply, women can love women deeply, and both can love the opposite sex deeply--pursuing holy love

that seeks their good rather than self-gratification. The mistake Eve and King David made was choosing to look too long, desire wrongly, and take for themselves!

This brings us to Christ's clarifications regarding *divorce* in *verses 31-32*: *It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.* Yikes, right? No wiggle room there! **But texts like** Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 16 and 1 Corinthians 7 say a lot more on the subject and include exceptions for *divorce* and remarriage. Such passages show that, like His Father (cf. Malachi 2), Jesus hated how *divorce* ruins relationships and the early church struggled to apply this. So, I hope this next statement bugs you enough to fact check me...God's laws are full of "grey areas" by design! They aren't meant to be some checklist we apply apart from thoughtful prayer and discussion. Many laws in the first 5 books include situational instructions for the topics Jesus mentioned here like *murder*, *marriage*, and *making pledges*. It's also no coincidence that Jesus addressed *divorce* between *lust* in *verses 27-30* and *truth-telling* in *verses 33-37*. Professor NT Wright (p. 47) wisely noted that "*Divorce normally happens when lust and lies have been allowed to grow up like weeds and choke the fragile and beautiful plant of marriage.*"

That's clearly Christ's concern here in *Mattew 5*, **specifically that marriage is a sacred covenant**, not a contract to be discarded if it's costly or inconvenient. Sadly, 1st century men treated *divorce* as a legal loophole--a religious justification to dump their *wives* like objects for trivial reasons like if she burnt his food, she lost her temper, or he found another woman more attractive. Their selfishness exposed women to poverty and shame, especially ones who fully relied on their hubby's money and influence. A women who lacked wealth, for example, lost her household stability, social standing, and economic security. If she couldn't go back to her family, then she was in real trouble--ultimately, because her husband refused to deny himself and honor God. Jesus stripped away all self-righteous excuses, which implies that with the Spirit's help, we can and should do the hard work of saying

“no” to our selfish impulses that treat human beings like replaceable products instead of cherished image-bearers.

As a pastor, I’m supposed to help folks do that. Sadly though, some ministers take the easy way out by not officiating the wedding of or serving communion to anyone who has been **divorced**. These pastors love God, but by treating His Law like cold checklist, they **cut off** His Spirit’s role in helping us apply lifegiving principles to everyone’s messy situations. **Not only does this example fit our text**, but it also happens to have profoundly shaped my gospel understanding. You see, I once made a crazy move while our leaders were wrestling with how we handle divorce and remarriage. I called a well-known author of a book on marriage, divorce and remarriage in the Bible! He didn’t know me and should’ve hung up on me but instead was super gracious as I rambled on about Jesus leaving no wiggle room on **adultery**. I’ll never forget what the author asked when I finally shut my mouth: “*Brandon, do you think adultery is unforgivable?*” **Duh, right?** Like my peers, my fixation on the letter of the law kept me from considering how the gospel applies to sins like **adultery**! Bottom line: I now realize there’s grace and forgiveness for stuff that Scripture condemns. We must, of course, take such matters seriously since Jesus sacrificed His life as the solution. But with Holy Spirit help and guidance from His Word, we can be serious about sin AND help people find redemption instead of discarding them based on the worst thing they’ve ever done. After all, much of the New Testament was written by a former Christian killer! It won’t popular nor easy for us, any more than it was for Jesus, but with His help, we can swim against the cultural tides that leave humans washed up on sin’s shores. That’s true whether we’re talking about **anger**, **lust**, or next week’s topic: How Christ followers shouldn’t need to sign contracts or **swear oaths** just to tell the simple truth. **For now, let me repeat**...we don’t ever have to take our next steps alone. We have the Holy Spirit and we have each other. We invite you to reach out to us for help when you’re ready!

Sunday to Monday Connection:

- **Question:** See questions above and below.
- **Next Step:** See applications above and below.

- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to explore what all this might mean for you, please speak with someone you know here or one of our church leaders.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. What is the key distinction between seeing others (as image bearers) and lusting after them (like an object)?
2. What is Jesus saying about adultery in 5:27-28? Was He redefining, refining, or saying something else? And what gave Him the right to say such things more so than the rabbis of His day?
3. Why does God care about our sexuality? Isn't that a private thing between 2 consenting adults?
4. Concerning the extreme language Jesus used in 5:29-30, what are some modern "eyes" or "hands" (access points, devices, habits, relationships) that we might need to modify to guard our hearts? What digital boundaries or environmental habits could you implement this week to protect your heart and mind (e.g. setting screen-time limits, removing certain apps, creating accountability, guarding what you watch).
5. In the first century, divorce was often used as a legal loophole for husbands to discard their wives conveniently. How does Christ's teaching in verses 5:31-32 protect people by persevering the dignity of covenant relationships against a throwaway culture?

