

The Sermon on the Mount Part 8

Matthew 5:27-30

Thesis: We are a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Text: Matthew 5 – 7

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. People refer to it and quote from this teaching of Jesus all the time.

These words of Jesus are revolutionary, radical, and relational (righteousness). I wonder if the words of Jesus have lost their cutting edge in our lives because of familiarity.

God is showing me wonderful things from his Word. And, the Lord is using The Sermon on the Mount to transform me.

So, I am asking the Lord to encourage you by his Holy Spirit and to speak to us as we spend time on Matthew 5 – 7 over the next months.

What we have considered so far in our time looking at The Sermon on the Mount.

In a message last November, we got through an overview of The Sermon on the Mount on 11'10'24.

Then, we looked at Matthew 5:3-5: The Poor in Spirit, The Grieved, and The Unimportant on 11'17'24.

In a message on 11'24'24, we looked at Matthew 5:6-8: The Hungry, The Merciful, and The Pure in Heart.

In a message on 7'13'25, we considered Matthew 5:9-12: The Peacemakers, The Persecuted, and the Misunderstood. Actually, we only considered what it means to be a peacemaker.

In a message on 7'20'25, we finished looking at our kingdom identity from Matthew 5:9-16: The Peacemakers, The Persecuted, and the Misunderstood. We also sought to understand three illustrations of the way we show up in this world as a part of our kingdom identity: as salt, light, and a city on a hill.

In a message on 7'27'25, we looked at Matthew 5:17-20. Jesus came to fulfill the Torah. Jesus' teaching on righteousness brings the Torah to its completion.

In a message on 11'16'26, we looked at Matthew 5:21-26 which dealt with murder and angry contempt. True righteousness means treating every human as an image of God who is to be loved and respected.

Today, we will continue looking at the second Main Section of The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:17 – 7:12. This is the main body of teaching. In this section, Jesus tells us what he means for his followers to be righteous. Righteousness is living in right relationship with God and others. It is a character trait that creates justice and peace in the world.

Here is an important perspective to keep in mind:

As we look at The Sermon on the Mount, I will share with you what I am learning and processing, some of which is new to me. But please understand: The Lord can speak to you through his Word without all this teaching I am doing and without all the research we are processing. **What we are doing together is to help us enter into the context of this Word, and to let the Lord speak to us in our current context.** The Lord can do that through the Holy Spirit whenever you open God's word and read it devotionally or study it thoroughly. **Getting into God's Word and listening for The Voice is one of the most important spiritual practices the Lord has given us for growing in our relationships with God and others. I pray that our time in The Sermon on the Mount will stir in you a greater love for God, for God's word, and for the leadership of Jesus in your life.**

Consider While Reading:

The first hearers of these words were mostly low-status, powerless Israelites on the fringes of mainstream society ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7). They were the impoverished, the infirmed, the unimportant, the oppressed, and the ignored.

Overview:

"The introduction (5:3-16) announces the surprising and counterintuitive identity of those who are a part of God's Kingdom. Then comes the main body of teachings (5:17-7:12), where Jesus explains further what he means when he calls his followers to be 'righteous.' Finally, Jesus concludes the sermon (7:13-27) by calling people to make a choice about how they're going to respond" ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

The Sermon on the Mount is carefully designed and organized.

