

THE REAL MEANING OF ADULTERY

MATHEW 05:27–30

Introduction: Immorality and Adultery

Immorality and adultery cause great destruction and hurt and pain — both within and without a person. There are at least three reasons why a person commits an immoral act.

1. The ego: the sense of conquering, taking, capturing, controlling, knowing, seeing, experiencing, enjoying, and on and on — a person's ego is boosted and inflated.
2. The inner need for attention and sharing.
3. The raw lust of the sinful nature or flesh.

Immorality is so common that it is often thought excusable and acceptable if it is agreed to by the partners and if other lives are not directly affected.

Man has always tended to glorify the body and the sinful nature or flesh: exposing the body, dressing the body for sexual attraction, looking at and observing the body and its movements — all are often acceptable practices of society. Inward desire (lust) and the act of sexual pleasure itself are often thought to be so much a part of nature and normality that to restrict them is considered abnormal and straight-laced.

Christ is strong, insistent in His demand for purity — so strong that He insists on radical surgery rather than allowing the hand or eye to sin. “An immoral eye and hand will carry the whole body into hell,” Christ says: “so pluck out the eye; cut off the hand.” But what do we say? “He doesn't mean this literally.” And we use this fact as a way to water down the sharpness and the strictness of His point. However, we ignore and neglect His words to our doom. This is His very point. We might...

- fantasize and lust as a result of reading immoral magazines and books
- lustfully look at the movements of a person walking (and call it recognizing beauty)
- dress to sexually attract
- take pleasure in the stimulation and sensation of sex

But Christ clearly warns: lustful looking, touching, and behaviour will cause the whole body to be cast into hell. The matter is so serious that radical surgery is called for. No diluting, no evading, no explaining of His words and what He means can change the severe judgment that awaits the immoral person.

- I. The law: do not commit adultery (v. 27).
 - II. The real meaning: committed by one of two acts (v. 28).
 - III. The two guilty culprits: the eyes and hands (v. 29).
 - IV. The danger (v. 29).
 - V. The answer (vv. 29-30).
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I. *Mathew 05:27 The Law: Adultery, Immorality*

The law against immorality is the seventh commandment (Exo. 20:14; Deu. 5:18). Note that God's law is given for three reasons.

1. To assure the respect and protection of all families and neighbours. God will take vengeance upon those who destroy families through adultery.

Exo 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery."

Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

1 Th 4:3-6 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.

2. To protect a man from judgment, the judgment of perishing in hell (v. 30).
3. To protect a man from sinning against his own body (See 1 Cor. 6:18).

1 Cor 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

II. *Mathew 05:27 The Sin of Adultery*

The real meaning of adultery. Adultery (moicheia) is often said to be sexual unfaithfulness by a married person. This is true, but it is much more. Man's idea of adultery is shattered by Christ (See Mt. 19:9). Christ says adultery is not only the actual act, but adultery is committed by any one of five acts:

- A deliberate look.
- Passion within the heart: desiring and lusting.
- The actual act of sex with someone other than one's own spouse.
- Divorce relationships (Mt. 5:32; 19:9-11; Mk.10:11-12; Lk.16:18).
- Spiritual unfaithfulness toward God or apostasy from God (Mt.12:39; 16:4; Mk. 8:38; Jas. 4:4; see Eze. 16:15f; 23:43f).

Simply stated, Christ says there is eye adultery, heart adultery (lust) and body adultery. This is a shattering revelation that strikes at the experience of every young person and adult. There is no question: many dream and imagine, and if they had the opportunity, they would commit the act. All they lack is the chance and a boost to their courage to sin

(Jas. 1:14-15.) The eyes can lead to lust by looking upon persons or pictures or stimulating objects. The eyes can be used sinfully in several ways.

- To look and search for another person in order to lust.
- To let another person know that one is available.
- To attract, suggest and entice.
- To gratify lust where an experience is not possible.

There are two other matters that need to be thought about at this point.

1. Suggestive communication. This can arise from (a) unclean talk such as jokes, foul words, and suggestive statements made in passing; (b) luring talk that arises when sharing with the opposite sex. This tends to lead a person to let down his guard or to play loose with his conviction and mortal commitment. Such sharing often dallies with enticing phrases and suggestive propositions that arouse pleasure. Suggestive conversation can occur anywhere: at work, at school, at parties, over the phone, or just standing around talking.
2. Dress. This arises from exposing parts of the body or from following the latest fad in dress that might be designed to display or attract. (1 Tit. 2:9-10)

There is real danger in using one's eyes sinfully. Peter warns that a person can lose control: "With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning" (2 Pet. 2:14). A person can actually become enslaved and bound by the seriousness adultery is seen by the drastic action suggested by Christ in vs. 29-30. Adultery is a work of the flesh that will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). It is a serious sin, very serious. There is the possibility of the whole body's being cast into hell (Mt. 5:29-30). The believer can conquer the eyes and lust and can keep from committing adultery by doing a few simple things.

