

Uprooting Duplicity — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 5:31–37 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, April 26, 2026 • Healing The Heart

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Well thanks to the team for leading us in worship. If you've got a Bible, you can open it to Matthew chapter 5. We're going to be in Matthew chapter 5 this morning in verses 31 to 37. And as you're turning there, it was October 11th, 1975, when a young lawyer from Arkansas got married to a young w Lady named Hillary, that Arkansas lawyer would 17 years later become the president of the united States. And it would make the second covenant that he professed 17 years before that marriage covenant before a preacher and a handful of family and friends.

That president, of course, is president Bill Clinton. And the covenant he made to Hillary in 1975 was accompanied with the oath he swore to serve and defend the Constitution of the united States and serve as our commander in chief. And both of those covenants came under public scrutiny a couple of years after his after he began as president in nineteen ninety-eight, there was a investigation into a relationship between president Bill Clinton and an intern, I think it was an unpaid intern, Monica Lewinsky, who was serving for the chief of Staff Leon Panetta at the time.

She had just been reassigned to the Pentagon because white House staffers noticed there was a little bit too much friendly attention between her and the president. And Monica Lewinsky later confided in with one of her friends in secretly recorded tapes, which at the time she did not know were being recorded and expressly asked not to be recorded. But those tapes were recorded and she divulged the details of that adulterous affair and Ken Starr used those tapes. To bring a public trial against Bill Clinton, which culminated in an impeachment trial, and the Senate ultimately vindicated him.

I bring all that up to say that in 1998, I think it was in January twenty-sixth, nineteen ninety-eight, Bill Clinton waved his finger in front of the cameras and said of the accusations against him that he did not have. Sexual relations with that woman. I did not have sexual relations with that woman to give my Bill Clinton person. Miss Lewinsky. These accusations are false. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time, never except the allegations were not

false. And Bill Clinton's statement, even though it was technically true had been carefully parsed so as to say something while simultaneously meaning the opposite of what he said.

Now, this is not just true of Democratic politicians. Republican politicians are just as guilty of using speech to lead people to believe one thing while simultaneously taking them a completely different direction. The duplicity of Bill Clinton was a public stain on his on his image. It wasn't just the adulterous affair. But it was the duplicitous cover-up that followed after the fact. And when he was pressured in his deposition, two different examples that I think are pertinent to our passage today. He was pressed, why did you say to the public you did not have sexual relations with that woman?

And he quibbled on the technical definition of sexual relations. And because what he had engaged in sexually was not of a certain type of sexual relation, then he was valid in saying what he said. And then in a deposition about Paula Jones and totally separate matter, they brought up Monica Lewinsky. And he submitted a statement that said there is no sexual relations at all, zero, none. And when the prosecutors pressed his lawyers and Bill Clinton on that false statement that there is no sexual anything between him and Lewinsky. He said.

Well it depends on what the definition of is. And what he meant by that is there was sexual encounters between me and Mr. Lewinsky, but right now we're not doing anything. And again, he was parsing English words and through trickery and deceit, saying one thing and being technically accurate in his words while simultaneously being functionally deceptive. Now again, I could pull up just as many Republican politicians. My goal is not to be partisan or even to make a political statement because what we see on a public stage with president Clinton happens.

Every day in living rooms, in church houses, in office spaces, we use words not to convey truths, but rather to conceal them. News organizations today take factual information and package the facts within narratives and then through those narratives spin the facts so that they might even say the opposite. Of what they actually entail. We live in a post-truth society. We especially young people today with the rise of artificial intelligence and deep fakes. People are really beginning to question, is there, not only is there truth, but if there is a truth, can it even be known?

How can I ever know with certainty that anything really is what it professes to be? And that duplicity compromises integrity. And integrity is something we all need, and it's one thing our culture needs if we're going to have a life-giving culture and if you're going to live a flourishing life. That integrity gets compromised through duplicity. And that's what we're going to look at this morning. Uprooting duplicity and promoting integrity. So if you're taking notes, if you go to the next slide, integrity is compromised by duplicity. Where if you're new to Broadview, we're going through the Sermon on the Mount, and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus cast a vision for a life of flourishing, and he gives in the Sermon on the

Mount what that flourishing life looks like, and he was very shocking in some of the things that he said and that a flourishing life doesn't come through power and wealth and prestige and things like that, but rather it is blessed are the poor in spirit.