1. **There are 3 main parts to The Sermon on the Mount.**
 - a. The middle part is divided into 3 parts.
 - b. Each of the parts of the middle part is divided into 3 parts.
 - c. Right at the center of the center of The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's Prayer.
2. **The Bible tells us what it means for God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.**
 - a. The kingdom of God coming to earth is the one of the main themes of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.
3. **From the beginning, humans rebelled and started to build their own kingdom by their own wisdom.**
4. **So, God chose one family, Israel, to join him in his mission.**
 - a. And, God offered them his wisdom.
 - b. That wisdom was called the Torah—the teaching.
 - c. Beginning on with Moses on Mt. Sinai, God entered into a covenant with Isreal.
 - d. The goal was for Israel, one nation, to be transformed by God's wisdom, so that they could represent God's Kingdom before all the nations and to lead the nations back to God.
5. **In Jesus' day, the kingdom of God was nowhere to be seen.**
 - a. Instead, Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire and Roman oppressors.
6. **So, why wasn't God's Kingdom coming?**
 - a. Some religious leaders-- the **Pharisees**-- believed Israel was not being faithful enough to the Torah.
 - b. Other religious leaders—the **Sadducees**—said it would be best if Israel found a way to cooperate with Rome. They were the power brokers in Jesus' day.
 - c. Some people ran to the hills to become freedom fighters against Rome. They were known as the **Zealots**.
 - d. Others **withdrew to the desert**, waiting for God to use them to start the new Israel.
7. **But walk around the country of Israel, like Jesus did in his day, and here is what you would find.**
 - a. You would find mostly normal people.
 - b. They were trying to figure out how to live their lives as best they can.
 - c. Most people were living in poverty and were carving out a subsistence living.

- d. There were lots of poor and sick people.
 - e. They were oppressed by high taxes.
 - f. Rome had taken their land away from them.
 - g. Most people were struggling to pay the heavy taxes imposed on them by their Roman occupiers.
 - h. In essence, the people of Jesus' day were powerless and hopeless.
8. **Jesus went to these people** healing the sick, setting free the demonized, mending broken hearts, and bringing salvation.
- a. Jesus came with good news.
 - b. And, Jesus told these people that the kingdom of God was arriving.
 - c. People came from all over to hear his teaching and to get healing, deliverance, and encouragement.
9. **One day, Jesus went up to a tall hill or small mountain and said, "The arrival of kingdom of God is starting here and now with you."**
- a. The kingdom of God was starting with the powerless, the weak, and the nobodies.
 - b. Where can you go to see God's presence and blessing?
 - i. You see God's presence and blessing among the poor in spirit, the crushed, and the defeated.
 - ii. The kingdom of God was not coming first among the wealthy and the powerful.
 - iii. The kingdom of God was coming to the people standing right before Jesus.

The structure of The Sermon on the Mount:

There are **3 main sections** to The Sermon on the Mount.

1. **Main Section 1: Matthew 5:3 – 16. This is the introduction. Jesus tells us about the kingdom identity of his followers. Jesus gives 9 sayings about who is experiencing the good life of God's kingdom.**
 - a. Matthew 5:3 – 12. The Good Life.
 - i. The Poor in Spirit (3).
 - ii. The Grieved (4).
 - iii. The Unimportant (5).
 - iv. The Hungry (6).
 - v. The Merciful (7).
 - vi. The Pure in Heart (8).
 - vii. The Peacemakers (9).
 - viii. The Persecuted (10).
 - ix. The Misunderstood (11-12).

