

Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 7, Matthew 5:27ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 2 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 7, Matthew 5:27ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bill Mounce explores Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:27-32, specifically focusing on the concepts of lust and divorce as expansions of the Old Testament law. Mounce examines Jesus' assertion that lustful thoughts equate to adultery in the heart, differentiating temptation from the sin of intent. The discussion then moves to the complexities of divorce, considering the exception clause for "sexual immorality" and the differing interpretations in Jewish and Roman contexts. Ultimately, the lecture emphasizes Jesus' deeper understanding of righteousness, which centers on the heart and the intended permanence of marriage, contrasting it with the more lenient interpretations of the Pharisees.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 7 – Double click
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Gospels → Sermon on the Mount).**



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3. Briefing Document: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 7, Matthew 5:27ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 2

Briefing Document: Dr. Bill Mounce on Matthew 5:27-32 (Lust and Divorce)

Overview: This briefing document summarizes Dr. Bill Mounce's lecture on Matthew 5:27-32, focusing on Jesus' teachings on lust (verses 27-30) and divorce (verses 31-32) within the Sermon on the Mount. Mounce emphasizes Jesus' intent to reveal a "greater righteousness" that goes beyond external adherence to the law, delving into the heart and intent behind actions. He also navigates the complexities and interpretations of the divorce passage, highlighting the historical context and ongoing debates.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Lust and Adultery (Matthew 5:27-30): Broadening the Commandment

- **Pharisaical Narrowing:** Mounce highlights that the Pharisees had narrowed the commandment against adultery to a mere external act, ignoring the underlying desire and the 10th commandment against coveting. He states, "As is true of what the Pharisees do throughout this passage, they had taken a commandment and had narrowed it down... narrowed it down to one external act."
- **Jesus' Broadening:** Jesus, in contrast, broadens the commandment to include the internal desire, stating, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Mounce emphasizes this as typical of Jesus' approach in this passage.
- **Intent vs. Temptation:** A crucial distinction is made between temptation and the sin of lust. Mounce clarifies, "Temptation is not sin... It's not the first look, but the second. It's not the glance but the stare. It's not the passing thought but the cherished memory that makes temptation into the sin of lust." He emphasizes that the Greek word explicitly points to "looking with the intention of lust," where the intent of the stare is to treat the person as an object.
- **Lust as a Violation, Not Equal to Adultery:** Mounce clarifies that while lust violates the emotion that leads to adultery and is a violation of the commandment, it is not the same as the physical act. He uses the analogy, "They're not the same thing. I'd certainly rather you hate me than kill me." He notes that some have misunderstood Jesus to equate the two, which needs to be clarified in preaching.

- **Hyperbolic Language and Seriousness of Sin:** Jesus' strong language about gouging out eyes and cutting off hands is discussed. Mounce suggests this is not to be taken literally but is "strong language meant to drive a point home." He prefers to call it "dramatic speech" to emphasize the seriousness of sin and the need to be willing to remove even precious things that lead to it. He quotes Job 31:1 ("I've made a covenant with my eyes") as an example of taking this principle seriously.

2. Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32): Complexity and Context

- **Jesus' Pattern and the "Exception Clause":** Similar to the discussion on adultery, Jesus begins with "You have heard it was said..." and then offers his own teaching. The focus quickly turns to the exception clause: "anyone who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality..."
- **Differing Translations and Interpretations:** Mounce points out the difference in the NIV ("makes her the victim of adultery") and ESV ("makes her commit adultery") translations, highlighting the nuance in how the woman's position is portrayed.
- **Not a Comprehensive Doctrine:** Mounce strongly cautions against building a complete theology of marriage, divorce, and remarriage solely on this passage. He states, "You cannot develop your doctrines of marriage, divorce, and remarriage out of this passage. It's certainly part of it. But there's more the scripture has to say." He emphasizes the need to consider parallel passages like Mark 10 and 1 Corinthians 7.
- **Historical Context: Pharisaical Views:** Mounce emphasizes the context of Jesus speaking to a Pharisaical culture that had a lenient view on divorce, referencing the Mishnah Tractate on divorce which listed numerous trivial reasons for divorce. He suggests Jesus' teaching is a polemic against this laxity.
- **The Meaning of "Sexual Immorality" (Porneia):** Mounce delves into the Greek word "porneia," noting it's a broader term than just adultery, encompassing various forms of sexual infidelity, including prostitution, homosexuality, and bestiality. He also notes the Hebrew term for "indecent" used in Deuteronomy (the basis for the certificate of divorce) might also have been broader than just adultery.