1. ***In relation to others:***

- a. Stay away from places that lend themselves to suggestive lust.
- b. Stay away from persons who might be suggestive and enticing -no matter how enjoyable and pleasing.
- c. Refuse invitations to functions or socials that might lead to suggestive conversation or enticement.

2. ***In relation to self:***

- a. Dress decently: dress to please the Lord (1 Tit. 2:9).
- b. Behave at all times as a genuine Christian believer.
- c. Build a testimony by conversation and behaviour as a Christian believer.

3. *In relation to the eyes and mind:*

- a. Make a covenant not to look at or think about immoral persons, places, or things; and don't look. Job said of himself: "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl." (Job. 31:1).
- b. Keep the eyes and mind upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Phil. 4:8). Start immediately: begin to think upon the positive and the moral day by day. Keep the mind upon the positive for the rest of your life.
- c. Learn to captivate every thought (2 Cor. 10:3-5, esp. v. 5).
- d. Resist the first thought — turn the mind and body immediately to other matters. Get busy at something else without hesitating, and stay there — stay busy.

4. *In the presence of others:*

- a. Guard one's self at all times.
- b. Flee when suggestive statements are made: excuse yourself - show displeasure by statements or force if necessary. Get away immediately, not allowing the pleasing words to stimulate and gratify your flesh. The flesh revels in expressions of pleasure and appreciation over the way one looks, dresses, works, serves, performs, and on and on. A person must simply appreciate such and then move on — immediately. Lingering to enjoy and revel in appreciative remarks will lead to attraction. Everyone is human.

Mat 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

Gen 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Prov 15:26 The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked, but those of the pure are pleasing to him.

III. *Mathew 05:29 The Culprits in Adultery*

The two guilty culprits in adultery — the eyes and hands. Why did Christ use the eyes and hands to illustrate His point? Probably because a man is moved primarily by thoughts that arise from sight, and a woman is moved primarily by touch. It is the eye and hand that are the culprits in adultery (Mk. 9:43-48)

IV. *Mathew 05:29 Danger of Adultery*

The danger is twofold.

1. Sinning or stumbling. The phrase "causes you to sin" (*skandalon*) means to stumble; to be baited; to be lured; to be tripped up. The eyes and hands are stumbling blocks.

2. Being condemned to hell. The sin is serious, extremely serious. Unless the sin is dealt with, it will cause a person to be cast into hell (Mt. 5:22).

1 Cor 6:9-10 *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Gal 5:19, 21 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;...and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Thought 1. The sin of immorality ruins the body as well as the soul. This is a terrible fact, yet it is a fact that is seldom considered.

1 Cor 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*

V. **Mathew 05:29–30 Solutions for Adultery**

The answer to solving the problem of adultery is threefold.

1. **Surgery:** cut out the sinning body member. The lustful look and the lustful touch should be cut out of one's life — completely.

Prov 10:31 *The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out.*

Mat 5:30 *“And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”*

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

Col 2:11 *In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

2. **Death:** let the sinning body members perish. What feels good and pleases the flesh is not always good. Self-denial is sometimes called for (Lk. 9:23).

Rom 6:13 *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Eph 6:13 *Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

2 Pet 3:17 *Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.*

Prov 1:10 *My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them.*

Prov 4:14 *Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.*

3. *Repentance*: turning from being cast into hell. Note an important fact: Christ does not appeal for a man to forsake adultery; He warns man of the consequences of adultery. Some sins have to be restrained by warning, not by appeal. A man has to be warned about the lust of the flesh (Jas. 4:1-3). Adultery is a sin that feels so good and seems so natural that it can be easily rationalised. The warning given to adulterers is, your whole body will be cast into hell (Mt. 5:30).

Thought 1. “Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:16).

Thought 2. The members of the body are not to be yielded to sin. The members of the body are to be counted dead with Christ (Rom. 6:11-13).

Rom 6:11-13 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Thought 3. A man must repent, *turn from* adultery to God. (Mt. 4: 17)

Luke 13:3 *I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.*

Acts 2:28 *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

Acts 8:22 *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

Acts 17:30 *In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ■*

THE REAL MEANING OF DIVORCE

MATHEW 05:31–32

Introduction: Divorce

Throughout history there have always been two schools of thought when interpreting the laws of society — the strict, conservative interpreters and the broad, liberal interpreters. In Jesus' day, the strict interpreters were known as the school of Shammai; the broad interpreters were known as the school of Hillel. In dealing with the subject of divorce, Shammai said the words “something indecent” found in Deu. 24:1 allowed for divorce, but the words meant adultery and adultery only. Hillel said “something indecent” meant that anything that destroyed unity was a justified reason for divorce; that perfect unity had to be maintained in the marriage state. Such allowance had disintegrated into the position that anything displeasing to a man was reason enough for divorce.