- b. Matthew 5:13. Salt of the Earth.
 - i. "In the Hebrew Scriptures, salt is a symbol of God's long-lasting covenant relationship with Israel. So Jesus is claiming that he and his followers are carrying Israel's covenant relationship to its fulfillment" ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).
 - ii. Salt is an important preservative.
 - iii. Salt is a seasoning. We are to bring out the God-flavors in this world (MSG).
 - iv. A little salt goes a long way. Christians are supposed to influence rather than be influenced by the ways of this world.
- c. Matthew 5:14 – 16. The Light of the World and a city on a hill.
 - i. According to Isaiah, one day the inhabitants of Jerusalem will reflect God's light, peace, and blessing out to all the world.
 - ii. Jerusalem is the image of the city on a hill that shines for all the world to see. We are a part of that family, heritage, and kingdom.
 - iii. Light shines in the darkness and overcomes darkness. Christians have influence way beyond themselves.
 - iv. We are to bring out the God-colors in this world (MSG).
 - v. When Jesus calls his followers "the light of the world" and "a city on a hill," he is referencing images from the prophet Isaiah. The shining city on the hill portrays God's wisdom and heavenly presence emanating from Jerusalem and filling the whole Earth. By using these images, Jesus is applying Isaiah's prophecies to himself and his followers ([The Bible Project](#)).
- 2. **Main Section 2: Matthew 5:17 – 7:12. This is the main body of teaching. In this section, Jesus tells us what he means for his followers to be righteous. Righteousness is living in right relationship with God and others. It is a character trait that creates justice and peace in the world.**
 - a. **Section 1 of the Middle Section: Matthew 5:17 – 48. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness relates to the Torah.**
 - i. Matthew 5:17 – 20. Jesus fulfills the Torah.
 - 1. Jesus' teaching on righteousness brings the Torah to its completion.
 - ii. Matthew 5:21 – 32. Jesus gives six case studies on how the righteousness of Jesus fulfills the Torah
 - 1. Anger, lust, divorce, telling the truth, revenge, and enemy love.
 - iii. Matthew 5:33 – 48. Summary: be complete or whole. The purpose of the Torah is teaching people God's wisdom so that they can become mature, whole people who spread God's blessing to the world.

1. Being complete or whole links back to what Jesus says: living by Jesus' teachings will fulfill the Torah and Prophets.
- b. **Section 2 of the Middle Section:** Matthew 6:1 – 18. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness relates to **religious practices**.
 - i. Matthew 6:1. Living in right relationship with God and other results in a reward.
 1. But be careful: If you are doing your righteousness to get public praise, you will miss out on the real reward God has in store.
 - ii. Matthew 6:2 – 18. Three examples of how religious devotion can go astray.
 1. Generosity to the poor.
 2. Prayer.
 3. Fasting.
 - iii. Matthew 6:19 – 21. True wealth: the real reward.
 1. The real reward links back to Matthew 6:1. The reward is knowing and being love by God.
- c. **Section 3 of the Middle Section.** Matthew 6:19 – 7:12. In this section, Jesus tells us how **this righteousness is expressed in right relationships with God and with neighbor**. Doing righteousness affects our relationship with God and neighbor.
 - i. Matthew 6:19 – 34. God and money.
 1. Our stuff tends to claim our allegiance and causes us to worry.
 2. Our relationship to our stuff can be one of the biggest obstacles to healthy relationships with God and others.
 3. Store up treasure in heaven.
 4. **Parable 1: Two eyes.** You can have a healthy, generous eye, or an evil, stingy eye.
 5. **Parable 2: Two masters you can serve—God or money.**
 6. Teaching on worry. We are invited to trust the generous God of creation who cares about us.
 - ii. Matthew 7:1 – 11. God and neighbor.
 1. Teaching on not judging others.
 2. Parable 1: Speck and log.
 3. Parable 2: Holy pearls—using discernment when we try to help and correct others.
 4. Ask God for the wisdom you need: ask, seek, and knock.
 - iii. Matthew 7:12. The Golden Rule.
3. **Main Section 3:** Matthew 7:13 – 27. In his conclusion, **Jesus calls people to make a choice as to how they are going to respond.**

- a. The choice for how we will live our lives.
 - i. Matthew 7:13 – 14. Two paths with two different gates. One leads to life; the other leads to ruin.
 - ii. Matthew 7:15 – 23. Two trees. Discerning between two kinds of leaders who claim to represent God. One tree is good; one is not.
 - iii. Matthew 7:24 – 27. Two types of houses you can build. You can ignore Jesus and build your house by your own wisdom. Or, you can listen to Jesus and build your house on the rock.
4. **Finally, every one of these parts has 3 parts.**
 - a. There is a lot of design in the structure of The Sermon on the Mount.
5. **Review of The Sermon on the Mount:**
 - a. **Kingdom Identity:** the sermon begins with a surprise announcement about how the good life of the kingdom of God has come to the least likely people.
 - b. **A Greater Righteousness:** in the main body, Jesus teaches how to do right by God and others.
 - c. **The Choice:** the conclusion calls for a decision. In light of what Jesus has said, what choice will you make?

