

Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 8, Matthew 5:31ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 3 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 8, Matthew 5:31ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 3, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Bill Mounce's Sermon on the Mount Lecture 8 explores Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:31 and following, focusing on acts of greater righteousness. **Mounce discusses the complexities of divorce and remarriage**, referencing Old Testament law and various interpretations, including his own. He also addresses the concept of **rigorous honesty**, contrasting Jesus' commands with pharisaical loopholes and advocating for truthful communication. Finally, the lecture examines Jesus' teaching on **non-retaliation and loving one's enemies**, emphasizing a willingness to forgo personal rights as an act of love, rooted in understanding God's character and our journey toward spiritual perfection.

**2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 8 – 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 8, Matthew 5:31ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 3

Briefing Document: Dr. Bill Mounce on Matthew 5:31-48 - Acts of Greater Righteousness, Part 3

Main Themes:

This lecture by Dr. Bill Mounce delves into Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:31-48, focusing on three key areas as examples of "Acts of Greater Righteousness": divorce and remarriage, rigorous honesty, and the rejection of the "eye for an eye" mentality in favor of love for enemies. Throughout the lecture, Mounce emphasizes the importance of understanding the original intent of Old Testament laws versus the Pharisaical interpretations, the evolving nature of language and its impact on Bible translation, and the overarching call for Christians to live at a higher ethical standard rooted in love and God's own character.

Key Ideas and Facts:

1. Divorce and Remarriage (Matthew 5:31-32):

- **Focus on the Seriousness of Marriage:** Jesus emphasizes the solemnity and permanence of marriage, contrasting with the more lenient interpretations prevalent at the time based on Deuteronomy 24:1. Mounce highlights that Deuteronomy's primary thrust was to control divorce and prohibit certain kinds of remarriage (e.g., remarrying a first wife after divorcing and marrying another).
- *"Again, the point that Jesus is making is the solemnity and seriousness of marriage. You cannot move in and out of marriage, which is what the Deuteronomy passage is actually about, right? If you get married, you get divorced, you get married again, you get divorced, you can't go back and marry the first wife."*
- **The "Indecency" Clause:** Mounce discusses the vague nature of the "indecency" (Greek: *pragma aschēmon*) that could justify divorce according to Deuteronomy and the Septuagint, suggesting it referred to something shameful, unpresentable, indecent, or unmentionable, often related to sexual activity.

- *"And if she is not found grace before him if she doesn't curry favor in his eyes is the idea, and he finds in her a, and here's the word, shameful, unpresentable, indecent, or unmentionable. That's what the word means—an indecent pragma, thing, then the divorces."*
- **Jesus' Concern with "No-Fault" Divorce:** Mounce believes Jesus is concerned about the kind of no-fault divorce where individuals seek to end a marriage for reasons other than genuine indecency.
- *"That kind of no-fault divorce is what Deuteronomy and Jesus is concerned about. There has to be an indecency."*
- **Remarriage After Non-Biblical Divorce as Adultery:** Mounce interprets Jesus' words to mean that if a divorce occurs for non-biblical reasons, remarrying constitutes adultery, highlighting the act itself as breaking the initial marriage covenant.
- *"I think a straightforward reading is that if you're divorced for non-biblical reasons, you're still married in God's eyes. So, when you remarry, you commit adultery. It's the act... that act does, in fact, sever the marriage covenant of the first marriage. And so, a second marriage is not living in sin."*
- **The Nature of the Marriage Covenant:** Mounce posits that the vow, the oath taken during the wedding ceremony, is what primarily creates the marriage covenant, with sex being the sign of that oath.
- *"I think it's the vow. I think the vow is what creates the marriage covenant. The sex is certainly the sign of the oath."*
- **Exception Clause and *Porneia*:** Mounce states he is comfortable expanding the exception clause (adultery) to include any kind of sexual activity outside the scope of marriage (*porneia*), including pornography. He distinguishes this from abuse (verbal, physical), suggesting separation as the first step in such cases, particularly for the safety of the abused party.
- *"I will argue that point strongly that porneia is any kind of sexual activity that is outside the scope of marriage. Pornography clearly is a sexual activity, right?"*
- **Differing Standards for Christians:** Mounce acknowledges that while ethical standards remain constant, Christians, being further along the "journey," should be held to a higher level of expectation than non-believers regarding marriage and divorce.

