

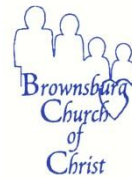
Living the Sermon in My Marriage

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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Introduction:

Jesus didn't intend for the Sermon on the Mount to be merely heard or read. He intended it to be lived. One of the first places we should live it is in our marriages. Most of us know what the Sermon says directly about marriage. "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" (**Matthew 5:31-32**, ESV). Some Jews believed as long as they signed the right papers, there was no problem with divorcing as many wives as they wanted. Jesus explained there was more to divorce than these Jews wanted to believe. They may go through the proper process, but when these men put their wives away, they were on the hook for causing their ex-wives and whoever married their ex-wives to commit adultery. God intends married couples to stay married. As Jesus will later say in **Matthew 19:5-6**, God joins the married and men should not separate them. What a commitment. In a culture of divorce in which about half of all marriages end in destruction, we might ask, "How on earth can I make sure my marriage is permanent?" The rest of the Sermon provides a wonderful foundation for a lifelong partnership in marriage. We are especially going to look at the "I say to you" statements from **Matthew 5:21-48**.

Discussion:

I. Live in love (**Matthew 5:43-48**).

- A. In our culture, we usually enter marriage based on being "in love." Our culture has the idea that if we fall in love with the right person, it will last forever. But that is not what this passage tells us. This passage isn't about a romantic, butterflies-in-your-stomach, walking on sunshine, emotionalism kind of love. When we apply this to marriage, Jesus is not saying we need to fall in love with the right person. He is saying we must choose to love the person we've married. Further, we choose this no matter how the other person treats us.
- B. It's easy to love our spouses when they are acting neighborly, but sometimes your spouse isn't so neighborly. Sometimes your spouse is just selfish, annoying, and mean. Sometimes your spouse is acting like the enemy. But Jesus says we don't just love our neighbors; we love our enemies as well. That means loving even when I don't feel very loving. And as counter-intuitive as it may seem, this "lost that loving feeling" can really happen in marriage. When someone you hardly know does something against you, it is not so bad. But when the person we have devoted our lives to and opened ourselves completely to takes on the role of enemy, it is like getting kicked in the gut over and over and over again. The more intimate we are, the more opportunity for pain when they don't act very neighborly. But we are to choose love for our spouse anyway.
- C. Our example is God. He doesn't just bless those who bless Him. He sends the sun and the rain on the righteous and unrighteous, on the just and the unjust. Isn't this how He has treated us? Isn't this how we want Him to treat us? What about the greatest of His blessings, His Son Jesus Christ? When did God sacrifice Jesus for us? **Romans 5:6-8** points out that God did this for us while we were still ungodly, weak, sinners. How much more should we choose love for our spouses even when they are not loving us?
- D. Make sure you express your love. Express it in words, in affection, in service, in time, in devotion. Some people aren't brought up in families that express love easily. Break that. Let your spouse know you love him/her. Of course, notice what Jesus claimed was the greatest expression of love: Prayer. No matter what is going on, pray for your spouse. And don't pray selfish prayers: "God, my wife is such a nag. She never respects me or does what I ask. Make her better." "God, my husband is such a bum. He never asks about my day or tries to help around the house or with the kids. Could you fix him, please?" Instead, how about praying a powerful prayer: "God, please give my wife the husband she needs." "God, please give my husband the wife he needs." In marriage, take this a step further. Pray with your spouse. As you pray together, pray for each other. Let your spouse hear you carry his/her needs and desires to God. Intercede for each other.

II. Communicate with honesty (**Matthew 5:33-37**).

- A. Sadly, too many Christians have reduced this passage to merely about whether or not they'll take an oath in a court of law. That completely misses the point. Jesus' point is not that we should never take an oath, after all, Jesus Himself was placed under legal oath in **Matthew 26:63** (cf. **Leviticus 5:1**). Jesus' point is that we need to be honest. We shouldn't think we can play word games with others, avoiding the truth unless we've

bound ourselves to it with convoluted oaths. **Ephesians 4:25** says we should not lie to other Christians because we are members of one another. How much more should we base our marriages on honesty?

