

## The Sermon on the Mount – Part 2

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*Matthew*

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Before we turn to our respective text this evening, I think an explanation of the word Adonai would be fitting. You may or may not know where that term for the Lord comes from so if you will, bear with me a few moments. In the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Exodus 3, we have Moses about to go back into the land known as Egypt to deliver the Israelites by those famous plagues. You remember one of the statements that he makes to the Lord is, "I don't even know your name. How am I to tell them that I'm here to deliver them when I can't even give the name of the one who is sending me?" Do you remember the famous statement in Exodus 3:14? The Lord says, "I AM THAT I AM." That name in the Old Testament for God is Yahweh. It's spelled with all consonants, and it is so revered among the Jewish people, so revered among the Hebrews, that they dare not even pronounce it. In fact, the term that you and I have, Jehovah, that is actually a construct of adding vowels to the word Yahweh to make the word Jehovah. What's interesting about that is unless it is a descriptive like Jehovah Jireh, those who are of a Jewish faith will not even pronounce the name Jehovah because it contains the letters of Yahweh. You can see this in our contemporary culture when the time comes for what we know as the Passover season. You go to an area of the grocery store where there needs to be foods that are deemed kosher, and there'll be statements about that food and they will use the term G-d. They don't even want to use the word for God because they don't want to take the Lord's name in vain going back to what we know as the 10 Commandments. What that means is Adonai, that was the word that the Jewish people constructed to communicate openly and verbally about the Lord in their lives. They had such a reverence for him and his name, they would not dare speak it. So Adonai is actually not a word in your Bible but it is a word that was used by the Jewish people because they were so reverent of who God is and his name when they spoke of him, they used the term Adonai. Why do I go into such graphic detail? Because words matter. Tonight, when we go into our text, we're going to discern what words really mean and then what their meaning is for our lives today.

Let's pray.

*Heavenly Father, as we open your holy sacred book, God, today I pray that our heart and our desire would be to be biblicists. God, we just want to live according to your word. Lord, we come tonight and we confess we have a lifetime of baggage and tradition,*

*perspectives, opinions, information that at times is correct and other times not so much. Lord, we confess that oftentimes when we open your word, the filter between our eyes and your word is filled with so many different things. God, today remove that filter. May you allow us the privilege of reading, studying, and living out your word as you wrote it and as you intended it. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

Tonight, we're going to be in Matthew 5 and I know there may be some of you either in person or online that are new to our study here on Sunday evenings. We are very slowly, let me emphasize very slowly and strategically walking through the book of Matthew. Matthew. But let me share with you the why. We know there are four gospels about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ within the Bible. There's Matthew, there's Mark, there's Luke, and there's John, and they all have their respective not only perspectives but importances thereof. But I'm of the opinion that Matthew is critical for multiple reasons of which kind of the linchpin or the centerpiece is, I believe that if you can get Matthew, you can get the entirety of scripture. You can get the Old, the New Testament. You can get the "big picture" because what we see in the gospel of Matthew that we don't see in the others, is this connecting us from the old covenant to the new, taking us from the temple physical body, meaning a building at a location, to our bodies being the temple of the Holy Spirit, taking us from Judaism to Christianity and for what we know as the temple to the church. It serves as a transition. In fact, one of the things that we discover in the book of Matthew over and over and over again, and we're going to see it again tonight, is taking that which God communicated in the Old Testament and either confirming or clarifying what that means in the New Testament. You see, by the time you get to Matthew, not only did you oftentimes have hundreds or thousands of years from the time of which the Lord originally gave these words to humanity, but very specifically, you do understand that before Jesus Christ, before his incarnation, humanity had not received a single word from God for over 400 years. Do you know how easy it is when there is that deafening silence to construct your own perspectives? You know how easy it is when you don't consistently hear the voice of God just to begin to construct things based on one's personal agenda or perspective?