They're the ones that have the flourishing life. It's those who mourn and the meek and the peacemakers and the mercy givers, those are the ones who inherit God's kingdom, and therefore those are the ones who experience a flourishing life, because true flourishing is found in the kingdom of God. Now we are not in the first century context, and most of us were not raised Jewish, and so we don't have the background knowledge that they would have had in that in that original audience of Matthew But they were eagerly awaiting the kingdom of God because they knew that when the kingdom of God comes, there's going to be a king that sits on that throne and he's going to establish peace on the earth.

Through the just administration of that kingdom culture. And Jesus, when he comes on the scene, basically says, I am the king of that kingdom, and I am going to establish that peace on earth, but I'm going to do it through a certain kind of people who recover God's original purpose for the Old Testament law and for what human flourishing was supposed to look like. And so in the Sermon on the Mount, he's essentially saying, this is what the kingdom of God is. These are the people who inherit it. And this is how I want you to live if you want to position yourself to benefit.

And the last couple of weeks we've looked at six different illustrations from the Old Testament that Jesus uses to really give concrete examples of what kingdom righteousness looks like. Righteousness sounds like a theological word. It just means to live right, to do right, to be rightly related to God and other people. And the Jewish people in the first century, especially the Jewish leaders, had kind of advocated a form of righteousness that Jesus says was deficient. Because it was only focused on the behavior, it was only focused on the rules and the regulations, and it was not focused on the human heart.

And the law of God was always originally given to heal the heart and govern the heart and bring the heart into right relationship with God. And so what we're going to see Jesus do today is address that with the issue of honesty, integrity, and keeping our commitments. A flourishing life, and this is true for every single one of us, whether you're a Christian or not. If you want a flourishing life, a flourishing life comes through keeping our commitments. And Jesus makes that statement with murder and anger and contempt. He makes that similar statement with lust and adultery.

We looked at those of the last two weeks. This week he's going to basically argue for this premise of how to flourish through honesty and integrity, but he's going to do so by dealing with two thorny issues and that is the issue of divorce and remarriage and the issue of making an oath or keeping an oath. And it's not lost on me that for many of us in this room,

you've been personally impacted by divorce. Some of you are just on the other end of a divorce. And have the scars to prove it.

Some of you are currently going through a divorce and you know the emotional toll that it takes and the kind of collateral damage that is associated with that kind of a process. And so my goal this morning is not to add pain in any way. My goal is not to contribute to the hurt that you may be feeling. And unfortunately, I think a lot of people have used the passage that we're about to read to say of what Jesus is saying that which he never said. And so it's important that we understand what he's actually saying, what that what those words meant in their original context to their original audience.

And in both ways, both with divorce and with keeping oaths, he is going to establish what true righteousness looks like and true righteousness entails keeping our commitments. So let's read the passage starting in verse 31. He had just dealt with anger, divorce, and I'm sorry, anger and adultery. In verse 31, he concludes the first triad with this statement. It was also said, whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice, or some translations will say a written certificate of divorce. But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery.

And whoever marries a divorced woman, that man commits adultery. Again, you have heard it said, or again you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, you must not break your oaths. But you must keep your oaths to the Lord. But I tell you, don't take an oath at all, either by heaven, because it's God's throne, or by the earth, because it's his footstool, or by Jerusalem, because it's the city of the great king. Don't swear by your head because you can't make a single hair white or black, but let your yes mean yes and let your no mean no.

Anything more than this is from the evil one. Now the reason I'm dealing with these two together is because I think they are a hinge on this entire unit of what Jesus describes with the six different issues. There are two sets of three. Most commentators agree with that. And divorce closes the first triad and making oaths opens the second triad. But they are a hinge of r of kingdom integrity and that if you're going to inherit a kingdom life, you've got to have true integrity. You've got to be pure in heart.

As well as merciful and a peacemaker. So anger dealt with mercy, lust dealt with purity of heart. Now we're really getting to the real issue of integrity. And whether it is divorce after the fact or oath making before the fact, both divorces and oaths are trying to deal with the problem. And the problem that they're trying to deal with is the problem of human failure. Specifically, humans failing to keep their word. When it comes to a divorce certificate, it's after the fact. You made a promise that you would, until death do us part, be with the person.

