

# **Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Lecture 6, Matthew 5:21, and Following, Acts of Greater Righteousness, Part 1**

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This is Dr. Bill Mounce in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session 6 on Matthew 5:21, and following, Acts of Greater Righteousness, Part 1.

I wanted to quickly follow up on Bob's comment, and I pulled up pleirao, the Greek word to fulfill, and let me give you the range of meanings that he referenced. Number one is BDAG doesn't put things in order of frequency, so they have a different guideline, but the number one entry is to make full, in other words, to fill or fulfill, and they've got examples of someone eating and getting filled, of the perfumes, smell of the perfume, filling the house, so I mean you could even out of that entry you get the sense of making full, complete, finishing, you know that kind of stuff for prophecy.

Number two is to complete a period of time, to fill, fill up, or complete. Number three is to bring to completion that which was already begun, in other words, to complete or finish. Number four is to bring to a designated end, and that's where fulfilling a prophecy comes in.

To bring to completion an activity in which one has been involved from the beginning, again complete, finish, and some weird thing with numbers. So, the word really has a very wide flexibility of meaning; it doesn't simply mean to fulfill an overt prophecy, so anyway, that helps. Okay, verse 20, I think that just like the poverty of spirit is the key to the beatitudes into the whole sermon, verse 20 and this exceeding righteousness is certainly a key to all the chapter, and it's lying under actually the rest of the sermon, whether we're talking about acts of piety, or you can't serve God and money, or prayer, or being critical, and I mean all these different topics are going to come up in this sermon.

The idea of what it means to have a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is underlining that all, all right? So, this is a phenomenally important verse. What does righteousness mean? Right is defined as by whatever conforms to God's character, right? So righteousness is what God is, righteousness is what God does, His moral perfections in all things, behavior, and character, and so what Jesus is saying is if that's the kind of life you want to become if that's the lifestyle you want to emulate if you want to be like your father God, then the righteousness that you seek and the righteousness that God requires has nothing to do with what you see the scribes and Pharisees doing, nothing at all, and you know I know you all know this, but it's an important point to make, I think, when you preach

is to identify these groups, the scribes or the NIV says teachers of the law. Now, these are the seminary professors, right? These are the Bill Mounts and Walt Kaisers, these seminary professors of the day, and Jesus is saying your righteousness must exceed that of the highly academic and formally trained leaders of the church in the academy, okay? Pharisees, on the other hand, were laymen; they were committed to meticulously following all 613 commandments, so, for example,, the Old Testament requires one community feast, one national feast, so they feast twice a week, okay? So I mean these are the, they just go overboard with their religiosity, and Jesus is saying these two groups, in a sense, were the religious giants in Jesus's day, and Jesus is saying if you want to live a life of righteousness, if you want to move towards God's righteousness, it has nothing to do with what you're seeing in your seminary professors and in the most committed laymen in your church, right? And the key to understanding, and by the way, Stott's discussion of this is the best of the discussions, I think, so if you really want to spend more time thinking about this, review what Stott says.

Their righteousness, described by the Pharisees, was an external righteousness, right? Everything was for show; that's what Chapter 6 is all about. Everything was, there was no real interest in purity of heart; the emphasis was on purity of actions and purity of how you appear. It's about doing the right things, alright? These are people who think that all God wants is clean outside, and the inside doesn't matter, and Jesus reserves his harshest criticism for these hypocrites.

The best example I've ever come across was a man that I knew, and he was Mr. Everything in his church, you know, the head deacon, the head everything, you know, basically ran the church, funded the church, I mean, he was the church. And this is in Kentucky, and I was in his house one day, and an African-American walked in; I've never seen an African-American in this house before, and he went over, and he was, oh how you are doing, you know, touching him and shaking his hands, oh it's good to see you, then he walked back over to the other side of the house and to two other people, and I said, I hate those in. I just thought, wow, wow.

I'm not going to say the word, you know which word I'm talking about, not because I'm politically correct, I'm not, I just don't like the word. And so, on the outside, he's embracing and loving and accepting and wow, he's really progressive, then this is in the 70s in Kentucky, you know, and actually, all the racial walls had not broken down, I'm sure they still haven't, and he was warm and friendly and then walked over and said, I hate them. Okay, this is what Jesus is dealing with: the scribes and Pharisees, that level of hypocrisy where all the show was, look at me, look at me, praise me, praise me, aren't I good? And inside, they're just whitewashed tombs; inside, they're dead; they're defilements, and they make everyone who touches them unclean.

That's what's going on here. So, the question is, how can our righteousness, how can our behavior and our character surpass, how can it be, and how can it exceed the

most outwardly religious people? And Stott uses the phrase, did you pick it up? A deep obedience. That is Stott, as far as I can tell, he came up with that.

A deep obedience, and by that, he means it's obedience that comes from the heart. A religiosity that is from the inside, that deals with a pure heart and lets the actions flow out of it. Stop placing primary emphasis on what I appear to be.

Who we appear to be is important, right? But the primary focus, the primary intention, is on our heart. It's on our motives more than our actions. It's on our being more than our doing.

That's the deep obedience. And this was, as I was sharing some of my experiences with the Chinese church yesterday, my ultimate concern for my brothers and sisters there, that God places primary emphasis on being, on character, and on the heart. And it's not because the actions aren't important; if you control the heart, you control the actions, right? But if everything in our churches is about what we do, then it's so easy just to become a hypocrite and to receive condemnation from God.

So, the way that our righteousness exceeds or surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees is that our obedience is a deep obedience that comes from our heart. Not more and more obedience, God says, but deeper and deeper obedience. And then what he's going to do is follow with five or six examples of deep obedience, depending upon what you do with the divorce passage.

They're all making the same basic point: the attitude of the heart that leads to the action violates the commandment. The commandment is not just violated by an action. The commandment, thou shall not murder, is not violated only by the murderous act.

It's also violated by the attitude of anger that leads one to murder. Murder and anger are not the same thing. Both break the commandment.

And so, Jesus is going a deep obedience. It deals with the attitudes of the heart, and they violate the commandment just like the action violates the commandment. So that's the point of the rest of the chapter.

But I wanted to stop and just say this is such a fundamental thing. I'm going to see if there are comments or questions. Yes, sir.

