

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 2)

The New People of God

Study 4 – The Faithful Heart

Introduction

Given what Jesus says about adultery and sexual purity in Matthew 5:27-30, it comes as no surprise that in the next section of the Sermon on the Mount we have Jesus' teaching about marital faithfulness, divorce and re-marriage (Matthew 5:31,32). The subject is of course a difficult and a painful one for there are very few people within our community who are not affected by marital breakdown, either in their own experience or among family and friends.

It is very important to understand that Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:31,32 is not the sum-total of all that He had to say on the subject. Thus in Matthew 19:1-12 Jesus deals with the question of divorce and re-marriage more fully, though even this is in answer to a particular question designed by some Pharisees to 'test Him' (19:3). Added to this there is the teaching of the Old Testament beginning in Genesis 2 and the teaching of the New Testament letters which address the relationship between husbands and wives in general (e.g. Ephesians 5:22-33) and in some cases the reality of relational breakdown (e.g. 1 Corinthians 7:10-16).

The upshot of all of this is that Matthew 5:31-32 gives us a very specific and limited answer to what is a very complex question. But it is an answer well worth hearing for, as with the other passages in this part of the Sermon on the Mount, it is an answer which helps us to think carefully and prayerfully about the state of our hearts.



Investigate and Think



Read Matthew 5:31-32

1. In Matthew 5:31 Jesus quotes a statement regarding divorce. In this context, whose statement is Jesus likely to be quoting? (see Matthew 5:20; *cf* Matthew 19:3)

6. In the context in which Jesus spoke divorce implied re-marriage. Why is Jesus against divorce where there are not proper grounds for divorce? (NB: Again bear in mind that this passage does not list every valid grounds for divorce)

Read Matthew 19:1-11

7. What does the question in verse 3 tell us about the attitude that Jesus was speaking against in his own day?

8. What attitude should believers have toward marriage?

9. What does verse 8 tell us about divorce and re-marriage?

10. With what attitude should God's people approach the question of marriage?

