

Monday Week 33 Teaching of Jesus

Bible Reading: Matt. 5:27-30

Q 129 How did Jesus explain the Seventh Commandment?

A. Jesus said that a look to lust is breaking the Seventh Commandment.

“Does your pastor allow you to have a television?” a lady was asked.

“Oh, yes,” she answered, “but he doesn’t let us watch it.”

The minister wanted people to be careful about what they looked at because Jesus said that looking in a certain way is sin. To lust is to have a strong desire. If a man looks at a woman who is not his wife for the purpose of stirring up a strong desire for her, he has committed adultery in his heart. That’s what Jesus said. And committing adultery is sin. A lot of programs on television can easily make someone think things they should not be thinking. Other things can also cause wrong thoughts. We must be careful what we allow ourselves to look at and think about.

Jesus taught us that what is in the heart is most important. It is from the heart that we decide what to do, what to say and what to look at. The Bible says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pr. 4:23).

Thinking Deeper

The scandal of one of the recent U.S. Presidents involving an intern had an insidious twist. The President held that because he didn’t technically commit the act of adultery he was not really in violation of the Ten Commandments. He even said that he had studied the Bible on the subject. The trouble with his excuse is revealed in this teaching of Jesus. When he felt an attraction for the intern, he was duty bound by God’s laws to say no to the attraction before it got to any physical involvement. He was married and his attraction was to be to his wife. The scandal was first a scandal of the heart before it ever manifested itself. That’s why Jesus warned against the look with the intent of lusting. That’s where the sin started.

All people, whether young or old will be held to account not only for their actions, but also for the thoughts of their hearts. The Word of God “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” It is deceptive to think that keeping certain legalistic outward limits on actions fulfills the requirements of righteousness. Righteousness begins and ends in the heart. Outward actions are merely an indication of what is in the heart. Jesus taught that the Seventh Commandment is violated by thoughts in the heart. People who have trouble with actions need to look deeper. The problem is in the heart.

Tuesday Week 33 Teaching of Jesus

Bible Reading: Matt. 5:31-32

Q 130 Why is divorce wrong?

A. Jesus said that divorce was a cause of adultery.

“Why are you having trouble paying attention today?” the teacher asked her student. The student told the teacher that he had been sleeping all night in their pickup truck. “Why did you do that?” she asked. “Mom and Dad were fighting and I didn’t want to stay in the house.” No wonder that boy had trouble in school! Many times parents get a divorce. They say it will be better for the children not to live with them. But the children don’t agree. Over and over children think it’s somehow their fault that mom and dad got divorced. So they are sad, and they blame themselves. When the parents do divorce, they often get re-married. But that is usually bad for the kids. There is a lot of violence and abuse in homes where the children live with someone who is not their parent.

Jesus made a very strong statement about divorce. He said when it happens, it causes someone to commit adultery. Divorce is wrong because it causes more sin and more heartache. Jesus loves families and taught that the mother and father should stay together for life. That’s how God created things to be in the beginning.

Thinking Deeper

Why does God hate divorce? (Malachi 2:16). Jesus said that it causes adultery. Sometimes adultery causes divorce. So adultery can be at the heart of divorce as either a cause or an effect. In either case it is a violation of God’s Seventh Commandment.

God has given his laws for the benefit of people. “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deut. 5:29). The commandments have a twofold benefit: for the parents and for the children. When the commandments are violated, the violation has a generational effect. Both generations (parents and children) suffer. Wives divorced from their husbands have a statistical likelihood to be worse off financially after the divorce. Children of divorce suffer in their childhood from the separation and then as they grow as evidenced in higher incidences of social pathologies (drug abuse, alcoholism, physical abuse, divorce). It is no wonder that God hates divorce. It is a violation of His laws that were given for the benefit of mankind.

Not everyone involved in divorce wanted it to happen or agreed to its happening. Some state laws make it hard for one spouse to keep a troubled marriage together. And there is an exception to culpability in divorce (Matt. 5:32; 1 Cor. 7:15). God cares for the abused and abandoned and does not blame the innocent. But He hates divorce because of the harm and heartache it produces, and because it violates His original purpose for marriage. Defend marriage. Do it God’s way.

Wednesday Week 33 Teaching of Jesus

Bible Reading: Matt. 5:33-42

Q131. What did Jesus teach about standing up for yourself or for your rights?

A. Jesus gave examples of being meek in various ways.

A Christian man was digging a hole in his backyard for a clothes line pole. His neighbor came to him and rather crossly asked him what he was doing. The neighbor complained that he was putting the pole on the wrong side of their property line. The Christian man stopped his work and kindly asked the neighbor, "Why don't you show me where you think I should put it?" The neighbor looked around and then said, "I guess it will be fine to put it where you are digging." By having a meek spirit, this Christian man was able to keep from having trouble with his neighbor.

