

The Gospel According to  
**Matthew**

**Lesson #7 – Ch.5:31-48**

**Jesus Teaches on Divorce – Ch.5:31-32**

**Jesus Teaches on Oaths – Ch.5:33-37**

**Jesus Teaches on Retaliation – Ch.5:38-42**

**Jesus Teaches on Love – Ch.5:43-38**

Let's settle our hearts in prayer before we begin the study this week. Recommit your heart to Him and His will for your life. Remind him that you desire to be "ALL IN" wherever you are.

We are about to wade through some very difficult Scriptures. They are difficult in the aspect that they are challenging for us *to follow*. They are familiar to many and easy to read, but actively living them out in our day-to-day living is difficult for any ordinary Christian.

I have put together a medley of Scripture from Psalm 119 for us to pray through. I have used many different Bible translations to make up this prayer. Pray through it with me as you lift your heart and intentions before the Lord.

**Let's pray:**

"Lord, take away my foolish desires and let me find life by walking with You. Make your Word sure to your servant \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your name) who is devoted to fearing You."

"I will pay careful attention as You lead me, and I will follow closely. I will obey Your Word instead of following a way that leads to trouble. You have been my teacher - You have been faithful and I won't reject Your instructions."

"Your Word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk. I have bowed my heart to do your statutes; help me to follow You always to the end!" "Great peace have those who love and follow Your law." "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law - Your testimonies are my counselors, my delight. Strengthen me according to Your Word." "Keep me in all Your ways." "Thank you, Father, that I am continually in Your thoughts, and Your intent towards me is good continually."

Amen

**→Read Matthew 5:31-48 - our text for this week.**

**→Divorce and Remarriage according to Jesus. Matthew Ch.5:31-32  
Matthew 19:1-12, Mark 10:1-12 (Please read through these passages also)**

God's Word concerning divorce is really very simple and clear, but because people read it with carnal minds and a heart bent toward fulfilling their own selfish desires and situation, the picture of what His Word says about divorce has become complicated and muddy.

The confusion isn't from God, but from man. His Word is pretty straight-forward. The problem comes when we try to make God's Word fit our present-day cultural beliefs or our own personal desires. I don't have a degree in theology, so I have no claim to be an expert on this matter, but from what I can see, God's Word is very plain and understandable on this subject.

I want to state right up front if you have been a victim of divorce, please read His Word with all the grace it is written with. There is truly no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! Many have had their lives ripped apart from the tragedy of divorce and bear the scars to prove it. I would guess to say that every person doing this study has been affected by divorce in some way, either personally or from within your family. I would never want this lesson to heap condemnation on any already-forgiven believer or add any shame to any victim. There are so many that would have stopped a divorce from happening in their family if they could have, but in this day of frivolous "no-fault" divorce, there is often no recourse. I would never want anybody feeling like they have to be ostracized from the Christian community for bearing the difficulties of divorce. If you have been the victim of divorce, God has a bright future for you up ahead; believe that! If you chose to divorce your mate, and after studying God's Word you realize you have no Biblical grounds for that decision, just go before the Lord and ask His forgiveness, which is given to you at that moment. Go and serve Him freely.

My goal here is to bring clearer understanding to a topic that has been grossly misunderstood. We live in a culture where everyone does what is right in their own eyes. The standard of God's Word as being truth is being challenged on every front every day, but as spirit-filled believers, we agree that God's Word is our truth for living by which He guides us into success. We have to agree - God's Word is the ultimate standard by which we make our decisions as a child of God.

Praise God that He is able to bring goodness out of heartache and turn our failures into His victories in Jesus' name!

Divorce wasn't mentioned in Scripture until God gave the Law through Moses.

**→Please read this account in Deuteronomy 24:1-2.**

Note - in Moses' day, divorce was always initiated by the husband. Women had little or no rights about this subject. In this time, Scripture stated that a man could divorce his wife for "indecency." Adultery wasn't mentioned here. That's because adultery was a capital offense, punishable by stoning (Lev. 20:10).

In Old Testament times, the Scribes and Pharisees (the religious teachers of that day) taught that a divorce could be granted for any reason (which they called an indecency), as long as they filed the correct paperwork. They would divorce their wives for something as ridiculous as burning their dinner or having a bad attitude, not cleaning house, or the inability to bear children. Divorce was rampant. They misunderstood Deuteronomy 24: 1-3, which was written to give instruction and protection to the woman being divorced. The Lord here in Deuteronomy was putting an emphasis on the *divorce certificate* to protect the woman so that if her husband divorced her, she would have proof that she could remarry again legally and therefore not be punished or reduced to begging as a means of survival.