You read this passage right here. You're speaking at least on a service level. It makes you think that you're sort of not having something that will happen. It doesn't. I think that your definition of deep obedience related to God ruling life, emphasizing now, and I know you've talked about it already, not yet, seems to me that there's another application of that, not just the benefits of death but also of fear.

This would probably also be a good defense of your parody of taking the path. Mm-hmm, yeah.

Yes. Ladd carefully articulates the kingdom of God as the rule and reign of God in your hearts because you start seeing its ramifications. If the kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God in your heart, then God requires deep obedience by definition.

He requires a purity of heart, not just a purity of actions. And it's something that is true now. Entering and living in the kingdom are by the same standards.

And so, yeah. So yeah, those definitions are very carefully worded. Oh, I'm supposed to look Ladd's book up for the kingdom.

The Presence of the Future. Presence of the Future. Thank you.

Who said that? Thank you. Yeah, The Presence of the Future. I think that was the main one he wrote.

Okay, so I thought he wrote two books on that. The Presence of the Future. Yeah, okay, yeah, that's, I'm not, okay, but it's the one I'm thinking of is The Presence of the Future.

So, I meant to look that up. Thanks. I mean, this is, I mean, it's in one, I know I'm preaching to the choir, all right, but here's your text.

All right, I mean, this is, I think, one of the most powerful texts to deal with legalism, to deal with compartmentalization that we all do, and our people all do. You know, this part of the patchwork quilt belongs to God, and, but this part's mine and there's probably a lot more patchwork quilt squares that belong to me than belong to God, and I mean, all of that goes away when you realize what God requires is purity of heart, that a deep obedience that manifests, that starts with the rule and reign of God in your heart, and therefore moves out into actions. But I'm just so convinced that the bulk of the church views Christianity as a series of transactions, a series of things they do to earn favor with God, to check off the checklist.

Okay, I did my spiritual thing, and I just remember talking to one pastor, and he said, you know, I think we do the Sunday morning experience pretty well. We don't do anything else, really. What? Are you proud of that? Do you think the most important thing that you can do, and the way that you can spend millions of dollars on, is to give people a good hip-hip-hooray experience on Sunday morning? Wow.

I mean, I just was, I was flabbergasted. I just, I'm not really one who's at a loss for words, and I just, I didn't have anything to say. I didn't have anything to say.

I know there are a lot of different functions on Sunday morning, but a pep rally really isn't anywhere on the horizon as far as I can tell. Deep obedience, that's what God, you know, there's no joy, right? There's no joy if Christianity is a bunch of checklist things you do, right? There's no joy in that. There's no fulfillment.

There's no growth. I mean, I just don't understand. I mean, it'd be so hard to go through life thinking of Christianity as a series of do's and don'ts, and Sunday mornings a pep rally to give me a little bit of emotional energy to get through the week.

It doesn't work either, but that's something else. Anyway, okay, so deep, that's the phrase I'm going to use for the rest of the chapter: deep obedience and obedience that starts in the heart and comes out of the heart. The actions are still important, but they're the result of what's really important, and that is the heart.

So, we're going to have, and I think that there's five examples. I think that the divorce discussion is a bit of a parenthesis. I could be wrong.

I think most people probably say there are six, but whatever. There are five or six examples of deep obedience that are an illustration of what Jesus says in verse 20. I've got it here. There are really, I guess, two basic themes going on.

There's another way to look at deep obedience. Two different themes that are going on in the rest of this chapter. Number one is the supremacy of Christ.

You know, you have heard it said, but I say to you is either incredible egotism or Christ is supreme. The law is fulfilled in me. Egomaniac or true, right? I mean, this is part of the defense.

Jesus is either a liar, lunatic, or God. There's no other option. I mean, good people don't go around saying, I'm the bread of life.

You got to eat me and drink me if you want to get into heaven. I mean, good people just don't say nutso things like that. So it's a good, strong defense that's been around since I think, in origin, but I'm not sure.

Anyway, the theme of the supremacy of Christ not only differs with the scribes and the Pharisees but, depending upon your interpretation, even moves beyond the Old Testament. This is all about the supremacy of Christ in all things. So that's one of the themes, right? The supremacy of Christ.

The other is there's a difference between the letter and the spirit of the law. The Pharisees held to the letter of the law, at least their understanding of it, and Jesus

wanted them to hold to the spirit of the law, the intent of what's the deep principle behind things. And let me just, this was one of my sermons, and I left it in my notes because it was one of my favorite sermons.

And this is all to illustrate the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. Why do people want to define sin so carefully? Have you ever thought about that? They want to say, okay, up to this point, it's okay; past this point, it's not okay. Why do we do that? And I think that we do it because if this is the dividing point between okay behavior and sinful behavior, what we can do is we can move as close to that line as we want and still feel safe.

And when we try to figure out what's right and what's wrong, what we really should do is move as far away from the line as we can, right? But that's not the human tendency. The human tendency is to draw a line in the sand, and that's the letter of the law. We want to move up to it as closely as we can—a couple of illustrations.

There was a guy in a church who came to me and was having real troubles with his daughter. his daughter had drawn a line in the sand, and her line was that everything above the waist is permitted. It crushed the dad because she was saying all kinds of sexual activity is okay except for one. So, she had drawn a line in the sand, and she had moved as close to it as she possibly could.

One of the more interesting things that happened to me when I was at Gordon Conwell is right near the end, and I taught the pastorals, and it was near the end of the semester, and I had required too much. I had him read all 13 chapters in Greek and read my commentary and some other stuff, and it was too much. I understood that.

And a guy who was a pastor in New Hampshire came in, and he was so mad at me, and he sat down and he said, you don't give a s about us. Four letters end in a T. You don't give up on us. I went, excuse me? And he said, at Gordon Conwell, there's quite a divide between faculty and students.

It's East Coast kind of politeness, and you didn't call me Bill at Gordon Conwell. I mean, I wanted them to call me Bill, but there was no way because of this divide. So he went, you don't give a about us.

I went, why'd you say that? You don't give a. And he kept saying the same thing over. He wouldn't explain it. He was so mad at me.

He wouldn't stop. He wouldn't say anything else. So, I went over and I opened the door to my office, and he just kept yelling at me.

