

Study Guide-Matthew Lesson 78: The Sermon on the Mount – Are You an Adulterer?

Sunday AM-August 16, 2026

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount contains some of the most challenging teachings of Jesus Christ. In this lesson, the focus is on Matthew 5:27-30, where Jesus Christ addresses the topic of adultery. While many people believe they are righteous because they have not committed a physical act of sin, Jesus Christ teaches that God is concerned with the condition of the human heart. This study guide explores how Jesus Christ shifted the focus from external rules to internal attitudes, using the Law of Moses and the book of Deuteronomy to show that God has always desired a relationship based on love rather than just a list of "do's and don'ts."

Quiz: Reviewing the Lesson

1. According to the Pharisees, what was required to be considered righteous regarding the law of adultery?
2. How does Jesus Christ change the definition of adultery in Matthew 5:28?
3. What is the significance of the phrase "But I say" when Jesus Christ speaks to His listeners?
4. How do the prophets and other Old Testament writings relate to the Pentateuch (the first five books of Moses)?
5. What does the name "Deuteronomy" mean, and why is this book considered so important?
6. According to the lesson, what is the "pinnacle" or most important verse in the entire Bible?
7. Why did God wait until after He rescued the Israelites from Egypt to give them the Ten Commandments?
8. What was Jesus Christ trying to show the Pharisees about their own ability to keep the law?
9. Based on Deuteronomy 10:12-13, what does the Lord require from His people before they keep His commandments?
10. What is the difference between a relationship based on "law" and a relationship based on "love"?

Answer Key

1. The Pharisees believed they were righteous as long as they did not physically commit the act of adultery. They focused entirely on external behavior and thought their lack of physical sin earned them the best seats in the Kingdom.
2. Jesus Christ explains that if a person looks at another to lust after them, they have already committed adultery in their heart. He teaches that internal thoughts and attitudes are just as significant to God as external actions.
3. This phrase shows that Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority on God's law. He is not changing the law, but He is correcting the narrow and incorrect interpretations taught by the rabbis and Pharisees.
4. The Pentateuch is the core or "gospel" of the Old Testament. The prophets and later writings serve as commentaries and explanations that remind the people to return to the standards God laid down through Moses.
5. Deuteronomy comes from Greek words meaning "second law." It serves as a summary and reiteration of God's laws for the Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land.
6. The pinnacle of the Bible is Deuteronomy 6:5, which commands people to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and strength. Jesus Christ Himself confirmed this was the greatest commandment.
7. God established a relationship of love and redemption first by saving His people from bondage. The law was not the cause of their relationship with Him, but rather the result of being His redeemed people.
8. Jesus Christ wanted them to realize that they were helpless and powerless to change their own hearts. By hitting them where they were "hopeless," He aimed to drive them to God, who is the only one who can truly transform a person's inner life.
9. God requires His people to fear Him, walk in His ways, love Him, and serve Him with all their heart and soul. These internal attitudes are meant to come before the external act of keeping His statutes.
10. A relationship based on law focuses on following a system of rules to prove one's own righteousness. A relationship based on love is a heart-centered devotion where obedience to God's word is a natural response to His prior love for us.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the Pharisaical view of the law with the interpretation provided by Jesus Christ. Why is the "heart" so central to His teaching?
2. Explain the relationship between the Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament. How does Deuteronomy act as a "key" to understanding the Bible?
3. Discuss the concept of "Adultery of the Heart." Why does Jesus Christ use such strong language (referring to hell) to describe internal lust?

4. Describe the chronological order of God's love, redemption, and the giving of the law to Israel. How does this same pattern apply to the Gospel of Jesus Christ today?
5. How does a society's focus on "physical attraction" and "perversion" conflict with the biblical definition of love and relationship? Use points from the lesson to support your answer.

The Inner Law and the Heart of God

The lesson emphasizes that society is currently bombarded with sexual propaganda that destroys families and individual lives. This environment appeals to the sinful nature of man. To counter this, Jesus Christ points back to the true intent of the law.

The Contrast of Authority

Jesus Christ repeatedly uses a specific formula to challenge the traditionalists of His day:

- **"You have heard":** This refers to the external, reduced version of the law taught by the Pharisees and scribes.
- **"But I say":** This establishes the authority of Jesus Christ to reveal the full truth of the law, which includes the internal life of a person.

The Pharisees invented a system of rules they could actually follow, which gave them a false sense of self-righteousness. However, Jesus Christ shattered this confidence by showing that God judges the "secret life" and the attitudes of the heart.

The Importance of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is presented as the most important book in the Old Testament because it summarizes the standards for living in God's kingdom.

- It repeats the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5).
- It contains the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).
- It is the Old Testament book quoted most often by Jesus Christ and New Testament writers.

Love: The Foundation of Obedience

A common misunderstanding is that the Old Testament is only about law. The lesson clarifies that the Old Testament is actually an "economy of love." God did not give the law to the Israelites so they could *become* His people; He made them His people through redemption and then told them how to live.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 (NKJV):

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

This scripture confirms that God has always sought a heart commitment. Obedience is meant to be driven by love, not by a desire to follow a checklist of rules.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Adultery:** Traditionally defined as physical unfaithfulness in marriage; Jesus Christ expanded this to include lustful thoughts in the heart.
- **Bondage:** The state of being enslaved; specifically refers to the Israelites' time in Egypt before God rescued them.
- **Decalogue:** Another name for the Ten Commandments.
- **Economy (Biblical context):** A specific way or system by which God deals with humanity or governs His people.
- **Lechery:** Excessive or offensive sexual desire; lustfulness.
- **Pentateuch:** The first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), written by Moses.
- **Pharisees:** A religious group during the time of Jesus Christ known for their strict (and often external) adherence to the law.
- **Propaganda:** Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a particular point of view or behavior.
- **Redemption:** The act of being saved or "bought back" from bondage or sin.
- **Statutes:** Written laws or decrees passed by a legislative body or, in this context, commanded by God.

Greek Terms and Pronunciation Guide^[^1]

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
<i>deutero</i>	DYOO-ter-oh	Meaning "second."
<i>nomos</i>	NO-moss	Meaning "law."

[^1]: These terms are combined to form the title of the book "Deuteronomy," which literally translates to "Second Law" or the reiteration of the law.