When we get to what we know as the Sermon on the Mount, it begins in chapter 5, and it concludes with chapter 7. One of the things that we see Jesus so masterfully doing is not only clarifying but communicating what scripture originally intended and tonight, Matthew 5, we're going to deal with an issue that is difficult at best and unfortunately personal to all of us. Jesus is going to address a subject matter that most assuredly was impacting everyone in his audience at the time, and impacts everybody in this audience tonight. Let me remind you, Sermon on the Mount, we're transitioning from Judaism to Christianity, old covenant to new covenant. He is showing them not what they claim to believe but what is actual truth for their lives.

Over and over again in chapter 5 he says, "You have heard but I say to you." Now let me tell you what Jesus is not doing. Jesus is not changing the Old Testament. Jesus is not saying, "It was written, but I'm changing it." No, no, he says, "You have heard." When he uses the statement "you have heard," what he means is, "That's not what God wrote, that's

what somebody taught you. You have heard this, but this is what scripture actually meant."

Now let me get the proverbial cart before the horse. Why is he doing this over and over and over again? Because all throughout the Sermon on the Mount, he's leading us to this illustration where our lives can be built on one of two things, the rock of Christ Jesus or the shifting sand of anything else. And one of the intents of the Sermon on the Mount is to show us how easily we drift into, "I've heard it said." How easily drift in, "Well, that's just my opinion and I justify, I rationalize it," whatever it may be. What he's doing over and over again is taking us back to what the scripture originally said, what God originally meant, and showing that all of us have strayed, all of us have sinned, all of us have fallen short and clarifying for us what God actually meant from the beginning.

That being said, Matthew 5:31.

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

It gets a little bit personal, does it not? But let me remind you how this famous passage begins, "You have heard." In other words, what Jesus is showing us is they, much like us today, had created a culture that wasn't exactly lined up with scripture.

Now before we walk through a variety of scriptures tonight, I realize, and some of you were a part of it, that for roughly an hour or so I addressed the distinctives of the Baptist faith. We spoke about what makes a person a Baptist versus not being a Baptist. But one of the things I said there and I want to say here tonight: our goal tonight is not to be a better Baptist. Our goal tonight is to be a biblicist. What does the Bible say? And so one of the things that we need to do, not just on this subject matter but on any subject matter, is that we need to go back, what was it that God originally wrote? What was it that he originally gave humanity? Because Jesus says, "You've heard it said." In other words, what Jesus is addressing is, "What you're being taught, what you're being preached to isn't what I wrote to you originally."

So tonight, for you and I to truly understand what Jesus is saying in this passage, we've got to go all the way back to Deuteronomy 24. By the way, let me give you a head's up: tonight we're going to turn to a lot of scriptures. You say, "Why are we going to turn to so many scriptures tonight?" Because this subject matter is so important and because it is so personal in so many of our lives, I don't think you need to hear me say, "It has been said," we need to go back to what God actually wrote.

In Deuteronomy 24, beginning in verse 1, just a little bit of context here. The Israelites are about to make their way into what we know as the Promised Land. Moses is still alive. He's about to rebel against God. He's going to die outside of the Promised Land,

but essentially what the Lord is doing is giving them the rules for engagement. They're about to go in this Promised Land. He's going to bring victory at Jericho, Ai, all these other places, but once all those victories take place, they've got to learn how to live. Time after time, generation after generation, how do they do this thing called life? I want to begin in verse 1 of Deuteronomy 24 and not only do I want to read the text, but I want to illustrate something that is not spoken of in this text that Jesus said they had "heard of." It says, "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken."

Now, some of y'all laugh at that phrase, cheer up his wife, but nonetheless, let me unpack this and many of you may be familiar with what's happening here. I want to describe Deuteronomy 24 and then I want to delineate the difference between what it says and what Jesus said they had "heard." In biblical days, particularly the Old Testament, the arrangement for marriage was very much different than ours today. In fact, typically what would take place is that a young man on the last day of his 12th year, the night before his 13th birthday, they would have a bar mitzvah, and it was at that bar mitzvah that two major events in his life took place. First, he was given an apprenticeship, the job of which he would partake in the rest of his life, whether it be, I don't know, a carpenter, or whatever it may be. It was at that celebration where whoever was going to mentor him. You see, understand in their day, in their time, formal education ceased at age 13 and you went into your job, you went into that which would sustain your family for the rest of your days. So it was at that point where one's occupation was formally disclosed. The second thing, it was at the bar mitzvah where that young man would be betrothed. By the way, that's the Bible word that's used in Matthew 1 referring to Mary and Joseph, would be betrothed to a young lady.