And I could watch the secretaries look because this went on for a half hour. I could see the professors walk. They had never heard anything like this before.

And I tried to get him to tell me why. I was pretty sure it was because I had assigned too much work, but he wouldn't say that. He just swore and swore and swore at me.

And after about 20 minutes, I said, does it bother you at all as a Christian and as a pastor that you're sitting here swearing at a brother and a professor? And he said I'm not swearing. I went, shit's not swearing? And he goes, no, it's vulgar. Oh, so it's okay to be vulgar, but it's wrong to swear.

Yes. Wow. That was a fascinating experience.

I had never seen it with that amount of anger and that amount of vehemence before drawing a line in the sand. Instead of filling his mind with what is pure and lovely, you know, Philippians 4, he moved as close as he could, and he was okay with being vulgar as long as he wasn't swearing. So, I took out a piece of paper, and he said, what are you writing? I said you don't give up on me.

I just want to make sure I get this right. That's what you're saying, right? It went another 10 minutes, and he stormed out. I went to my department head, and Gary's eyes were, I've never ever heard of that before in this school.

He said, you need to go see the dean. So, I went and told the dean what happened, and his eyes, and I said, you really can't graduate this person. You just, you can't.

There's something fundamentally wrong in this character. Well, Gordon Conwell at that time did not have a character clause. They do now, I'm told because of this incident.

But anyway, it's, we draw the line in the sand, not so we can stay away from it, but so often so we can get so close to it. That's the letter of the law. And what all of chapter five is about is that it's the spirit of the law.

Matt, in your three years at Gordon Conwell, did you ever hear anything like that? No. Okay. I mean, it's a, it was, it's not, it's not a reflection on Gordon Conwell at all.

Yeah. It's not a reflection on Gordon Conwell at all. It's a fabulous school.

Students like Matt are everywhere. But it was just a, it's a, an example. The other example I give is, there's this great bridge in Spokane.

It's called the Bowling Pitcher. It's the Spokane River comes down and goes through some rapids. The water's pretty dangerous at that point.

And there's this great suspension bridge that goes over it. And it's about five feet wide. And if you jump on it, you know, it shakes and stuff.

We used to go down there a lot when the kids were little, and it had walls on it. So, what does any dad do with a two-year-old son on a rickety bridge over a dangerous river? We lean up on the wall. We lean over.

I hold my kid over and spit. Ryan, we used to go and spit on the water all the time. We're easily amused, you know, and my wife's going, will you get away from the edge? It's fine.

There's a wall there. Now imagine what I would have done if, in going over Bowling Pitcher, there had been no walls in the suspension. I'd have gone right down the middle, wouldn't I have? I would have seen the danger and I would have stayed as far away from it as I could.

Okay, those are all illustrations. You will have your own, I'm sure. But that's what's going on, that the commandments were broad.

And I think Jesus is bringing back the original intent. I don't think he's making anything up. I don't think he's reinterpreting the Old Testament law.

I think the law, Exodus 20, was all about how the heart of the love of people who live in a covenantal relationship with God expresses itself. So, I think Jesus is getting back to the original intent. But what the Pharisees do in all of these things is they narrow.

They narrow, narrow, narrow. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Okay, that only refers to having sex with another person.

They narrow it down. Jesus says, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. We're going to talk about lust because that's the issue of the heart.

That's what's most important. So, you have this letter of the law and what the Pharisees did with it. Does that make sense? I mean, I know you guys have thought through this before, but Bob? What I was going to say is that I think there's a certain comfort in having things written down.

I grew up in a fundamentalist church. And if you did anything in that church, you know, if you were going to sing in a choir or serve on the board, or do anything with social issues, this church had a statement that you had to sign that said that you didn't do certain things. You didn't smoke, you didn't drink, you didn't go to the movies, you didn't play cards.



I think you were not allowed to go to the pool hall, but that was the initiative. So, people define their spirituality by what you did not do. I remember somebody told me, well, we don't go to the movies.

We go to the movies with our daughters. That made it okay. And so having those lines drawn, it's very easy to tell who was a spiritual person.

I like your phrase. That's how they define their spirituality. That's a really good way to say it. You know, how do your people define their relationship with God? Is it a line that they draw on the sand and get close to it? Then, when they don't go over it, they figure they're okay. Is that how they define their spirituality? Or do they do it some other way? A really, really good phrase.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You knew where my mind was going. Yes, sir.

I grew up in this area, and I went to church. It was one of those places where you were taught in church that you were next. I want to ask a question, though.

Jesus ultimately did not raise His apostles. But they say you cannot keep people's obedience to the gift of God. That's something that we achieved.

Jesus was saying that no one can reach this. You think the bar is here. It's actually here.

The only way you're going to achieve that level is through your relationship. Yeah, so the question is, is this an achievable ethic? And you weren't here yesterday, but they should know what my answer is going to be. Oh, come on.

Yeah, this is, we talked about the already and not yet, that the Sermon on the Mount is a picture of who we are, what we're becoming, who we're going to be. So, at some level, the Christian ethic is an achievable ethic. As I grow in spiritual maturity, lust becomes less and less of an issue.

That doesn't mean it never happens, but ideally, it's happening with less and less frequency. And then at some point in the future, I will fully understand that women are totally created in the image of God, and they're not objects, right? I'm not sure I want to go there. Never reaching perfection.

Right. Yeah, if we hold out perfection as something that is fully attainable now, we will die in misery and frustration. Or we'll redefine perfection so it means something else.

I think it's really, I mean, I like the idea of reaching for something I can't grasp. I'm fine with that because the joy is in the journey. And you know, in my prayer life, I believe that God will answer prayers, for example, but I know I don't fully grasp that.

And so, I look at the verses about the assurance in prayer that prayer moves God to do things that he might not otherwise do. It's my little ditty. But the joy is watching myself grow and learn, and God either answering my prayers or changing my prayers.

And it's never going to be perfect until I get to heaven. And then I'll perfectly know the will of God, and it'll be easy to ask what I know is God's will because I know what it is. So, ethics is achievable in that we are always moving towards it, and we are growing stronger or more perceptive or using whatever word we want to use.

Some people argue that if you view the Christian ethic as unachievable, it's just you just give up. But I think you can, in every increasing measure, grow towards that. And someday, we'll get there.

