

# **Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Lecture 7, Matthew 5:27ff, Acts of Greater Righteousness, Part 2**

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This is Dr. Bill Mounce in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session 7, Matthew 5:27, and following, Acts of Greater Righteousness, Part 2.

Okay, we are going to finish up chapter five this afternoon.

One way or another, we will finish because we have to. And so, we're going to look at the remaining four examples of exceeding righteousness, of deep obedience. And number two is the whole issue of lust and adultery, verses 27 to 30.

Now, the thing that I'm never able to anticipate is how long will the discussion go on the divorce passage. So, let's kind of see what you want to do. But we'll, anyway, we'll jump in.

Starting at verse 27, you have heard it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right-hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go to hell.

Okay. As is true of what the Pharisees do throughout this passage, they had taken a commandment and had narrowed it down, as we said last and before lunch, narrowed it down to one external act. Now, in doing so, they had ignored the 10th commandment of not coveting your neighbor's wife.

But they had taken murder and said this only applies to the external act. Typical of Jesus in this passage, he is about broadening the commandments back to where they were supposed to be. Just as hatred may lead to murder and violate the commandment, so lust may lead to adultery and also violate the commandment.

The ESV translation is infinitely better on this point. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent, and although we are under a gag order on the decisions that have been made in the NIV since 2011, I will bet you anything that the next NIV is a better translation. I'm going to let you fill in the blanks.

The Greek is explicitly looking with the intention of lust. And the important distinction here, of course, is that temptation is not sin. These things flip through our heads, right? I used to say guys, but I'm aware of support groups for women who are under the bondage of lusting and can't dig their way out.

So, it is becoming as much a woman's, well, it's becoming also a woman's problem as it is a male problem. Temptation is not a sin. Our people need to hear that.

The passing thoughts, the challenges, and the temptations are 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. And it's frustrated me that the Greek is so phenomenally clear. It's not me walking down the mall and seeing Victoria's Secret.

My wife is really good at helping me with these things because I don't know where these stores are. All of a sudden, I'll feel her dragging me in another direction, and I go, "Oh, there's something over here I don't want to look at."

And so, we have this little thing where she helps. But even if you go, oh, gee, you know, the image is still burned into your memory, right? And I don't want that. But it's the person who sees the Victoria's Secret coming up and goes, hmm.

He was looking with lustful intent. That's the intent of the stare is to lust, to undress her, to treat her as an object and not as something equally created in God's image. That's what the lust is that Jesus is talking about.

And again, I was unaware of this until I preached on it. And a couple of people came up to me and said, you know, you are being misunderstood. There are people here who have been taught that lust and adultery are the same thing.

So, if you've lusted after your girl, you might as well sleep with her because there's no difference. And that clarification needs to be clear in all of our preaching. That Jesus is saying that lust violates the emotion that leads to the act is itself a violation of the commandment.

But they're not the same thing. I'm sure Robin would prefer me to lust than to commit adultery. I'm pretty sure of that.

They're not the same thing. I'd certainly rather you hate me than kill me. They're not the same thing.

Yesterday, we practiced almost everything that you want to preach, but I don't know how to preach that. That's what I said. It's not to preach other stuff.

And that sounds to me like other stuff that can't be brought forth. But on faith values, even in the GSD, it says, has already committed to adultery. He's already committed to adultery, but it's been hard for him to do it.

He's committed to adultery. That's what it says, being on faith values. Would you speak to that violation of the commandment? I just haven't heard the word loins used in common English in a long time.

I'm having to get over that in just a second. No, no, no. It was a really good way to say it.

That is a really, really good way to say it, and I know what a loin is. I know how to gird them up, too. It would be a pretty unusual definition of the word adultery to expand it to the point that adultery is a mental act as well as a physical act.

I mean, you're going to have to redefine the word adultery, and maybe that's what Jesus is doing. I think that in all of these five or six, the basic thrust is that Jesus redefines what it means to violate the commandment, and it starts in the heart. But in all of them, the heart that violates is different from the physical act.

So, it's a question of, do we take the words at face value, or do we... Hey, it's what it says. Then, we have to redefine adultery as including lust. I don't know.