As they often did with Scripture, the Pharisees interpreted the Scriptures to fit their own moral standards. They wanted the freedom to divorce and remarry as they wished, so they taught that divorce could come for any reason, as long as they were given a certificate! They divorced their wives for simple things like talking to a male stranger, letting down their hair in public, or even talking so loudly their voice could be heard next door! Jesus was making it clear here in Matthew Ch.5, Matthew 19, and Mark 10 that divorce for any reason except for adultery (and abandonment, which we will discuss further ahead) was unbiblical.

1. Write out Matthew 5:32 so that it is very clear in your mind. “But I say to you, (Jesus Himself talking here) “Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except for \_\_\_\_\_, causes her to \_\_\_\_\_.” And whoever marries a woman who is divorced \_\_\_\_\_.”

Here is the best translation I could find:

Weymouth’s Translation – “ But I tell you that every man who puts away his wife, except on the grounds of unchastity (adultery), causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries her when so divorced commits adultery.”

Unjustified divorce leads to adultery. A man or a woman with no right to divorce has no right to remarry. The commandment there in Deuteronomy was not a command to divorce, but a command *not* to remarry. The certificate didn’t make the divorce right, but gave the woman protection. God had permitted divorce through Moses because of the hardness of their hearts (Matthew 19:8). Divorce was now an alternative to *death* upon the offender.

Jesus was allowing divorce on the basis of adultery only. This was an act of mercy on His part. Adultery was originally grounds for the death penalty (See Lev. 20:10-14). Now, in God’s mercy, He was allowing divorce instead of death upon the sin of adultery. The problem was that, through error in the teaching of the law, divorce and adultery was running rampant in the church. Families were being torn apart and destroyed. Jesus came to teach and bring resolve to the topic of divorce that was ingrained with so much confusion.

2. Our problems aren’t resolved when we try to lower God’s standards to line up with our desires. Marriage is a lifelong commitment and God ordained it to be that way. When we try to make His Word say anything different, we are asking for problems. According to James 1:25, who is blessed by the Lord and for what?

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3. Satan, the liar, thief, and destroyer, would like you to believe that God would want you happy at all costs, even if that means leaving your spouse. He will try to convince you that most of your problems would be resolved if your marriage was dissolved. That in itself is a lie from hell! That

is not the heart of God. What is the truth about how God views divorce? Write out Malachi 2:14-16.

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God calls marriage a covenant in this Scripture (v.14b). He also says that God makes man and woman ONE in a marriage (v.15). Divorce destroys a “union” (both spiritual and physical) that God has made.

Divorce might seem like a quick fix for a mountain of problems at the moment, but in the long run, it further complicates lives. In the future, most remarry, adding his and her children to the now new marriage, which carries along with it a whole new set of difficulties to work through. As long as you have children with a man, he will most likely be apart of your life forever, so you will have to learn to get along and communicate to some degree.

My husband’s grandmother, who was a dear sweet Christian woman, had been married three times. She was divorced once from the father of her children, and then she married twice more and outlived them both. She said something I will never forget early on in our marriage. She said, “Teri, I have been through one divorce and the death of two more husbands and the divorce was much more painful and cruel than burying the other two...he deaths were final, you see, but the divorce continued on and on. Every time there was a birthday or holiday, or a problem with the children - even when they were grown adults- I had to deal with that man and the difficulties of divorce.”

Divorce isn’t a big eraser to the problems we face in marriage. You see, everyone has their weaknesses; you might leave one and marry another, but the new guy will have weaknesses, too. You have weaknesses and character flaws - I have weaknesses and character flaws - and so does every person on this planet! The key is to be ALL that God calls you to be in Christ and pray that your husband is growing right along side you, and ask the Lord to give you what your husband needs to be his helpmate in his growth with Christ.

The reaping of difficulties that come from divorce doesn’t surface right away. Many people that divorce for unbiblical reasons often find relief at first. They experience temporary freedom from previous responsibilities and a temporary feeling of peace and release from marital burdens. The true test comes in time: child support and alimony checks are due, when you try and make ends meet with two households on the same paycheck, and when little Bobby comes home and says daddy has a new girlfriend. Divorce on the “stress scale” ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. These are the heartaches that Satan doesn’t want us to contemplate *before* we make the decision to pull out of marriage. The price for marital break-up is very high, and Satan would rather disguise that part of it than allow people to see it for what it really is.