A person can easily see which school was followed by human nature and most societies. Divorce had become so common that society itself was threatened. All a man had to do to divorce his wife was to have a Rabbi write out a bill of divorcement and hand it to his wife in the presence of two witnesses. The divorce was immediate and final (Deu. 24:1-4).

- I. The law: anyone who divorces must give a certificate of divorce (v. 31).
- II. The real meaning: divorce disallowed (v. 32).
- III. The exception: immorality (v. 32).
- IV. The guilty parties (v. 32).

I. *Mathew 05:31 Purpose of the Law of Divorce*

The law against divorce was given for three reasons.

1. To protect the family.

Mark 10: 6-9 “*But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘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. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*”

Eph 5:31 “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*”

2. To protect the land or nation, preventing national disintegration.

Prov 11:11 *Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.*

Prov 14:34 *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.*

3. To prevent a person from becoming an adulterer.

Mat 19:9 “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” (see Luke 16:18)

Mark 10:12 “And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

II. **Mathew 05:32 Meaning of the Law of Divorce**

The real meaning of the law is that divorce is disallowed. Enormous protection is seen in this pronouncement. There is protection of the family, including the wife, husband and children. There is emotional, physical, mental and spiritual protection — protection against a family’s being ripped apart and having to undergo all the strain and disruption that follows. Divorce is one of the most traumatic experiences of human life. For many, it is the most traumatic experience.

Divorce *touches* so many. It *touches*...

- husbands
- parents
- wives
- friends
- children
- employers and employees

Divorce *affects* each person it touches, affects them ever so deeply. It *affects*...

- mind
- emotions
- spirit
- love
- behaviour
- possessions
- joy
- control
- security
- purpose
- hopes
- plans
- peace
- faith

Divorce drastically *changes* each person’s life. It *changes*...

- personal life
- recreational life
- private life
- social life
- home life
- dream life
- parental life

Because divorce affects human life so much, it is of critical concern to Christ. When anyone hurts, Christ hurts. And because divorce hurts so much and hurts so many, Christ sets out to correct man’s corrupt concept of marriage and easy divorce. (See *Marriage and Divorce: Shammai and Hillel*, Mt. 19:1-12)

Thought 1. Teaching, preaching, and living by strict principles takes enormous courage. Christ demonstrated enormous courage by going against the grain of society and demanding strictness in marriage.

Thought 2. There are four attitudes to marriage, three of which are *loose attitudes* that often lead to divorce.

- 1) *A back-door marriage*: “If it works, OK; if it doesn’t work, OK.”
- 2) *A cheap, sensual marriage*: based upon some reason other than love, some reason such as attractiveness, sex, or finances.
- 3) *An adventuresome marriage*: the marriage is entered into for the experience and the adventure of being married.
- 4) *A marriage of commitment*: the full conviction of both spouses that they should fulfill the solemn vows taken — a conviction before God.

Thought 3. There is only one basis for marriage that can absolutely prevent divorce; a true union, both a spiritual and physical union (see Mt. 19:5; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Mark 10:9 “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Eph 5:22, 29 *Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord...After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.*

Eph 5:31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

MATHEW 19:01–12 MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE: SHAMMAI AND HILLEL SCHOOLS

The Pharisees came to Jesus tempting Him and saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

There is a background to this question. The society of Jesus’ day was very lax in its morals. Marriage was considered nothing more than a piece of paper: if it worked, fine; if it did not work, fine. One could always divorce.

There were two positions or schools of thought on divorce. Moses had said that any man could divorce his wife if “she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her” (Deu. 24:1).

1. The school of Shammai said that the words *some uncleanness* meant adultery only. A wife could be as loose and mean as Jezebel, but she was not to be divorced unless she committed adultery.
2. The school of Hillel said that the words *some uncleanness* meant anything that was not pleasing to the man. One should remember that women were counted as nothing but *property* to be possessed by men. They had no rights whatsoever except as a man might wish to give. Of course, this was the position followed by society, for it was the position that allowed human nature to run loose. Women were abused: used and discarded, neglected and violated. They were nothing but

chattel property of men and were often considered of less value than property, whether animals or things. Therefore, divorce ran rampant in Christ's day.

