

LIFE AND LAW ACCORDING TO JESUS

I. The Scripture: Murder, Adultery, Divorce and Oaths

The Fulfillment of the Law

17"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Murder

21"You have heard that it was said to people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

23"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

25"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 I tell you the truth; you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

27"You have heard that it was said 'Do not commit adultery.' 28But I tell you that anyone

who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30And if your right hand causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

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

Oaths

33"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' 34But I tell you, do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

Matthew 5:17-37

II. Looking at the Scripture

1. The Fulfillment of the Law - Matthew 5:17-20

What was Jesus' view of the Old Testament laws and prophets?

What role does obedience to the Law play in establishing the least and greatest in God's eyes?

Read Psalm 119:1-8. Describe the psalmist's attitude about God's laws.

How does Jesus' View of the Pharisees in Matthew 12:33-37 help you understand verse 20?

2. Murder - Matthew 5:21-2

What three types of "attitude murder" does Jesus mention? What does Jesus say should take place before worship?

What are the results of uncontrolled anger?

3. Adultery-Matthew 5:27-30

How does Jesus define the act of adultery?

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Jesus' point in verses 29 and 30 is that we should deal drastically with sin as necessary. He is not teaching self-mutilation, for even a blind person can lust. How would you put verses 29 and 30 into modern language?

4. Divorce - Matthew 5:31-32

What do you think Jesus is trying to say about the sanctity of marriage in verses 31 and 32?

Read Matthew 19:3-6. Jesus quotes from the book of Genesis in this passage. What point do you think He is making about God's original design for marriage?

Many wonderful people, both parents and kids, have been through hurtful divorces. What action steps can you take that might help keep divorce out of your own future marriage?

5. Oaths - Matthew 5:33-37

What do you think Jesus meant by "swearing"?

Why do people feel the need to swear or promise?

III. The Scripture and You

1. Obedience According to Jesus

Although our salvation and grace are free gifts from God, commitment to Christ can be very costly. In this section of Scripture, Jesus calls His followers to a deeper commitment to obedience. Where are you on the obedience scale?

On a scale of one to ten, ten being the highest,
I rate my obedience to God as a _____

Carefully read **John 14:21**.

According to this verse, how should we show God we love Him? What will He do in response to our obedience?

There are times when many Christians say, "If only God would reveal more of Himself, I would obey Him." According to John 14:21 the opposite is true. He reveals more of himself to those who love and are already trying to obey Him.

Here is a great spiritual principle to remember:

If you love God, you will obey Him and He promises to reveal Himself to you!

What are your thoughts about this principle?

2. Obedience and Anger - Matthew 5:21-26

Jesus made some very strong and important statements about anger in this section of Scripture. People express anger in different ways. Which response best describes your method of venting anger? Circle the appropriate response(s).

Anger seems to surface in my life in the following way(s):

1. Yelling and screaming
2. Sarcasm and criticizing
3. Backbiting
4. Silent withdrawal/Depression
5. Physical outbursts
6. Physical illness
7. Destroyed self-image
8. I have never been angry ... (Denial)
9. Other:

What can you do to better manage your anger?

If we are to take the words of Jesus seriously, we must go repair any damaged relationships with others before we attempt to worship God.

Is there someone in your life who needs to hear from you? Who is this person and when will you contact him or her?

Obedience and Lust - Matthew 5:27-30

Circle the response that best describes you.

When Jesus talks about lust I get . . .

1. bored because it's not an issue for me.
2. nervous because He's talking about me.
3. guilty because I've thought like that.
4. anxious to ask forgiveness one more time.
5. motivated to find support from other Christians.
6. involved in God's Word to clear my mind.

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Why do you think this area of our lives is difficult to discuss with other Christians?

Here are a few action steps to take if lust is a problem for you:

1. Renew your mind with Scripture.
2. Change your setting or situation.
3. Seek support from a close Christian friend. Ask for prayer.
4. Take your mind off the sin by serving in the name of Christ.
5. Ask God for forgiveness.
6. Find a task that will care for someone else's needs.

4. Obedience and Marriage

In what ways might divorce reveal the hardness of our hearts?

How does Jesus' teaching contrast with today's view on marriage and divorce?

How will a love relationship between two Christians who put God first in their lives be stronger than the relationships of people who do not invite God to be a part of their relationship?

What does this seem to imply for Christians seriously dating non-Christians?

5. Obedience and Your Word

You've probably heard people described as men or women of their word. This means that their word can be trusted.

Are you a person who is trustworthy? Circle the word below that best describes you.

Seldom

Sometimes

Most of the time

Always

Read James 5:12.

What keeps people from simply saying "yes" or "no"?

According to James 5:12 and Matthew 5:37, what is the result of disobedience in this area?

How can the advice given in James 1:19 and 1:26 help you to be trustworthy?

Here is an interesting story:

A fellow went into a fried chicken place and bought a couple of chicken dinners for himself and his date late one afternoon. The young woman at the counter inadvertently gave him the proceeds from the day - a whole bag of money (much of it cash) instead of fried chicken. After driving to their picnic site, the two of them sat down to open the meal and enjoy some chicken together. They discovered a whole lot more than chicken - over \$800. But he was unusual. He quickly put the money back in the bag. They got back into the car and drove all the way back. Mr. Clean got out, walked in, and became an instant hero.

By then, the manager was frantic. The guy with the bag of money looked at the manager and said, "I want you to know I came by to get a couple of chicken dinners and wound up with all this money. Here." Well, the manager was thrilled to death. He said, "Oh great, let me call the newspaper. I'm gonna have your picture put in the local paper. You're one of the most honest, men I've ever heard of." To which the guy quickly responded, "Oh no, no, no, don't do that! You see, the woman I'm with is not my wife . . . she's uh, somebody else's wife."¹

¹Charles Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1986), pp. 159,160.

How does this man's behavior illustrate someone who seems to be living a moral life on the outside but really is not a trustworthy person?

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