But not this side of the new heavens and the new earth. See, again, that's why we spent so much time on this yesterday: because I really think this life is a journey. It's just key to the Christian ethic.

I'm a good Christian because none of those things bother me. Yeah, yeah. I think I remember, I was really inspired, I was 20 some years old, and the guy was being fully honored for 40 years of service in the church or something.

And he said, don't confuse not being tempted with no longer being able to do the things that you're tempted to do. Yeah, yeah. I think it's what Bob was getting at in his fire analogy.

Yeah, okay. All right, all right. Okay, so with that as a, let me see, check my notes here.

Anyway. Okay, the first of the five illustrations of exceeding righteousness is the whole issue of anger. So, Jesus starts by quoting the sixth commandment.

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago: you shall not murder. And anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, again, which is the structure of all of these, but I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, and again, we're dealing here with relationships within the covenantal community, angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, raka, is answerable to the court. And anyone who says you fool will be in the danger of the fire of hell—a very odd statement.

A second. Come on. What Jesus is doing is exerting his supremacy over the Old Testament.

Again, we're not dealing with how you and I relate to people outside the covenantal community. These are our brothers and sisters. And there is a question as to these three things, you know, angry, raka, fool, whether he's just repeating himself for emphasis, which is traditional Jewish teaching methods, or whether it is increasing and quarrels argue that it's increasing.

I'm not convinced it's increasing. But again, his argument you have angry. See, the problem is who is subject, who would hold you subject to judgment if you're angry? No law court will, but quarrels points out, well, maybe for slander, you would go to a law court, a secular law court.

If you accept that, then there might be some increase going on here. So, if you're angry, you could end up in court. If you use a stronger word of content, you can be answerable to the court, which would be the Sanhedrin or a subcommittee of the Sanhedrin.

And anyone who says fool, more, is in danger of going to hell. So, either they're increasing or he's just being repetitive to make a point. Doesn't overly matter, I don't think.

The Old Testament says that if you murder, let me just a second here. Okay, let's look at those three different things. The Old Testament says that if you murder, you're going to be liable to judgment.

Even if you never shed blood, anger still makes you guilty enough to be judged. The anger here is an anger that's arising out of personal relationships. Most likely, it's a reaction to being hurt.

And so, what Jesus is saying is you know the commandment, but the attitude that might eventually lead to the action also violates the commandment. It's a question of who is judged. And again, at one level, you can say no civil law court will find someone guilty of being angry, except maybe quarrels or arguments about slander.

I think that the judge all the way through these verses is God. I think the counsel is the counsel of heaven. The fire of hell is his statement of judgment on you.

It's all the passives so far have been divine passives, and I'm not really comfortable seeing anyone else as the agent of retribution other than God. So, he's saying if you're angry with someone within the covenantal community, you're subject to judgment by God. Let me make the point again, he says, anyone who says to a brother, sister, raka.

Sorry, my notes are messed up here. Raka is just an Aramaic term for contempt. And what he's basically saying is if, in your anger, you say idiot, numbskull, blockhead, birdbrain, nitwit.

In other words, our normal driving vocabulary. Even though you have not shed blood, you're still liable to judgment for your actions. If you say you are a fool, fool translates to another Aramaic term of insult: more M-O-R-E with an accent on the E.

And if there's a distinction between raka and more, again, what does the King James or ESV have? You fool, no. Angry, insults, we didn't use the word, what's in the footnote. Insults says you fool.

Okay, if someone says you fool, they're liable to the hell of fire. Fool translates another Aramaic term of insult, more. And if there's a distinction between raka and more, raka attacks the head, more attacks the heart and the character.

Raka says you are really stupid. Why did you pull out in front of me? You know, why did you, you know, just stupid nitwit. Raka, more attacks character.

It's saying you're godless, and it's saying the person is immoral. It's the difference between saying you're stupid and you're a loser. There's a song the kids used to play all the time, talking about a giant L on your forehead.

You know, that's not the kids, well, I don't know if it's a kid song, but so if I do this, that's, I kind of just do this instead, you know, loser, loser. See, that's more, that's attacking a person's character. That's saying something about something that's down deep, that they're a worthless person.

They're not only stupid and do stupid things, but they're a worthless person. So, whatever you want to do with these, he's saying if you're angry, if your anger leads you to question a person's intelligence if your anger leads you to question a person's character, those are all violations of the heart, and breaking of the commandment, even though you've never pulled the trigger. While a gun can assassinate the body, more assassinates the character, and that is the of slander and gossip, isn't it? Slander and gossip are a forms of assassination.

It's a way of destroying another person, another person's character, another person's reputation. So, the point, and then I'll stop, the point is that a beatitude kind of

person, a person who recognizes his spiritual poverty, mourns over it, hungers and thirsts for a righteousness outside of himself, is becoming meek and submissive to the will of God that results in a peacemaking reconciliation kind of life, that kind of person is not going to respond in anger. Again, so if you're preaching this, you can't just say, don't get angry, right? Because that doesn't help anybody.

The way you help people not get angry, the way you help people not call people numbskulls, the way you help people not question other people's character, is to help them understand who they truly are before God, and who he is, and how should that affect how we live. I think that you've got to keep going back to the Beatitudes to make any sense of chapter five. If our righteousness is to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, then God's call for deep obedience must extend to the heart, to our anger, which then can produce a more kind of attitudes towards people.

Okay. Comments. The reason the NLT is doing it is not because they believe it's right.

The King James gives a phenomenal, creates a phenomenal amount of pressure on translators. And there is a difference in Greek manuscripts. The phrase without cause was obviously added much later.

Matthew never wrote it. But translators are very, very cognizant of the impact of the King James, and that's why you see a lot of footnotes in the modern translations that don't really belong there. And I would say this is one of those.

I don't think Jesus would want us calling people a more if it were justly, if it were just. I think the whole point is that's not what a beatitude person does. So, I would struggle with the theology of the without cause.

Myself. Is, have you, what is the name of the book? Anger is a fascinating topic because we all deal with it in our hearts and in our churches. And there's a book by Lewis Meads called, his book's The Art of Forgiveness.

It's a very, very good book, by the way. But there's another book. Oh, Making Your Anger Work For You is, it's, I don't know if it's a major publisher that handled it.

