

- b) Joseph could have publicly divorced Mary, shaming her and her family, and entitling him to receive back the dowry he had paid upon their engagement.

- Joseph *lived* the Sermon on the Mount even when he intended to divorce Mary.

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- In Matthew 5:21-32 how can you tell if Jesus is saying, “Moses was wrong, listen to me instead,” or “Moses was right, but you’ve misunderstood him”?
- Why might the message of Matthew 5:17-48 have been particularly important for the church of the 1st century in Antioch?
- What does Jesus mean when he says, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”? Are we called to this anywhere else?
- How is Jesus teaching in 5:21-26 radical compared to the ways of the world? ... even among what is commonly taught in religious circles?
- What does 5:27-30 teach us about God’s will concerning human sexuality?
- Why is it important to see that Jesus’ teaching (and Moses’) on divorce was originally designed to show mercy to women? How might some today stick to the letter of what Jesus taught but, like the Pharisees, misunderstand it?
- Which of these three examples Jesus of what righteousness that surpasses the Pharisees looks like spoke most to you? How so?
- Explain: *“The new covenant is not different in its expectations from the Old, but it is different in the means by which we will accomplish it!”*

DISCIPLE 1.0.51: *How do You Interpret God’s Law? (Part 1)*

Jerry Cisar — March 17, 2019

Text: Matthew 5:21-48

Introduction

I. Did Jesus just say, “Perfect”?

A. Matthew 5:48 “Be perfect!”

- i. Not the only place this call is put forth!
- a) James 1:4
- b) Colossians 1:28
- c) Ephesians 4:13
- d) Matthew 19:21
- ii. “Be holy as I am holy” (see Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26).
- a) Deuteronomy 18:13
- “These unloving practices which have become the acceptable way of life is as abominable as the things the nations were doing. You are not to be that way! Your practices must be like the Father in the heavens—blameless!”
- b) The Christians in Antioch needed to be told they must not fall short of the righteousness of the synagogue but surpass it!

- B. What does “perfection” look like? What does a righteousness that surpasses the Pharisees look like?

II. How does Jesus Understand the Law?

In Matthew 5:21-47 there are six very specific examples that get to the heart of what Jesus is saying; six transforming ideas that, *when our minds are renewed by them to the point of following them*, we are living in the Empire of Heaven.

A. On Anger and Reconciliation (5:21-26).

- i. Jesus is not invalidating the Law; He is showing the true intent of the Law.
- ii. What makes someone subject to judgment?
 - a) Just as killing people has consequences, so too being angry, calling the driver who cuts you off an idiot, will cause you to spend the rest of your life in prison... and not in the Empire of Heaven!
 - b) All of these were perfectly acceptable in Jerusalem, the city of peace, and the Roman empire with its “peace of Rome,” but none of these offer real peace, the peace of the Empire of Heaven!
- iii. Reconciliation and peace (23-24)

B. On a Proper Understanding of Sexuality (5:27-30)

- i. External compliance to the letter of the Law is not compliance to the heart of God in the Law!

- ii. Adultery damages people’s lives and the community; so does coveting someone other than your wife.
- iii. The “external” righteousness of not committing adultery (but lusting is fine) misses the real issue of seeing women as objects that exist for one’s own pleasure.
- iv. *“Keep your eyes and hands to yourself! If you can’t, gouge them out or cut them off!”*

C. On Divorce and Mistreatment of Women (5:31-32)

- i. Jesus properly interprets Deuteronomy 24.
- ii. Two schools of thought regarding what Deuteronomy 24. said made for a permissible divorce.
 - a) Moses did not prescribe divorce, but was protecting a woman whose husband was kicking her out from a life of destitution!
 - b) A certificate of divorce was a means of mercy for the woman in that culture.
- iii. Matthew has prepared the way for us to understand this topic way back in chapter 1:19.
 - a) Evidently, there is a righteous or just way to divorce *AND* an unjust way!