

Title: Matthew 5-6: The Sermon on the Mount

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Session 8

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Abstract In this lecture, Dr. Craig Keener explores Matthew 5 and 6, presenting Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount as a radical demand for internal integrity over outward religious performance. Through a detailed examination of the ethical "antitheses" regarding lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and enemy love, Keener demonstrates how Jesus utilizes striking cultural hyperbole to capture attention and reveal the heart of God's law. The lecture further analyzes the call to secret acts of devotion—specifically almsgiving, prayer, and fasting—arguing that true discipleship is lived for an audience of the Father alone rather than for social status. Ultimately, Keener bridges these ancient ethical demands to contemporary personal and social struggles, illustrating that God's standards call for a heart transformed by divine love.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-6)

- **A. Speaker:** Dr. Craig Keener
- **B. Context:** Session 8 of the Matthew Lecture Series
- **C. Core Theme:** Radical demands of internal integrity surpassing external rules

II. The Antitheses: Lust, Adultery, and Divorce (Matthew 5:27-32)

- **A. Internal Purity and Adultery of the Heart**
 1. Moving beyond literal physical adultery to covetous desire
 2. Jesus' graphic demands to gain listener attention
- **B. The Redemptive Context of Divorce Teachings**
 1. Jesus' words as hyperbole vs. literalistic cosmic law (context of eye plucking)
 2. The social and economic vulnerability of divorced women in antiquity

3. The School of Shammai (divorce only for unfaithfulness) vs. School of Hillel (any reason/burnt toast)
4. The exception clause (*porneia*) and Matthew's focus on marital fidelity
5. Pauline exception (1 Corinthians 7:15) as an analogical expansion of Jesus' principles
6. Rhetorical function: An urgent demand to preserve and honor marriage covenants

III. Truthfulness, Oaths, and Integrity (Matthew 5:33-37)

- **A. Swearing and Surrogate Oaths (*K'nuyim*)**
 1. Swearing by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or the hair on one's head
 2. The fallacy of secular/sacred divide: All creation belongs to God
- **B. Historical Models of High Integrity**
 1. The Essenes and Pythagoreans: Rejection of oaths in favor of absolute truthfulness
 2. Scriptural warnings: Negative models of Herod Antipas and Peter's oaths
 3. Jesus' command: "Let your yes be yes and your no be no"

IV. Non-Retaliatio, Resistance, and Loving Oppressors (Matthew 5:38-42)

- **A. *Lex Talionis* (Eye for an Eye) in Context**
 1. Ancient Near Eastern law (Code of Hammurabi) as class-based retribution
 2. Mosaic law as a civil limitation on vengeance, establishing equal justice
 3. Jesus' higher standard: Relinquishing personal rights and legal claims
- **B. Practical Examples of Non-Retaliatio and Active Love**
 1. Turning the other cheek: Insults to personal honor and non-violent resistance
 2. Giving the inner garment with the outer cloak: Yielding standard protections (Deuteronomy 24)

3. Carrying the load a second mile: Requisition rights of Roman/Syrian occupying soldiers
4. Personal Reflections: Keener's experiences with internet critics and ethnic reconciliation in Cote d'Ivoire
5. The cost of love: Middle belt Nigerian conflict and Sunday Gan's prayer of forgiveness for jihadist persecutors

V. Loving Enemies and the Standard of Perfection (Matthew 5:43-48)

- **A. The Command to Love and Pray for Persecutors**

1. Contrast with Qumran teachings (hating enemies) and prayers for vengeance (Zechariah, Psalms)
2. Divine model: God's impartial grace in sending rain and sun on just and unjust
3. The negative contrast: Even tax collectors and pagans love their own

- **B. The Call to Perfection**

1. Aramaic root behind 'perfect' (mercy, wholeness, completeness) in Luke 6:36
2. Imitating God's holy character (Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 18:13) leaves no room for self-boasting

VI. Secret Devotion and Motivations for Righteousness (Matthew 6:1-18)

- **A. The Principle of Secret Righteousness**

1. The danger of practicing piety to seek human praise ("practical atheism")
2. The Greek business term for "paid in full" regarding earthly recognition

- **B. Three Core Devotional Practices**

1. Almsgiving (6:2-4): Secret charity vs. hyperbole of blowing trumpets; don't let the left hand know the right hand's actions; John Wesley's extreme model of stewardship
2. Prayer (6:5-15):

- **a. Avoiding public show; praying in the "closet" or "storeroom" (private devotion)**
 - **b. Pagan prayer methods: Manipulation, piling up deity names, formulaic repetition**
 - **c. The Lord's Prayer as a concise, relational model based on "Our Father"**
3. Fasting (6:16-18): Secret fasting vs. looking unwashed or disheveled to signal piety