



Be Obedient: Six Examples of Inside Out Righteousness Part 1: Be Anger Free and Adultery Free (Matthew 5:17-30)

Did your parents ever say, “Do as I say, not as I do?” Our parents knew what was right and yet realized that they would fall short. Aware that we would not only listen to their words, but also watch their behavior, they couched their inevitable disparity in word and deed with “Do as I say, not as I do.” In Christ, we have a Lord and Savior who says, “Do as I say, and as I do.” His teachings are perfectly aligned with His heart and life. Consequently, He calls the fully surrendered to be obedient from the inside out (Matthew 5:17-20).

Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17-18). *Fulfill* meant more than “complete.” It meant “to clarify the intent of.” Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) including the three parts of its 613 laws: (1) the ceremonial law, (2) the civil law, and (3) the moral law.

Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial law, the sacrificial system that the blood of animals could not satisfy (Hebrews 10:4). Jesus died once and for all for sin (Hebrews 10:10), and there is no longer any need for sacrifice (Hebrews 10:18).

Jesus fulfilled the civil law, also known as the judicial law (John 3:18; 16:11). The civil law brought order to the Israelites leaving Egypt. Its purpose was to keep harmony and health among the civilization. In the United States today, we live in a culture of civil laws based on those laws found in the Old Testament. Inheritance, health, and equity laws are based on these commands. Because of the ultimate clarity of God’s life in Christ, civil judgment has appeared to all men. Those who do not fully surrender their lives to Christ stand condemned.

Jesus fulfilled the moral law (Hebrews 4:15). Though He was tempted in every way, He did not sin. He kept the Ten Commandments and loved the Father and His neighbors during His entire life on earth. Jesus did not abolish these laws. Jewish teachers said that one abolished the law by disobeying it (Deuteronomy 27:26). Jesus did not disobey the law.

The Law and the Prophets testified, or pointed, to Jesus (John 5:39; Luke 24:44). Before He went to the cross, Jesus said that He had completed (fulfilled) His mission from the Father (John 17:4). On the cross, He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The Greek word for the phrase meant “paid in full,” the same word that appeared at the top of a paid bill of sale 2,000 years ago. Jesus did what the Law was powerless to do—provide righteousness (Galatians 2:21). The purpose of the Law was to point us to Christ so that we might be justified—just as if we had never sinned—through faith in Him (Galatians 3:24; Luke 16:16). Faith in Christ makes us no longer under the supervision of the Law (Galatians 3:25).



Now, we must obey Him from the heart to experience inside out righteousness (Matthew 5:19-20). *Obey* meant “to listen.” Jesus said that anyone who would break the least of these commandments and teach others to do the same would be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever would practice and teach these commands would be called great in the kingdom of heaven. He went on to say that our righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. That was a radical statement to His listeners because the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were thought to be the most righteous of all in keeping their commands.

Unfortunately, the Pharisees and teachers of the law practiced outside in righteousness (Matthew 23:25-28). They thought that righteous acts performed on the outside where others could see justified them before God. This had never been the case. After sinning with Bathsheba, King David lamented that God had never been satisfied with burnt offerings, but always attributed His righteousness to a contrite heart (Psalm 51:16-17). Paul taught that in Christ, we are the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21), the living, breathing righteousness of God in the flesh, or actually in the Spirit.

Obedience from the heart occurs from the inside out because it comes from the Spirit of Christ in us (Romans 8:1-4). If we do not have the Spirit of Christ, then we do not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9). We obey and live only by faith—Christ in us (Galatians 2:20). Our ticket to enter the kingdom of heaven is righteousness that comes from another—Christ (Romans 3:21-22). He is the “Do as I say and as I do” Savior.

Street Smarts for The Restoration Road

When tempted to disobey, listen to Christ in you and obey Him from your heart. He fulfilled the law, and He will empower you to obey, experiencing His inside out righteousness.

Example 1: Be Anger Free (Matthew 5:21-26)

Have you ever been angry...today? Anger is an emotion that moves us to a physiological response. It is possible to be angry and not sin (Ephesians 4:26). Anger is a secondary emotion that follows a combination of three primary emotions: hurt, fear, or frustration. Usually, it works like this. Our emotions are stuck in past hurts; our wills reside in the present, frustrated from unmet expectations; and our minds are focused on the future, afraid of its potential outcomes. The result is a soul (emotions, will, and mind) that is out of alignment. We need Christ to align our angry souls.

In His first of *six examples of inside out righteousness*, Jesus taught His disciples to *be free from anger* (Matthew 5:21-26). In each example, Jesus followed a three-fold pattern: (1) He addressed an Old Testament command saying, “You have heard that it was said;” (2) He alluded to the Pharisees’ legalistic interpretation; and (3) He clarified the intent, or spirit, of the law, prefacing His fulfillment with, “But I tell you.”



The Old Testament command: “You have heard that it was said to people long ago, ‘Do not murder’” (Matthew 5:21). Jesus referred to the sixth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13). Having the choice of seven words for “murder,” Jesus selected one that communicated premeditation and deliberateness, including suicide. The definition of the word did not include animal sacrifices, accidents, self-defense, war, or capital punishment. Rather, He chose the word for “murder” that flowed from unchecked anger. While we might not murder anyone, each time we harbor anger toward someone, we die a little inside.

The Legalistic Interpretation: ““ Anyone who murders will be subject to judgment”” (Matthew 5:21). Jesus alluded to the legalistic interpretation by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Translated, “*Murderers are to be judged.*” Once again, the Pharisees and teachers of the law taught outside in righteousness, which said that one was made right or wrong with God based on what he did on the outside. However, Jesus painted a different picture.