Something's not clicking in my head. I'll have to think about it. I agree with that, and when we talk about the next paragraph, I'm going to talk about it because I think a pornographic addiction violates the commandment and violates the marriage covenant.

So, I don't have any trouble arguing that position, so I'm going to agree with you on that. Well, I mean, would you rather have your son lust after his girlfriend or copulate with her? But what you're saying is that there are two different words to describe, in English, to describe two different things, and the question is, would Jesus say they're just the same? Otherwise, all of our wives can divorce us. That's right.

Yeah. The difference here is he did. It says, in his heart.

There is a difference there, but they're both wrong. Yeah, I'm not willing to go there, but I will. Let me mull it over.

Let me mull it over because anger and murder are not the same thing. Jesus can't be saying that. They're both horrendous things.

They both violate the commandments, but they're substantively different things. In both cases, think about it. If you think about it, you could do it, but sometimes, many people think about murder, and people don't.

So, I think that the action should begin in the mind that you're not careful. Well, and it definitely will. I mean, nobody murders anyone they don't hate at one level or another.

Yeah, the point, I think, is that, and we'd all agree with this, both lust and adultery are sins, and both lust and adultery violate the commandment; thou shalt not commit adultery. The question is, should we go one step further? And you're saying yes. I'm not sure it's the same.

Maybe that's what I'm calling it. Well, Jesus is saying that the commandments are not violated just by the action. The commandments are violated by the heart attitude that leads to the action.

That's different than saying the heart attitude and the action are the same thing. I'd rather he loved death than my wife than actually commit adultery. Yeah, and his answer is, is that what Jesus is saying? That's a funny point.

With all respect, I don't mean this in a mean-spirited way, I don't care what either one of you want. I don't care what either one of you throw. I'm really interested to know what Jesus is actually saying here.

You're supposed to preface everything because they're just reading it from mouth to face. Well, I'm not sure I've prefaced everything with that because we did talk about how you are going to understand the language because the language is so strong. We're not going to gouge out eyes and cut off hands, so we have to let the force of Jesus' words hit us full force, but we can't be in the word I used; it's not a good word, but be simplistic in it.

That's an interesting thought, and I just need to onion them all over. You talked about the Pharisees and their outbursts. You heard there's a term I heard one time called the bruised and bleeding Pharisee.

The what? Bruised or bleeding Pharisee. Bruised or bleeding Pharisee. To show how they're not trying to do this, they see a free woman, and they would close their eyes and kiss her under the wall.

To show how they were not, you know, like, oh, I might be out in the dry. Look at me, and I'm not going to look at all of them. I said, I have to.

No, I've never heard that phrase. No. But if you're talking to somebody who's hung up at the walls, you're caught under the wall like the Pharisees were.

He's saying, look, by your own standards, by the true spirit of the law, there's no difference between the act of adultery and the thought of adultery. That doesn't mean that that carries over into the church today. He's talking about a group of people who thought that they were just obeying the law beautifully as long as they didn't actually commit adultery.

And he's saying, by your own law, by the spirit of this law, you are actually guilty for your condition. You don't have any Pharisees in your church? Are you the only church on the face of the earth? I mean, I really wouldn't want to relegate it to the past. But if you convict them of that, and he brings it into the discussion, mental adultery and so on, then he's not forbidding them to get away with stuff.

He's not saying, hey, for Christians today, if you commit adultery in your mind, you might as well go ahead and do it. I don't think what he's saying really has an application in that sense because of what he's trying to accomplish. He's arguing against the Pharisees because they thought everything was fine.

They were divorcing people right and left, they didn't care. And he's saying, no, by your own code, it is a large scripture that you want to follow the spirit of the law. But we're not under the law.

So that same code and that same standard is informative, adaptive, and useful for teaching and proposing all those kinds of things to the church. But I don't think in the church today, you should be equating mental adultery with physical adultery. What did Jesus say? You're asking, what did Jesus say? He's talking to the Pharisees.

But yeah, he's talking to the Pharisees. Your righteousness must exceed that of the Spirit. No, it's not about the Pharisees.

But when he says it, I think he's carrying out a polemic against the Pharisees. I mean, it struck me kind of narrowly. But everything he has to say is aimed at defeating the Pharisees and showing them up as the lawbreakers that they truly are.