Here is what Jesus is saying through The Sermon on the Mount.

1. God's Kingdom comes to Earth through Jesus.
2. In God's Kingdom, love, justice, and peace prevail.
3. This Kingdom is arriving first to ordinary people—the poor, the powerless, and the outsider ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

Prayer:

1. Lord, I pray that you speak to us, encounter us, and grant to us your Spirit of wisdom and revelation that we might know you better.
2. Bless our time in your word together corporately.
3. Bless our time in your word individually as a part of our spiritual practices.
4. Help us to hear your voice, God, by the power of your Holy Spirit.
5. Help us to fall more and more in love with you, and help us to join Jesus on his mission together with others in our spheres of influence.
6. May we be a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Let's continue our look at the second Main Section of the Sermon on Mount. In Matthew 5:21 – 32, Jesus gives six case studies on how the righteousness of Jesus fulfills the Torah: anger, lust, divorce, telling the truth, revenge, and enemy love.

Adultery and lust:

Matthew 5:27 You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery"; 28 and I say to you that everyone who goes on looking at a woman in order to cultivate lust for her, he had already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes your downfall, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of your body-parts that for your whole body to be thrown in Gehenna. 30 If your right hand causes your downfall, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of your body-parts, than for your whole body to go off into gehenna ([The Bible Project Translation of the Sermon on The Mount](#)).

Matthew 5:27–30 (NIV84) 27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, 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. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, 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 into hell.

[The BibleProject Guide](#)

1. **Imagine a world where everyone treats each other with dignity and respect.** And when problems do arise, everyone works hard to do right by each other. In the Bible, this way of treating each other is called righteousness. It sounds great, but how are we supposed to know how to do right by others? Jesus, like any Israelite teacher, believed that you can learn righteousness through studying God's wisdom in the ancient Scriptures, the Torah and the Prophets. Jesus believed that meditating on the laws given to ancient Israel would reveal God's wisdom.
2. **The Bible's ancient laws can teach us how to do right by each other, even today.** Jesus illustrates this in the Sermon on the Mount by quoting a command from the Torah and then revealing God's wisdom underneath the command.
3. The Old Testament laws about murder, adultery, and divorce reveal God's wisdom about how we treat others. **Jesus teaches that righteousness means treating all humans with dignity because we are all made in the image of God.**

Key Takeaways about Case Study 2: Adultery and Lust

- Jesus explains that adultery and lust come from a common source. Just because we avoid committing adultery doesn't mean we are free from the root problem.
- Jesus directly confronts the public social dynamic of men staring at women in order to stir up desire, emphasizing that in his kingdom, women are to be safe.
- The eye and the hand are used together as a common Hebrew Bible idiom to represent both our focus and what we do in response to our ingrained patterns of thinking.
- By identifying the problem as one of the heart, Jesus makes it clear that he's not commanding self-mutilation when he speaks of tearing out your eye or cutting off your hand. Instead, he's using an arresting image to make a clear point: **At all costs, don't let a habit of the mind or body prevent you from doing what is clearly best for yourself and others.**

The meaning and impact of lust

The Old Testament law about adultery reveals God's wisdom about how we reduce people to objects of desire. **Jesus invites us to view every human being as an image of God who is to be honored in our actions and imaginations.**

Matthew 5:27 You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery"; 28 and I say to you that everyone who goes on looking at a woman in order to cultivate lust for her, he had already committed adultery with her in his heart.

