



*“The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart”.*  
~ Joe Focht, Pastor

The heart is the core of who we are. Parts of our hearts may be yielded to Christ, and parts of our hearts are withheld from Him.

The fruit we bear is our behavior. Our behaviors are directly influenced by our faith in Christ (or lack thereof) and are shown in how we honor Him (or do not).

## **Anger and Reconciliation** - Read Matthew 5:21-26

### **Questions:**

What does Jesus say about the human heart in Matthew 15:18-20?

What does Jesus say about hearts and fruit in Matthew 12:33-35 and Luke 6:43-45?

Autonomy describes an individual who lives according to his/her own will. Cain is an example of this in Genesis 4:1-15, particularly in verse 7 when God tells him *“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”*

Jesus is telling us that murder begins in the heart long before it occurs. Murder is the fruit that could be born from unrepentance and unforgiveness.

### **Questions:**

How can the condition of one’s heart influence one’s worship of the Lord?

How could things have been different for Cain if he had a repentant heart before God?

How does Ephesians 4:25-32 lay out what Jesus is teaching in Matthew 5:21-26 of His sermon?

## **Encouragement:**

Do you have anger or vengeance in your heart for someone today? It is not too late to repent for this sin and move toward healing your relationship and your heart.

Here are some helpful steps to repentance:

**Recognition of Sin** - If you know in your heart that you are angry at another, accept that this is something you need to lay at Jesus' feet.

**Remorse for your Sin** - You are noticing that you have feelings of sympathetic sorrow, anguish of compassion, or compunction of conscience. If not, pray for the Holy Spirit to incite these feelings in you so you are compelled to act.

**Confess your Sin** - Do this right away directly to the person you have sinned against. If this is not possible, confess to a trusted Christian brother or sister.

**Forsake Sin** - This is a conscious effort to change your behavior and grow healthy spiritual fruit. Turn Toward God - Continually seek a deeper relationship with Him and align your life with His will.

## **Lust and Adultery** - Read Matthew 5:27-30

*"Thou shall not commit adultery"* is a commandment from God. You might say that you have never broken this commandment. However, Jesus is clarifying that it begins in our hearts, and over a period of time it could grow and develop into infidelity.

### **Questions:**

How can media, fashion, and cultural shamelessness influence lustful thinking?

Has there ever been something harmful in your life that you had allowed yourself to repeatedly do that you had a difficult time letting go of?

Would you say that the harmful thing became a part of who you are or who you were? How does this relate to what Jesus is saying in verses 29 and 30?

Job said in verse 31:1, *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"* Perhaps you have been watching or reading things that are unholy. It is not your eyes or your hands causing you to lust, it is your heart.

### **Encouragement:**

Do you need to make a covenant with the Lord about what you have been looking at or watching? Confess this to a trusted brother or sister in Christ, and release the burden you are carrying over this sin. Then seek healing help from church leadership ~ hospital is the root of hospitality, after all.

Romans 12:2 says *"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* When our minds are renewed by the Holy Spirit, and fed by the Word of God, our hearts are influenced to change our desires.

## **Marriage and Divorce** - Read Matthew 5:31-32

In Matthew 19:1-6, Jesus describes marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman. He said that the married couple's one fleshness that God has joined together, must not be separated by any person. Jesus said that the breaking of the covenant by fornication/sexual immorality/adultery was a reason that divorce would be permissible.

### **Questions:**

How is God's design for marriage counter-cultural today?

Is there someone you know that is living a lifestyle in which this covenant is not being lived out?

How could you/do you/will you love them like Jesus does?

In Old Testament times, women did not have the right to divorce, and a husband could divorce his wife for any reason. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, a certificate of divorce was permitted by Moses in order to protect the wife, as well as the future 2nd husband, from being considered an adulterer. Adultery was punishable by stoning.

### **Questions:**

Since God operates outside of time, how do you think that plays into what Jesus teaches about marriage in verse 32?

In Matthew 19, Jesus tells the Pharisees that *“Moses permitted divorce because of the hardness of their hearts, but from the beginning it was not so.”* How could the hardness of one’s heart influence them to divorce their spouse?

How could the Lordship of Jesus over married individuals influence a marital outcome?

### **Encouragement:**

It can seem obvious that in marriage we should put our spouse first, but the proper alignment is to put God first, then each other. *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all things shall be added unto you.”* Matthew 6:33.

One way to accomplish this is to pray together and do daily devotions together - a step toward vulnerability with each other is a step toward greater intimacy.

### **Conclusions:**

What do each of these sections have in common? Which commandment do they all break?

Read what Paul says in Romans 7:7-25. Does what he says there resonate with you?

The law is like a thermometer in that it identifies we are ill, but the thermometer can’t heal us. Only Jesus is the cure - allow Him to help you change your heart!

Please remember Romans 8:1 - *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Conviction comes from God, and condemnation does not. If you are feeling any guilt, allow the Holy Spirit to draw you to go to the Lord. If you are feeling shame about your sin, know that the Lord knows your heart already. He is waiting for you to return to Him.

Proverbs 4:23 ~ *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life.”*

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