- *"My general approach to ethics is that life is a journey, and you treat people differently where they are on the journey... It doesn't mean the standards change, it means we're just on different places on the journey."*

2. Rigorous Honesty (Matthew 5:33-37):

- **Against Pharisaical Loopholes in Oaths:** Jesus condemns the elaborate system developed by the Pharisees to take oaths without feeling obligated to fulfill them by mincing words and avoiding direct references to God.
- *"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you made. Okay? But I tell you, don't swear an oath at all..."*
- **The Spirit of the Law:** Jesus calls for rigorous honesty, where a simple "yes" or "no" should be sufficient and reflect one's true intention. Anything beyond this stems from the "evil one."
- *"All you need to say is simply yes, no. Anything beyond this comes from the evil one."*
- **Examples of Lack of Rigorous Honesty:** Mounce provides examples like telling "little white lies," being purposefully ambiguous, exaggerating, and using hyperbolic language, illustrating how people often fudge the truth.
- *"Today, we tell little white lies. They're neither white nor little. They're lies. And we do, or we're purposely ambiguous, leaving ourselves loopholes."*
- **Ray Kroc and McDonald's Example:** Mounce shares a story of Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald's, who refused to sign contracts, emphasizing that his word was his bond, illustrating rigorous honesty in the business world.
- *"The interesting thing about Ray Kroc is that he never signed a contract in his life. He absolutely refused. His word was his bond."*
- **Qualified Yes to Oath-Taking:** While emphasizing the importance of being so honest that oaths are unnecessary, Mounce offers a qualified "yes" to oath-taking in certain contexts, such as marriage vows or when God himself takes oaths in Scripture. However, the principle remains that Christians should be known for their unwavering honesty.

- *"My position is that I want to give a qualified yes. I think there are times when oath-taking is okay... Marriage is an oath. It's an establishment of a covenant. So I vowed, I promised, and I don't think there's anything wrong with that. But the thrust of it that is applicable to all is that we are so rigorously honest that all we have to do is say yes or no, and people will take us to our word."*
- **Situational Ethics and Hierarchy of Ethics:** Mounce addresses the concept of situational ethics by framing it within a hierarchy of ethics, where higher ethical principles (like protecting life or obeying God's commands) may override others in specific situations. He uses the examples of lying to protect someone or lying about a Christmas present to his wife.
- *"Right, I think the answer is we all have a hierarchy of ethics... we all have these hierarchies, don't we?"*
- **God's Example of Not Telling the Whole Truth:** Mounce cites the example of God instructing Samuel to say he was going to offer a sacrifice (1 Samuel 16:2) as an instance where not the whole truth was told, implying we are not obligated to reveal everything in all circumstances, especially if it serves a greater purpose aligned with God's will.
- *"We are not obligated to tell the whole truth under all circumstances. God didn't think that Samuel was up to take the whole truth. Yeah, as long as Samuel was doing what God told him to do."*
- **Jesus' Supremacy Over the Old Testament:** Mounce points out that Jesus' command not to swear oaths at all goes beyond the Old Testament's requirement to fulfill oaths, suggesting Jesus sees himself as having authority even to overrule Old Testament practices.
- *"So, he doesn't say keep your oaths, he says yes, I know the Old Testament says you can take oaths, just don't do it. Supremacy of Christ."*

3. Rejection of "Eye for an Eye" and Love for Enemies (Matthew 5:38-48):

- **Lex Talionis' Original Intent:** Mounce explains that the law of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (lex talionis) in the Old Testament was originally intended to *limit* the escalation of retaliation, ensuring justice was proportionate and preventing endless cycles of revenge. It was primarily the prerogative of the judges, not individuals.