4. Today, one out of two marriages will end in divorce. Sad to say, the statistics for Christians is about the same. There is an all out assault on our families!! Satan knows that if he can destroy a family, he can destroy a nation.

See 1 Peter 5:8-9. Describe our adversary.

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Satan loves to devour marriages and destroy family life.

80% of those divorced will remarry within 3 yrs, and 65% of those marriages will fail again!

Ok- so what do we do if we find ourselves in a dangerous or extremely unhealthy, volatile marriage? Well, Scripture speaks to that also. God would never expect a woman or man to stay in a relationship of abuse. He provides an answer in His Word.

5. In Matthew 5:32, we see that marital infidelity is the only reason Jesus gives for biblical grounds for divorce. In 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, we find some further instructions for married believers. We find some help concerning separation and reunification. What are the principles here?

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In some cases, where abuse is prevalent in the home, separation may be the last resort toward saving a marriage. The Bible calls us to be at peace with all men if possible; when that isn't possible because one of the partners in the marriage has some serious bondage or abuse issues, there may come a time where separation is needed. The important thing to note here is the heart and motives of the one leaving. They must leave with an attitude towards reconciliation and not divorce.

They must use this window of time through separation as a battle ground to win their spouse for Christ. Separation is never meant to be a trial run towards divorce. The Lord's heart is always to SAVE. I have seen Him save them over and over through marriages that I deemed too messy or broken! He tenderly and delicately restores broken lives and breathes new life in marriages that were once dead, broken, and lifeless. **HE IS THE GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE!!!**

Dear one, if your marriage is lifeless - don't give up! I have seen Him breathe life into marriages that have been dead for over 20 years, and now they beat with the love of the Lord! Surrender to His ways of restoration. He has the ability to fix what men can't.

If, in the end, the marriages dissolves even after your best effort, God has a glorious future ahead for you! He will bless you, give you new life, protect your children, and provide all you need to lead a full rich life in Him! He's the best at restoration and redemption! Remember, He is always for YOU in all He does!

6. According to 1 Corinthians 7:12-13, are we to stay committed to a nonbeliever or a believer that doesn't act like one? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? What does this have the power to do (v.14)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What happens to our children when we stick it out.14b)?  
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My husband, Brad, is a testimony of this Scripture! My mother-in-law has been married to a nonbeliever for over 50 years, and he has yet to claim Christ as his Savior. She could have left him many times through the years, but out of obedience to her Lord, she stayed and loved and served him. I want to list for you the blessings that I see came from her obedience.

If this is currently your story, if you are living with one that doesn't honor God, I hope you will see hope for your future through this list!

**My mother –in- law currently has:**

- \* All four children saved and their children saved (25 immediate family members in all).
- \* She had the privilege of being apart of each one's salvation (her children are holy= v.14).
- \* Her husband's heart has softened over the years toward spiritual things, and he has been apart of the spiritual blessings she receives from God for her obedience (sanctification v.14).
- \* She has the blessing of having her family united, which wouldn't have occurred if she had decided to leave.
- \* She has been honored before the Lord as she teaches Bible Studies to other women and encourages them in their faith and obedience.
- \* Her testimony has POWER because she lives what she preaches.
- \* She lives in joy and under the favor of the Lord because she obeys His statutes and commands.
- \* She will one day stand before Him and hear, "Well done good and faithful servant!"

As I am writing this, I have to just stop. The Holy Spirit has impressed upon me that there are many reading this that secretly wish divorce could be their answer. I am going on my knees for you right at this moment! Satan would love to sift you like wheat!

**Oh Lord! I pray for these that are hurting deeply who struggle and endure - many times alone- through deep, emotional pain. Help them, Lord, to endure, to persevere, and to find hope through the touch of your Spirit. Fill them with your grace and infuse them with your power that they might be able to be a pillar of righteousness in their homes. They need an extra portion of your grace to find hope in hopeless situations. Give them new eyes, spiritual eyes to see their worth and their future promises for those who endure. Grant them an extra measure of favor as they, in faith, stick it out! Bless them for their tenacity and willingness to push through the hard stuff and not quit. Let them know how proud of them You are. Draw them up close, Lord, so they will believe that You will never fail them! Let them feel Your presence and know beyond doubt that You will bring fruit from their**

**obedience, and their families will be sanctified through them! Lift the yoke of burden as they often feel alone in this mountain climb. Be their constant companion. Amen!**

O.k. let's finish with one last point!