And then you're no longer going to make good on that word, and so the divorce certificate is cover to say, I'm breaking my word, but here's a legal recourse to make it right. Oaths are s

very similar except they're not after the fact. Oaths are before the fact as an additional layer of protection essentially saying, I know that humans have a tendency to break their word, so to prevent that from happening, we're going to make an oath. And that oath is going to provide an additional layer of protection. Before just like divorce certificates provide protection after the fact.

And so they're very, very similar, even though on the surface they may not be. And they're both dealing with this problem of humans not keeping their word. And in both cases, what Jesus does is he attacks the scribes and the Pharisees because of their insistence that true righteousness is at the level of technicalities. They were so obsessed with legal technicalities in the Mosaic law and the oral tradition that through their loopholes and concessions they had totally missed God's original design. And Jesus is going to rebuke them for that because of that tendency.

They did that same thing with murder and anger, and they did that same thing with adultery and lust. And now Jesus is saying, here you go again, focusing on the loopholes and concessions instead of God's design. And your insistence to make it all about the loopholes has thwarted what God has intended to do. God wants to bless you, he wants to give you a flourishing life, but you'll never find a flourishing life through your obsession on these concessions. And so I'm going to start with what he says in verse 33, because what I think he says about oaths really frames up nicely what he says about divorce.

So he says in verse 33, again you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, you must not break your oaths. You must not break your oaths, but you must keep your oaths to the Lord. Now this phrase here is a summation, you might say. Of three different Old Testament passages that are in a footnote in your Bible. If you look at the little letter at the end of the verse, it'll take you to the bottom and show you Leviticus 19 and Numbers 30 and one other passage. I'm not going to list them all, but I do have Leviticus 19.

The Old Testament never really prohibited making oaths. In fact, they made a lot of oaths. There was just one qualification. If you're going to make an oath. Do not make an oath to the Lord. Because if you make an oath to the Lord and don't keep your oath, you're going to end up blaspheming the name of God. And you know from the ten Commandments, that's one of the big ten. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. People wrongly assume that Exodus 27 is about saying God before you say the D word when you stub your toe.

But that's not really the fullness of what it means to take the name of God in vain. You should not say God D word. You shouldn't say the D word either. But that's only one example of using God's name in vain. Really, what it means to take the name of God in vain is to assign to God that which he does not agree. It is to put on to God something which he

would have nothing to do with. So for example, if you were going to do something really sinful with your life, maybe you know, do something immoral.

And then before you acted, you said to everyone around you, I just feel like God's really calling me to do this thing with my life when what you're going to do is a sin against God. That is what you're doing is evil, it's sinful, and it's even doubly so because you used God's name to justify what God has nothing to do with. You're assigning to God that which he does not agree. And that's what it means to take the name of God in vain. It's to flippantly throw God's name out there.

Such that he gets associated with things that he doesn't have anything to do with. And people do this all the time with all sorts of different things, whether it's justifying their sinful actions or you know, kind of adding credibility to their so-called cause. You know, you're very passionate about a cause and it's good to be passionate about causes, but if you try to put God on top of your cause to make your cause even bigger, that is a way of using the name of God in vain. Well they did the Jewish people were super careful.

Of not being guilty of that big sin because it's one of the big ten Commandments we don't want to be guilty. And so instead of swearing to God, they would come up with alternatives. And we do this today, but we kind of do it in reverse. They would say, I'm not going to swear to God, but I'm going to swear to heaven. Because swearing to heaven is like swearing to God, but not actually saying God's name. We do that in reverse, at least I did, when I was a kid. If you wanted someone to believe in what you were saying, you would say, I swear on my life didn't anybody else do this?

Is this just me? I cross my heart, hope to die, stick needles in my eye, whatever that means. Or, because I grew up in the church, we would swear on the Bible. If you really wanted to convince someone that you were serious, you say, swear on the word of God. And my mom didn't like that, but or if you really, really were serious, you would even swear to God, which you shouldn't do. Or you would say, I swear on my mother's grave. Which I think's weird because she's not even well, mine wasn't even dead yet when I said that.