- *"This is a reflection of one of the oldest laws in the world, lex talionis, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and its original intention was to limit the escalation of retaliation."*
- **Pharisaical Misinterpretation:** The Pharisees shifted the intention of lex talionis from restrictive to prescriptive, claiming an individual *right* to retaliation.
- *"Then along come the Pharisees, and what do they do? They want to change the intention of the law, and they move it from the realm of the state to the realm of the individual. I have my rights."*
- **Jesus' Call to Non-Resistance (in Personal Insults):** Jesus' command "do not resist an evil person" is illustrated through four examples. Mounce argues that the first example, being slapped on the right cheek, refers to a backhand insult rather than physical abuse, as the right hand was used for polite interaction.
- *"So, he's not talking about physical abuse. He's talking about an insult. All right. He's not talking about a punch to the nose. The only way I can get at Dave's right cheek with my right hand is to do that. So, it's primarily that he's talking about more an insult than physical pain."*
- **Willingness to Forgo Rights as an Act of Love:** Mounce emphasizes that these illustrations are about being willing to voluntarily limit one's rights as an act of love for the other person. This principle is crucial for understanding when and how to apply these teachings.
- *"I think what Jesus is saying is that we must be willing to voluntarily limit our rights when it is an act of love... when it is an act of love for the other person."*
- **Not an Ethic for Non-Christian Society:** This teaching is primarily for disciples of Jesus and not a societal ethic. Non-Christian society is not equipped to function based on consistently turning the other cheek. The state exists to punish abuse, and there are times when even believers may need to insist on their legal rights.
- *"This is not an ethic for non-Christian society. Non-Christian society is utterly incapable of turning the other cheek as a society. It's the sermons for disciples, not for society."*
- **Love Your Enemies:** The subsequent teaching to "love your enemies" is presented as the key to understanding the principle of non-resistance.
- *"And I don't know what to do with this paragraph, verses 38 to 42, unless you bring in the concept of love. So, I think Jesus knew where he was going in the*

discussion because it is love that helps us know how to put this paragraph into play."

- **God's Love for All:** God's impartial love, causing the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sending rain on the righteous and unrighteous, serves as the model for how believers should treat their enemies.
- *"Look at how he treats people. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good. He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. I mean, this is how he does things. There is a level at which he loves all people and treats them well."*
- **Redefining "Neighbor":** Jesus challenges the Pharisaical narrowing of "neighbor" to only fellow Jews, implying a broader love that extends even to enemies.
- *"Again, what do the Pharisees do? They have this command in Leviticus to love your enemy, and they started narrowing the command. And so, who is the neighbor? Well, the neighbors are just Jews. It is okay to hate the Gentiles... That is not at all what the text is saying."*
- **Hating Evil, Not Enemies:** While we are called to hate evil, we are not called to hate our enemies.
- *"There is something we hate, and that is evil. We have all the imprecatory Psalms, and we are called to hate evil. We are not called to hate our enemies."*
- **God Loves the Sinner and Hates the Sin (Nuance):** Mounce challenges the common adage "God loves the sinner, hates the sin," suggesting that Scripture indicates God can hate both the sinner and the sin, while still loving the sinner enough to die for them.
- *"Again, I went to Gary Breshears at Western one day, and I said, 'We were talking about love the sinner, hate the sin.' And he said, 'That is too easy.' God hates both. How does that work? He goes on to say that only God has perfect love and perfect hatred. He is able to hate sin and the sinner and, at the same time, love the sinner and die for him."*
- **Definition of Love:** Mounce presents a working definition of love as "joyfully putting the needs of others above your own" and cites Blomberg's definition as "costly self-sacrifice for another's good," emphasizing the element of joy as crucial for true love.
- *"Love is joyfully putting the needs of others above your own. That's a good definition of love."*