Everything in this whole sermon, that's what that is about. So, to say, well, what is Jesus saying? He's telling the Pharisees that they're liars, that they're hypocrites, that they have violated the very law that they claim to be loyal and true to the church. But now, do we have to say that same critique of the norm and standard in every service in the church today? And so, you're saying, what is Jesus saying to us today? Is that absolutely applicable? This equality of adultery with the mind and equality of actual adultery? No, under the law, it is, but we're not under the law.

And then we start talking about common sense. Common sense tells you that family adultery is not physical. Sure, it is.

To a Pharisee who is laying himself open under the law, say that. Not someone today, not a Christian. If I committed mental adultery, I am not going to compound it by going out and doing it because that would have got it.

Then, we compound it. So, you're saying, what is Jesus saying to us? What is Jesus saying? And who is he talking to? He's talking to me. Is he talking to you? I doubt it.

I don't think he was. He's talking to his disciples. But he wasn't talking to you and laying down a norm and standard for you today, in the sense that you are guilty of a sin that is so great that you fall under the condemnation of Gehenna.

Does any of this Sermon on the Mount apply to you? It applies after. After it first applies to the Pharisees and the scribes because it's a polemic against them first. So you have to be careful, I think, about how you appropriate the warning and such.

As a Christian today who is not under the law. Okay, we need to move on. I'm uncomfortable with your distinction of law.

Jesus is giving his understanding of the true meaning of the law. And there are ways in which we are not under the law. The law was our guardian, bringing us to Christ.

But in other ways, it's not a jot of till we're going to pass away. Everything's fulfilled in Christ. And so, I would be nervous about saying something applied then but doesn't apply now.

But our churches are so full of Pharisees. My church had so many people that the Pharisees would go, hey, brother. And I think all our churches are full of those people.

And so, I mean, if I could refine what you're saying, if you're going to understand the original authorial intent, you've got to see it in the first century. And you're at least saying that. But I wouldn't want to relegate any of it to the first century.

That's why when I started, I said it applies to all disciples of all times. Because there are Christians today that define spirituality purely in terms of the external action. If there was someone that I had a relationship with, that this was the issue in their life, and like he were an elder, absolutely.

I wouldn't talk in terms of discipline. I'd say you are compromising yourself. You're compromising the integrity of this church.

You're compromising your leadership. You clearly have an issue if I had a brother who was a pornographic addict, absolutely.

Because it violates the commandment, it's phenomenally destructive of the church. And it fundamentally denies the reality of creation, that women are not objects.

Yesterday, I was quoted twice. I don't know if that's correct. You did not say, take the word, take God out of the Bible.

You said, let the word say what it is. Let the what? Let the word say what it is. Let the words say what they mean.

But everyone have two hands? But this is a great discussion, because this is the problem with the sermon. We all have two hands. We all have two eyes.

Why? Well, because we understand that we want the words to have their force, we have to be careful in understanding what Jesus is getting at. But let me think about what you're saying because that's kind of what I was doing. I was looking at the other examples of exceeding righteousness, and the first and the second are kind of parallel.

The other three aren't. They're not quite the same thing. And so, you really don't have a set of four other parallels making the same point.

You have one other parallel making the same point. Now, if all four were making exactly the same point, then I'd say, no, I can't go where you're going. But you have these two, and they're not completely and totally parallel.

So that's why I've been sitting here wondering about the precedence of context, and I just need to spend some time looking at it. Well, this is where I really like Stott in his deep obedience, that the way you exceed the righteousness is you go deeper than the external action. You go to the heart.

So, it is being more righteous. If I were going to say it exactly, it's actually righteous because religious observance isn't righteousness at any level. And so the righteousness that gets us into and defines how we live in the kingdom is a righteousness that starts in the heart.

At the very least, we have to admit that Jesus is teaching his disciples to live up to the Pharisees. Absolutely, absolutely. You have heard it said, but I said it, say of you, what he's referring to is not what the Bible says. It's what the Pharisees interpret.

And he's undoing it. So even like you have heard it said, love your neighbor and hate your enemies. The Bible never says hate your enemies.