9. There is another reason Jesus states that divorce is permitted. Desertion or abandonment is a reason God allows a dissolution of a marriage. We can see that here in 1 Corinthians 7:15. What is the principle?

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No one can force a partner to stay. There have been women who have had their husbands just leave; they refuse to live with them any longer. After time passes, it becomes evident he doesn't want to return, or he remarries. She is then free to remarry herself.

To all of us who are married - the goal should be "How can I make my marriage better?", not "How can I get out of this one and on to another one?".

**I once heard a pastor say, "Adultery is grounds for divorce, but it's also grounds for forgiveness!"**

That's great! Sounds like the heart of God to me. God would always prefer restoration and redemption over the death of a relationship. Many marriages have worked through infidelity and have been redeemed, and their marriage is now stronger than ever. Our hearts should first beat towards reconciliation until that is clearly not an option.

#### **→Return to Matthew 5:33-37 - Oaths**

These next few Scriptures are Jesus' teachings on using oaths to affirm that what we say is true.

Some call them oaths; others call it swearing by the name of the Lord. The issue is using the name of a person supposedly with greater credibility to preface your statement to give your words more weight.

People in the Bible used oaths at times to affirm what they said to be true. They applied an oath to signify that what they were saying was the absolute truth.

Our character should be that we shouldn't have to swear by any oath to give our words credibility.

I think these were Jesus' thoughts too.

7. What is Jesus' answer to this practice? Matthew 5:37

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William Barclay says, "We will regard all promises as sacred if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God."

**Jesus' thoughts on retaliation – Matthew 5:38-42**

8. What does retaliation mean to you?

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9. What does the phrase mean "an eye for an eye" mean?

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When was the last time God called you to "turn the other cheek"?  
What was the hardest part of doing that?

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There is a law mandating the rights of those who have been a victim. We can see this one and others in Exodus 21:24-25. These were put into law, not as mandates, but to create limits! Without such laws, the victim would be tempted to retaliate with fury and punish beyond what the offense deserved.

***\*\*When self-interest dominates, justice is replaced by vengeance.***

10. Where do our quarrels come from (James 4:1-2)?

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11. Instead of retaliation, what would the Lord have our attitudes be toward our enemies (Proverbs 25:21-22)?

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We need to leave the defense of our dignity and character in God's hands.

Your Pastor Kenny commonly says, "If we will see to God's reputation, He will see to ours!"  
Great point!



Jesus moves on from there to the topic of love. This is where we will find some of the most well-known verses in the Bible, but I tell you, v.44 is one of the most difficult to perform, at least apart from the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

12. Let's fill in the blanks... maybe you could do it with a red pen...something that stands out!  
v.44 – “But I say to you, \_\_\_\_\_ your enemies, \_\_\_\_\_ those who curse you, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ to those who hate you, and \_\_\_\_\_ for those who spitefully use you and  
persecute you.”

13. When our actions are like Christ's, what shall we be called (V.45)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Christian love is an act of our will, not just an emotion!**

14. Love is not reserved for only those we get along with. We are to love those who treat us unkindly, and those who don't particularly like us. This is so unlike the world that loves with condition; if you are nice to me, I will be nice to you. What does Matthew 5:46-47 call us as believers to do differently?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

William Barclay says this about this kind of “*agape*” love.

“*Agape* is the word used here for love in these verses. If we regard a person with *agape*, it means that no matter what that person does to us, no matter how he treats us, no matter if he insults us or injures us or grieves us, we will never allow any *bitterness* against him to invade our hearts, but will regard him with that unconquerable benevolence and goodwill which will seek nothing but their highest good.”

“*Agape*” is not a feeling of the heart, it means a determination of the mind, whereby we achieve this unconquerable goodwill even to those who hurt and injure us. *Agape* is the power to love those whom we do not like and who may not like us. In fact, we only have *agape* when Jesus enables us to conquer our natural tendency to anger and to bitterness and are able to treat them with kindness and goodwill.”

Let's look at HOW we are told to love. In v.44 we have four action commands.

Love is best described by what it does.

I know God loves me because what He has done for me. In the same way, you can prove your love for another by what actions you take towards them.

15. Who did God embrace with His love (John 3:16)?

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16. Does God love only those who love Him? Look through Romans 5:8-10.