1. **The NIV translates Matthew 5:28 as "...anyone who looks at a woman..."**
 - a. The word translated "looks at a woman" in the NIV is a tense (present active participle) that refers to a present, ongoing action.
 - b. The "look" is more than just a glance, an attraction, or a noticing. It is more than that. The "look" is a prolonged stare for the purpose of cultivating a mental fantasy.
 - c. The "look" Jesus is talking about is more like a "stare." The idea is that you focus your gaze on something, and then you go on looking at it.
 - d. In Genesis 3 and the eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **the progression is "see, desire, and take"** (Genesis 3:6).
 - e. In this case, the idea is using my eye and my hand to take something that isn't good or is prohibited.
2. **The issue of lust is a matter of the heart, according to Jesus.**

- a. So often, male lust is framed in terms of what the woman is doing or wearing. The idea is that “it is her fault.” This idea externalizes the issue.
 - b. **Jesus is very clear that the problem isn't external; rather, the problem is internal. It is a matter of one's heart.**
 - c. The solution isn't to put that woman into a different room, cover her up, or separate her from yourself in order to remove the problem.
 - d. **Jesus seems to say, “Hey men, there is something going on in your heart. You deal with it.”**
 - e. **Our culture blames women. Our culture excuses men** and says, “Boys will be boys; men will be men.” That is not the way of the kingdom of God.
 - f. Jesus is not talking about sexual desire that is healthy and loving. Lust is actually an anti-love force in your life, and it belongs to you. Therefore, you have to deal with it.
 - g. In reality, lusting for a woman or another person in your heart has already objectified that person. So, you further objectify her when you say, “It's your fault.”
 - h. The tendency is to make an excuse and say, “You make me feel like this.”
 - i. **Jesus just calls out that sentiment and mindset for what it is: sin. We are degrading another person, using another person, objectifying another person, and treating that other person as less than an image-bearer.**
3. **What does this way of looking at or treating another person do to the human imagination cultivating this habit?**
- a. If you are the kind of person who goes on cultivating and staring, then that woman becomes something you can take.
 - b. Even if the fantasy doesn't result in committing adultery, that thought life is going to spill out in all sorts of ways.
 - c. It will come out in the language you use around women.
 - d. It will come out in the way you treat a woman who enters the room or comes near you.
 - e. **For Jesus, character formation of an individual is personal but never private. The cultivation of our character is a deeply personal activity, but it is never private because it affects us and others.**
 - f. Here is the point: **Our inner life will spill over into how we regard people and in how we treat others.** In this case, Jesus says that it will affect how men regard women.

Summarizing the meaning and impact of lust

1. Looking at a woman as an object is the same thing as adultery, because both involve heart postures that reduce someone's identity.
2. This habit has devastating effects on the man who "goes on looking" and also on the woman who is objectified.
3. Within the command to not commit adultery, there is wisdom about how men can treat women as equal images of God.
4. When a man goes on looking at a woman in order to cultivate lust for her, he corrupts his own heart and reduces the woman to an object of desire.
5. **For Jesus, true righteousness means viewing every human being as an equal image of God to be honored in our words, actions, and imaginations.**

Matthew 28:29 If your right eye causes your downfall, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of your body-parts than for your whole body to be thrown in Gehenna. 30 If your right hand causes your downfall, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of your body-parts, than for your whole body to go off into gehenna ([The Bible Project Translation of the Sermon on The Mount](#)).

The right eye/ right hand: "If your right hand/eye..."

1. **Meaning: that which is most useful or dominant.**
 - a. Because the majority of people are right-handed, it became a common saying to talk about that which is most useful. It assumes that the right hand, or whichever is used most; dominant, is the most useful.
 - b. The point Jesus makes is to highlight the extreme nature of the action.
 - c. **Even what is most useful is to be sacrificed when one's life is at stake.**
2. **Jesus believes that distorted sexual desire is a matter of serious consequence, which is why he uses the phrase "cause to stumble"** (causes you to sin in the NIV).
 - a. The kind of "fall" Jesus has in mind is not a minor slip, but a crash to the ground (downfall).
 - b. **Jesus is talking about sexual desire taking over your life and shipwrecking your ability to make wise choices.**
 - c. Sin is the inward turn and the destruction of outward living and healthy relationships.
 - d. (For more on "cause to stumble" (skandalizo) in Matthew 5:29-30, see the following: France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007.)
3. **Jesus is not denigrating sex or sexual desire.**