It says love your enemies. And so, I mean, it's clear he's working against the Pharisaical misinterpretation and trying to say, here's what the law really says. Here's God's will, actually, so.

Yeah, you'd have to say that was the original intent. And so, if that is true, then it is better for you to jerk that eye out and cast away for you to cut your hand off because you are going to hell by your own standards. We don't live with those standards.

We are informed that, yes, that lad is an adulterer, he is a whore. But in fact, it's a pharisee. It's so good, but it is not. I mean, I could not see it from Calvin's way of saying, well, that's a high school argument.

That's where you hear that argument, high school students. And they've only got about a third of their brain developed at that time, so. Yeah, and that's the point I am trying to make.

We would make it differently. However, the point is that the similarity is that both violate the commandment. That doesn't mean they're equal, so.

All right, something to think about. Thank you. Thank you, Mark.

Take sin seriously. You must do something about it. Plucking the eye, cutting the hand.

And the commentaries like to point out how the eye and the hands are not just valuable, but they're part of the lust adultery process. And maybe that's why he picked the eye and the hand. The question is, is this being hyperbolic? Of course, you guys are going in the exact opposite direction.

But most people, when they read this, they go, well, Jesus is being hyperbolic. I don't really know what he's talking about, so I'm going to ignore the whole thing, right? And that's generally what happens. But you got people like Origen in the second century who took it literally and castrated himself and later repented.

I'll bet he did. He may not have been able to commit adultery, but it certainly would not stop him from lusting. Dan Wallace, I think I mentioned in his grammar, talks about a seminary student who gouged out his eye with a screwdriver.

He could not get his lust under control. And it didn't really help the problem at all. You mentioned common sense.



You know, if you gouge out the right eye, you can still lust with the left. If you tear out your left eye, you can still fantasize with your mind. You know, you cut off your two hands, you can still sin with other parts of your body.

This is strong language meant to drive a point home. I don't like the word hyperbole because it's too easy to dismiss. He's trying to use dramatic speech and a vivid image to drive a point home.

Sin is really serious. And if one of the most precious things I have leads me to sin, I have to be willing to get rid of it. I think we could all agree on that.

Actually, we dare not trivialize sin. Maybe we should live as blind people. Job 31:1, I've made a covenant with my eyes, right? Maybe we should live as one who is crippled and doesn't go everywhere that our hands are able to take us.

I mean, he's got a poetic way of saying we really need to take these things very, very seriously. I'm intrigued, Mark, with what you said, but I really need just a mullet over. I got a mullet over.

The blind people, lust? I'll bet you they do. I've not talked to one, but I'll bet you that the lust process doesn't leave someone who doesn't have lust. Doesn't have physical sight.

Okay, well, I thought that was going to be a pretty easy paragraph. Now, we get to the hard one. Now, we get to the hard one.

And I've been sitting here trying to remember why I listed the divorce passage, 31 and 32, as an appendix to the previous discussion on lust. Because it has, well, it's different. It has been said, anyone who divorces a wife must give her a certificate of divorce.

But I tell you, so it's somewhat the same pattern. I just cannot remember the argument for treating this as an appendix. But anyway, I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality, and then the NIV translation makes her the victim of adultery.

The ESV is makes her commit adultery. Hear the difference? One treats the woman as a victim, the other one is not quite so gracious. Makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

One of the most painful phone calls I had at Gordon-Conwell was near the end of my time there. I was sitting in my office minding my own business, and I got a call. I didn't normally get calls from the outside, so I didn't know who this was. She really wanted to talk to me, and here's what had happened.

She had been married. I can't remember if she was a Christian or not at the time. She had committed adultery, had been divorced, and got married again.

Her elders at a different church, the elders were telling her that she was living in adultery and she was going to go to hell, and she had to divorce her second husband because she wasn't really married to him, because she was still married to the first one. And then she had to go back and try and reconcile. And the elders had said, if you do not divorce your second husband, you will go to hell.

And she just wanted to know if that was true or not. My guess is that we all know horror stories on people that take the permanence of marriage and just ignore it. And we know of people who are, I mean, we probably have a very, very wide range of experiences, don't we, all of us.