The Spirit of the Law: “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment” (Matthew 5:22). The spirit of the Law dealt with the heart because God designed us to live from the inside out. Jesus called His disciples, including us, to a heart condition that desires to be reconciled: not harboring anger toward anyone in our hearts. He taught that unchecked anger and its name-calling has consequences, including hell (Matthew 5:23). Jesus said that we should reconcile, or settle our accounts, quickly. We are to do this whether (1) we sin against someone, or (2) someone sins against us.

If we are in the middle of a worship service and realize that we have sinned against someone, Jesus said to “Go and come.” First *go* reconcile, then *come* and worship (Matthew 5:23-24). If someone sins against us and is taking us to court, whether legal or social, we are to settle the matter quickly because it is likely that the un-reconciled conflict will only get worse (Matthew 5:25-26).

We are to reconcile and not harbor anger in our hearts because it reflects God’s heart to do so. God told Moses that He was slow to anger (Exodus 34:6). Paul revealed that Jesus was our peace (Ephesians 2:14), reconciling the world to God so that we would reconcile with others in order that they would be reconciled with God (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

Street Smarts for The Restoration Road

Ask God to help you reconcile conflicts quickly, whether you sin against someone or someone sins against you. If you have sinned against someone, go and come. Go and ask the offended person for a “clean slate,” then come and offer your heart for worship. If someone has sinned against you and is taking you to court, whether legal or social, settle the matter quickly so that the un-reconciled conflict does not get worse (Matthew 5:25-26). Be free from unchecked anger and reflect the peaceful heart of Christ in you.



Example 2: Be Adultery Free

How many times have you committed adultery? Jesus said that it might be more than you think. With the invention of Internet pornography, adultery in our world might be at an all-time high. In His second of *six examples of inside out righteousness*, Jesus taught His disciples to *be adultery free*.

The Old Testament command: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery’” (Matthew 5:27). Jesus referred to the seventh of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14). The Old Testament’s penalty for adultery (to alter, or to change, marriage vows) was the death of both parties, including an adulterous fiancé (Deuteronomy 22:22-24). Adultery was not considered only a sin against others; it was viewed as a sin against the Creator. After his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, King David said that he had sinned against God (2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51:4).

The Legalistic Interpretation: “*Adultery is a bodily act of sexual intercourse.*” While this is not mentioned verbatim, it is alluded to by Jesus’ context. Outside in righteousness follows the letter of the law, but misses the spirit of the law. While in this mode, we seek loopholes that allow us to “keep the letter of the law,” while maintaining control of our own lives. “I never had sexual relations with that woman” has become one man’s legacy. He chose his words carefully in order to justify his following of the law’s letter while falling short of its intent.

The Spirit of the Law: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). Sin, including adultery, begins when we desire it in our hearts (James 1:14). Jesus was not saying, “Now that you’ve thought about it, you might as well do it.” Rather, He was calling His disciples to *be faithful in heart*—faithful to God and faithful to their spouses. Jesus said that faithfulness was one of the most important matters of the law (Matthew 23:23). He followed His fulfillment of the intent of the law with two tools for His disciples to be faithful.

First, bounce your eyes. “If your right eye causes you to sin, 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” (Matthew 5:29). Jesus referred to the right side of the body because it was considered the most dominant. He was not advocating self-mutilation. Instead, He used hyperbole, deliberate exaggeration to make a point. In essence, Jesus said that immediate gratification leads to dissatisfaction and death. Sexual temptation enters through the eyes (John 2:15-17), and the eyes are never satisfied (Proverbs 27:20). The more that we see sexual temptation the more we desire it.

Two thousand years ago the people of Corinth were surrounded with live sexual temptations, not with virtual ones that we have available on the Internet today. The



Apostle Paul told the Corinthians to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Second, run. “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of our body than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matthew 5:30). Joseph ran from Potiphar’s wife who pursued him to go to bed with her, noting that it was both a sin against her husband and a sin against God (Genesis 39:6-12).

Immediate gratification leads to dissatisfaction and death. Sexual temptation enters through our eyes, gets mulled over in our hearts, and is executed through our hands. However, God always provides a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Paul called the Thessalonians to run from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3). The Greek word for “sexual immorality” is the same root word for “pornography.” The comprehensive definition of this word includes any sexual gratification outside of marriage. God designed sex to take place between one man and one woman in the context of marital union. This is the only kind of sex that satisfies.

Street Smarts for The Restoration Road

When you are tempted, bounce your eyes and refocus your mind with God’s Word and images of your spouse if you are married, then run. Surround yourself with photographs of your spouse and family, including a picture of your wife as a little girl, so that you see her as her father saw her, vulnerable and in need of protection.

Conclusion

Practice inside out righteousness through heartfelt obedience to Christ, who fulfilled the Law. Surrender to the Holy Spirit to reconcile conflicts quickly, whether you sin against someone or someone sins against you. If you have sinned against someone, go and come. Go and reconcile, then come and offer your heart for worship. If someone has sinned against you, settle the matter quickly so that the un-reconciled conflict does not get worse (Matthew 5:25-26). Be free from unchecked anger and reflect the peaceful heart of Christ in you, remembering that God is slow to anger.

Whether you have un-reconciled conflict or you have committed adultery, you can be forgiven and restored in Christ. God’s intent of the Law is peace and faithfulness because God is slow to anger and faithful (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 145:13), and Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14) who is faithful (Hebrews 3:6)—faithful to forgive and to restore (1 John 1:9). Left to ourselves, we are unfaithful; we lust in our hearts for others who are not our spouses. But, Christ in us is faithful. When tempted, (1) bounce your eyes from the temptation, and refocus them on God’s Word and your spouse if you are married; and (2) run away from the temptation, both in your heart and physically if necessary. Fix your eyes on Christ, and run to Him.