- **Praying for Enemies:** Loving enemies involves praying for them, even pleading their case before God.
- *"Bonhoeffer says, loving our enemies means we walk side by side with our enemy into the throne room of heaven to plead your enemy's case before your heavenly father."*
- **"Be Perfect" (Matthew 5:48):** Mounce argues that verse 48 is the culmination of this section and the entire teaching on greater righteousness, calling believers to strive for perfection, maturity, and completeness, just as their Heavenly Father is. This perfection is a journey of growth and will be fully realized in heaven.
- *"Then, the culmination, not only this paragraph, but I am going to argue for 48 becoming a new paragraph... I think it is the culmination of the whole thing that we are called to be perfect, mature, and complete, just like our Heavenly Father is mature and complete."*

Language and Translation:

- **NIV Updates and Gender Language:** Mounce discusses the ongoing updates to the NIV translation, driven by the changing nature of the English language. He critiques the TNIV's attempts to eliminate "he" and "man" by switching to plurals, but acknowledges the underlying motivation to use contemporary English. He notes the increasing acceptance of "they" as a singular pronoun but points out grammatical challenges with related forms like "them."
- *"From the beginning, the NIV has in its charter to constantly update... The point is that English is changing, and if you don't think English is changing, you really do not know what's going on in the English-speaking world."*
- **Complexity of Translation:** Mounce illustrates the difficulty of translation with the example of the Hebrew word used to describe King Eglon, which means "robust" or "strong," not necessarily "fat," highlighting the importance of cultural context and the layers of meaning in original languages.
- *"Do you know that Eglon wasn't fat? It is not what the word means. It can't be what the word means because you know who also was described with the same Hebrew word? Daniel, vegetarian. The word means a stud. It means a robust man."*

Overall Tone:

The lecture is engaging and conversational, with Mounce sharing personal anecdotes, addressing audience questions (even those not explicitly transcribed), and expressing his own opinions and interpretations while acknowledging differing viewpoints. He emphasizes the practical application of these challenging biblical teachings to contemporary life, urging believers towards a deeper understanding and embodiment of Christ's call to greater righteousness rooted in love and honesty.

4. Study Guide: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 8, Matthew 5:31ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 3

Sermon on the Mount: Acts of Greater Righteousness, Part 3 (Matthew 5:31ff) Study Guide

Quiz:

1. According to Dr. Mounce, what was the primary motivation behind the updates to the NIV that led to the TNIV, and what was a significant point of contention regarding those changes?
2. Explain Dr. Mounce's illustration of the Hebrew word used to describe King Eglon and Daniel. What point was he trying to make about translation?
3. Summarize Dr. Mounce's explanation of the historical context and primary thrust of the Deuteronomy 24:1 passage regarding divorce.
4. How does Dr. Mounce interpret Jesus' teaching on remarriage after divorce for non-biblical reasons, and what question does he raise about the marriage covenant?
5. Explain the Pharisaical interpretation of oath-taking that Jesus addresses in Matthew 5:33-37, and contrast it with Jesus' teaching.
6. Describe the original intention of the "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" principle (lex talionis), and how the Pharisees misinterpreted and applied it.
7. According to Dr. Mounce, what is the key principle that should guide a Christian's application of Jesus' teachings on not resisting an evil person in Matthew 5:38-42?
8. Summarize the four illustrations Jesus gives regarding resisting an evil person, noting any specific cultural context Dr. Mounce provides for the first illustration.
9. How did the Pharisees narrow the command to "love your neighbor" in the Old Testament, and what is Dr. Mounce's understanding of who we are called to love and hate?
10. What is Dr. Mounce's preferred definition of love, and how does he connect loving our enemies with becoming like our Heavenly Father?