It's a very, very painful topic. And like I told you, I think it's a week from Saturday, I'm going to be at a conference as the biblical authority at the end of a women's conference dealing with this issue. So, I need to hurry up, make up my mind about a couple of things.

But these will be 250 women leaders, and most of them have suffered serious sexual abuse in one way or another. And they're going to want to know about being divorced or remarried. In fact, I've already been kind of warned that they're looking for any reason they can to get out of a marriage.

And so, I've been warned, be careful, choose your words carefully. So, it's a difficult, difficult topic. Maybe that's why I made an appendix, it'll be easier to skip.

All right, let me go through a few things, and then we'll share them together. And I guess the tie into the previous discussion is does lust violate the commandment and hence the marriage covenant? So, if they are, if they are the same thing or however you want to say it, if any of us in this room, Ket Marion, has lusted after another woman, do our spouses have a biblically, can they divorce us? It's got to make this really personal. Qualifier number one is a very abbreviated statement.

And 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.

And on this particular topic, we really have to be aware. The parallel passage in Matthew 19? Or is it? No, it's Mark. In Mark, the parallel passage is that anyone who divorces his wife makes her the victim of adultery.

There's no sexual, legitimate reason for divorce. And if you would look at that, then the one flesh covenant argument would stand if that were the only verse. That there is no legitimate reason for divorce.

What is it Mark? What? I should have written. Mark 10:11, thanks. But here you have an exception.

And I was reading the commentaries, and there's probably a pretty standard position that the Jews knew, based on Deuteronomy, that sexual infidelity did violate the marriage covenant and was legitimate grounds for divorce. And so, Mark added in what certainly would have been Jesus's intention. I said Matthew adds in what certainly would have been Jesus's intention.

The problem is you get 1 Corinthians 7. In 1 Corinthians 7, you are not bound if your unbelieving partner does not want to live with you. In David Instone Brewer's book on marriage and divorce, he makes a very strong case that bound is a legal Roman language for a legitimate divorce with the possibility of remarriage. It's a legal Latin term or it translates a legal Latin term.

And so, there's a second. And that's how you divorced in Roman law. You just left.

Abandonment was divorce in Rome. And so, you have, most people feel, a second biblically permissible grounds of divorce that is not sexual. So that's what I'm saying.

We've got to be careful when drawing theology from any one point, especially this one. I would also like to add just briefly that when I came to preach this one, it was a hard sermon for me. In fact, I think I skipped it and came back to it.

I gave myself a couple more weeks to read. And I don't think that there is a position on this topic that can adequately explain all the Bible verses. Whether it's anything that violates the marriage covenant, only sexual infidelity breaks it, and whatever the position, there are all problems.

I didn't know David very well at the time, but I do now. He's one of the NIV translators.

But at that time, I called him and talked to him. And I said he had this position. I go, yeah, what about this verse? And he goes, I don't know.

David, you wrote a whole book on the topic. I can't put all the verses together. That's how complicated this issue is.

So, it does call for some humility. That whatever position we hold, there will be a verse, there will be a legitimate argument that drives a little humility home. So, it's something we have to be careful with.

Yes, I think it's absolutely crucial that a church does a position paper. Because what a position paper is, it doesn't say, thus saith the Lord. A position paper says, here's a series of verses, and the elders and pastoral staff have worked and worked.

This is our best understanding of it. It is the guidelines by which we will govern. Specifically, when it comes to whether an elder has been divorced in the past, this is such a crucial issue.

So yes, this is a fantastic position paper that if you don't do it now, you have to do it sometime. You need guidance. When we did our position paper on qualifications for elders, it was the first real painful experience in our church.

We merged churches, which is kind of cool. Everywhere else, it's splitting. We thought we'd merge churches.

And so, this other elder came from the other church, and I didn't know him very well, but I really, really liked him. And just personality-wise. And we spent a long time on our elder position paper.

And we looked specifically at this issue, you know, the versantitis. Their kids must be; are they believers or faithful? You know, that whole debate. I forget where it is. And we passed it all.

Then, the time came up in the cycle to nominate our next set of elders. Well, what I didn't know was my friend had four children, none of whom were walking with the Lord. And I went, ooh.