Now there was a multitude of ways that this could have occurred. Obviously, it was an arrangement of the respective families. You could have had a young couple that already had a young child, a young lady and the betrothal would be to this 13-year-old and a "two-year-old." It could be that the arrangement was a young couple who, upon the birth of their first daughter, would be betrothed to this man. And so again, there was not only the disclosure of one's occupation, there was the disclosure of one's future relationship, one's future marriage. And I know there's a lot of layers between all that that is not for our discussion tonight. But here's what's important is when the day came that that young lady and that man were to marry, typically she would be somewhere between the ages of 13 to 15, he would be in the range of, say, 27, 28 to 30. She was eligible for marriage and

when she physically, biologically could bear children, and by the way, he had been working for 14 plus years and hopefully had attained some type of financial security for their future. But notice what it says that when they do marry, for one year no war, no work, cheer up your wife. What was that? Well, it was the dowry. That dowry, we hear that term in our culture, the dowry was basically the one-year salary for the husband which the young lady was to marry. Based on the occupation, it would vary what the dowry was going to be. But the woman's family gave to that man one year's means of living.

Now why is that important? Because notice the bill of divorcement and that he should give to her so she could "marry again." Well, how are you going to marry if you don't have a dowry? You see, one of the beautiful things about the dowry is it basically was divorce insurance that the Lord gave the young lady that if she entered into a relationship or according to what we just read the husband doesn't like her anymore and says, "I'm done with you, I want to go a different direction," he was not allowed to depart from her unless he gave her the dowry back. It's divorce insurance. You say, "Well, why is that important? Why is that critical?" Go back to Matthew 5. What did Jesus say? "You have heard that if a man put away his wife." That's interesting because in our English language when a marriage dissolves, we only have one word, but in the Old Testament there actually was two words. The word that we read here in Deuteronomy 24 means the ceasing of an arranged relationship and a return of the fiduciary contract. That's exactly what it was.

But let me encourage you to turn to the last book of the Old Testament to the book of Malachi 2. When we get to Malachi 2, there is a statement that is made by the Lord. It's actually not about specific marriages, even though it can be read in that context. He's actually talking about his relationship to them because you do understand that Israel was his wife. And so yes, he's speaking of individuals, but he's really, he's broadening, saying this is bigger than just your home, this is who we are collectively here. Now you remember earlier I said that words matter. Again, in our English language, we only have one word for the dissolution of a marriage. It's called divorce. However, in the Old Testament, there was actually two words that could have been utilized. In Malachi 2:16, I'm going to read a word that your Bible may or may not have. If your Bible, don't get upset with me, if your Bible uses the word divorce, it's a very English Bible. It's a very American Bible, okay? But it's not a very Hebrew Bible. Malachi 2:16, "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously." It says the Lord hateth putting away. Now some of your Bibles say the Lord hateth divorce but we just read Deuteronomy 24. And by the way, he's never a fan of it. He never condones it. He never celebrates it. In fact, in a moment, Matthew 19, he's going to say from the beginning, male and female, the two of them and nobody else. That was his intent. But did you get any idea from Deuteronomy 24 that he hates it? No. In fact, he's saying, "You know, seeing sin and sin happens, if this happens, then I've got a Plan B, it's called grace, okay?" But by the time you get to Malachi 2, it says that the Lord hates putting away. Jesus and Matthew 5 says, "You have heard that if a man put

away his wife for any reason other than," then you've got this whole adulterer, adulteress situation.