People often fuss because they want to protect what belongs to them. Jesus taught us to consider the other person above ourselves. Our lives are much happier that way. Remember the song that says "Jesus and Others and You, what a wonderful way to spell JOY."

Thinking Deeper

It is a good thing to look out for the things that are your responsibility. "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds," said the wise man in Proverbs. Jesus did not contradict that by his teaching on meekness. Turning the other cheek, or giving your cloak to the man who sued you for your coat, are not irresponsible actions concerning your possessions. Rather they are investments in God's economy of grace. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty" (Pr. 11:24). People who insist on keeping all that is theirs and who never want anyone to get an upper hand over them are often impoverished in spirit. Miserly people are miserable people, for the most part, and their reputations are not to be envied.

Thursday Week 33 Teaching of Jesus

Bible Reading: Matt. 5:43-48

Q 132. In what way did Jesus say we are to be perfect?

A. Jesus taught us to be perfect in love.

Many years ago a young couple in a Russian village faced persecution because they were Bible believing Christians. Early one morning four young men went to the house of the couple, climbed onto the roof and began throwing the thatch to the ground. When the couple realized what was happening they went to prayer. Then the husband told his wife to make a meal. When she had it ready, her husband invited the four men to join them. “You must be hot and tired from your hard work. Come in for a drink of water and some food.”

The young men thought it was a joke, and came into the house laughing and winking at each other. Just before they ate, the Christian man got on his knees and prayed. After he said “Amen,” he stood up and invited the fellows to eat. But during prayer they had lost their appetites. Instead of eating, they left the table, went outside and began to repair the roof.

In the days that followed all four of them began asking what it meant to really follow Jesus. Soon they were all saved.

That couple put in practice the teaching of Jesus to love their enemies. Those enemies became their friends. The teaching of Jesus is powerful.

Thinking Deeper

Some people dismiss the idea of “being perfect” as impossible. One writer in his commentary on this passage felt obligated to counter what he called “the false doctrine of entire sanctification.” In his answer he promoted not Christian perfection but the normalcy of sinning. Why do many professing Christians continue to plead for sin? Instead of hiding behind some theological argument, wouldn’t it be more helpful and more honest to allow the teaching of Jesus to stand on its own? Jesus taught us to yield our rights to God and in so doing relate to our enemies by turning the other cheek, praying for them and giving to their needs. That is part of being perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. The issue is not as much one of theology as one of obedience to God from the heart.

Theology, though, does have an influence on how people view this subject. If one’s theological bias obscures the teaching of Jesus to treat enemies a certain way, then that theology is negative. When the first response to Jesus’ directive for us to be perfect is a refutation of the possibility of perfection, there is a problem. In this case, let God’s Word be God’s Word. Love your enemies.

Friday Week 33 Teaching of Jesus

Review the Week's Questions

- Q 129 How did Jesus explain the Seventh Commandment?
A. Jesus said that a look to lust is breaking the Seventh Commandment.
- Q 130 Why is divorce wrong?
A. Jesus said that divorce was a cause of adultery.
- Q131. What did Jesus teach about standing up for yourself or for your rights?
A. Jesus gave examples of being meek in various ways.
- Q 132. In what way did Jesus say we are to be perfect?
A. Jesus taught us to be perfect in love.

“Son, you just can’t get into fights anymore.” The boy’s father was on the school board and let his son know that any more fighting would not be tolerated. The boy thought about it and then burst into tears. “Dad! I have six more years of school left. There’s no way I can go that long without fighting.” That boy knew his weakness. But his father knew there was a better way to live — the way Jesus taught. He helped his son make it through school and become a fine Christian man.

Jesus taught us how to live. His teaching is not easy. Many people have given up on being a Christian because they don’t think they can live the Christian life. But God does not expect us to live as Jesus taught us on our own. He has also given us his power to live as he taught us. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). You can follow Jesus if you give him your heart. He will help you live the Christian life.

Thinking Deeper

A young college student became a Christian by asking Jesus to forgive his sins and come into his heart. He joined a Bible study group and began learning what Jesus taught. After one Bible study session he said, “I want to be good ground.” He understood that the Word of God needed an honest heart in which to grow. The student continued in the Word and became a serious follower of Jesus and a blessing to his church and community.

Following Jesus is much more than making a one time “decision for Christ.” That decision is not ended by asking for forgiveness of sins. It is only the beginning of a new way to live – the Jesus way. Jesus spent three years with his disciples teaching them his way of living.

If we would follow Jesus, we must receive the word with humble, honest hearts. Following Jesus is learning how he wants us to live and changing from our former way of living. Some things are much more difficult than others. It is not very hard to begin going to church and becoming part of a fellowship of believers. It is much harder to begin to love your enemies and to do good to those who make your life miserable. But that is the Jesus way.