And he was objecting to the fact that someone said, I don't think you can come back on the elder board. And I said, why do you think we did the position paper? And he goes, I just thought it was to look good. I didn't think we were actually going to follow it.

Oh, and it was painful because I liked him so much. And you could tell, you know, you merge church, and you bring all these new people in, and all of a sudden, things start to change. They're a little different.

All of a sudden, he realized they were really going to follow scripture. I was really uncomfortable with that, and it was just painful.

So yeah, do a position paper. Don't assume everyone knows that it is the defining document, that there'll be people that will assume you're, it's just to look good. But anyway, passage is an abbreviated statement.

Very important. Number two, you've got to understand the language. And understand, I still haven't made up my mind on some of this stuff.

So, I'm not saying this to drive my point home. You've got to understand the divorce language here, like you do all the other languages in the Sermon on the Mount. It's a critical issue. And I remember getting into a debate with one of my elders, and he was very much a one-flesh argument with no legitimate reasons for divorce.

And he said, well, the Bible says, and he would read this. And I go, I said, show me your two hands. I said, how on earth can you be the age you are and have two hands? Why aren't they cut off? The Bible says to cut them off.

Oh, that's a metaphor. Oh, really? I didn't say this. How convenient.

That's metaphor, but this isn't metaphor. Which is it? Can we please be consistent? It was a rather strong argument for a lot of reasons. Anyway, we have to understand the language of divorce in the same way.

However, you want to understand all the other languages, whether it's lust and adultery or eyes and hands or be perfect or whatever. How are you going to understand this language? In other words, 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? And he simply said, don't bother me with the, okay, I'll add in sexual immorality, but don't bother me with all the quibbling stuff.

I need to make the point. I'm speaking of a Pharisaical culture that is dramatically divorce-based. Did you all read that passage in Quarrels? That was, if you haven't gotten to it, make sure you do.

He goes on for two pages, going through the Mishnah Tractate on divorce, giving all the reasons why the Pharisees allowed divorce. And it is, I mean, it's, I left feeling dirty when I read that. It's like you are God's chosen people, created by him to be a priesthood to the world, to share God with the world.

And you're sitting here trying to decide. She has a mold, and she's out of here. She burned my toes, and she's out of here. She's not very pretty, and she's out of here.

I like that, she has a crooked nose. Well, did she have a crooked nose when you married her? You know, crooked nose. I mean, it's just, it's worse than our culture.

I think, when you read that, we cannot treat one part of the sermon one way and another part of the sermon another way. I think it's just really crucial that we be consistent. Are we really ready to condemn angry people to capital punishment? All right, the next thing I wanted to say is, let me just check my notes for a second.

All right, you can get me through this page and then we'll stop and take a break and you can talk. The exception clause, anyone who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality. I learned some interesting things when I was preparing for class, and this was one of them.

Again, I've only been thinking about this for about a week, but this is kind of where my mind's going. Deuteronomy says that if you're going to divorce, this is because of the hardness of the heart; if you're going to divorce, it has to be because of indecency, something that is lacking, and you have to give a certificate. In other words, there has to be a reason, you just can't walk away from your marriage.

And the certificate was there to protect the woman because if a man could divorce a woman for any reason, then people are wondering, well, did she commit adultery? What was the reason for the divorce? And the certificate was there to guarantee that the woman's reputation, that she had not been an adulteress, all right? That's what's going on with the certificate. So has to be a reason, and it has to be clearly stated to protect the woman. The interesting thing is that Hebrew has a word for adultery, and this is the thing I learned, and again, I'm still mulling it over.

Hebrew has a word for adultery, but Moses didn't use it. He could have said, because of the hardness of your heart, you're going to allow divorce in the case of adultery; give her a certificate. That's not what he said.

He said, if there's an indecency, give her a certificate. And what I'm wondering about is, does that, and I should tell you, I'm really conservative. So anytime I do anything that's perceived as liberal, all the checks in me start flying, going, careful, careful, careful, careful.

But I'm wondering is, why did Moses say indecency instead of adultery, unless Moses understood that it was more than just adultery, that the indecency was more than just adultery? I don't want to say I believe that yet, but I'm going there. And part of the reason I'm going there is the translation of the Greek word. Greek word uses, the Greek uses porneia.