- a. There's an entire book of his Bible dedicated to the celebration of love and sexual desire (Song of Songs).
- b. What Jesus addresses here is distorted desire that is aimed at someone you don't love or to someone you don't have any commitment.
- c. Sexual desire, apart from covenantal commitment, allows people to use each other.
- d. Jesus is not suppressing sexuality, but he is telling us that some things matter more than gratifying our sexual desires. For example, the dignity of people who are made in the image of God is way more important than fulfilling our sexual fantasies.

Self-mutilation

1. Jesus clearly isn't commanding self-mutilation; rather, he's using an arresting image to make a clear point. Jesus got your attention, didn't he?!
2. **Jesus is saying that at all costs, don't let a habit of the mind and body prevent you from doing what is clearly best for yourself and others.**
3. The command is not to be taken literally, as if Jesus thinks that amputation can curb sexual passion. The body or a particular body part is not the problem. That viewpoint is way too simplistic. The problem is not with the body itself, but "in the heart," as Jesus said in Matthew 5:28.
4. The point Jesus makes is to take decisive action against that habit, thing, or person that, though pleasurable and perhaps seemingly indispensable for living, is in fact ruining our lives. Life in the kingdom will require some degree of loss, of denial, or of withdrawing from things that seem fine or even good.
5. Notice again that Jesus focuses on men.
 - a. It is not that Jesus is excluding women.
 - b. However, Jesus puts extra emphasis on this teaching aimed at men.
 - c. Jesus wants to emphasize the fact that in his kingdom, women are to be safe.

Let's say it again: Key Takeaways about Case Study 2: Adultery and Lust

1. Jesus explains that adultery and lust come from a common source. Just because we avoid committing adultery doesn't mean we are free from the root problem.
2. Jesus directly confronts the public social dynamic of men staring at women in order to stir up desire, emphasizing that in his kingdom, women are to be safe.
3. The eye and the hand are used together as a common Hebrew Bible idiom to represent both our focus and what we do in response to our ingrained patterns of thinking.

4. By identifying the problem as one of the heart, Jesus makes it clear that he's not commanding self-mutilation when he speaks of tearing out your eye or cutting off your hand. Instead, he's using an arresting image to make a clear point: **At all costs, don't let a habit of the mind or body prevent you from doing what is clearly best for yourself and others.**

Conclusion:

Our identity: We are a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

For reflection:

1. What is God saying to you?
2. What is getting stirred up in you?
3. Where do you sense resistance?
4. What questions do you have?
5. What are you feeling or thinking?
6. What is at least one takeaway for you today?

Ministry Time:

Announcements:

1. **Remind people about the Pledge Card** (online or in the basket).
2. Speak to the viewers on the livestream and on demand and thank them for joining us.
3. Remind people to subscribe and hit the notification button on our YouTube channel.
4. Remind people to put their offering and connection cards in the baskets.
5. Welcome Center: Dana Montgomery.

Reference: Gehenna

1. **What is the fire of Gehenna?**
 - a. Most English Bibles translate Matthew 5:22 with the word "hell."
 - b. But the word used here is "Gehenna," which comes from the Hebrew phrase *gey'-hinnon*. This word refers to a valley in Jerusalem where two ancient Israelite kings sacrificed their children in the fire to other gods (2 Chronicles 28 & 33).
 - c. The prophet Jeremiah condemned this practice.
 - d. The prophets said that one day God would turn these fires back on the kings (see Jeremiah 19). One day, God would bring the kings' violence back on them in the same valley. This word was fulfilled when Babylon conquered Jerusalem.
 - e. Jesus uses this image to describe God's just response to evil.
 - f. If you are going to bring fire and destruction to others, then you are lighting a fire that will be the thing that ultimately undoes you.