So what's happening here? Because remember, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus' desire is to clarify what God really meant and to show the error of humanity's constructs. Well, one of the problems with Old Testament marriage is that by the time you got to the first day of your second year, the dowry had been spent and usually the marital discord, as we just read about, didn't happen in year one. The money is gone. It's years down the road, maybe even a decade down the road, and all of a sudden you've got an individual who says, "I can't do this anymore but I don't have the money. I can't give a bill of divorcement. I don't have the resources so that she can begin again. Ah, I've got an idea," please note my gift of sarcasm, "What if I just place her in the 'second best bedroom' and go and get a new wife? That is called putting away. What they would do is take their first wife, place her in another room and, by the way, still care for them financially, still meet their needs as far as clothing and shelter and life, but it not be, it would not be a marital scenario, and then they would "get a new wife." Well, guess what came with a new wife? A new dowry. Do you see what humanity is doing here? We found a way to never go to work and to never go to war. We'll just keep bringing new dowries into the picture.

It's interesting because what does the Lord say in Malachi 2"16? "I hate putting away." But then you go and read chapter 3 of the book of Malachi and do you know what he told them? He said, "You've committed adultery on me, the living God." And they say, "How have we done that?" Do you know what his illustration is? "You've made other things more important than me. You've relegated me to the second bedroom. You've put me away." And really the point of Malachi is he's saying, "You can't do that. You can't do that with the Lord." It was manifested in this microcosm of a relationship that you and I know as marriage.

By the way, the gospel of Matthew 1, we have the story of Mary and Joseph, the incarnation, let's just call it what it is, it's the Christmas story. Remember that Mary comes and tells Joseph, "I'm going to have a child. It's not yours, but it's nobody else's. It's of God." Now let's all agree, guys, that's a hard pill to swallow, right? Do you remember what Joseph said he would do? Put her away privately. What did that mean? You see, in their culture what that was basically saying is if he had exposed her, by the way, if he had said, "I don't believe you and I'll let the people decide what's going to happen," do you know what would have happened? She would have been stoned. But by putting her away privately, he would have made sure she was cared for, etc, really one of the great heroes of the story, Joseph, in that scenario. But what did the angel of the Lord say? "No, we're not going to do that." Why? Because God hates putting away. God hates this idea that we have multiple entities here that you can have somebody in second place and somebody in first place. You're either all in or all out. That's all there is. So he says, "Don't worry, Joseph. This child is born of the Holy Spirit, conceived of the Holy Spirit.. Trust me, we got this. Just go forward."

Now don't get me wrong, when the wise men or the magi came, they had gold, frankincense and myrrh which accounted for their trip to Egypt, but there was also a

dowry that was there that made their life sustainable from a financial perspective. I want you to fast forward to Matthew 19. We're going to get back to the Sermon on the Mount, I promise, but in Matthew 19. By the way, the parallel passage is in Mark 12. We're going to discuss this issue of marriage again. In verse 1 of chapter 19 of Matthew it says, "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there." Listen to verse 3, "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Now let me peel some layers there. The Pharisees are the same ones that Jesus fought with about everything. They had everything upside down. They had taken the Old Testament and they had constructed it to their own personal benefit. These are the same men, by the way, who when the woman was "caught in adultery," they brought her but did not bring the other party. These individuals were theological scoundrels at best.

What does it say? We're tempting him. Their agenda is right there in verse 3. They basically were trying to catch him and hear the answer to the question must be based on the question. What is the question? Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause now? Now number 1, they're dealing with an issue that God had not originally constructed. They're dealing with, "You've heard it said." What does Jesus say in verse 4, "he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female," in the year 2022, I need to read that again, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Now, by the way, we're about to read that Deuteronomy 24, the reason for God giving that instruction is because the hardness of man's heart. God's original intent was not for marriages to dissolve. His original intent was not for there to be marital discord. This was never the desired, this was never the intent but you go back into Deuteronomy, and there are these grace measures that God put into the mix. What had humanity done? What humanity always does, we take advantage of other people for our own personal gain. That's exactly what these Pharisees had done and basically when they came to Jesus, they said, "Okay, Jesus, when we put them away what are the rules and what are the regulations? Can we do it for anything or just these certain things?" Jesus' first response was that this should not even be a part of your vocabulary. This was never what God wrote back in Deuteronomy.

Notice verse 7, "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" Now I want you to notice words are important. Did Deuteronomy 24 ever talk about putting away? Never did. Talked about a bill of divorcement. Putting away is a man construct that was actually pretty financially prosperous.