The Pharisees wished to embroil Jesus in the controversy between the conservative (Shammai) and liberal view (Hillel). They were simply asking Jesus if He agreed with the school of Hillel: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and *every* reason?" (v. 3). No matter which position He took, He would offend and stir up a large number of people, becoming embroiled in a mean controversy. □

III. *Mathew 05:32 Adultery – Sexual Immorality*

The exception for divorce is the sin of marital unfaithfulness being committed by one of the spouses. The great tragedy of sexual immorality or adultery is that it breaks the union and attachment between husband and wife. The union and attachment and all that goes with it — faith, hope, love, trust, assurance, confidence and strength — are broken. If the husband and wife are not believers, then the physical union and the mental union of the marriage are broken. If they are believers, then all three unions are broken: the physical, mental and spiritual. (see Mt. 19:5-6). Two facts should be noted in the brief words of Christ here and elsewhere in the gospels. ((see Mt. 19:1-12).

1. Christ does not stand with either the conservative or the liberal school. He does not mention either school or either position.
2. Christ says two things about divorce.
 - a. Divorce is not the purpose of God. This is silent, but clearly understood.
 - b. Divorce is allowed only if one of the spouses has committed adultery.

What Christ is trying to prevent is what history shows. Societies have tragically ignored the command of God. They have planted the seed of national disintegration, that is, broken homes (see Eph. 5:22-33; Mt. 19:9; Mk. 10:12; Lk. 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:12-16). This brief statement on divorce shows the great need to protect men, women, children and the home. It points to the immense value of all three (Mt. 5:32; Mt. 19:1-12).

1 Cor 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. (see 1 Cor 7:12)

Eph 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Col 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (see 1 Th 4:3)

Thought 1. It should always be remembered that adultery is not the only sin that can break the union of a marriage. Faith, hope, love, trust, assurance, confidence, strength

— all can be dashed upon the rocks of selfishness and meanness (see *Marital Unfaithfulness*, Mt. 19:9)

**MATHEW 19:09 MARITAL UNFAITHFULNESS:
SEXUAL IMMORALITY, ADULTERY**

“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Mat 19:09

A person, especially a Christian believer, needs to think of the meaning of adultery here. Adultery is the turning away from a spouse to another person. Many a person would never think of turning away from their spouse to a third person, yet they readily and willingly turn toward self and toward other things. As God said of the nation Israel. “I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries” (Jer. 3:8). Many a person has done just as Israel did. They refused to surrender to God. They lived in a backslidden state, and day by day they turned more and more away from their spouse and, in many cases, from their children.

Day by day a person can take a spouse and children and...

- be mean and ugly
- be nagging and mentally cruel
- be neglectful and unthoughtful
- be physically abusive and life-threatening
- be deliberately withdrawn and separated

And the truth of the matter is that many live selfishly that way.

=> Some are cruel; others sadistic.

=> Some are critical: others sarcastic; still others *demonic and hellish*.

=> Some are mentally abusive; others physically abusive, *even* to the point of murdering spouse and children — the unthinkable.

The truth of a marriage is known only to God. A husband or a wife can use his or her personality to present a front to the world. Yet within the heart, there can be such a hardness toward a spouse, such an unwillingness to be truly united together, that God just cannot join them together as one flesh. Hardness, very simply, wrecks a marriage. It wrecks a marriage by causing a person to turn away and separate from his or her spouse. If a spouse is not with the other spouse, then the two are separate, not truly united and joined together. There can be no true union if there are not *two* persons together; and as pointed out earlier, being united is the blessing and gift of God. Being united is only possible as each allows God to “join them together.” □

IV. *Mathew 05:32 Guilty Parties in Divorce*

The guilty parties in divorce (see Mt.19:5; 19:8; *Marital Unfaithfulness*, Mt. 19:9; *Essentials of Marriage*, Mt. 19:11). ■

MATHEW 19:11 ESSENTIALS OF MARRIAGE

Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given." Mathew 19:11

"Not everyone can accept this word." What word?

1. The word that a man and wife are "to be united to one another." They are to be totally united together as *one flesh* "So they are no longer two, but one" (vv. 5-6).
2. The word that it is God and God alone who can *join together* a man and a wife (v. 6; see *Unite, Cleave*, Mt. 19:5).

These two things, being united together and God Himself, are the two essentials for a true marriage. Many are living together who refuse *to be united* and refuse to let God join them together. They are not willing to be united, nor are they willing to let God make them as *one flesh*. They are not willing to let God join them together.

(Note: man and woman can only unite and join themselves together physically. God is not needed for a purely physical union. If a married couple wishes more than a physical union, they must turn to God. He alone can "join together" a couple spiritually.) □