- B. Jesus says let your speech be Yes or No. His point was not that these are the only two words we are allowed to say. Rather, we need to be clear. We need to mean what we say. If you mean No, don't say maybe. If you mean No because you don't want to do something, don't say it is because you don't have time. If you say maybe, explain what the contingency is. If you commit to something, do it. If you commit to not doing something, don't do it. Don't say, "I'll try," when what you really mean is No or let me see if I get a better offer. Don't hide things. Don't do things that you need to hide. Certainly there is a difference between keeping secrets and withholding surprises. And certainly, there are cases where you are aware of someone else's secrets and you have not right to share their secrets with your spouse. Don't say, "You should do such and such," when what you really mean is, "I would really like it if you did such and such." Don't say, "You never do such and such," when what you really mean is, "I wish you would do such and such more." And don't say, "You always do such and such," when what you really mean is, "I don't like it when you do such and such, would you please stop." Don't say nothing is the matter, when you are sad, hurt, angry, or disappointed by something. Don't say everything is fine, when you are angry.
- C. Communicate honestly. Say what you mean. Mean what you say. Say what you'll do. Do what you say.

III. Be absolutely committed and loyal (**Matthew 5:27-30**).

- A. We all know this text speaks about our individual responsibility to avoid lusting after members of the opposite gender. But think about the importance of this for the married. Lust, whether for visual or emotional reasons, is fantasizing about another relationship. Refraining from this fantasizing is the ultimate in loyalty.
- B. Some have the idea that as long as they are physically loyal, they are fine. But when we entertain fantasies of breaking our vow, we have done so in our minds. We have betrayed the commitment we promised. Certainly, this passage addresses men and the visual lust we often fall prey to. But the principle would apply to wives as well when they get involved in emotional and romantic fantasies remembering how wonderful a relationship was with an old boyfriend, fantasizing what it would have been like to be married to him instead, fantasizing about some character in a book or on a show, or fantasizing about some hunk of an actor.
- C. Notice how committed Jesus demonstrates you should be. This is where He tells us to pluck out our eye or cut off our hand. Be that committed. Anything that gets in the way of your commitment and loyalty to your spouse needs to be removed. If a Facebook friend constantly leads you to the fantasy, unfriend them (or get off of Facebook). If you repeatedly turn to pornography when on your computer, put some significant restrictions on it, or if need be, get rid of your computer. If your tablet, smart phone, or other device keeps taking you back to the fantasy, block the apps, block your ability to get apps, or get rid of the technology. If someone at your workplace is taking you away from your commitment, get a new job. Be so committed to your spouse that you won't even allow disloyalty in your mind.

IV. Be angry appropriately (**Matthew 5:21-26**).

- A. **Ephesians 4:26** says, "Be angry and do not sin" (ESV). The term translated "be angry" is in the passive voice. It is something happening to the subject, not something they are doing. Thus, it really means "be angered." I don't care how well you work at your marriage; you are two sinners living together. Your spouse is going to do things that anger you. Jesus' point in the Sermon on the Mount demonstrates we need to deal with anger appropriately. This passage actually deals with the anger from both sides.
- B. If you are angered, be careful. Some have the idea as long as they don't actually physically abuse their spouse they are allowed to express their anger however they want. Sadly, some women even seem to think they are allowed to physically abuse their husband because they are weaker than he is so slapping him is fair game. But this passage explains that insults and name-calling are ungodly. Notice in the context of **Ephesians 4:26** some of the sins that must not be allowed even though you are angry: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (**Ephesians 4:31**, ESV). **Matthew 18:15** explains if someone sins against you, you should go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. You don't need to bring the kids into these discussions. But notice it is not go and yell at him, berate him, belittle her, abuse her. It is tell them. When your spouse does something to anger you, be honest about it. Let them know it is angering. Let them know what it meant to you. But don't do it out of a desire to put them in their place; rather, do so for the saving of their soul.
- C. But Jesus spends more time dealing with the other side of this issue. What if you did something and your spouse has responded in anger. If you know your spouse has something against you, leave your gift at the altar and get it fixed. Please understand what this means. This doesn't mean get it fixed before you go wor-

ship God. At the time Jesus said this, going to the altar is what you did to get forgiveness from God. You took a gift to the altar and sacrificed it. The point is if you leave this discord between you and your spouse and think you are okay because you prayed that God forgive you of all your sins, you are in trouble. It doesn't work like that. Before you seek forgiveness from God, go to your spouse and resolve the anger.

