



10: Promise Keepers (Matthew 5:31-37)

"My word is my bond."

That's a claim we rarely hear, and even more rarely see lived out in our culture. Intentional or not, breaking our promises will negatively affect our relationships. Today we discover the importance of being Promise Keepers.

beourguest

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Jesus thinks promises made to God & people are really important.

BIG TRUTH: When we keep our promises we point to the Ultimate Promise Keeper.

When we don't...then we don't.

The Author of Scriptures

If Jesus is not just the interpreter of Scripture, but *the AUTHOR of Scripture - the One who inspired the Scripture to be written* - then we **MUST** see **divorce** through through HIS eyes.

- ③ Is divorce allowed for any reason? Can a divorced person remarry in God's eyes? Let's see what the **AUTHOR** of Scripture has to say.

Matthew 5:31 (NIV)

It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' [from Deut 24:1]

Only the man could initiate divorce. The husband would present a **certificate of divorce** to his wife before witnesses, clearly stating that she was released from him and able to marry another.¹ On rare occasions, the woman could petition the court for divorce and if her plea was accepted, the court would order the man to give the woman a certificate of divorce.²

This document protected the woman, allowing her to remarry. Otherwise, women would have very few options to provide for themselves and their children - leaving some with the only option of prostitution.

Moses on Divorce

Deuteronomy 24:1 (NIV) If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and **he writes her a certificate of divorce**, gives it to her and sends her from his house...

What does displeasing or indecent mean?

In Jesus' day there was a long standing controversy over what something **displeasing** or **indecent** meant.

- Some took the ultimate liberal slant of **Rabbi Hillel**, who said a man could divorce for spoiling a meal.
 - **Rabbi Aquiba** said a man could divorce his wife if he found someone else prettier than her.
 - The more conservative **Rabbi Shammai** said divorce was only an option because of the act of adultery.³
- › This is the environment Jesus is weighing in on.

Jesus reminds the people that **God's view of marriage is intended to be a lifelong covenant.**

¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 120.

² Ibid.

³ Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah : A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 487.

Jesus on Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage

Matthew 19:3-9 (NIV)

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore **what God has joined together, let no one separate.**"

"**Why** then," they asked, "**did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce** and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and **marries another woman commits adultery.**"

› Marriage is intended to be one man and one woman for one lifetime.

Jesus is not focused on why a person might GET OUT of marriage, but why a person should STAY IN marriage.

The man who **divorces his wife** without Biblical grounds, who then **marries another** commits adultery.

How could that be? Simple. God doesn't recognize the previous marriage as being over, so the husband or wife being intimate with another person...**commits ADULTERY**.

Different Location, Same Teaching

Matthew 5:31-32 (NIV)

It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' **But I tell you** that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of **adultery**, and anyone who marries a divorced woman **commits adultery**.

Since God still sees her married to the other man, this also causes her to commit **adultery**.

Marriage is intended to be one man and one woman for one lifetime.

But marriage is more than just about a man, a woman, & family.

☀ **Denny Burk:** "Our marriages were always meant to be about this other marriage (Eph. 5 - the mystery of Christ and the Church)...Our marriages are supposed to be saying something about the gospel...marriages are supposed to be these little dramas of redemption put on display for the world."⁴

BIG TRUTH: When we keep our promises we point to the Ultimate Promise Keeper.

Jesus is our Ultimate Promise Keeper. We have the privilege and responsibility to point to the ONE who can forgive our disobedience - lust, slander, sexual impurity, adultery, & unbiblical divorce, etc.

When IS remarriage recognized by God?

> Listen to more from our **1 Corinthians series** last year, in a teaching called "Devoted or Distracted".

The bond between husband and wife is only dissolved by death, adultery, abandonment, or abuse.

- The Scriptures say that the **death** of a spouse means a person may be remarried.
- Jesus has just mentioned **adultery** in the text we are studying.
- Paul further mentions **abandonment** as another legitimate reason for divorce & remarriage (1 Cor 7:15-16).
- Although not specifically mentioned in Scripture, a spouse may divorce the husband/wife who **abuses** and **endangers** the family. This man/woman has broken their vows to love, provide, and protect. Without a time of separation, protection, and proof of change, a quick apology is not enough.

What if someone has divorced and remarried outside of these allowed exceptions?

Jackie's take...not the Lord's, and not Paul's - they don't speak to it. STAY in your marriage and honor the Lord with it for the rest of you life!

- **Is your marriage in trouble?** You might be PERMITTED to divorce and remarry, but that doesn't mean you are COMMANDED to. If your spouse is willing to turn from their sin against you, **make the effort to restore relationship. THAT is the heartbeat of God.**
- Are you **already divorced**? Have you done all you can to reconcile the relationship...even now?
- If you have Biblical grounds for divorce or your previous spouse has remarried, and YOU desire to remarry... do it God's way! Seek a Godly mate. Take things slow. Walk in purity. And then...in time...**COMMIT FOR LIFE!**



DEVOTED or
DSITRACTED

⁴ interviewed by Greg Koukl on podcast ("Denny Burk - The Meaning of Sex")

Taking Oaths & Being Honest

Matthew 5:33-37 (NIV)

Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, '*Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.*' But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Is it wrong to make a verbal oath to tell the truth or sign a written oath on a document promising to pay?