It's like prematurely burying my mother. So for those of you who've lost your mom, you know how just insensitive that could be. But what we were doing was we were working from the bottom up. What the Jewish people would do is they would work from the top down. So they would start with, I swear by heaven. And you see Jesus do this in the Sermon on the Mount. He says, don't swear by heaven. Well they say, okay, well I won't swear by heaven, I'll swear by the next layer down. I swear by the earth.

And Jesus says, don't swear by earth either. Okay, not earth, then I'll swear by Jerusalem. And if not Jerusalem, then I'm going to swear on my own life. I'll swear on the hairs of my head, which is a way of saying I swear on my life. And Jesus essentially exposes that what

may have begun as a well-intended caution had ended up becoming a grounds for immorality. Because they had come up with these silly rules and I'm going to use a fancy word, it's the word casuistic. It's a word that means using fancy or creative speech to lead people astray.

It's exactly what president Clinton was doing in his depositions. It's saying something technically accurate, but doing it in such a way that you're not bound by what you say. In fact, you might be meaning the opposite of what you say. That's casuistry or casuistic speech. And they had done that in the first century, particularly the scribes and the Pharisees. And their casuistic words had become a justification for dishonesty. And Jesus rebukes this specifically later in Matthew's gospel. If you'll turn to Matthew twenty three, you'll get an example of what that looked like.

He rebukes them in Matthew 23 and says, you and your silly rules. If you go to the next slide Woe to you, blind fools, who say, whoever takes an oath by the temple, that doesn't mean anything. But if you take an oath by the gold of the temple, well then you're bound by your oath. You have to hit the spacebar one more time. I don't know why it's doing that. So essentially they had come up with these rules that said, you can swear by the temple and not have to keep your word, but if you swear by the gold in the temple, then you have to keep your word.

Now on the surface to us that sounds like total nonsense, but it was coming from that Old Testament restriction of not profaning the name of God. And they were saying, there are some things you can swear by that profane the name of God, but then there are other things you can swear by that that don't profane the name of God. And they were trying to find the tension between being persuasive and giving emphasis, but restraining against blasphemy. And profaning the name of God. And Jesus says, that's silly. Which is better, you blind fools, which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

The one who takes an oath by the temple takes an oath by the temple and by him who dwells in the temple. And the one who takes an oath by heaven takes an oath by God's throne, which heaven is God's throne. And by him who sits on it. In other words, Jesus is saying there is no creative speech that somehow gives you a license to break your words. You can't say because I didn't swear by the temple or the gold of the temple that I'm therefore morally permitted to break my commitment that's what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

He says, don't swear by heaven because it's the throne of God. Don't swear by earth because it's God's footstool. Don't swear by Jerusalem because it's the city of God's great king. And don't swear by your head. Because you can't even determine whether your hair is gray or black. That's something that is in the hands of God to much of your chagrin and dismay. You know, you can't decide what color hair you're going to have, which is Jesus' way of

saying everything is God's. The temple is God's, your head is God's, the city of Jerusalem is God's, everything is God's.

And so your misguided notion by this technical loophole that you can not swear to God by swearing to God is ridiculous. And as a result of your obsession about these loopholes and concessions, you've missed the heart of God and you're cut off from the kingdom. And so don't even swear an oath. That's what Jesus is trying to say. Rather, Christians should just speak the truth. Christians should be known for credible speech. Jesus says at the end, there in Matthew. 537, but let your yes mean yes, and let your no mean no.

Anything more than this is from the evil one. Now he's not Jesus is not saying you can't be a person that talks a lot although your husband may wish that's what he was saying. What he's saying is your words should communicate your heart that whatever it is that you say, it is that which you mean. And what you mean to say, you will use words that convey that. And you won't use words that convey the opposite. Let your yes mean yes. Let your no mean no. In other words, Christians should be known for credible speech.

We should be the kind of people who if we say something, the thing that we say isn't hard to understand. Hide it in codes and funny phrases. We let our yes mean yes and our no mean no. And Jesus says anything more than that is satanic. It's from the evil one, which is a favorite phrase of Matthew's. He does the same thing in the Lord's Prayer, and what he means by that is the way that Satan lies is through casuistic speech. Satan does not lie, Satan does not tempt us with outright lies and deception.