- **Jesus' Intent: Emphasis on Permanence:** Despite the exception clause, Mounce believes Jesus' primary emphasis is on the permanence of marriage. He suggests Jesus added the exception but didn't intend to dwell on loopholes. He poses the question, "...is Jesus not concerned with laying out every possible exception because he wants to drive the point home that God intends marriage to be permanent?"
- **Exceeding the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees:** Mounce proposes several ways Jesus' teaching on divorce exceeds that of the religious leaders:
- **Against Hillel's Laxity:** Jesus' requirement of "porneia" as a reason for divorce is stricter than Rabbi Hillel's view that divorce was permissible for any displeasure.
- **Adultery Doesn't Mandate Divorce:** Jesus implies that even in cases of adultery, divorce is permissible but not required, contrasting with some rabbinic views.
- **Husband's Culpability:** Jesus extends blame to the husband who divorces his wife (without legitimate reason), as it could force her into a situation of adultery (through remarriage or prostitution).
- **Emphasis on Permanence over Exceptions:** Jesus' focus is on the enduring nature of marriage, rather than focusing on justifications for ending it. Mounce asks, "In what sense is Jesus here teaching something deeper, something that exceeds the scribes and the Pharisees?"

Practical Implications and Discussion Points:

- **The Church's Role:** Mounce strongly advocates for churches to develop a "position paper" on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. He clarifies that this isn't claiming to be the definitive word of God but rather the leadership's best understanding and guidelines.
- **Consistency in Interpretation:** Mounce stresses the importance of interpreting this part of the Sermon on the Mount consistently with other parts, particularly regarding the use of metaphorical language.
- **Taking Sin Seriously in the Heart:** The discussion on lust underscores the need to address sin at the level of the heart and intention, not just external actions.
- **Compassion and Complexity:** Mounce's personal anecdote about the woman seeking counsel highlights the painful and complex realities surrounding divorce and remarriage. He acknowledges the difficulty in finding a position that perfectly aligns with all biblical texts.

- **Commitment in Marriage:** Mounce concludes by emphasizing Jesus' vision of marriage as a permanent commitment, urging couples to enter marriage with the mindset that divorce is not an option, even during difficult times. He states, "You need to get to a point where you are so committed to this marriage that even in the yucky times, you will push through."

Quotes:

- *"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matthew 5:28)
- *"Temptation is not sin... It's not the first look, but the second. It's not the glance but the stare. It's not the passing thought but the cherished memory that makes temptation into the sin of lust."* (Dr. Bill Mounce's explanation of lustful intent)
- *"But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."* (Matthew 5:32, NIV translation quoted)
- *"You cannot develop your doctrines of marriage, divorce, and remarriage out of this passage. It's certainly part of it. But there's more the scripture has to say."* (Dr. Bill Mounce on the scope of Matthew 5:31-32)
- *"Jesus is giving his understanding of the true meaning of the law."* (Dr. Bill Mounce on the nature of Jesus' teaching)
- *"Take sin seriously. You must do something about it."* (Dr. Bill Mounce on the overall message of the section on lust)
- *"This is meant to last forever."* (Dr. Bill Mounce summarizing Jesus' emphasis on marriage)

This briefing doc provides a summary of the key points and discussions within Dr. Mounce's lecture on Matthew 5:27-32. Further engagement with the source material is recommended for a more comprehensive understanding.