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

- [Article](#): Failure Happens Slowly Before It Happens Suddenly
- Bible Project - Gospel of the Kingdom [Videos](#) and [Podcast episodes](#).
- Bible Project - Heaven and Earth [Videos](#) and [Podcast episodes](#).
- Bible Project - Temple [Videos](#).
- Bible Project – Day of the Lord [Podcast episodes](#).

Quotes related to this passage:

- **No redefining or refining:** "Jesus fulfills Torah by interpreting it rightly and living it completely, and he calls his followers to live out covenant loyalty in line with the values expressed in the Torah. Our preaching and teaching of

this passage will need to contend with common perceptions (possibly our own) that the law implies legalism and exists only to provide the counterpoint to God's grace and forgiveness. We would do well to remember that the Old Testament affirms the goodness of the law (e.g., Ps. 119:9–16), and that within the law itself a means of forgiveness is provided in the sacrificial system (e.g., Lev. 4). So, it is important in our preaching and teaching of Matthew that we do not offer a false dichotomy of law versus grace. This dichotomy is most certainly foreign to Matthew's theology. And Matthew's perspective is a needed corrective for many expressions of Christianity in today's world. Just as the Old Testament affirms the importance of covenant loyalty as a response to God's redemptive work and grace, so Jesus calls his followers to covenant loyalty in light of the arrival of God's kingdom and through the lens of the ultimate values of the Torah. Jesus as its consummate interpreter demonstrates that the center of the Torah is expressed in love of enemy as well as neighbor. And Matthew provides the theological grounding of Jesus (as God) with his people (1:23; 28:20) to indicate the relational (covenantal) basis for obedience to God (for the question of the relationship between contemporary Christians and the Torah, see comments on 28:19–20)." (Brown, 62)

- **We were made to desire:** "This teaching of Jesus, confirmed in the experience of Job, is still true today. Deeds of shame are preceded by fantasies of shame, and the inflaming of the imagination by the indiscipline of the eyes. Our vivid imagination (one of many faculties which distinguish humans from animals) is a precious gift of God. None of the world's art and little of man's noblest achievement would have been possible without it. Imagination enriches the quality of life. But all God's gifts need to be used responsibly; they can readily be degraded and abused. This is certainly true of our imagination." (Stott, 88)
- **Lust in 1st century times:** "Although some philosophers, especially Stoics, opposed lust because it meant that pleasure rather than virtue dominated one's thoughts (e.g., Epict. Disc. 2.18.15–18; 3.2.8; 4.9.3; Marc. Aur. 2.10; 3.2.2; 9.40; cf. Nock 1964a: 19), many men in the ancient Mediterranean thought lust a healthy and normal practice (e.g., Ach. Tat. Clit. 1.4–6; Apul. Metam. 2.8; Diog. Laert. 6.2.46, 69; Diog. Ep. 35 to Sopolis; Artem. Oneir. 1.78) ... Jewish men expected married Jewish women to wear head coverings to prevent lust (single women were exempt, since they needed to find a husband). Jewish writers often warned of women as dangerous because they could invite lust (e.g., Sir 25:21; 26:9; Ps. Sol. 16:7–8; Test. Reub. 3.11–12; 5.1–5; 6:1; Jos. War 2.121; Ant. 7.130; b. Ta'an. 24a), but Jesus placed the responsibility for lust on the person doing the lusting (5:28; Witherington 1984: 28). He treats lust as if it is exclusively a sin of the lusting heart, not a sin of letting hair out from under one's covering... Although Matthew retains the Markan context of causing others to stumble (Mk 9:42–48; Mt 18:7–9), he here uses Jesus' hyperbolic sayings about sacrificing limbs to underline the urgency of rejecting sin... Herod Antipas, controlled by lust (14:6), ended up murdering a prophet (14:10; cf. 5:11–12), illustrating the principle of both this paragraph and the preceding one (5:21–30), as well as the prohibition of oaths (5:33–37;

14:7)... Jesus does not, of course, refer here to passing attraction, “but the deliberate harboring of desire for an illicit relationship” (France 1985: 121; cf. Blomberg 1992a: 109; Is 33:15). The Greek present tense often bears a continuous sense and probably does so here: Jesus refers not to noticing a person’s beauty, but to imbibing it, meditating on it, seeking to possess it. Paul and most of his Jewish contemporaries prescribed marriage as a helpful antidote to this sin (Keener 1991a: 72–74, 79–82).” (Keener, 186-187, 189)