What Satan likes to do is use truth and then twist it. He'll twist scripture and quote it so that it is suggesting what it doesn't say, or he'll take general truth about reality. And use it to impugn God's character. You see this in the Garden of Eden, when the serpent was tempting Eve He said, did God really say you can't eat from any tree in the garden? Well, God did say you can't eat from one tree, but he didn't say any tree, so he's twisting it just a bit. You won't surely die.

Meaning you're not going to die physically, which fact check true, but they would die spiritually. God doesn't want you to eat from the tree because he knows when you eat of it, you're going to be like him. And you're going to know the difference between good and evil. Again, fact check true, but the assumption what Satan was doing is he was using truth to impugn God's character, to say God doesn't love you and he doesn't want what's best for you and he you could be better and greater but God's prohibiting that when the reality is that God was trying to protect her.

He was trying to keep her innocent, trying to keep them in a state of holiness and righteousness. And so Satan used technically true words to lead them astray. It's satanic. And he does the same thing in the wilderness in Matthew chapter 4. And that's what Jesus is

restricting us from doing. He's not saying you can't take an oath. He's not saying you can't serve in the military. He's not saying you can't be a politician. Lord knows we need some Christian politicians to fix things. He's not saying any of that. He's just saying mean what you say and say what you mean.

And that same idea applies to the issue of marriage, to the one commitment that some of us make to a spouse forever and ever. So let's look again at verse 31 and deal with this issue of divorce. It was also said, whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce. That quote there from Jesus in verse 31. Is a quotation of Deuteronomy chapter 24 verse 1. It's a verbatim quote, and I'm going to we're going to go there and look at it for just a few moments. But before I do that you've got to know the context.

Just like they had done with murder and adultery and oaths. The Pharisees had become obsessed with technicalities and loopholes. And essentially they had made the case that so long as your divorce is by the book, then God is good with your divorce and you are it is morally permissible and not bad at all. And so since that was the assumption, the big debate was how can I divorce my wife or husband by the book. They weren't having the conversation of what is God's design for marriage. They were rather having the ki the conversation, how can I technically get out of marriage without impugning my character?

And they became obsessed with this really two words in one passage in Deuteronomy 24. And before I read Deuteronomy 24, I want to read you Matthew 19, because Matthew 19, Jesus addresses this whole debate. The Pharisees were trying to keep Jesus from becoming more popular. And so they asked him a question in order to try and trick him. And in Matthew 19, the question that they ask is to get Jesus' take on a big theological debate. And the big theological debate was on divorce. And so they say, Jesus, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?

And what that shows you is that the debate was not whether they could get divorced, but rather the grounds by which divorce was permissible. Jesus, what's your take on what makes a person moral or immoral when it comes to divorce? And the debate really raged between two theological camps. There was one rabbi named Shammai who took a very narrow view, and there was another rabbi named Hillel who took a very broad view. And those two theological camps were debating two Hebrew words found in Deuteronomy 24, starting in verse 1. If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him.

Because he finds something indecent. Those are the two words that they were debating about. He finds something indecent about her, then he may write her a divorce certificate. And hand it to her and then send her on her way from his house. This was a concession given by Moses in Deuteronomy 24 for a very particular reason. But what had happened, just like they did with oaths and everything else, they had developed this whole legal tradition with technicalities and loopholes that made more of what Moses said than what he actually said.

And so they're asking Jesus, what's your take on the debate, Jesus? Can you divorce your wife for any reasons, or can you only divorce her for sexual immorality? And this phrase something indecent, it's literally translated a naked matter. And that's why it was so debated. There was Shammai who took the words naked matter and took it literally. In order to divorce your spouse, they must be guilty of sexual infidelity. They were naked with another man. Hillel took the view, any indecency, any nakedness in that it's a deficiency or not enough, that was grounds for divorce.

And as you would probably guess, the Hillel school was more popular. Because our hearts are prone to sin and justifying our bad actions. And Hillel scratched the itching ears of the people of the first century. And so people were getting divorced for all sorts of reasons. In fact, by the time you get to the second century, there's a legal document called the what's it called? Starts with an M. The Mishnah. There it is. Until you get 40 years old, your brain gets cobwebs. There was this document called the Mishnah that recorded all of their reasons.