It's a counselor up in Canada who's a friend of our Chinese pastors. That's how we found out about it. And the point that he makes is the point I've heard with other counselors, that emotions are not right or wrong.

Have you heard this? Anger is not an inherently bad thing. This counselor unpacks this basic idea specifically with anger. He said anger is an indicator.

Anger is an indicator that there's pain, that there's danger, that there's fear. It's saying, look out, something's going on. And either it's, you know, physical danger or emotional danger or, you know, something like that.

And for a long time, I didn't accept this. I said, no, anger is just, anger is wrong. And I've changed my mind on that.

I think the counselor convinced me of it. That is when someone says something and you feel that flash of anger; what the anger is doing is saying you're in trouble. They hurt your feelings.

Deal with it. The anger that Jesus is talking about is when we don't when we let the sun go down on our anger, right? Ephesians 4. And so I, I think it's helpful to distinguish between anger as a healthy emotion that points out danger in our life, again, of any kind, and the anger that produces Moreh and Raqqa kind of language and attitudes in our hearts. What do you think about that? It's one of the few places where we can't tell in the Greek the difference, whether it's the be angry is an indicative, you know, in your anger, don't sin, or it's actually telling you to be angry.

Because there are certain situations where it, I don't know, maybe just a human speaking, it feels like, I mean, you got to, sometimes stuff is so evil you can't just sit passively by and watch it go, right? You, you, but the anger moves you to do something to deal with it and deal with it right away. The anger that's really that it decimates lives, families, marriages, and churches is when anger is allowed to seethe and become part of the very fabric of the person. I had an interesting discussion with Gary Breshears, who's a systematics prof at Western in Portland, and Gary is, has done a ton of work on spiritual warfare.

In fact, on biblical training, there's a 10-hour seminar on biblical warfare that's really worth listening to, and he's given this seminar literally around the world over a hundred times, and this is something that he deals with. And what he says is we all have a weak spot. Every one of us has a potential beachhead for Satan, right? And Satan's really, really smart.

He doesn't know what's going on in our minds because he can't read our minds. He's not omnipresent, he's not omniscient, but he's had a lot of practice watching people, and he knows where our weak spots are. Gary's view on spiritual warfare is that if you give Satan a beachhead in your anger, in your lust, in your pride and arrogance, in your gossip, whatever that beachhead is in your personality and mind, Satan will come in and will, it's not possession, it can be, it can become oppression, but he can come into that beachhead.

And here's a scary thought. Gary believes that Satan can actually lend his demonic power to that beachhead. Have you ever known anyone whose anger? It's like the

anger has a life of its own. It's like the person's controlled by the anger; the person doesn't control the anger, and the anger is like a life force emanating out of him.

Gary would say it is Satan. So, the thing on anger is that if you don't deal with it right away if you let the sun go down in your anger and you let it fume, Satan goes, ha ha ha, I got an opportunity here. Or his demons, who are well-trained, say, ah, we got an opportunity here.

And it's scary to think that he can actually lend to a Christian his demonic power over anger. I don't know how else to explain that one pastor's anger in my office. It defies all reason.

Why would he not explain himself? Why would not he tell how, I mean, I was begging him, tell me what I've done to hurt you. And all he could do is swear at me. Oh, I'm sorry, but be vulgar to me.

So, I think anger is a really fascinating topic. But the anger that Jesus is talking about is the seething, undealt-with anger that produces attitudes and actions of verbally assassinating people. And that's what gossip is, right? That's what talking behind your back is.

That's what stabbing people in the back is all about. It's murder. It's just not physical, but it can be as painful.

Yeah. My wife taught me a really important lesson. When we were first married, we were four months into the marriage, and she just burst out in tears.

And she said you don't love me. And I almost said, hmm, what's that then? But I'd already started to learn that that wasn't the right kind of response. So I said, I just love you.

Why do you think I don't love you? She said you don't ever tease me. I went, yeah, I love you. Therefore, I never tease you.

Well, in her family, teasing was a sign of love. And Robin, who's a blonde, used to love blonde jokes. I mean, this was part of how she was raised: to tease and prod and whatnot.

I was mercilessly teased growing up. Meanly, cruelly, rock amore kind of teasing. And I hate being teased.

I have no internal wall. And if you jokingly call me a numbskull, you send me into depression. If I have any relationship with you all, if Matt called me an idiot, there's no way that I could, and he hasn't, there's no way, because we're friends, there's no

way, I don't have anything interior to stop that from going to my heart and stabbing me.

And my kids love to tease me. And I begged them to stop. And they finally did.

They finally figured out that Dad couldn't handle that. So, you're talking about a classic clash of cultures. And I finally said to Robin, okay, this is really, really hard for me.

How do I tease in a way that's funny? She says there can be no truth in it at all. And if there's no truth at all, if you want to tell me a blonde joke, and there's no truth in it at all, go ahead and tell me a blonde joke. I'll probably laugh.

And so, anecdotally, that's my answer, that if there's a relationship, if there's zero honesty, I mean, if there's no truth in it at all, you know, I think that friends can get along calling each other, what a twit, you know. I don't do it, though. I mean, I teased Robin for a while, about 10 years, just to let you know I loved her.

And then I just said, I'm not comfortable doing it. I can't get past my own childhood. And she decided she didn't want to be teased either.

So, all that to say, I think if there's zero truth in it, there are relationships. My best friend from Azusa, I talked to him last night because I'm going to Outer Banks this weekend. That's his heaven.

And so, I was asking him where to go. And my friend, everything's a stupid this and idiot that. He didn't mean a word of it.

And I can hear that and go, oh, that's Scott. That's not a big issue. And I think that's okay.

But boy, if there's not a relationship, if there's not an understanding, if there's any intended truth in you, idiot. And it's really hard for me to think of any situation under which the word idiot wouldn't have some truth. I think that is over the line.

You know, whatever is pure and lovely and all the flippings for test, idiot, numbskull, twit, moron, none of those things really fit in there. So, I would say, I would guess in a relationship where there's love, where there's no truth, some of this stuff might be just silly, careless speech, and it's not a big deal. But I think that's probably a pretty small category.