- **The Psychological Heart:** The heart attends intellectually (e.g., Jer 12:11); it also perceives (Jn 12:40), understands (1 Kgs 3:9), debates (Mk 2:6), reflects (Lk 2:19), remembers (Lk 2:51), thinks (Dt 8:17), imagines (Lk 1:51), is wise (Eccl 1:17 KJV) or mad (Eccl 9:3), has technical skill (Ex 28:3 KJV), and much more. Emotionally, the heart experiences intoxicated merriment (1 Sm 25:36), gladness (Is 30:29), joy (Jn 16:22), sorrow (Neh 2:2), anguish (Rom 9:2), bitterness (Prv 14:10), anxiety (1 Sm 4:13), despair (Eccl 2:20), love (2 Sm 14:1), trust (Ps 112:7), affection (2 Cor 7:3), lust (Mt 5:28), callousness (Mk 3:5), hatred (Lv 19:17), fear (Gn 42:28), jealousy (Jas 3:14), desire (Rom 10:1), discouragement (Nm 32:9), sympathy (Ex 23:9), anger (Dt 19:6 KJV), irresolution (2 Chr 13:7 KJV), and much besides. Volitionally, the heart can purpose (1 Cor 4:5), incline to (1 Sm 14:7), prompt (2 Kgs 12:4; cf. Prv 4:23), be steadfast (Acts 11:23), willing (Ex 35:22), or willful (Ez 13:2 KJV), contrive evil (Acts 5:4), or follow its ‘treasure’ (Mt 6:21). Morally, the heart can be gentle, lowly (Mt 11:29), holy (1 Thes 3:13), faithful (Neh 9:8), upright (Ps 97:11), pure, singleminded (Jas 4:8), clean (Acts 15:9), loving toward God (Mk 12:30) and others (1 Pt 1:22), or hardened or sensitive (Ez 11:19). Scripture’s emphasis falls upon the heart’s evil (Gn 6:5 and throughout), as self-deceiving (Jas 1:26), deceitful (Jer 17:9), avaricious (Mt 6:19–21), lustful (Mt 5:28), arrogant (Is 9:9), impious (Acts 7:51), perverse (Ps 101:4), and impenitent (Rom 2:5). Nothing defiles a man but his own heart (Mk 7:18, 19). Yet, as conscience the heart can smite (1 Sm 24:5; cf. Acts 2:37). Moreover, out of the heart can come good (Lk 6:45; 8:15). Even when frustrated by circumstances or by fear, the heart’s good intention remains good, its evil intent, bad (1 Kgs 8:18; Mt 5:28). Being so complex, man’s heart is sadly divided, and Scripture often extols a perfect, whole, true (united) heart (Gn 20:5; Acts 8:37 mg; Ps 86:11). For ‘heart’ signifies the total inner self, a person’s hidden core of being (1 Pt 3:4), with which one communes, which one ‘pours out’ in prayer, words, and deeds (Gn 17:17; Ps 62:8; Mt 15:18, 19). It is the genuine self, distinguished from appearance, public position, and physical presence (1 Sm 16:7; 2 Cor 5:12; 1 Thes 2:17). Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Heart,” in Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 939.
- **Clarifications:** “There is not the slightest suggestion here that natural sexual relations within the commitment of marriage are anything but God-given and beautiful. We may thank God that the Song of Solomon is contained in the canon of Scripture, for there is no Victorian prudery there but rather the uninhibited delight of lovers, of bride and bridegroom in each other. No. The teaching of Jesus here refers to unlawful sex outside marriage, whether

practised by married or unmarried people. He is not even forbidding us to look at a woman, but to look lustfully. We all know the difference between looking and lusting. This leads to the second point, that Jesus' allusion is to all forms of immorality. To argue that the reference is only to a man lusting after a woman and not vice versa, or only to a married man and not an unmarried, since the offender is said to commit 'adultery' not 'fornication', is to be guilty of the very casuistry which Jesus was condemning in the Pharisees. His emphasis is that any and every sexual practice which is immoral in deed is immoral also in look and in thought." (Stott, 87-88)