And it would be comical if it wasn't sad. I'm going to give you just a couple. If you go to the next slide, I don't know why this is oh it's not messed up on this one. So if your wife was barren, meaning she couldn't have babies, then you could get a divorce. If she was deaf or mute or had warts, you could get a divorce. If she had leprosy or epilepsy, you could get a divorce. If she had a funky head, a funky looking head, specifically a hammer shaped head, I miss I forget the other kinds of shapes of heads, or any deformity on her skull at all, you could get a divorce.

If she had big eyes, you could get a divorce. If she had little eyes, you could get a divorce. If her eyes were misplaced too high or too low on her cheeks. You could get a divorce. If her hands were too small, if her knees were too bony, if her toes were too big, you could get a divorce. If she had a bad figure or big feet or bony ankles or bowed legs, all of those were legal grounds for divorce. If she was a poor cook or burned your toast on during breakfast, or she couldn't, you know, make anything except, you know, whatever can be in the microwave.

Whether she had a bad name, meaning a bad reputation, or a loud mouth. Meaning she yelled so loud that people could hear it in the front yard, then you could get a divorce. If she had a nagging voice, or if she let her in-laws move too close to you. That was grounds. For divorce. Sexual dissatisfaction. I thought this was interesting. They actually had a quota for how often a wife had to sleep with her husband. If the husband had the time, it had to be every day. If he didn't have the time and he was a day laborer, it was at least twice a week.

If he had a different kind of job, it was once a month, or if he was a sailor, it was every six months. If he was in any way dissatisfied for any reason sexually, then he could divorce you and have legal grounds to do so. And then the cherry on top is just he finds somebody better. Not just that he finds someone better, but that she actually wants him. And you look at that

list and you say, my lands, that's just terrible. But I'm telling you, people get divorced today for just as silly of reasons.

Except we don't even appeal to some rule book. All you have to do is put on the little paperwork irreconcilable differences. That's all it takes. And you can get out. And Jesus is essentially saying, this whole discussion is missing the point. Your obsession with the concessions, it is blinding you to what God is trying to say. And these certificates of divorce are corrupting God's design. And so he rebukes them in Matthew 19. I'm going to show you this, and then we're going to go back to Matthew 5, and then we're going to wrap it up.

Haven't you read Jesus' replies? And he doesn't quote Deuteronomy. He quotes the book of Genesis and that God made man in his image and that he created them male and female. And that after he created a man and a woman, he said, the whole reason I'm giving you each other is so that you can leave your father and mother and be joined to your wife. And that in that process of sexual union, the two will become one flesh. So they're no longer two different people, but now they're this new one thing.

And therefore, what God has joined together, meaning God has created marriage, God created it for a sacred purpose, and it has significant implications. What God does in marriage. Let no one separate. So again, Jesus is taking a side on the debate, and he's siding with Shammai, and he's saying it's just sexual immorality. But he's saying, I'm not even saying that because of the concession in Deuteronomy. I'm saying that because of God's design in Genesis 2. In Genesis 1, God designed marriage to do something. And it is to take two people and make them one in the Lord.

And that through a covenant of marriage and through the sexual union of those two parties the something supernatural and sacred transpires whereby they become one flesh. And what God does in marriage, you shouldn't just separate. Because to do so would violate God's design. And so if you go to the next slide, well I'm sorry, before you go to the next slide, he makes that beautiful speech. And then they respond with, but what about Deuteronomy? What about the concession, Jesus? Why then, they asked him, did Moses Why did Moses command us to give divorce papers and to send her away?

They almost found like they're they're victims of having to get divorces. Why did he command us? And Jesus says he didn't command you, he permitted you. Number one, to divorce your wives, not because the design's not warranted, but because of the hardness of your hearts. It was not that way from the beginning, I tell you, whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another person. They commit adultery. Now, everybody focuses on that last part of the sentence, but before we go there, I just want you to track with his argument.