- D. When your spouse reacts with anger, rather than getting defensive, rather than dicker over semantics and technicalities of how you didn't do anything wrong, rather than isolating and waiting for them to deal properly with their anger themselves, you need to determine what you did that upset them. Allow an illustration of how this doesn't work sometimes. The wife and the husband get into a little spat and the wife starts crying. The husband rolls his eyes as he asks, "What on earth is the problem now?" "You won't stop yelling at me." "Yelling? Me, yelling at you. I wasn't yelling at you. If you want me to yell at you, I'll show you yelling." The whole time he is increasing the volume of his voice. What is wrong with this situation? Rather than simply recognizing that his wife has something against him and determining what it is so he can set it aright, he gets defensive over a difference in how they define the word "yell." If your spouse is not handling his/her anger properly, rather than defending against their inappropriate anger, you should simply interpret their anger as a sign that says, "I've done something. I need to figure out what it is so I can fix it." Of course, if your physical safety is in danger, you may need to get to safety and allow some time before you pursue that. And if they sin when expressing their anger, you should go back to what we said earlier about dealing with that. However, do not act like their inappropriate expression of anger justifies your sin.

V. Serve, don't retaliate (**Matthew 5:38-42**).

- A. First, let me say, I do not believe when we apply this to marriage that it means either spouse should simply submit to physical abuse. It is not saying if your wife slaps you or your husband blacks your eye, that you just quietly take it. The rest of what the Bible teaches on marriage demonstrates that there is absolutely no room for tolerance of this kind of behavior. If your spouse is physically abusive, take that to them alone. If they won't stop, bring two or three others. If they won't stop, take it to the church. And certainly, I believe it is perfectly lawful to appeal to the legal system for protection when your safety is endangered. As Paul in **Acts 22:25** appealed to the laws of Rome to protect himself from a beating, you can appeal to the laws of our city, state, and nation to protect yourself from that as well.
- B. But it does mean if your spouse hits you, you are not justified in hitting them back. Christians do not live based on revenge. Vengeance belongs to the Lord, not us (**Romans 12:17-21**). Therefore, we do not repay evil for evil. We don't live based on eye for an eye retaliation. My high school band instructor used to warn us, "I don't get mad; I get even. And I'm not even until I'm one up." Too many spouses live like this. But Christian spouses must not. Just because your spouse yells at you doesn't mean you can yell back. When your spouse gives you the cold shoulder, that doesn't mean you should give them the cold shoulder back. We do not use our spouse's behavior as justification to sin ourselves. Just because your husband blew his paycheck doesn't give you the right to belittle him to your girlfriends or buy that whatever-it-was you've been wanting for so long. Just because your wife refused to have sex with you doesn't give you the right to flirt with the woman at work, look up some pornography, or have an affair. Just because your spouse called you a name doesn't mean you get to call her/him a name. We can't justify our sinful actions based on theirs.
- C. Instead of acting from retaliation and getting one up in the wrong that we will inevitably do to each other, we try to outdo each other in service. We go the extra mile. We give more than is asked. We do more than is expected. And we do our best to do it willingly. I know I have a problem. I usually do what Marita asks of me. However, a lot of the time I sigh, huff and puff, procrastinate, complain, and let it generally be known that it is a really big deal for me to make such a sacrifice. But do you get from this passage that this sacrifice is to be done in a way that stands out? Of course not. This is about service. An example I've thought about recently that I fail miserably at following is found in **II Samuel 23:15-16**. David didn't command anyone to get him this water. He didn't even actually ask anyone to do it. He simply expressed that he wanted some. He had three mighty men who stepped up to the plate and did it. I don't fully understand why David wouldn't drink the water. But I do see their great example. Husbands, we need to be our wives' mighty men. But wives, you also need to be your husbands' mighty women. We need to have our eyes and ears open and go the extra mile in service, rather than in retaliation.

Conclusion:

The Sermon on the Mount is not about marriage. However, if we are kingdom citizens, we need to be kingdom citizens at home. And if our marriages are to last as God has commanded, we need to follow these other principles Jesus teaches in our marriages as well. How are you doing at that?