- **Eyes and hands:** "This was evidently a favourite saying of Jesus, for he quoted it more than once. It recurs later in this same Gospel, where the foot is added to the eye and the hand, and the reference is a general one to 'temptations to sin', not explicitly to sexual temptation. So the principle has a wider application. Nevertheless, it is to this particular realm that Jesus applied it in the Sermon on the Mount. What did he mean by it? On the surface it is a startling command to pluck out an offending eye, to cut off an offending hand or foot. A few Christians, whose zeal greatly exceeded their wisdom, have taken Jesus au pied de la lettre and mutilated themselves. Perhaps the best-known example is the third-century scholar, Origen of Alexandria. He went to extremes of asceticism, renouncing possessions, food and even sleep, and in an over-literal interpretation of this passage and of Matthew 19:12 actually made himself a eunuch. Not long after, in AD 325, the Council of Nicea was right to forbid this barbarous practice. The command to get rid of troublesome eyes, hands and feet is an example of our Lord's use of dramatic figures of speech. What he was advocating was not a literal physical self-maiming, but a ruthless moral self-denial. Not mutilation but mortification is the path of holiness he taught, and 'mortification' or 'taking up the cross' to follow Christ means to reject sinful practices so resolutely that we die to them or put them to death... then pluck out your eyes. That is, don't look! Behave as if you had actually plucked out your eyes and flung them away and were now blind and so could not see the objects which previously caused you to sin." (Stott, 89)
- **Divorce in the 1st Century:** "In practice, the early Christians immediately began to qualify Jesus' divorce saying; other principles of Jesus, such as not condemning the innocent (12:7) or the principle of mercy (23:23), would have forced them to do so in some circumstances. For instance, when confronted by Christians wanting to divorce unbelieving spouses, Paul used Jesus' saying to forbid their design, but noted that if instead the spouse left, the believer was 'not bound' (1 Cor 7:15). Paul's words recall the exact language for freedom to remarry in ancient divorce contracts, and his ancient readers, unable to be confused by modern writers' debates on the subject, would have understood his words thus (e.g., m. Git. 9:3; CPJ 2:10-12, §144; Carmon 1973: 90-91, 200-201, §189; Harrell 1967: 71; Keener 1991a: 61-62).⁹⁵ The exception Matthew states is the spouse's unfaithfulness to the marriage... Paul's and Matthew's exceptions (Mt 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor 7:15, 27-28) constitute two-thirds of the extant first-century Christian references to divorce, and both point to the same kind of exception: the person whose marriage is ended

against his or her will. In other words, Jesus' exceptions do not constitute an excuse to escape a difficult marriage (cf. 1 Cor 7:10–14); they exonerate those who genuinely wished to save their marriage but were unable to do so because their spouse's unrepentant adultery, abandonment, or abuse de facto destroyed the marriage bonds." (Keener, 191-192)

- **Teaching on Adultery:** "Clearly, this is a painful and pressing issue for many people around the world. Almost any large congregation these days will have at least some divorced people among its members. Many will have couples who have remarried after divorce. Not many years ago most clergy were unable, in conscience, to give Holy Communion to such people; yet now most churches, of whatever sort and in most parts of the world, receive remarried couples as full members, even if they continue to regard divorce as a great evil. Indeed, many clergy themselves, in many Christian denominations, have been through divorce and remarriage. As I write, I think not only of today's correspondent, but of some very close friends, and some members of my own family, who are in this situation. What must we say? What did Jesus mean? How practical is his teaching today? This passage is not, of course, the only place in the New Testament where the matter comes up. It is important to study Mark 10:2–12, Luke 16:18, and 1 Corinthians 7:10–16, as well as the present passage and Matthew 19:3–9. Together they show both that Jesus set his face firmly against divorce (in line with Old Testament teaching, e.g. Malachi 2:14–16) and that the early church wrestled with how to apply this in practice." (Wright, 46-47)
- **Sin and remarriage:** "Deal ruthlessly with the first signs of lust. Plucking out eyes and cutting off hands are deliberate exaggerations (like leaving an animal for a week at the altar while you go off to be reconciled), but they make the point very forcibly. Don't suppose that Jesus means you must never feel the impulse of lust when you look at someone attractive. That would be impossible, and is not in any case what the words mean. What he commands us to avoid is the gaze, and the lustful imagination, that follow the initial impulse. Likewise, determine resolutely to tell the truth, to yourself and to your spouse...But we must start where we are, not where we are not, as Matthew and Paul both clearly recognize. For Matthew, here and in chapter 19, sexual immorality by one partner—presumably an adulterous relationship of some kind—is sufficient grounds for divorce. For Paul, if a Christian is married to a non-Christian, and the non-Christian wants to separate, that too is sufficient; though he insists, despite what some in his churches may well have felt and wanted, that the Christian should not initiate the split. And it seems clear to me (though not to all writers on this subject) that in both of these cases divorce is only divorce if it allows for remarriage. To put that the other way round: if one is not allowed to remarry, then divorce has not really taken place. So if in these two cases divorce is clearly allowed, we must assume that remarriage is at least potentially envisaged." (Wright, 47-48)
- **Caution:** "Although the thrust of this passage is faithfulness to one's marriage, Matthew's exception clause does not allow his readers to apply his rhetorical overstatement legalistically. Indeed, to read the Sermon on the

Mount ‘legalistically as a set of rules is to miss the point; it represents a demand more radical than any legislator could conceive’ (France 1985: 106), still less enforce. Jesus’ central point, which the hyperbolic image is meant to evoke, is the sanctity of marriage (cf. 19:4–6; Efrd 1985: 57–59). Addressing the hardness of legal interpreters’ hearts (19:8), Jesus opposed divorce to protect marriage and family, thereby seeking to prevent the betrayal of innocent spouses.” (Keener, 192)

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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