Jesus is saying God designed marriage. And he designed marriage for a certain kind of thing. Marriage was created to be a covenant, meaning it is a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman in one lifetime and that unlike contracts that can be jumped in and out of based upon your convenience or extenuating circumstances the covenant of marriage was meant to symbolize something deeper, something more lasting, something much more permanent. And God designed marriage to be that way, and when you even if it's for a concession that God allows, break that covenant, you are breaking God's original design.

That's all that he is trying to say. Now, if you go back to Deuteronomy 24 and take a look at it, what Deuteronomy 24 was really obsessed about was not what we think of. We think of divorce and we get hung up on this last phrase. And there is a huge gap between our context and the context of the first century. And there's a huge gap between the first century and Deuteronomy 24. If you go back and you read Deuteronomy 24, one of the things that Moses was dealing with was this thing of wife swapping.

Women in that context were economically disadvantaged to for an understatement. They did not have the same rights as men. They were in many cases seen as property. And objects just like men objectify women today and treat them like objects with pornography. But they what was true today is true then, but women didn't have any recourse economically. And so what Deuteronomy was essentially saying is, is if you're going to do that, you need to give your wife social and legal cover so that she can survive economically. And the only way that she could survive is by getting remarried.

Because you had to have children and a husband and a farm and all that to work. If you keep reading in Deuteronomy, it gets more interesting. Go back to Deuteronomy 24. He addresses wife swapping in particular. If after leaving his house she goes and becomes another man's wife and the second man hates her and he writes her a divorce certificate, hands it to her, sends her away from his house, or if he dies. Then the first husband who sent her away may not marry her again after she has been defiled.

In other words, she has had a sexual union with the second husband. And so just because that husband dies, or just because he divorces her, that does not give the first husband the moral permission to bring her back. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord because of that sexual fornication that that reunification represents. You must not bring guilt on the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. Now I said it's wife swapping what they would do because they so objectified women and treated them as property.

A husband would get the bright idea, I'm sexually bored with my wife, and so I'm going to take that guy's wife and have sex with her. And the other guy was thinking, well, I'm kind of bored too, and so I'm going to give you my wife if you'll give me your wife. And they're like, that sounds great. Today we call it swinging swingers who just decide that they're just going to I don't know what you call that. It's to me it's I don't know. I don't get it. I don't get it.

I really don't. But the Lord is saying if you're going to do that, you can't take her back. Okay, when you sever the covenant, you sever something sacred, you sever something permanent, you sever something divine. And you can't just jump in and out of that because of your concessions or because of your hardness of heart or sexual promiscuity and needs or whatever you want to call it. And that was the whole context of Deuteronomy 24, and that's what Jesus is addressing in Matthew 5. So the idea of if you get divorced and then you get remarried, does that mean you commit adultery?

This is an issue many people struggle with, and again I think people have wrongly used Matthew 5 to say of it what it doesn't say the even the language in Deuteronomy 24 forces the moral culpability on the man because the man was the one most likely to initiate the divorce and it was the woman most likely to be a victim in the process. There's a difference between that and our context, obviously. It's equally white likely for a woman to file for divorce and women are much more economically viable by themselves as versus the ancient history.

So making a one-to-one comparison is tricky, which is why the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 spends a lot of time dealing with the special cases. And so my goal here is not to talk about all the special cases because I don't think that's what Jesus is concerned about. He's not even trying to focus on the concessions. He's trying to focus on God's initial design. But the idea that you can have a husband cheat on you or a wife cheat on you and then because of their whatever shame or sexual desire for the other person, they file for divorce.

And then send you packing against their will, the idea that you, the victim of that sinful act are now faded to a life of singleness, and that if you were to ever remarry, you would be an adulterer in doing so. Number one, that's not what Jesus says, and that is the opposite of what the legal concession was for it was not to double victimize the innocent party. And if you notice in Matthew 5, what Jesus emphasizes, it's never the woman who is victimized in the process. He says except in the case of sexual immorality, he causes her to commit adultery.

The moral culpability is on the one who's filing and who's activating this divorce against their will. And then again, it's not on her when she gets remarried, but rather the man who chooses to remarry her. So again, I don't have time to get into the one for ones and all the special cases, and I know everybody probably wants me to do that and we'll do that when we get to Matthew 19. All I'm trying to say is the point is not the concessions. What Jesus is trying to drill down is God's initial design.

