

Book Study – Matthew 5:31-42

Divorce, Oaths, An Eye for an Eye

Before We Begin Our Journey...

1. What commitments do adults commonly make and break?
2. Persons in what occupations (for example, ministers, insurance agents, lawyers, car salesmen, and politicians) are often distrusted for what they say?
3. What is so appealing about revenge?

Do Some Digging and Pre-planning...

4. Why did Jesus need to say this about marriage and divorce? (5:31-32)
5. What conditions are placed on divorce? (5:32)
6. How did Jesus update the ancient proverb about oaths? (5:34)
7. How should believers respond to questions? (5:37)
8. What's wrong with swearing oaths? (5:37)
9. To what familiar saying was Jesus referring in this context? (5:38)
10. How did Jesus say we should respond to people who do us evil? (5:39)
11. What should we do to protect our rights and possessions? (5:39)
12. What is the proper response to a request to borrow something? (5:42)

Sort it Out, Organize It, Gain Some Understanding...

13. Why is it important to try to hold a marriage together?
14. What can people do to strengthen their marriage and show respect for marriage?
15. How much does swearing on a Bible guarantee that a legal witness will tell the truth?
16. In what situations do people typically swear?
17. How should we respond when people try to get us to make promises or extra assurances?
18. Where do we draw the line between our rights and our responsibility to be forgiving and patient?
19. How can doing good change a bad situation?

Application for the Journey...

20. What can you do this week to strengthen your marriage or the marriage of a friend?
21. What steps can you take this week to become known as a person who keeps his or her word?
22. What act of kindness or reconciliation could you perform by next meeting to help "bury the hatchet"?

A prayer for your journey... "Lord Jesus, as I walk through this coming week, help me prepare for my journey by reading my Bible more regularly, seeking help as I need it from my Christian friends and focusing on the needs of others instead of myself." -Amen



"We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said,
I will give it to you: come with us, and we will do you good..."

-- Numbers 10:29

NOTES FOR REFERENCE...

DIVORCE

(1.) **How the matter now stood with reference to divorce.** It hath been said (he does not say as before, It hath been said by them of old time, because this was not a precept, as those were, though the Pharisees were willing so to understand it, ch. 19:7, but only a permission), "Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce; let him not think to do it by word of mouth, when he is in a passion; but let him do it deliberately, by a legal instrument in writing, attested by witnesses; if he will dissolve the matrimonial bond, let him do it solemnly." Thus the law had prevented rash and hasty divorces; and perhaps at first, when writing was not so common among the Jews, that made divorces rare things; but in process of time it became very common, and this direction of how to do it, when there was just cause for it, was construed into a permission of it for any cause, ch. 19:3.

(2.) **How this matter was rectified and amended by our Saviour.** He reduced the ordinance of marriage to its primitive institution: They two shall be one flesh, not to be easily separated, and therefore divorce is not to be allowed, except in case of adultery, which breaks the marriage covenant; but he that puts away his wife upon any other pretence, causeth her to commit adultery, and him also that shall marry her when she is thus divorced. Note, Those who lead others into temptation to sin, or leave them in it, or expose them to it, make themselves guilty of their sin, and will be accountable for it. This is one way of being partaker with adulterers Ps 50:18.

OATHS, SWEARING

That we must not swear at all, but when we are duly called to it, and justice or charity to our brother, or respect to the commonwealth, make it necessary for the end of strife (Heb 6:16), of which necessity the civil magistrate is ordinarily to be the judge. We may be sworn, but we must now swear; we may be adjured, and so obliged to it, but we must not thrust ourselves upon it for our own worldly advantage. -Matthew Henry

But I say unto you, Swear not at all. That this was meant to condemn swearing of every kind and on every occasion-as the Society of Friends and some other ultra-moralists allege-is not for a moment to be thought. For even Yahweh is said once and again to have sworn by Himself; and our Lord certainly answered upon oath to a question put to Him by the high priest; and the apostle several times, and in the most solemn language, takes God to witness that He spoke and wrote the truth; and it is inconceivable that our Lord should here have quoted the precept about not forswearing ourselves but performing to the Lord our oaths, only to give a precept of His own directly in the teeth of it. Evidently, it is 'swearing in common conversation and on frivolous occasions' that is here meant. Frivolous oaths were indeed severely condemned in the teaching the times. But so narrow was the circle of them that a man might swear, says Lightfoot, and a hundred thousand times and yet not be guilty of vain swearing. Hardly anything was regarded as an oath if only the name of God were not in it; just as among ourselves, as Trench well remarks, a certain lingering reverence for the name of God leads to cutting off portions of His name, or uttering sounds nearly resembling it, or substituting the name of some pagan deity, in profane exclamations or asseverations. Against all this our Lord now speaks decisively; teaching His audience that every oath carries an appeal to God, whether named or not.

The JOURNEYMEN

"We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said,
I will give it to you: come with us, and we will do you good..."

-- Numbers 10:29

"Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" The untruthfulness of our corrupt nature shows itself not only in the tendency to deviate from the strict truth, but in the disposition to suspect others of doing the same; and as this is not diminished, but rather aggravated, by the habit of confirming what we say by an oath, we thus run the risk of having all reverence for God's holy name, and even for strict

truth, destroyed in our hearts, and so "fall into condemnation." The practice of going beyond Yes and No, in affirmation and denials-as if our word for it were not enough, and we expected others to question it-springs from that vicious root of untruthfulness which is only aggravated by the very effort to clear ourselves of the suspicion of it. And just as swearing to the truth of what we say begets the disposition it is designed to remove, so the love and reign of truth in the breasts of Christ's disciples reveals itself so plainly even to these who themselves cannot be trusted. that their simple Yes and No come soon to be more relied on than the most solemn asseverations of others. Thus does the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, like a tree cast into the bitter waters of human corruption, heal and sweeten them. --Jamison Fausset Brown

James 5:12

12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear — not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned. NIV

Heb 6:13-18

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.



"We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said,
I will give it to you: come with us, and we will do you good..."

-- Numbers 10:29

===== DIVORCE =====

Matt 5:31-32

31 "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. NIV

Matt 19:3-9

3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' a 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' b? 6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

7 "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." NIV

Mark 10:2-12

4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." NIV

Luke 16:18

18 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. NIV

Mal 2:13-16

13 Another thing you do: You flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. 14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

15 Has not [the Lord] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

16 "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the Lord Almighty.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. NIV

===== SWEARING, OATHS =====

2 Cor 1:23-2:1 (Apostle Paul)

23 I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. 24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm. NIV

The JOURNEYMEN

“We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said,
I will give it to you: come with us, and we will do you good...”

-- Numbers 10:29