4. Study Guide: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 7, Matthew 5:27ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 2

Matthew 5:27-32 Study Guide

Key Themes: Exceeding Righteousness, Lust and Adultery, Divorce

I. Lust and Adultery (Matthew 5:27-30)

- **The Pharisaical Interpretation:** How did the Pharisees narrow the commandment against adultery?
- **Jesus' Broader Interpretation:** How does Jesus redefine the violation of this commandment? What is the significance of "lustfully" in verse 28?
- **Temptation vs. Sin:** What distinction does Dr. Mounce draw between temptation and the sin of lust?
- **The Intent of Lust:** According to Dr. Mounce, what is the underlying intention of looking at someone lustfully?
- **Hyperbole of Eye and Hand:** How should we understand Jesus' command to gouge out an eye or cut off a hand? Is it literal? What is the main point?
- **Seriousness of Sin:** What does this passage emphasize about the seriousness of sin?

II. Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32)

- **The Traditional Understanding (Deuteronomy):** What was the purpose of the certificate of divorce according to Deuteronomy? What was the accepted ground for divorce?
- **Jesus' Teaching on Divorce:** What does Jesus say about divorce in Matthew 5:32? What is the exception clause?
- **Different Translations:** What are the nuances in the NIV and ESV translations of verse 32 regarding the woman's role?
- **Parallel Passages:** How does the teaching on divorce in Mark 10:11-12 differ from Matthew 5:32? Why might these differences exist (audience)?
- **Additional Grounds for Divorce:** What other potential biblical grounds for divorce are mentioned (1 Corinthians 7)?

- **The "One Flesh" Covenant:** How does the concept of the "one flesh" covenant relate to the permanence of marriage?
- **Porneia:** What does the Greek word "porneia" encompass? How does it relate to the exception clause?
- **Jesus Exceeding Rabbinic Teaching:** In what ways does Jesus' teaching on divorce exceed the interpretations of rabbis like Hillel and Shammai?
- **Emphasis on Permanence:** What is the primary emphasis of Jesus' teaching on divorce?
- **The Role of Commitment:** What role does commitment play in Jesus' view of marriage?

III. Application and Interpretation

- **Historical Context:** How does understanding the historical context of Jesus speaking to the Pharisees influence our interpretation of these passages?
- **Applicability Today:** How do the principles Jesus teaches in this passage apply to Christians today, even though we are not under the law in the same way the Pharisees were?
- **Church Position Papers:** Why does Dr. Mounce advocate for churches to develop position papers on issues like divorce and remarriage?
- **Consistency in Interpretation:** Why is it important to interpret different parts of the Sermon on the Mount consistently (e.g., the metaphor of cutting off a hand versus the teaching on divorce)?

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. How did the Pharisees typically interpret the commandment against adultery, and what did they overlook according to Jesus?
2. Explain the distinction Dr. Mounce makes between experiencing temptation and committing the sin of lust.
3. What does Dr. Mounce suggest is the underlying intention of looking at someone with lustful intent?

4. How should we understand Jesus' command to gouge out an eye or cut off a hand? Is it meant to be taken literally?
5. According to Deuteronomy, what was the primary reason for allowing divorce, and what was the purpose of the certificate of divorce?
6. What is the exception clause in Matthew 5:32 regarding divorce, and how do the NIV and ESV translations slightly differ on this point?
7. How does the teaching on divorce in Mark's Gospel differ from that in Matthew, and what might explain this difference?
8. What does the Greek word "porneia" generally refer to, and how does it broaden the potential exceptions for divorce beyond just adultery?
9. In what key ways did Jesus' teaching on divorce surpass the common interpretations held by rabbis of his time, such as Hillel and Shammai?
10. What is the central emphasis of Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce in this passage, according to Dr. Mounce?

