

Last week we discussed **Matthew 5:27-30** – Jesus says: “You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, 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.”

What are some examples in life today of right eyes and right hands? Why are destructive actions to our spirit so important?

Matthew 5:31-32 – Jesus said: “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.”

What is Jesus trying to tell us here? Why do you think he needs to say this in the time that he lived?

Johann Christoph Arnold (1940-2017) was a pastoral counselor and popular author. He was the elder of the Bruderhof Communities between 1983 and 2001. Arnold authored 12 books.

“The majority of Christians today believe that divorce and remarriage are morally and biblically permissible. They argue that though God hates divorce, he allows it as a concession to our sinful condition.” What does this explanation mean to you?

Under this belief, if we as Christians are allowed to divorce what else are we allowed to do under the guise of being sinful?

What is marriage?

Isaiah 62:4-5 – Isaiah wrote regarding the relationship between God (the bridegroom) and Israel (the bride): “...for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.” What does this old testament scripture tell us about marriage?

Revelation 19:6-8 – John wrote: “Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine line stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)” Who is the bride and groom in this new testament scripture?

How does this compare to the previous old testament scripture and what does this tell you?

Why are wedding dresses white? How does this correlate with God’s marriage to the church?

Revelation 21:2 – John wrote: “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” God loves his church so much that he wants the best for them.

If we as the church are married to God, what does this tell us about marriage?

Arnold continues: “In rejecting divorce, we cannot reject the divorced person, even if remarried. We must always remember that though Jesus speaks very sharply against sin, he never lacks compassion.” What does this mean to you?

“But because he longs to redeem and heal every sinner, he requires repentance for every sin. This is also true for every broken marriage.” Like the rich man who could not follow Jesus, many today cannot give up their lifestyle to repent. Do you see this today?

David Fleer (1954-) is an American professor and preacher. He is professor of religion and communication and special assistant to the president of Lipscomb University in Nashville. During the last calendar year he preached for churches in 30 different communities, and he regularly presents at conferences, seminars, and lectureships in the Churches of Christ.

“...Jesus is walking with people in need, the hopeless and helpless, women and men on the margins. Jesus is standing with a wife about to be exchanged. He says, “Not so fast, mister.” “Jesus says, “No lust,” “no anger,” “pray for your enemies.”...These are not ideals beyond reach, an interim ethic, all about the hereafter. This is reprogramming for the community who call themselves the church of Christ.”

How does the world program us? And how does that differ from the way Jesus tells us to live?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a Lutheran theologian executed under Hitler. He was a German Lutheran pastor, neo-orthodox theologian and anti-Nazi dissident who was a key founding member of the Confessing Church. His writings on Christianity's role in the secular world have become widely influential; his 1937 book The Cost of Discipleship is described as a modern classic. His famous last words, spoken just before his execution by hanging on April 9, 1945, were, “This is the end—for me, the beginning of life”. “Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power. For it is God’s holy ordinance by means of which he wills to perpetuate the human race until the end of time.”

What is Bonhoeffer telling us about marriage? Do you think people of “the world” have this mentality of marriage?

Bonhoeffer goes on to say, “God is joining you together; it is his act, not yours.” “Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” If marriage is an act of God, what is divorce doing to this act?

I Cor. 7:27 – Paul wrote: “Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life and I want to spare you this.” What is Paul telling us about seeking a wife? And what is he telling us about marriage?

the “trouble” (Greek: *thlipsis* or *anankē*) Paul mentions refers to the **worldly cares, anxieties, and potential hardships (like persecution or social dislocation) that come with marriage, especially during a time of “present distress” (7:26, 28)**, distracting believers from undivided devotion to God, though marriage itself isn’t condemned but seen as a secondary option for those with strong sexual desire. He contrasts this with the **“anxieties” (Greek: *merimna*)** of the unmarried, who are focused on serving the Lord, vs. the married who are divided between pleasing their spouse and worldly things (7:32-35).

Revelation 22:17 – “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”

This is one of the last statements of the Bible. God and his church, “the Spirit and the bride”, are one and act as one.

The earthly marriage represents this in our sinful world today until the return of Jesus and the true marriage begins.