Yeah, foolish talk. You have the problem with foolish talk in Ephesians, where it says don't do foolish talk. What was your other question? Yeah.



When is anger ever justified? I think it's really important that we not lead our natural anger into Jesus. And the fact that it never says he was angry at a person, we have to be careful of saying, well, he had to have been, we just aren't told. And that may be the case, but I'd be really cautious about doing that because it just never says it.

You know, well, if I cleaned out the temple, I'd be angry. Yeah. It doesn't mean Jesus was.

So, for me, in my thinking, when I feel the flash of anger, I'm trying to develop, trying to develop, and Robin reminds me that when I'm driving, I'm not at my best. I'm trying to develop the discipline of when I feel the anger, just right away saying, what's the danger? And not letting the anger escalate and saying, okay, I just got told there was a danger. Some guy cut me off.

Oh, I need to slow down. Or someone says something that makes me angry. And I go, what is that? Oh, that's right.

They remind me of so-and-so that really hurt me. Okay. They're not that person I need to extend grace.

I mean, in anger as an indicator of danger, I think it's a God-given gift. But boy, to let it simmer, to let it move, I don't know if it's ever right. I mean, when I think of the Ugandan rebels stealing children for their army, it really makes me mad.

So, what do I do with that? If I live in a state of anger at the Ugandan rebels, they don't care, and it's twisting my personality. So do something about it. Face the fact.

Preach about it. Teach about it. Whatever the case.

But Robin had a wonderful room when we first married, and we stuck to it religiously. Isn't that a funny expression? Stuck to it religiously. And that is why we never went to sleep angry, ever.

And there were multiple times that she woke me up at one in the morning saying, I can't sleep. We haven't dealt with this. And I go, Robin, my first class is at 7.30. It's Greek.

I really need my sleep. She goes, I don't care. We made an agreement, and you went to sleep, and you are to wake up, and we're going to deal with this.

We had quite a few discussions until 2:33 in the morning. Those were always the fun days in Greek, because we just kind of had a Greek party or played games or something, because I was so tired. That was a wonderful policy that made for a healthy marriage because we just didn't let anger or hurt sit.

And we always had a kiss when we were done. And when you're angry, it's really hard to do that, isn't it? And if you're angry with your wife or your spouse, and you kiss them goodnight, they can always tell. Yeah, yeah, we're not done yet.

So, I think there's a place, but it has to be dealt with right away. I realize I have some more notes. Let me get through to finish this particular one.

For righteousness is to exceed that of the Pharisees, and God's call for deep obedience must extend to our anger. The answer is instant reconciliation, isn't it? And that's what 23 is getting. Basically, there are a couple of illustrations, but they're all doing the same thing.

The key to anger is instant reconciliation. The verse we've quoted, referring to, is Ephesians 4, 26. Do not let the sun go down in your anger.

Give no opportunity to the devil. Anger is just one of those huge, wide-opening invitations to Satan. So, then he has two illustrations of this one point, the one point of instant reconciliation.

Verse 23. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and remember they still had altars back then, and still remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them, and then offer your gift.

If you have harmed someone, whose responsibility is it to reconcile? It is yours. And then the other parallel passage is, if you have something against a brother or sister, you go be reconciled. So, I still remember this sermon.

I didn't preach it. Someone else did. If there is a broken relationship, whose responsibility is it to initiate reconciliation? Yours. Doesn't matter whether you did it or you were the one offended, it's your responsibility.

Ouch. That's a hard one, isn't it? That's a really hard one. I verbally kicked two people out of church as I was a pastor.

One of them, the guy, didn't like an illustration that someone else from the church gave me. He came up to me after church and was screaming, literally screaming at me about how bad this other person was for the illustration she had given me. I couldn't calm him down, so I forcefully ejected him from the church. The other one was a very interesting situation where a visitor came, and he came up to me afterwards and said, do you believe in church discipline? I went, okay, he must be from that church that loves church discipline, the one I told you about, and he's thinking about coming here.

Great. He wants to know if we're going to do church discipline. I said, "Well, yeah, we don't like it, but I talked about it for a bit."

Well, I completely missed him. He said, "Well, the church needs to discipline you for that sermon." I went, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, you said that we offer forgiveness whether the person asked for it or not, and that's clearly wrong."

You never offer forgiveness until the person comes, and he said, begging and crawling for forgiveness. I looked at him, and I went, really? So, you would do church discipline against Jesus on the cross? He didn't like that, and he got, not violent, but it got really angry, and he's saying, well, you're going to have to forgive me, and I'm not even going to ask for forgiveness. I said, I forgive you.

You're wrong. Your attitude's not right. Well, have you ever heard of the teaching of so-and-so? And it was some pastor in Indiana I'd never heard of.

I said, no, you've never heard of him before? And I said, and this wasn't helpful, I said, oh, is he your cult leader? And I finally said, his name was Bill. I said, Bill, the door's that way. Don't come back.

He said, I have no interest in you spewing your poison in this church. I'm glad to talk with you if you ever want to talk about what the Bible teaches, but you may not spew your poison in this church ever again. He was really angry and had no desire for instant reconciliation, and as far as he was concerned, it's always the other person's responsibility to reconcile.

Took a long time to tell that story, but has that ever happened to you? I get really kind of extreme things happen to me. I am a magnet for weird people. What can I say? Not that everyone that I'm associated with is a weird person, Matthew.

Yeah, my situations tend to be extreme. It's our responsibility to try to instantly reconcile, but the thing that is really powerful in this passage, and I read it in Kent Hughes's discussion, Sermon on the Mount, and I've seen it in other places as well, but that's where I read it, is that Kent reminds us, where was Jesus speaking when he said this? Well, the traditional location for the Sermon on the Mount is the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, right? Where are all temple sacrifices made? In Jerusalem, it is 80 miles, a three-day walk, and you have to go around Samaria, right? And so, when you put yourself, he's talking to a bunch of people in Galilee, and he's saying, if you're down in a three-day journey, and you've bought your animal, and you're getting ready to kill it, and you remember that someone has something against you, you stop. I think Coral Soxie, you hogtie your animal.

I never thought about that. You lost your sacrifice. You leave your sacrifice.

You travel for three days. You find the person, and you get reconciled, and then you come back three days and offer your sacrifice. That's how important reconciliation is to God and that we don't go through the external motions of worship when there's relational conflict in our lives.