And God's initial design for marriage has always been covenantal. One man, one woman, one life. Does that mean divorce doesn't ever happen? Of course it does. We're broken people and there's very messy situations. What Jesus is saying is those concessions don't nullify the design. No matter how complicated or justified you may feel, you don't get to

thwart or cancel out God's design for marriage because of your special cases. Now Jesus is going to go on and address this more fully. I want to close by trying to restate what Jesus says differently.

Christian marriage, Christian speech should be known for credibility. When it comes to Christian marriage, we should be known for covenantal love. Specifically, a covenantal love Demonstrated by Jesus Christ Himself in dying for sinners like you and me. Paul talks about this in Ephesians chapter 5. He says that marriage is a mystery and it's extremely profound. And the mystery of marriage isn't even the one flesh union between a husband and a wife, but that in that one flesh union they're displaying the gospel of God. No one hates his own flesh, but he provides and cares for it just as Christ Jesus does for his church.

That's you and me. Since we are members of his body that's why a man leaves his father and mother, joins to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This idea that we are united to Christ by faith it's appealing to this covenant of marriage that we are one flesh with Jesus and that way we are not who we were. We are totally new, we were totally different. The old has passed away. The new has come because of this supernatural transformation that happens when you become a Christian. And that's what marriage is supposed to embody.

And when you what when you experience divorce, it damages that initial design. Now, a lot of you have been divorced and you know the pain and the scars that it causes. And I think of every divorced person I've ever met or known, I think everyone would agree. What I experienced and what I went through is not God's design. And I don't think God liked it. I don't think he was cheering it on. That's why the Old Testament book of Malachi says God hates divorce. He's not saying it never happens, and he's not even he's not even trying to put all the culpability here or there on concessions.

He's just saying it's bad because it's not what I intended. Just like I'd never intended for there to be murder, and just like I had never intended for there to be adultery, I never intended that there would be people who break their word, and I never intended that there would be marriages that end in divorce. And so what does that mean for you here today if you've been divorced? Or maybe you initiated the divorce for unbiblical reasons? As you see in Deuteronomy 24, you just can't go back and erase it.

You can't undo what's done, so you just are left with what you have today. And repentance essentially is just agreeing with God about the facts. And so from this point forward, you can start to think differently about marriage. And for those of you who are in a very difficult marriage today I'm not saying that you don't have biblical grounds for divorce, but what I always try to caution couples against divorce is that biblical grounds for divorce are also biblical grounds for forgiveness. And just as you may have legal recourse and spiritual justification to get out of your marriage, God is able to heal and redeem and reconcile beyond what you can think.

And there is a sense in which that process has the potential to display the love between Christ and the church that nothing else can do. Because we all know our tendency and our hearts being prone to wonder, and that we can we can commit infidelity spiritually against our Lord in a multitude of ways. And God does not give up on you. The Lord Jesus does not get remarried. The Lord Jesus does not file for divorce and say, I know we're one, but not anymore. He is steadfast, he is faithful, even when we are failures, and that is what every marriage has the opportunity to display.

Now I'm not saying that's easy, and I'm not saying there aren't special cases. I'm not even saying there are not sometimes grant. I'm not even saying there are not sometimes circumstances in which divorce is not justified. Sometimes it is, because of the hardness of heart. But that does not cancel out God's initial design. And so if you're a Christian and you're married and you're struggling in your marriage, the invitation is for you to model the love of Jesus. And I know what you want to say. I know you want to say, but they're not doing that.

And you're probably right. They're probably not. But you can't control what they do. You can only control what you decide to do. And until one person in that broken marriage decides to live as Jesus, that relationship has no hope of eventual reconciliation. But when you allow the Lord to come into your heart and you allow the Lord to come to bear on your brokenness. He is able to do things you cannot do alone, and he is able to move in ways that you cannot control or manipulate even on your very best day.

And so I would encourage you to not give up. To Stay consistent. Just like Jesus says you should keep your word and you should keep your covenant oaths. I'm saying to you, keep living like Jesus. Keep living like a Christian. Don't Quit before you finish because the flourishing life is not something that happens overnight. It's something that's available to every single person. It's something that you receive by grace through faith. It's not something you earn. It's something given to you by God. And it's something that if you've not possessed it's available to you this morning