Quiz Answer Key:

1. The primary motivation behind the NIV updates leading to the TNIV was the belief that English language was changing significantly, particularly concerning gendered pronouns like "he" and "man," which the committee felt needed to be addressed for global English readership. A major point of contention was the shift to plurals and second-person pronouns, which Dr. Mounce and others considered a mistake that sometimes obscured the original meaning, as illustrated by Revelation 3:20.
2. Dr. Mounce explained that the Hebrew word used to describe King Eglon was often translated as "fat," leading to an image of a weak, obese ruler. However, the same word was used for Daniel, a vegetarian, and actually meant "a stud" or a "robust, strong man." His point was to highlight the complexities of translation, where traditional interpretations can be inaccurate, and a deeper understanding of the original language and cultural context is crucial.
3. Historically, the Deuteronomy 24:1 passage aimed to control divorce and prevent a certain kind of remarriage, specifically prohibiting a man from remarrying his first wife after she had married and divorced someone else. The primary thrust was against frivolous or "no-fault" divorce, requiring some "indecency" as grounds, and the divorce certificate served to protect the woman from unjust future accusations and ensure her eligibility for remarriage.
4. Dr. Mounce interprets Jesus as teaching that if a divorce occurs for non-biblical reasons, the individuals are still considered married in God's eyes, and remarriage constitutes adultery. This raises the fundamental question of what truly breaks the marriage covenant, suggesting it is a complex issue.
5. The Pharisees narrowly interpreted the Old Testament requirement to fulfill oaths by creating elaborate loopholes, arguing that an oath was only binding if it directly invoked God's name or made a direct reference to Him. Jesus, however, teaches not to swear oaths at all, emphasizing that everything (heaven, earth, Jerusalem) is connected to God, and believers should be so rigorously honest that a simple "yes" or "no" is sufficient.
6. The original intention of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (lex talionis) was to limit the escalation of retaliation, ensuring that punishment was proportionate to the offense and preventing endless cycles of revenge. The Pharisees misinterpreted this principle by moving it from the realm of judicial restraint to an individual prescriptive right, believing they were obligated to seek exact retribution.

7. According to Dr. Mounce, the key principle that should guide a Christian's application of Jesus' teachings on not resisting an evil person is love for the other person. He argues that we should be willing to voluntarily limit our rights when it is an act of love, even though the concept of love is not explicitly mentioned in that specific passage.
8. The four illustrations are: turning the other cheek when slapped on the right cheek (interpreted as an insult, not physical abuse); offering one's coat when sued for one's shirt; going two miles when compelled to go one; and giving to those who ask and lending to those who borrow. Dr. Mounce explains that slapping someone on the right cheek with the right hand would have been a backhanded insult due to the cultural significance of the right hand.
9. The Pharisees narrowed the command to "love your neighbor" by defining "neighbor" as fellow Jews, believing it was acceptable to hate Gentiles and other groups. Dr. Mounce states that we are called to hate evil, but not our enemies, highlighting the complexity of God's love and hatred.
10. Dr. Mounce's preferred definition of love, which he attributes to Piper, is "joyfully putting the needs of others above your own." He connects loving our enemies with becoming like our Heavenly Father because God loves his enemies by causing the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sending rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the challenges and complexities of biblical translation, using Dr. Mounce's examples of the NIV/TNIV updates and the interpretation of the Hebrew word for Eglon as illustrative points. How do cultural context and evolving language impact the translation process and the understanding of Scripture?
2. Analyze Dr. Mounce's interpretation of Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage in light of the Old Testament context. What are the key points of continuity and discontinuity he identifies, and what fundamental questions about the nature of marriage arise from this discussion?
3. Explore the tension between the Old Testament allowance of oaths and Jesus' command not to swear at all. How does Dr. Mounce understand Jesus' authority in relation to the Old Testament law on this matter, and what are the practical implications of Jesus' teaching on rigorous honesty for believers today?
4. Examine Dr. Mounce's understanding of Jesus' teaching on "not resisting an evil person" (Matthew 5:38-42) in the context of the principle of love. How does he navigate the apparent conflict between this teaching and the need for self-defense and the role of the state in upholding justice? Use the four illustrations provided by Jesus to support your analysis.
5. Discuss the concept of loving one's enemies as presented by Dr. Mounce. How does he define love in this context, and how does he address the challenge of reconciling the biblical call to love enemies with passages that speak of God's hatred? What practical steps does he suggest for embodying this challenging aspect of Christian living?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **NIV (New International Version):** A popular English translation of the Bible known for its commitment to updating its language.
- **TNIV (Today's New International Version):** An update to the NIV that aimed to be more gender-inclusive, which sparked significant debate.
- **ESV (English Standard Version):** Another modern English translation of the Bible that, according to Dr. Mounce, sometimes considers exegetical insights from the TNIV.
- **Septuagint:** The ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- **Porneia:** A Greek word often translated as sexual immorality, but which Dr. Mounce understands broadly as any sexual activity outside the scope of marriage.
- **Lex Talionis:** Latin for the "law of retaliation," commonly known as "eye for eye, tooth for tooth."
- **Pharisees:** A Jewish religious and political group at the time of Jesus known for their strict adherence to and interpretation of the Law.
- **Mishnah:** A major work of rabbinic Jewish law developed in the first centuries AD.
- **Rigorous Honesty:** Dr. Mounce's term for the deep obedience called for by Jesus in relation to truth-telling, where one's word should be completely reliable without the need for oaths.
- **Situational Ethics:** The idea that ethical decisions depend on the specific context of a situation, often contrasted with a more absolute or hierarchical approach to ethics.