Answer Key for Quiz

1. The Pharisees narrowed the commandment against adultery to only the external physical act, ignoring the tenth commandment against coveting. Jesus broadened this by stating that lustfully looking at someone has already constituted adultery in the heart.
2. Temptation, such as fleeting thoughts, is not sin; however, the sin of lust develops when one intentionally looks with lustful intent, stares, or cherishes the memory, treating the person as an object.
3. The underlying intention of looking at someone lustfully is to undress them in one's mind, treat them as an object for personal gratification, and disregard their equal creation in God's image.
4. Jesus' command to gouge out an eye or cut off a hand is not meant to be taken literally but as a dramatic way to emphasize the extreme seriousness of sin and the need to remove anything that leads to it.
5. According to Deuteronomy, divorce was allowed due to the "hardness of the heart" and required a certificate of divorce to protect the woman's reputation by indicating she was not divorced for adultery.

6. The exception clause in Matthew 5:32 states divorce is permissible "except for sexual immorality (porneia)." The NIV suggests the man makes the woman the "victim of adultery," while the ESV says he "makes her commit adultery."
7. Mark's Gospel (10:11-12) presents a more reciprocal view, stating that whoever divorces their spouse and remarries commits adultery against them, reflecting a Roman cultural context where women could also initiate divorce.
8. "Porneia" is a broad Greek term for sexual infidelity or sexual behavior outside the legitimate confines of marriage, encompassing acts beyond just adultery, such as prostitution, homosexuality, and bestiality.
9. Jesus exceeded rabbinic teaching by going deeper than the external act to the heart's intention, by suggesting that adultery allows but does not mandate divorce, and by emphasizing the permanence of marriage over focusing on exceptions.
10. The central emphasis of Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce in this passage is on the permanence of the marital union, reflecting God's original intention and urging a deep commitment that endures through difficulties.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze how Jesus' teaching on lust in Matthew 5:27-30 challenges and expands upon the traditional understanding of the commandment against adultery in the context of first-century Jewish culture. Consider the implications of this teaching for contemporary Christian ethics.
2. Discuss the complexities and varying interpretations surrounding Jesus' teaching on divorce in Matthew 5:31-32, taking into account the historical context, parallel passages in Mark and 1 Corinthians, and the significance of the word "porneia." What are some of the challenges in applying this teaching in modern church settings?
3. Explore the use of hyperbolic language in Matthew 5:29-30 and its purpose in conveying the seriousness of sin. How should contemporary readers interpret these strong commands, and what principles can we derive from them regarding our struggle with temptation?
4. Compare and contrast the perspectives on the relationship between mental sin (lust) and physical sin (adultery) as presented in the lecture. What are the theological and practical implications of considering these as distinct yet connected violations of God's law?
5. Evaluate Dr. Mounce's argument that Jesus' primary aim in Matthew 5:27-32 is to challenge the Pharisaical understanding and emphasize the deeper spiritual intent of God's law. How does this understanding influence our interpretation and application of these challenging passages today?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Adultery:** Marital infidelity; sexual relations between a married person and someone other than their spouse.
- **Covenant:** A solemn agreement between two parties, often involving mutual promises and obligations. In the context of marriage, it refers to the sacred and binding agreement between a husband and wife.
- **Exceeding Righteousness:** A central theme in the Sermon on the Mount, referring to a righteousness that goes beyond mere external observance of the law and involves a deeper transformation of the heart and attitudes.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally, used for emphasis or effect.
- **Lust:** Intense sexual desire or craving, often involving objectification of another person. In this context, Jesus equates looking at someone lustfully with committing adultery in the heart.
- **Mishnah:** A major collection of Jewish oral law compiled around the year 200 CE, providing interpretations and applications of the written Torah.
- **Pharisees:** A Jewish religious and social movement in the first century CE known for their strict adherence to the Law and their interpretations of it. Jesus often critiqued their legalistic and hypocritical practices.
- **Porneia:** A Greek term used in the New Testament that broadly encompasses various forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, prostitution, incest, and other sexual perversions.
- **Scribes:** In ancient Israel, individuals who were experts in the Law of Moses, often responsible for copying, interpreting, and teaching the scriptures.
- **Sexual Immorality:** A broad term referring to any sexual activity considered morally wrong according to biblical standards, often translated from the Greek word "porneia."