Verse 8, "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another,

committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Now again, it seems a little convoluted there but that's why we went back to Deuteronomy 24. That's what we talked about, the distinction between these "two words," the bill of divorcement, the putting away are two completely different things which takes us back to Matthew 5. Jesus is dealing with the hardness of man's heart in a construction that was beyond what God had originally given them and basically said, "It doesn't matter how you do this, it doesn't matter how you slice it, how you dice it, this is never going to work out because it's never what I intended. This was never my design."

You know, it's interesting when we look at what we know as the institution of marriage, it's pretty serious in God's eyes. We just read about it in Matthew 19, Mark 12 basically elaborates when you get to verses 10 through 12, it's even more specific about this "putting away apart." It is so serious that when you get to Ephesians 5 it says that the only relationship on earth that mirrors or mimics God's relationship with humanity is the marital union. There's this picture, there's this description that as Christ is to the church so the husband is to the wife. So let me ask you a very rhetorical theological question: can you serve Jesus Christ and some other faith entity at the same time? You can't, and in fact, Jesus made it very clear, "You know, I'm the only way. I'm the only truth. I'm the only life. Nobody comes to the Father but by me." You cannot claim and I'm just going to use very well-known terminologies, you cannot claim to serve Jesus, Buddha and Allah all at the same time. You can't do it. In fact, Jesus made it very clear, "You've got to pick. I'm either the Savior for all or I'm the Savior for none."

And so when it comes to the marital union, we don't have the privilege of having two. We don't have the privilege of saying, "Well, that was convenient for a season. I want to go a new direction." What did he say in Deuteronomy 24? "You're going to go a different direction, then we're going to have it clear cut, we're going to have some, we're going to make this so clear that we're all starting over." Interesting, you have individuals that were tempting him, you have people that were trying to twist him up and they were using phraseology that God never used originally in Deuteronomy 24. So what is the uniqueness of this? Not only is it the one relationship that the Lord pictures for us in Ephesians 5, but I think unfortunately humanity in our context, in our culture today, has done very similar to what we did in Jesus' day, we have declared, we have made, we have proclaimed it to be something that it either is or it is not comparatively what or how scripture describes it.

You know, I've had the privilege of being a part of a lot of different marriage ceremonies, some of them have been small, some of them have been large, some of them, of course, most of them have been very unique. In fact, I don't, by the way, do not take my "man card" when I say what I'm about to say, but one of my favorite movies in the world is a movie called "27 Dresses." For those of you who have not seen it, it's about all these different weddings that this young lady is in and the reason it's one of my favorites is I have officiated every one of those weddings. I've been a part of all of them and I just, I laughed the whole way through because I'm like, "Been there, done that." But you know it doesn't matter the location, it doesn't matter the size, it really doesn't matter the style. When you have a marital service that is being done from a biblical perspective, there are



some interesting aspects of it. The first one is this, that the groom, and I'm just going to use this room as an illustration because we're sitting here, the groom is positioned waiting on the bride to come down the aisle. He has already paid the price. He's already bought the ring. He's already gone to the expense. He's already made the offer. He has proposed to her. He is simply waiting on her to respond.

Now when we open those doors in whatever the context may be, and that bride comes, they come and this is what's important, the mother and the father go back to their respective seat, we have friends and family that are all gathered around, but who is it that exchanges the vows? Just those two. Who is it that makes those agreements with each other? Just those two. Can you imagine, and I know there are false faiths out there and there are traditions of men that take everything skewed, but can you imagine if in this place and any place, we had a young man down here at the front, the Wedding March goes off, the doors open up, young lady is being brought down by her dad, and all of a sudden she gets to the front and there's another lady there. What would you say? "No. What is this?" That's what Jesus was refuting. Jesus said, "No, we're not going to play that game because that's not how I operate." Remember in Revelation 3, the church at Laodicea, he talked about it being lukewarm? He said, "You're either hot or you're cold." In other words, "You're not going to throw me into the mix. You're not going to make me just one of many. You're not just going to have me as an individual among the multitude." You see, when Jesus is communicating this message, he's not just clarifying the Old Testament rule and "law," it's beyond that. He's also saying, "You should not do this in your home and you shouldn't do it with me either. When you come and you believe in me, I am the only one. I'm not one of many. I'm the way, I'm the truth and I'm the life. There is nobody who comes to the Father but by me."