5. FAQs on Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 8, Matthew 5:31ff, Greater Righteousness, Part 3, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Matthew 5:31-48 and Related Themes

1. Why has the New International Version (NIV) undergone revisions, and what was the controversy surrounding the TNIV? The NIV has a standing commitment to update its translation to reflect changes in the English language. The decision to revise, leading to the TNIV (Today's New International Version), was driven by the argument that English was evolving significantly, particularly concerning gendered pronouns like "he" and "him." The TNIV attempted to address this by shifting to plurals and second-person pronouns. However, this translation was widely criticized, deemed "horrific" by some, including Dr. Mounce. Critics questioned the resulting English and felt the changes were poorly executed. The controversy also involved questioning the motives of the translators, which Dr. Mounce argues is unproductive in academic discussions that should focus on the facts of language change. Ultimately, the TNIV was discontinued, and the NIV was further revised in 2011, taking into account ongoing language evolution, particularly the increasing use of "they" as a singular pronoun, while also learning from the missteps of the TNIV.

2. How does Jesus' teaching on divorce in Matthew 5:31-32 relate to the Old Testament law in Deuteronomy 24:1? The Old Testament passage in Deuteronomy allowed a man to divorce his wife if he found some "indecency" in her. However, this was often interpreted loosely, leading to easy, no-fault divorces. Jesus, in Matthew 5, raises the bar, stating that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality (*πορνεία*, *porneia*), makes her the victim of adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. The intent of both Deuteronomy and Jesus, according to Dr. Mounce, was to control divorce and emphasize the seriousness and solemnity of marriage, discouraging the casual entering and exiting of marital covenants. Jesus' teaching underscores that divorce should not be a no-fault affair based on trivial reasons, and the exception clause likely pertains to significant sexual sin. Furthermore, the passage in Deuteronomy regarding not remarrying a former spouse after an intervening marriage highlights the sanctity and permanence intended in the marriage covenant.

3. What is the significance of the "exception clause" (except for sexual immorality) in Jesus' teaching on divorce, and how should it be applied? The "exception clause" in Matthew 5:32, often translated as "except for sexual immorality," introduces a complex and debated point. Dr. Mounce suggests that πορνεία (*porneia*) likely refers to any sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage, including pornography. He also touches on the challenging issue of abuse (verbal, physical, emotional) as potential grounds for separation, viewing separation as a necessary first step to ensure safety and potentially lead to repentance and change. While he acknowledges that his position is debatable, he leans towards interpreting the exception as primarily related to sexual violations of the marriage covenant. The difficulty lies in applying this exception in various real-life situations, and Dr. Mounce emphasizes the importance of both upholding the sanctity of marriage and offering grace and support in complex situations.