Now, we're going to talk about all the problems connected with that in a second, but that's a powerful picture, isn't it? And the way I say it in New Testament times when there are no sacrifices is that if you are getting ready to commit an act of worship, sing a song, make an offering, respond to reading, and preach. If you know that someone truly has something against you, don't do it. Stop.

Go, be reconciled, and then come back. Can you imagine what would happen if you got up to preach, and you said, I can't preach. I'm sorry.

I've hurt someone, and it is a sin for me to commit this act of worship. It's a sin for me to preach, so you all are dismissed. I need to go take care of my relational conflict.

It'd be an interesting song. I'll bet you they would remember that one. And that was why part of my weekly routine is, does anyone ... There's always going to be people who don't like you.

That's just the way it is, but is there anyone that I truly have hurt? Was there a careless word that I said? Was my action properly misinterpreted? I mean, could I see that they could misinterpret an action? Is there something that I need to do? I'm not saying I did this perfectly, but it was part of my weekly routine. My routine was ... I was very fortunate. I was given 30 hours a week to prepare a sermon.

I had very few other responsibilities. So, Wednesday was a pure research day. Thursday, I would start writing the sermon.

I could write until about mid-on Friday, and then I would start practicing. I practiced a sermon in the worship center. The church knew not to schedule anything else in there, and I would practice all day Friday and most of Saturday.

My kids always said I walked through the door on Friday and reemerged Sunday afternoon because that was my responsibility and my joy. And so, part of that routine is, okay, before I start, I shoot my mouth off so much of the time that I hurt somebody. I really encourage you to do the same thing.

So that's the first of the illustrations. Now, there's an important qualifier, and you all are waiting for this, and I'm sure you all know it. Romans 12, 18.

As far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all people. In other words, there are broken relationships that cannot be reconciled. This man that I told you hates me so deeply, I went to him three times.

I said, you know, I probably would do it a little differently now because of what I've learned, but basically, I said, I wish I had said, I wish I had not just said, tell me how you feel. I wish I said, tell me how you felt when I did this or when I said this. Help me understand where you're coming from.

I want to hear your emotions. And I didn't do that, but I said, what have I done? And, you know, I'll apologize if I can. And we did this three times and became very clear that reconciliation was never, ever, ever going to happen because he was not going to allow it to happen.

And after three times, it became pearls before swine. We'll get to that passage. In other words, there's nothing I could do about it.

As far as it is concerned, I've done everything that I could think of to be at peace with this individual, and I had to walk away from it. And with my thin skin, it still bothers me, but there's nothing I can do about it. So, we all know that there are people that will not reconcile with us, right? That's just life.

And if you are a spiritual authority, there'll be a greater number of people that will not reconcile with you because they don't want to be told what to do or how to think or how to behave or what they should be like. You will truly offend people by saying something wrong or by saying it the wrong way, and they want to be offended. Anger brings with it its own energy, doesn't it? And it fuels itself.

It's almost like the ultimate clean energy because anger just makes you angrier, and you don't need any other input. It fuels itself, and there are people who like it.

They like how they feel. It gives them a sense of I'm better than you. It gives them a sense of I'm in control.

There are a lot of different reasons, but they just won't reconcile. And you need to be content with knowing you've done all that you can. You know, for me and this one individual, it might be in five years. The Lord lays it on my heart to say, okay, I'm going to try again, but I'm not going to beat myself up.

I'm going to wait till I get a pretty clear message from the Spirit that I'm supposed to initiate contact because every time I initiate contact, it just gets worse. But this is life in the pulpit. Sure.

I would define it by going to biblical training and going to seminar. No, is it seminar? Where is it, Matt? Where's the one on forgiveness? It's a seminar. And this is a counselor that changed our life.

After all the hurt and pain from ministry, we went to a conference for abused pastors, basically. It was up in Canada, put on by Campus Crusade for Christ. And they brought in different specialists to talk about different things.

And he talked about forgiveness. And it was so fundamentally life-changing for us. We got him to come down.

We shot the video of the seminar for biblical training. And what he does, it's the last lecture in the seminar. And he says, forgiveness is the selfish thing to do.

You don't forgive the other person. You forgive yourself. And in forgiveness, you're saying, I release all rights to vengeance on this person.

Okay, Lord, it's in your hands. I forgive them. I release all rights.

The issue is, is there repentance on the other person's part? This is, I think, where you're getting at. If there is repentance, he's got a diagram. If there is repentance, it doesn't mean that everything is hunky-dory.

The trust in the relationship still has to be rebuilt. But you go that direction. I mean, have you ever been in a situation where a person apologizes, and you're still kind of smarting, and they get after you, like, hey, I apologize.

What's your problem? You ever had that? I had a family member do that to me once where they really hurt me. And it was still smarting. And then he just got mad at me.

Because I said, well, you know, I'm not sure I trust you at this point. I've forgiven you. I've accepted your repentance.

But the trust has to be rebuilt. The problem comes if a person repents or doesn't repent. And then the answer is boundaries.

You have to be comfortable saying, "This person isn't going to repent. There's no relationship. I have to establish boundaries so that I'm safe."

And I've forgotten your question, but I think that was my answer. Did I answer it? Sure. All right.

It is a fabulous seminar, you all. You ought to make every leader in your church tie him to a chair and make him walk through the forgiveness seminar. Because it is

gossip, and the hurt, and the pain, and the lack of forgiveness, and the lack of reconciliation is, I think, the main thing that's ripping churches apart.

And this seminar will help you walk through and understand. But forgiveness is the selfless act he'll teach. That's what you do for yourself.

It's how you are released. And then whether there's a relationship or not depends upon whether they repent and whether they're willing to do the hard work of re-establishing trust. What I don't want is to you all, and again, this was especially in the Chinese context.

We spent a ton of time talking about this. Because of the national psyche, there's a lot of broken relationships. Husband and wife.

Pornography is huge in the Chinese pastoral. It's just huge, beyond ours. And so this whole thing of hurt, pain, and broken relationships is especially pronounced there.

But I'm sure it's everywhere. I talked past our break, didn't we? I'm sorry. We'll quit a little early for lunch.