5. FAQs on Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 7, Matthew 5:27ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Matthew 5:27-32

1. How did Jesus broaden the understanding of the commandment "You shall not commit adultery" (Matthew 5:27)?

Jesus explained that the commandment against adultery extends beyond the physical act to include lustful intent in one's heart. He taught that looking at someone with the desire to commit adultery is itself a violation of the spirit of the commandment, just as hatred in the heart is a violation of the spirit of the commandment against murder. The Pharisees had narrowed the commandment to the external act, ignoring the underlying desires and intentions, whereas Jesus restored the understanding that true obedience involves the heart.

2. Is there a distinction between temptation and the sin of lust according to this teaching?

Yes, Dr. Mounce emphasizes that temptation, including passing thoughts and initial glances, is not the same as the sin of lust. Lust develops when a person looks with the intention of lust, cherishes impure thoughts, and objectifies another person rather than seeing them as equally created in God's image. It's the deliberate and sustained engagement with tempting thoughts that transforms temptation into the sin of lust.

3. How did the Pharisees' interpretation of the law differ from Jesus' interpretation regarding adultery?

The Pharisees focused primarily on the external act of adultery, often overlooking or minimizing the significance of internal desires and attitudes. Jesus, however, revealed that true righteousness, which must exceed that of the Pharisees, involves addressing the root of sin in the heart. He showed that the commandment against adultery is not just about avoiding the physical act but also about guarding one's thoughts and intentions.

4. What is the significance of Jesus' strong language about gouging out an eye or cutting off a hand in the context of lust (Matthew 5:29-30)?

This dramatic language is not meant to be taken literally as a prescription for self-mutilation. Instead, it serves as a powerful metaphor to emphasize the extreme seriousness of sin and the need to take radical measures to avoid it. Jesus is urging his followers to be willing to part with even the most valuable things in their lives if those things lead them to sin. It underscores the importance of taking personal responsibility in the fight against temptation.

5. What was the common understanding of divorce in the Jewish culture of Jesus' time?

Based on Deuteronomy, divorce was permitted due to "indecency." However, the interpretation of "indecency" was debated. Rabbi Hillel argued it could be for almost any displeasure a husband had with his wife, while Rabbi Shammai held a stricter view, limiting it to adultery. By Jesus' time, the more lenient view of Hillel was prevalent, allowing men to divorce their wives for trivial reasons, and a certificate of divorce was required to protect the woman's reputation.

6. What is Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage in Matthew 5:31-32, and how does it compare to the common practices of his time?

Jesus taught that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality (*porneia*), causes her to commit adultery if she remarries. He also stated that anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. This teaching was stricter than the prevailing views, particularly the broad interpretations of divorce allowed by the school of Hillel. Jesus emphasized the permanence of marriage, reflecting God's original intention, and limited the acceptable grounds for divorce.

7. How does Jesus' teaching on divorce "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees"?

Jesus' teaching on divorce surpassed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees in several ways: * He narrowed the grounds for permissible divorce compared to the wide interpretations of "indecency" common at the time (e.g., Hillel's view). * He implied that even in cases of sexual immorality, divorce is permissible but not necessarily mandated, contrasting with some rabbinic views that required divorce in such situations. * He extended blame to the husband who divorces his wife for reasons other than sexual immorality, as it could force her into a position where she might commit adultery through remarriage or prostitution. * His primary emphasis was on the permanence of marriage and discouraging divorce, a stark contrast to the ease with which divorce was practiced in his society.

8. What is the significance of the term *porneia* in Jesus' teaching on divorce, and how does it relate to adultery?

Jesus uses the Greek word *porneia* as the exception for divorce. This term is broader than the specific word for adultery in both Hebrew and Greek. Dr. Mounce suggests that *porneia* encompasses various forms of sexual infidelity or immorality outside the confines of marriage, including adultery, prostitution, and other sexual sins. By using this broader term, Jesus may be indicating that any fundamental breach of the marriage covenant through sexual unfaithfulness could be considered a legitimate, though not necessarily required, reason for divorce. However, the exact scope of *porneia* in this context remains a subject of discussion and interpretation.