You see one of the problems that Jesus faced in the famous Sermon on the Mount wasn't just men that had the scheme of putting away their wives, he lived in a place and an area where Caesarea Philippi was right around the corner. By the way, by the time you get to Matthew 16, this comes into play. You remember this famous scene? I'll close on this, Jesus goes to Caesarea Philippi, he gathers the apostles up, and he asked a very strategic question, "Who do men say that I am?" Remember, the disciples? "Oh, some think you're Jeremiah. Some think you're John the Baptist. Some think you're just a good teacher." Remember what Jesus said. "Who do you say that I am?" Why is that so important? Because Caesarea Philippi was this place of collective belief systems. It was a place where, shall we say, all the faiths, all the expressions gathered in one place. Oftentimes, what people would do in Caesarea Philippi is that they would offer a sacrifice at faith one, then they'd make a donation to faith two. They wanted to cover all their bases. "I want to make sure I've got everything covered."

You see, when Jesus made this statement he was clarifying Deuteronomy 24, but it's actually more important than our respective homes. It's actually more important than our respective "marriages." He was saying, "I can't just be one of many that you believe in. You're either all in or you're all out." You can't put one foot in Christianity and another foot in something else. You can't say Jesus on Sunday and somebody else on Monday. You see, what had happened is this construct that these Pharisees had created to benefit

financially and culturally had done exactly what it always did, it had seeped into their faith system as well.

And so when Jesus in Matthew 5 says, "It has been said whosoever," he was even speaking beyond Deuteronomy 24. He was speaking to our walk with him and our eternity. We don't have the privilege of making Jesus one of many. We don't have the privilege of saying, "Well, I want to believe in Jesus, but I want to put another system in room number 2." He said, "No." What must you do to be saved? You must listen, you must divorce yourself from your sin. You must divorce yourself from any false belief system. You must say, "I'm out and it's only Jesus." Now do you see in Malachi 2 why he said, "I hate putting away"? It's more than the home, it messes up eternity. He is the way, the truth, the life. Nobody comes to the Father but by him. And yes, our marriages should proclaim that and should preach that, because that's how he designed it from the beginning.

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Maybe tonight even in this place, even at this hour, you're one of those individuals who said, "Do you know what? I've never been one who believed. I've never been one who asked Jesus to save me." Well, tonight's as good as any night. In fact, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6 that today is the day of salvation and maybe today is the day that you do what Romans 10 says, you just call out to the Lord, you just call out to him to forgive you and to save you, and tonight you divorce yourself from your sin. Maybe tonight, you say, "Do you know what? I'm already there, I'm already a believer, but I'm struggling in this area. I'm struggling in that area." One of the beautiful things about the word of God is the Spirit of God can take the word of God and do a surgical procedure in our hearts that may or may not even relate to the subject matter at hand. You see, tonight as we come to this time of response, it may be about your eternity, it may be about your marriage, it may be about your family, it may be about your workplace, it may be about sinful behaviors and addictions and such, it may be about just trusting God in a very difficult season of life. It doesn't matter what the scenario is, what matters is that we make a conscious decision to trust the Lord in every scenario and every situation.

*Lord Jesus, as we come to the close tonight, Lord, forgive us for how many times we personally have said we have heard. God, tonight I pray that you would take us back to your word, that we would see that you're a God of mercy and that you're a God of grace, that, God, you take sinful man's inclinations and our desires to benefit ourselves and to prosper at the expense of others and even at yours as well, that you're willing to forgive us, you're willing to set us on the right path, you're willing to forgive and to walk with us every step of the way. God, I pray tonight, that we would experience what Jesus was trying to teach in the Sermon on the Mount, you've designed us to be free, you have come to set the captives free. May we no longer walk in the bondage of man's traditions, but in the freedom of your Spirit within our lives. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*