4. What does Jesus mean by "do not swear an oath at all" in Matthew 5:33-37, and what is the underlying principle? Jesus' instruction not to swear oaths is not a complete prohibition against oath-taking itself, as God and even Paul take oaths in the Scriptures. Instead, it addresses the common practice of Jesus' time, particularly among the Pharisees, of devising elaborate ways to avoid fulfilling their promises by swearing by things considered less binding than God's direct name. Jesus cuts through this legalistic maneuvering by stating that everything is connected to God (heaven is His throne, earth His footstool, Jerusalem His city). Therefore, any oath invokes God. The underlying principle is "rigorous honesty." Our words should be so trustworthy that a simple "yes" or "no" is sufficient, and anything beyond that suggests a lack of inherent truthfulness and originates from the "evil one." This calls for a consistent commitment to truth in all our communication, avoiding ambiguity, exaggeration, and loopholes.

5. How does Jesus' teaching on "eye for eye" in Matthew 5:38-42 differ from its original intent in the Old Testament, and what does Jesus command instead? The Old Testament principle of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (lex talionis) was originally intended to limit retaliation, ensuring that punishment did not exceed the offense and preventing escalating cycles of violence within society, primarily administered through judges. However, by Jesus' time, the Pharisees had twisted this principle, moving it from a restrictive measure for the state to a prescriptive individual right of revenge. Jesus counters this interpretation by commanding, "Do not resist an evil person." He provides four illustrations: turning the other cheek, giving your coat along with your shirt, going the extra mile, and giving to those who ask. These examples are not meant to be rigid rules but rather illustrations of a deeper principle: a willingness to voluntarily forgo one's rights as an act of love for the other person, breaking the cycle of retaliation and reflecting a different kind of response to injustice.

6. Are Christians expected to be passive in the face of injustice and abuse based on Matthew 5:38-42? No. Jesus' commands in this passage are primarily directed towards individual responses and attitudes, particularly among His disciples. They are not intended as a societal ethic for non-believers, nor do they negate the role of the state in punishing evil and protecting its citizens. Dr. Mounce clarifies that self-defense and seeking legal protection are not necessarily contradictory to these teachings. The core idea is a willingness to surrender personal rights and the urge for retaliation when it serves as an act of love and embodies the principle of non-retaliation. There are instances in Scripture where even Paul asserted his rights as a Roman citizen for the sake of the gospel. The emphasis is on a heart attitude that prioritizes love and reconciliation over personal vindication in certain interpersonal conflicts.

7. What does Jesus mean by "love your enemies" in Matthew 5:43-47, and how does this relate to the character of God? Jesus' command to love our enemies goes beyond simply tolerating them; it involves actively seeking their good. This is demonstrated by God's own character, who causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Loving only those who love us is not distinctive; even tax collectors and pagans do that. True love, as defined here, reflects God's generous and indiscriminate care. Dr. Mounce shares a definition of love as "joyfully putting the needs of others above your own" and Blomberg's definition as "costly self-sacrifice for another's good," emphasizing the element of joy and genuine care. This love should extend even to praying for those who persecute us, following Bonhoeffer's idea of pleading our enemy's case before God. However, this love is not undiscerning and may necessitate actions like separating from or even incarcerating those who are dangerous to themselves or others.

8. What is the ultimate goal presented in Matthew 5:48 ("Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect")? The call to "be perfect" (τέλειοι, *teleioi*), as your heavenly Father is perfect, is not a demand for sinless perfection in this life, which is unattainable. Instead, it signifies a call to maturity, wholeness, and completeness in our character and actions, reflecting God's own mature and complete nature. It is the culmination of Jesus' teachings on greater righteousness in this section of the Sermon on the Mount. Dr. Mounce emphasizes that this is a journey of growth and progress, where God patiently nudges, nurtures, and disciplines us towards ever-increasing wholeness. While we will only achieve perfect completeness in heaven when sin is removed, the goal is to strive for this maturity in our present lives, empowered by God's grace, making the journey itself a valuable and transformative experience.