

**Part Four**  
***Covenant Promises***  
***Matthew 5:27-37***

**Lust**

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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.

**Divorce**

<sup>31</sup> “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> 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.

**Oaths**

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

**STUDY**

**1. READ**

- a. According to the passage, is it a sin to lust after someone we are attracted to?
- b. What does Jesus say about divorce? Under what conditions is it inappropriate?
- c. What does Jesus say about taking oaths?

**2. MEANING**

- a. Is it a sin to simply “look” at a person we’re attracted to?
- b. What is Christ referring to when he commands one to tear out his eye and cut off his hand?
- c. What was Christ challenging believers to do when he said, “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’?”

### **3. APPLY**

- a. What are some ways we can protect our eyes from being tempted to lust?
- b. Why is it important for couples to know God's plan for marriage?
- c. In what ways have you seen and experienced a culture of dishonesty at school, at work, in the government, and even at home? Why is it hard to maintain a moral compass in a dishonest culture?

### **NOTES ON THE PASSAGE**

v. 27 - Adultery was considered an extremely serious offense because, in addition to violating another person, it broke the marriage covenant (Mal. 2:14) that was a reflection of the relationship between God and his people.

v. 28 - Lust begins in the heart, the center of a person's identity and will. It is not enough to maintain physical purity alone; one must also guard against engaging mentally in an act of unfaithfulness. Jesus is not adding to Old Testament law but correctly interpreting it, for even in the Ten Commandments God had required purity of heart (Ex. 20:17).

vv. 29-30 - The eye is the medium through which one is tempted to lust, and the hand represents the physical actions that result from lusting. Jesus uses deliberate overstatement to emphasize the importance of maintaining exclusive devotion to one's spouse. Even things of great value should be given up if they are leading a person to sin.

vv. 31-32 - A certificate of divorce in the ancient world gave a woman the right to remarry and reflect the fact that divorce and remarriage were widely accepted and practiced in the first century world. "But I say to you..." indicates that Jesus does not accept the practice of easy divorce represented in v. 31. Because divorce was widespread in ancient times, God had instituted a regulation through Moses that was intended to uphold the sanctity of marriage and to protect women from being divorced for no reason. Here and in Matthew 19:3-9, Jesus bases his teaching on God's original intention that marriage should be a permanent union of a man and woman as "one flesh". Divorce breaks that union.

vv. 33-37 - An oath involved invoking God's name, or substitutes for it, to guarantee the truth of one's statements. Jesus' disciples are not to swear at all. Instead, their character should be of such integrity that their words can be believed without an oath.

## COMMENTS

In verses 27-37 we examine Jesus' teachings on covenant promises such as marriage and making oaths. Specifically in verses 27-30, Jesus teaches that by looking at a woman with lustful intent, a man has already committed adultery in his heart. This contrasted sharply with the teachings of the Pharisees at the time, who believed that by not committing physical adultery, followers of God were keeping the seventh commandment. By focusing only on the physical act, the Pharisees and scribes opened their followers up to a wide range of permissive and immoral thoughts and behaviors that could be deeply destructive to their earthly and heavenly relationships. Therefore, Jesus focused on the original intent of the commandments and as a result, demanded a person's righteousness surpass that of the Pharisees and scribes. The point of this passage is that sexual temptation is destructive to human and Godly relationships, and therefore it should be avoided at all costs. In order to do this, we must learn to guard our eyes and our mind, while also being mindful of God's judgment on our sinful attitudes, not just our actions. In our society, it is impossible to avoid being exposed to viral imagery that objectifies sex and the human body, but we can learn self control to not act on those images or develop lustful intent.

Verses 31-32 focus on protecting the covenant of marriage. In Jesus' day, divorce was relatively widespread and common. Jesus is teaching here that through divorce, one is committing adultery because they are violating the covenantal oath made in marriage. Due to the permissiveness of divorce at the time, Jesus is emphasizing here that in order to protect our marriages and therefore honor God, we must be on guard against permissive views about divorce. Jesus is also implying here that in order to protect our marriages, we should recognize God's original plan for marriage. Although the State might recognize that two people are no longer married, God views marriage as a lifelong commitment that should never be broken if possible. Unity through marriage models the God-head and is meant to last, so we should strive to protect the unity that God gave us through marriage.

In verses 33-37, Jesus addresses the abuse of oaths and dishonesty that was occurring in the ancient world. Christ essentially indicates here that true believers will be recognized by their radical integrity. A true believer does not need to swear in order to keep an oath. Instead the true believer can simply say 'yes' or 'no' and be known by others to keep his or her promises without question. In order to achieve this, we must actively reject deceptive practices that can tempt us to make promises we do not intend to keep. Jesus was also addressing another common practice during the time, which was breaking oaths made in the name of religion. By breaking these oaths, Jews at the time were not only hurting their relationships, but also hurting their religion. In order to keep our promises, we should also be mindful that God is watching and He will judge us for making promises we intend to break.

## **References**

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