

Sex, Relationships and Words

Matthew 5:27-37

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes how his followers will live differently. This includes the areas of sex, relationships, and our personal trustworthiness.

Faithful in Thought

Having dealt with murder, Jesus moves to adultery. As murder begins in the heart, adultery begins with the eyes and imagination. Faithfulness in marriage, and sexual purity in singleness, are about being faithful with your imagination, as much as it is with your body.

There are two dangers. The first is to think this is a problem only for men. Secondly it's to think all sexual desire is wrong. But we must be ruthless in dealing with lust. We must do whatever it takes – much is at stake. There are some things we will have to stop doing/watching if we are to get serious with sin. Jesus also says this kind of faithfulness will not be short-lived.

Faithful for Life

The context of what Jesus teaches on divorce was a debate between two rabbis. Could a man divorce his wife for any reason, or only for sexual immorality? Jesus says the latter. But then he goes further. He talks about marriage – that it is lifelong and if you divorce your wife for any other reason and she remarries you make her an adulteress. Why? Because you are still married to her. And whilst the rabbis commanded divorce for sexual immorality, Jesus never did.

The walls of life-long commitment are not those of a prison but those of a garden: creating the safe space where sex and love and family can flourish.

Faithful in Word

The religious leaders said you could wriggle out of a vow, provided you hadn't mentioned God's name when you made the vow. Jesus says it doesn't matter how you phrased your vow – everything belongs to God – what matters is that you are a person of your word, of integrity.

We all fail to live up to Jesus' standards, so where can we find forgiveness and the power to live differently?

The Sinner's Faithful Friend

In the Bible God portrays himself as the husband of his people – an adulterous bride. He does not divorce us, rather he loves us and Christ dies for us. He does not cut us off, instead he is cut off for us. He is *the* self-sacrificing husband. He pays the price for our sins so that we might be forgiven.

The cross is also the place where we find the power to live differently, as we reckon ourselves dead to sin. We also hear Christ's words speaking to us – words of power and life, that can shape our hearts, so that our desires come into line with his. As we grow in our understanding of his faithfulness to us, our desire to be faithful to him and others will grow.