In order to understand what Jesus is saying, we need to consider His cultural context. First, Jesus is quoting & noting what the Scriptures say about oaths, when He says, "Do not break an oath, but fulfill your vows to the Lord" found in Num. 30:2, & Deut. 23:21, & Lev. 19:12. Once again, Jesus speaks to the intention of what is written in the Scriptures. Here are some examples Jesus is likely referring to.

Numbers 30:1-2 (NIV) This is what the LORD commands: **When a man makes a vow to the LORD** or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, **he must not break his word** but must do everything he said.

Deuteronomy 23:21-22 (NIV) **If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it**, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But **if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty.**

Leviticus 19:11-12 (NIV) "Do not steal. "Do not lie. "Do not deceive one another. "Do not swear falsely **by My Name** and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

God doesn't command His people to never swear an oath or make a vow, but **He does command His people to fulfill what they promise to do.** The person who violates the oath made before God, has now invited His judgment.

Dishonest Oaths vs Honest Words

Matthew 5:34-37 (NIV)

But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either **by heaven**, for it is God's throne; or **by the earth**, for it is his footstool; or **by Jerusalem**, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear **by your head**, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. **All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'**; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

This issue is **NOT** about making a promise in God's name, but making a **false promise** in God's name. When one swore to God to fulfill a vow, it needed to happen. When one swore to God to fulfill a promise to another person (e.g. a spouse, a employer/ee, a family member or friend) it needed to happen.

In Jesus' day the people had come up with **elaborate ways to make and break promises** without getting in trouble for it, like many politicians in our day. This resulted in a culture that was experiencing what MacArthur calls a "drought of truth."⁵ Instead of swearing falsely in God's name, they simply took oaths that **didn't** involve God's name; calling on **heaven** (often a synonym for God), **earth, Jerusalem**, or even by their own **heads**.

☛ **Kent Hughes** says they were like children saying, "*I know I promised, but I had my fingers crossed.*"⁶

Heaven is God's throne. Earth is God's footstool. Jerusalem is God's city. And **your head** is God's creation.

☛ **William Barclay**: "We will regard all promises as sacred if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God."⁷

Followers of Jesus are to recognize that **ALL promises are made in the presence of God.**

Matthew 5:37 (NIV)

All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

✓ **Followers of Jesus are to be known as PROMISE KEEPERS who speak the TRUTH.**

Those who make oaths, vows, or promises **without following through** are following the example of **the evil one** - Satan - "the father of lies." (Jn 8:44). God hates a lying lips (Prov. 6:16-17, 12:22).

BIG TRUTH: When we keep our promises we point to the Ultimate Promise Keeper.

⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Matthew, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 321.

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 124.

⁷ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew, 2 vols.* [rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 1:160.

Jesus is more than the *interpreter* of Scripture. **Jesus is the AUTHOR of Scripture and the Ultimate Promise Keeper.**

- Jesus CREATED marriage & RESTORES marriages.
- Jesus fulfilled past promises to come to Earth and be the substitute sacrifice for our sins. And Jesus will fulfill His future promises to return & redeem us.

BIG TRUTH: When we keep our promises we point to the Ultimate Promise Keeper.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ① **Are you being faithful in your marriage?** Will you forgive & FIGHT for your marriage, doing all you can do to be reconciled before giving up?
- ② **Do your friends & co-workers, brothers and sisters in Christ, children, & grandchildren, know that your word is your bond?** Do they SEE your trust in the Ultimate Promise Keeper by how you keep YOUR promises?
- ③ **Are YOU trusting the Ultimate Promise Keeper to be faithful to fulfill what He has promised?** Have you bowed your knee before Him?

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: Alan & Christy Androski (850-464-1428), Steve & Debbie Bass (850-673-7952), Freddy & Joyce Howard (850-973-0047), Tim & Joni Hughey (850-464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (850-253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (850-464-6717), or Tom & Martha Waddail (850-973-0011).

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What challenged or encouraged you most from today's teaching? (You might need to look back in your notes to help explain your answer.)
2. The **BIG TRUTH** from this passage is: **When we keep our promises we point to the Ultimate Promise Keeper.** How is this the case? How likely are others to consider our Savior if WE aren't trustworthy?
3. **Read Matthew 5:31-32 & Matthew 19:3-6.** How easy was it in Jesus' day and our day to get a divorce, and what did Jesus think about that? Although there are biblical exceptions that allow for remarriage, why should a person be quick to try to restore their marriage instead of leaving to find another spouse?
4. **Read Ephesians 4:22-33.** How is marriage supposed to be a mirror image of Jesus and His Church?
5. **Read Num 30:1-2, Deut 23:21-22, & Lev 19:11-12 & Matthew 5:33-37.** Since the Scriptures don't condemn making vows or taking an oath, why did Jesus seem to? What does Jesus expect from His followers regarding the integrity of their words?
6. How should a Christian's marriage and words be an example to our watching world? Share how someone who has been a good example in either/both of these areas.
7. Share prayer needs and pray for one another.