

## Lesson 8

### Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 3

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:27-32

#### Summary

- After dealing with the subject of anger, the Lord challenges us to be careful with our eyes (Matthew 5:27-28). In addition to condemning the physical act of adultery, Jesus also condemns lust and coveting.
- While lusting after another doesn't involve the physical act of adultery (Matthew 19:9), it is adultery of the heart.
- David's immoral relationship with Bathsheba began with an inappropriate desire for her (2 Samuel 11:1-4). What started with lust eventually led to adultery and murder!
- Conquering the sin of lust often requires radical action. The Lord uses strong figurative language in Matthew 5:29-30 to emphasize the seriousness of sin and how we should be willing to do whatever it takes to get it out of our lives. It is better to make the sacrifices necessary to please God than "to be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29b).
- Jesus also addresses the false ideas that the scribes and Pharisees promoted about marriage and divorce. Like in our current society, in Jesus' time, marriage had become a disposable commodity. Divorces were taking place for reasons God never intended.
- The citation found in Matthew 5:31 is from Deuteronomy 24:1. It was a provision made in the law to make divorces official and final. With the appropriate paperwork, a man could not divorce his wife and then change his mind later and demand her return to his home (Deuteronomy 24:2-4). The Pharisees will allude to this concept again in Matthew 19:7.
- By Jesus' day, the religious leaders had developed all sorts of loopholes to put wives away. Some of these things include disfavor with cooking, poor posture, and even thinning hair!
- Jesus rebukes their faulty teaching by revealing the true will of God. He says, "But I say to you, that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:32).
- Instead of looking for loopholes for divorce, Jesus wants us to understand that from the beginning, God's will for married people is for them to be faithful and stay together for a lifetime (Matthew 19:4-6). He wants them to honor their commitment to one another!
- What Jesus teaches in Matthew 5:31-32 is consistent throughout the New Testament (Matthew 19:1-9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

## Study Questions

1. What excuses do people often use to justify having no control over their eyes? How does Jesus challenge those excuses?
2. Why is it so important to Jesus that we guard our eyes?
3. Is Jesus talking about the same kind of adultery in Matthew 5:27 as He is in Matthew 19:9? Explain.
4. What are some “eyes” and “hands” that we might need to cut off to be the people of integrity that Jesus demands? Why is it often hard to make these amputations?
5. What was the original intent of the citation from Deuteronomy 24:1? What caused the passage to become controversial in the time of Jesus?
6. What can result from someone putting their spouse away for unlawful reasons? What is Jesus’ solution to avoiding this mess?
7. List some ways in which Satan has used divorce to hurt God’s people today? How should we respond to these challenges?