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John MacArthur makes this comment on how a believer is to love:

“Love’s question is never who to love- because we are to love everyone- but the question is how to love most helpfully. We are not to love merely in terms of feeling but in terms of service. Those who refuse to trust God are His enemies... but He is not theirs. In the same way we are not to be the enemies of those who may be enemies to us. From their perspective, we are their enemies; but from our perspective, they should be our neighbors (Therefore fulfilling the Old Testament command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” in Lev. 19:17-18).”

Showing our love by consciously doing the following things is real agape love:

We are called to BLESS our enemies (Matthew 5:44)!

We are to help provide goodness to them, and through those acts of goodness, our enemies will be set free from their hateful ways.

17. Have you experienced the power that love has when you return blessing for insult?  
Share:

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We aren’t necessarily called to love our enemies with our nearest and dearest emotion, but by our will. Some might feel that this is hypocritical, but it isn’t. It’s God’s way. Satan will even try to get you to believe that you cannot act upon something you don’t feel. He would love you to believe that, then no love would be shown and disunity would prevail. If we wait until we FEEL like loving our enemy, we will never get past conditional love.

I have a person in my life that was very hard to love at one point. God has done a great work after years of the Lord teaching me what it means to love with my actions- unconditionally - expecting nothing in return. Today, we have a very close, supernatural relationship. No, he still isn’t saved. In fact, he hasn’t changed very much at all. God has changed me, though, and given me a supernatural love for him that will never go away. I LOVE that man today. I mean, he is very dear to me! It’s crazy; even as the words are being typed, I can’t believe they are true!

I was waiting for this irregular person to change and see the errors of his ways (isn’t that the way we usually view things)? Well, as I look back, he is still the same in most ways. What changed? ME!!!

I learned what it means to love those who are hard to love, and this lesson has served me well in life.

You know, the ones that need it the most are the ones that deserve it the least. They have often run off all potential friends and are frequently very lonely people inside, although through their hard exteriors you would never guess it. As the Lord asked me to take baby steps with my ACTIONS of love, I began to see the hardness this person held for me melt away. This was a slow-coming process, you know. I didn't see any progression for a long while. I just had to keep planting seeds of love through action and good will towards them, no matter what their response was, and sometimes it wasn't very well-received!

I remember the Holy Spirit prompting me one day, saying, "Teri, I'm calling you to be the bigger person here; after all, someone has to represent Christ and His character! I'm calling you to do something different than the world expects you to do, what he expects you to do". Those words are the same words we find here in Matthew 5:47. "What do you *do more* than others?" Even the world loves those that love them." I was called to speak well of him and do good things for him. That was something I could only accomplish with the empowering of the Holy Spirit- my personal counselor, my personal friend! My flesh wanted to run him over with my car! God will equip you with the same power to love. You can love that irregular person in Jesus name!

21. We are also called to DO GOOD TO THEM (Matthew 5:44).

Let's look at some verses about doing good to our enemies:

Luke 6:38

Romans 12:17-21

1 Corinthians 4:12

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

The last action we are to take toward our enemies according to Matthew 5:44 is to PRAY for them.

***When you pray for an enemy, it takes the poison out of our attitudes toward them. It's difficult to pray fervently for them and still hate them.***

Why should we love in this way?

Three reasons;

1. Love is a sign of maturity and character in a believer, proving we are sons/daughters of God.
2. It is Godlike.
3. It's a testimony to others. We should have a much higher standard than the world.

**Wrapping it up and making it personal!**

If I belittle those whom I am called to serve, talk of their weak points in contrast perhaps with what I think of as my strong points; if I adopt a superior attitude, forgetting "who made thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou has not received?" Then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I take offense easily, if I am content in a cool unfriendliness, though friendship be possible, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I feel bitterly towards those who condemn me, as it seems to me, unjustly, forgetting that if they knew me as I know myself they would condemn me much more, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

- Amy Carmichael-

Oh, that poem was a great reminder of how alike we really are. We are all wicked in need of forgiveness, and no one owns any more goodness in them than the next guy! We are blessed that know the Lord and live under His care.

Who is it that needs some of your attention, forgiveness and good will? I know they probably don't deserve your kind actions and goodness but how will it draw them to our Savior? How will it reunite a family or community? How can we deny our neighbors our goodwill when Christ has never shut His hand of blessing to us -not once?

May the Holy Spirit prompt us all this week to love the unlovable, to love, bless, do good, and to pray for those who send us persecution! We are never more like our Lord when we do so!

I pray your week will be extremely fruitful, Sisters!