Some people refuse to reconcile. So, you have to follow Jesus's words to the point where you feel released. If it's your spouse, you probably never will be released.

If it's your children, sometimes there are situations with our children where it's just not going to reconcile and they're going to go off work on their testimony. And you keep praying and hoping they come back. I don't know how many times I've told parents, look, it's just halftime.

They're 20 years old. They're in the midst of the most difficult changes of their life. Yeah, they hate your guts right now.

It doesn't mean they're going to hate you in five years. It's just halftime. Just pray.

It'll come back. It'll come back. Do you have any other comments or questions on anger? Well, I'm sorry. There was a second I left that out of my notes.

There's a second illustration, 25 to 26. Oh, there it is. It's a picture of a guilty party who's smart enough to pursue out-of-court reconciliation.

Settle matters quickly with your adversary. And the assumption, and again, Quarles does a really good job on this one, saying in this particular case, most likely the person knows that he's wrong and that the adversary is right and the adversary is going to win in the law court. So, settle matters quickly with your adversary.

He was taking you to court. Do it while you're still together on the way, on the road. And there was just instant reconciliation.

Or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly, I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. So, the assumption is that you've done something wrong.

You're being sued for it. And it's just a model of taking care of things right away, right away, as far as it depends upon you. Okay, any comments or questions on that whole topic? No, this illustration would be of a law court.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that'd be a good illustration.

That'd be a really good illustration, wouldn't it? You're in a classroom, you're teaching, and a kid is just being really disobedient. And part of us just wants to... I remember I called one of my favorite teachers by her first name. Man, did I get my mouth taped? I mean, really taped.

I was licking my lips because I could see what she was doing. I was getting it all wet so it wouldn't stick. But it would have been better if Ms. Marion had said, Bill, why did you say that? And the answer was, I love you.

I love my teachers. She called me by my first name, so I thought that as a term of endearment, I should call her by her first name. You know, she completely misread.

She read it something totally different. But you know, I have friends that are... I have one friend who's a shop teacher for ninth grade; they really did saws, you know. And there's a real set of rules.

He teaches in a really bad area in Spokane. You know, he had one kid who was misusing a table saw, and he went to correct him. The kid turned and said, "I can have you fired."

I mean, he can't. A kid could make up a story. He touched me inappropriately, and the teacher was gone, right? And the challenge, even in a situation like that, is, okay, what happened this morning? Why did this kid come to school so angry? Maybe his alcoholic, cocaine-infected dad beat him this morning and left him again for the 300th time.

And it's, I mean, it's always, what is behind the anger? What kind of hurt, pain, and danger is the anger pointing to? And that's a much more effective way, if possible, to run a school, run a classroom. Yeah. But this is why I think I'm getting you all in the Chinese mixed up. I'm sorry.



But it's, tell you the story of the student who forgave me for preaching this. Did I tell you that story? He must have been in Shanghai. When I preached this passage the next Sunday, a kid in the church, 25 years old, neat kid, a good, devoted Christian, I knew his heart.

And he walked up to me before the first service and said, I just want you to know, I've forgiven you for your sermon last week. Now, wasn't you all I said this to? It was. Okay.

I thought it was in English. That's why I'm saying I swore I was able to tell the story without a translator. Anyway, this is a hard passage because it sounds like the minute I call that guy who cut me off in the freeway an idiot, I'm going to hell.

That's why we introduced this whole class by talking about how we are going to handle the language. And it's you. Jesus is using dramatic speech to drive the point home. And I would say on this point that if we have an issue with calling people Moray and Raka, and whatever word you want to use, loser.

I think we need to look at our own brokenness, our own spiritual depravity and saying, why am I willing to pass judgment on a person? Why am I willing to respond this way? Yes, I'm going to say the wrong things. I'm going to respond properly, improperly. Life is a journey.

We are learning these lessons. Someday, I'll never call anyone a loser. It'll be heaven.

But what is it in me? Oh, yeah, it's pride. It's arrogance. It's me elevating myself over the other person.

Afterwards, he just he drives a Prius. So, he's not as good as me. I drive a Jeep.

That's a joke. Who's got a Prius here? Yeah. Prius drivers are the bane of my existence.

I'm sorry. There are so many Prius drivers in Portland who get in the fast lane and go two miles an hour below the speed limit. And whenever you see a stack of cars in a Portland freeway, it's usually a Prius driver.

And if it's not a Prius driver, it's a Subaru driver. I've never seen a Charger in the fast lane going under the speed limit. Never seen a Charger or a Mustang or a BMW.

It's always a Prius. This is one of our ongoing jokes. And I have no idea why I said it.

Yeah, because I want to break the speed limit. If I get a ticket, I get a ticket. All right, I deserve it.

When there's conflict and when there's this desire, we like getting mad. If we didn't like it so much, we wouldn't do it so much. Right? Yeah, okay, well, if I... And so there are times, that's what I'm trying to get at.

There are times in which we look at our anger, we look at how we respond, numbskull, nitwit, and we go, oh, what is it in me that just did that? And you go back through the links of the chain, and you get to the poverty of spirit and say, oh, I'm better than they are. I'm thinking I'm better than they are. Because of what they drive or whatever the case is, I think I'm better, and I have a right to break the speed limit in Portland if I want to.

You know, you can fill in your own blanks on this one. And so this is just, yeah, we're going to fail, we're going to get angry, but they are, the anger is an indicator of a deeper problem, that there's danger, physical danger, or danger of significance, or danger of, you know, whatever. And we have to go back to the golden chain and deal with it.

And that means if you and I truly understand who we are before Christ, then it is so much easier to humbly and meekly go to the other person and say, what did I say that hurt you? Tell me how you felt. Walk me through it. And actually you're right.

I'm worse than you think I am. When you all get to that point, let me know. I'm not there.

But that's what we have to do. This is a hard one. In fact, some commentators address the issue of why he started with anger. It may be because it's the most universal and the most dangerous emotion.

I don't know if that's true, but it's interesting to think about. Anyway, talk too long. Let's take a break.

We'll be back here after lunch, 1:30ish, and then we will plow through the other acts of greater righteousness. See you then.

This is Dr. Bill Mounce in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session 6 on Matthew 5:21 and following, Acts of Greater Righteousness, Part 1.