Greek has a word for adultery. Jesus didn't use it. He used the broadest term for sexual infidelity.

I don't know, and I didn't check it. I don't know. In the end, yeah.

Good thing I follow Masoretics. But you can check it. So, I've always argued that porneia is not just adultery.

That's not what the word means. It's sexual infidelity. It's sexual behavior outside the legitimate confines of marriage.

Now I've got a Hebrew word that's doing the same thing. Interesting. I'll just say it's interesting.

Because in my mind, this, the exception clause covers, obviously, adultery. It covers prostitution. I would say it covers homosexuality.

I mean, how many gals are left by their husbands that it comes out that they're gay? Okay, that's sex with another man. But it is sex out of the confines of the marriage. That breaks it.

Bestiality breaks it. Sex with animals. So, there are examples of all these kinds of sins being categorized as porneia.

And so, my question is, I know Jesus's point, and this is what I have to do at the conference in a couple of weeks. Jesus's point is say, stay married. That's Paul's method, right? In 1 Corinthians 7. Stay married.

This was not supposed to be severed. Okay, that's the point. Okay, yes, there are situations where the marriage covenant is violated.

And in God's eyes, whether you're divorced or not, it's irrelevant. God doesn't care about our pieces of paper. But there are certain actions that do, in his mind, violate the marriage covenant.

And the question in this day and age, in all our churches, is how broad is that going to go? And this is where it gets really, really hard. Because you bring in the whole issue of abuse. What if it's not sexual abuse? What if it's verbal abuse? What if the husband just verbally beats and beats and beats and beats on a woman? Matt's wife works in an abused woman's shelter.

We had a great discussion on Sunday, and she was saying that these men who are so abusive to their wives are degrading the quality of God's creation. God made something lovely and wonderful, and they are destroying it and tearing it down. And in Tammy's mind, that is a violation of the marriage covenant.

You know, one of the other interesting questions is, what's marriage? Have you ever thought about that? What's marriage? What makes marriage? Gordon Hugenberger

has written an exhaustive and exhausting book on this point. And his primary thrust... How did you say, Matt? You said it better than I do. That it is the... Okay.

Okay, so... Okay, so it's the vow, and then sealed by the oath sign, which is sex. And a buddy of mine is a dean, and his faculty read it, and they just debated it all along. One of the arguments is there's no explicit prohibition against premarital sex in the Bible.

Have you noticed that? Yeah, what's that? Anyway, Hugenberger's argument is it's not explicitly dealt with because there's no such thing as premarital sex. You have sex, you're married. So, I tried that on my teenage boys.

I'm just trying to say, okay, guys, I was a teenage boy once too. You got to understand, if you all fool around, according to Hugenberg anyway, you're married. Had the exact opposite effect that I was hoping for.

One son said to the other, hey, let's go. Let's just get rid of it. We'll just get married.

No, no, no, that wasn't the point. That wasn't the point. It's interesting is what makes marriage, because until you know what makes marriage, you don't know what breaks marriage.

David Instone Brewer, in his book, argues that a lot of what makes marriage comes out of a passage in Exodus, where it's the vow to provide, love, care for, and cherish your spouse. When a man stops loving, caring for, and providing for his spouse, he's violated the marriage covenant, and hence, divorce is legitimate. That's David's position.

So, the question is, how wide do we draw porneia? How wide do we pull indecency? That's what this word is right here. Sexual immorality. Oh, no, no.

I tell you, anyone, who divorces his wife, except for Porneia, makes her a victim of adultery. It's interesting. Matthew is reflecting a Jewish culture where women could not divorce men, and only men could divorce women.

Unless, of course, you're rich. And if you're rich in any culture, you can do whatever you want. But in Jewish culture, unless you were rich, only the man could divorce a woman.

It's interesting. Mark is written for a Roman audience. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

So, Mark says, 10:11, and 12, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, because she's still married in God's eyes. And if she



divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. So, Mark shows both sides of it.

