



After introducing his sermon with talk about the character of a disciple (5:3-12), the influence of a disciple (5:13-16), the righteousness of a disciple (5:17-20), and the battles his disciples must fight (5:21-30), Jesus shifts our attention to the commitment of a disciple. If we're going to belong to the kingdom of heaven, what do we need to see and understand?

Jesus expects his followers to be people of integrity and that's not just something we talk about, it's who we are. That wholehearted, undivided devotion to God will set a tone for our relationships, so it's no surprise that Jesus would talk about marriage. After all, marriage was God's idea (Gen 2:24).

"It was also _____, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But ____ say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, _____ on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." (5:31-32)

Jesus reminds his audience of what Moses had delivered in Deuteronomy 24. Sadly, by Jesus' time, many regarded marriage as disposable. Some religious leaders seemed to pay a lot more attention to loopholes that might open the door to divorce than honoring God's institution of marriage. "But I say to you..." Again, Jesus speaks as one with authority.

But Jesus wasn't finished talking about integrity. Wholehearted, undivided devotion to God produces the fruit of honesty.

"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear _____, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by _____, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply '_____' or '_____' ; anything more than this comes from evil." (5:33-37)

Jesus' "you have heard that it was said" reference is probably to Leviticus 19:12. Again, by Jesus' time, some had convinced themselves and others that you definitely shouldn't swear by God's name, but if you swore by less important things and failed to keep your word, it wasn't all that big of a deal. Jesus' response? "But I say to you..."

Wholehearted, undivided devotion to God produces people of integrity. So let's talk...



For Class & Family Discussion:

1. Matthew 5:31-32 isn't the only time Jesus addressed the topic of divorce. Pharisees eventually tested Jesus by asking in Matthew 19:3, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" Human beings have struggled on this front for a long time. Why do you think that is? How have we wandered so far from the simplicity of God's design in Genesis 2:24?
2. Malachi 2:13-16 gives us insight into how the Creator feels when his institution of marriage isn't respected. What stands out to you from that passage?
3. As we listen to Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question in Matthew 19:4-9 and his teaching in Matthew 5:31-32, what do we need to see and understand?
4. What point is Jesus making in Matthew 5:34-36?
5. "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'" (5:37). How would you rephrase this straightforward teaching of Jesus in your own words?
6. This section of Jesus' sermon has led us to talk a lot about commitment. Why do Jesus' disciples, even in the 21st century, need to take commitment and integrity seriously? Where might we have the opportunity to really practice what Jesus has taught us this week?