Let me say, let me go through one more point, and then we'll stop and take a break and come back. How does Jesus' teaching exceed the righteousness of the scribes at this point? I'm not sure I like my answer. I'm not sure I have an answer, but that's what all this is about, right? Jesus' teaching talks about righteousness that exceeds, that's deeper than righteousness, external righteous behavior, and the perceived righteous behavior of the Pharisees.

So, in what sense is Jesus here teaching something deeper, something that exceeds the scribes and the Pharisees? Four possibilities. I'm sure you heard this: The two famous rabbis, Hillel and Shammai, had this as one of their points of contention. Shammai argued that indecency was only adultery, and Hillel argued that indecency was anything.

If in any way she displeases him, he can dump her, all right? And for the most part, Judaism went with Hillel. And so certainly, Jesus is exceeding Hillel's understanding. Hillel's saying, whatever, you can just get rid of her for any reason you want.

Jesus says, no, no, no, no, no, it's porneia. Number two, Jesus is going deeper than even Shammai in that adultery doesn't demand divorce. It makes it allowable. There are many rabbis who argued that if there is adultery, you must divorce your spouse.

And Jesus is going, "No, no, no. That violates the original intention of marriage as a permanent union. It may make it allowable, but it doesn't necessitate it." I'm sure you all have stories like this, but we have good friends.

Man was the pastor, had an affair, and his wife stuck with him. And he kept having an affair after he had confessed it, not repeatedly, but at least once. And she didn't do anything about it.

She said I don't want you back the way you are. I want you back now. I want a new husband.

I want you to go through this process. And if I just simply step in and threaten to divorce you, you're not going to get better. And after four years, it is an amazing marriage.

Both husband and wife have grown together in ways they have never before. They've grown spiritually in ways they have never grown before. It's just an absolute delight to see these two together.

According to the rabbis, that would have never happened. They would have had to have gotten a divorce. So, Jesus's teaching is deeper in that it's allowed, but it's not mandated.

Thirdly, he extends the blame to the husband, including the second husband. He says that if you divorce your wife, you make her the victim of adultery. And I think what that means is in that day and age, a woman only had two options.

And that was to become a prostitute or to get married again. And either way, you have sex outside that what God has determined is right. And she is committing adultery.

So, it's the husband's fault for forcing her into that situation. That's why the NIV says to make sure the victim of adultery, that the man is culpable in this whole process. And thirdly, uh, fourthly, I would say Jesus has an exceedingly deeper righteousness because the emphasis is not on the exceptions.

The emphasis is on permanence, and he just wants to drive that point home: Don't get divorced.

And that is a totally different emphasis than what you got on that day. And frankly, what you get today. I never did a whole lot of marriage counseling, but when I did, one of the questions I always asked was, are you at any point in your thinking, thinking if this doesn't work out, we can get divorced, right? It's a great question to ask a couple.

If they are even remotely entertaining that, I would never perform the wedding ceremony. I'd say 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. Are you willing to make that commitment? Because if you're entertaining divorce now, you will get divorced.

You will. I tell my kids that marriage is a crap shoot. It really is, isn't it? I mean, when Robin and I married, it was a great gal.

She hates being called a great gal—that's my dad's expression—but she's a great lady.

And, but who knows? There could have been all kinds of sick dysfunction in Robin that I could not have seen. Especially since from the time of our first date to our wedding it has been less than six months. And it was all at long distance.

We were fortunate. God just put it in our hearts. You two are together.

Just, just get married. You'll figure it out as you go. I was a college professor, and blah, blah, blah.

I could have been a sick person. There's no way to know. Marriage is a crap shoot.

I've got a friend that married a really up-and-coming pastor and academic, a very, very visible person, completely addicted to porn. Marriage has just been ripped to shreds. So, marriage is largely, isn't it? What you make of it.

You want to get a good start, but a good start doesn't guarantee that it will last. You want the commitment.

So, Jesus emphasizes, "This is meant to last forever." I know that Jesus said there's no marriage in heaven, but I don't care. I will be married to Robin for all eternity.

I am not leaving her side in heaven. What would be the point? I don't want to leave her. We're going to explore the world for the next 10,000 years together.

That's the emphasis that Jesus has. And that certainly would have set his teaching apart and separate.