

Instructions beyond the Jordan

There are so many deep teachings collected in the portion of the gospels you are exploring today. I am going to try and bring you just 4 teachings from these passages that come from Jesus' instructions beyond the Jordan.

1. Quit trying to save yourself and let God save you

Luke 18: The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

⁹To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

¹³“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

¹⁴“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Quotes & Concepts from *The Prodigal God* by Tim Keller (as applied to the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector)

- **Jesus is shattering our categories, redefining sin, what it means to be lost and what it means to be saved.**
- **Both religious and irreligious people are lost**
 - **Irreligious people are lost because of their distance or rejection of God.**
 - **Religious people are lost because they are trying to use God to get what they want through obedience.** (How do you know if this is the case with you? What happens within you when you don't get what you want).

- **Both religious and unreligious people are attempting to save themselves:** In the Prodigal Son, one son is lost at home, and one is lost abroad. One is lost by trying and one by not trying. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, salvation does not come to the one who tries hardest, or even the one who gives up trying. In the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, it comes to the one who gives up and surrenders. That is what baptism is!

- **Baptism as explained in Next Steps:** baptism=surrender

Isn't it crazy that when Jesus says, "Follow me", and we say yes, his reply is to have us go find someone we don't know very well and have them shove our face under water. Why? Because he wants to train us from the beginning of our journey with him that it is not the try harder muscle but the trust harder muscle that we will have to use to follow him. In the same way we trust someone to pull us out of that water before we drowned, we are trusting him to raise us up out of our circumstances, our sin and ultimately the grave before its too late. It is only that level of surrender that saves a person, not increased effort. Thank God!

- **So which are you in this story: the Pharisee or the Tax Collector?** Here is evidence that you have the Pharisee Spirit: you look down on or are irritated with people who...
 - **Believe different than you do,**
 - **Behave differently than you do**
 - **Study the Bible differently than you do**
 - We never see Jesus exhibit favor based on these things: see Zacchaeus. Then note the Tax Collector. Both stood at a distance and were brought near by God. Both experienced salvation.

2. Quit trying to collect on debts that cannot be repaid and forgive others.

Luke 17:3-4: "If your brother or sister^(a) sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. ⁴Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

I have always focused on the repetitive sin part of this, not the command toward repetitive forgiveness. Forgiving one incident of sin over and over is just as

important as forgiving repetitive sin once each time a person in your life commits it.

Forgiveness is not a one-time event for one sin. I unforgive, regularly! I must keep forgiving people for the one thing that comes back to my mind and hits me a different way on a certain day than it did yesterday. Stay clean by praying the Lords Prayer.

How do you know if you have forgiven something? When you can say, “You don’t own me anything because of what you did or didn’t do. Debt paid.” This is what God has done for us and he wants us to pay it forward to transform this broken world.

This is not about proximity in a relationship. It’s about debt in a relationship. You don’t have to be close with a person who is repeatedly toxic. You do have to forgive them so that the toxin does not take root in you. Remember:

- “Bitterness is drinking poison and expecting the other person to drop dead.”
- “Forgiveness is setting a prisoner free only to find that the prisoner was you.”

Q & A

3. Quit making divorce the unpardonable sin, and understand the purpose of marriage.

Matthew 19

When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ²Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

⁴“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’^[a] ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’^[b]?” ⁶So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

⁷“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

⁸Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Matthew maintains clarity on the sexual immorality clause (See Sermon on the Mount), though others do not say it explicitly. Paul adds abandonment in 1 Cor 7.

I think to understand the morality of marriage, we need to first understand its purpose:

God created marriage for the sole purpose of allowing mankind the opportunity to experience the relationship between **Christ and the church**

That’s why he made mankind male and female. He could have made us 5 sexes, or asexual like worms. He made us into 2 genders so that you would understand the relationship between **Him and you**

So the Purpose of marriage is to teach you about your relationship with Jesus by playing his role as a husband or the church’s role as a wife)

A posture of sacrificial love grows husbands spiritually by placing you in the shoes of Christ who made a life long commitment to an imperfect bride (the Church).

A posture of sacrificial respect grows you spiritually by placing you in the shoes of the Church that made a life long commitment to trust **a man** (Jesus) she can’t possibly understand.

Eph 5: 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Breaking Covenant vs. Abandoning the Covenant. Breaking of the covenant is provided for in a marriage vows (review the vows: “worse”, “poorer”, “sickness”). Abandonment is not. This is how our covenant with God is described:

2 Timothy 2:12-13 “If we disown him, he will disown us (**abandonment**). If we are faithless, he remains faithful (**breaking**) for he cannot disown himself.”

Divorce is not the unpardonable sin, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is.

God is divorced. The OT says he divorced Israel in Jeremiah 3:8. It broke his heart. That’s why he hates divorce, but doesn’t hate THE divorced.

Q & A

4. Quit trying to increase your faith: just place it in a strong object.

Luke 17:5-6

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

⁶He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

Ben Merold: If you were running from a savage tribe of warriors in the jungle and came to the edge of a cliff that had only a wood plank spanning the chasm between you and safety on the other side, **would you rather have a weak faith in a strong plank or a strong faith in a weak plank?**

It is not the strength of your faith that matters (a mustard seed is small) but the strength of the object it is placed in determines its power. People have great faith in things they should never place their faith in all the time. Great faith in a weak person, great trust in a “get rich quick” scheme. It is not the size of your faith that matters but the size of the object you place your faith in that matters. (Replace the word “size” with “strength” and say that sentence again to enhance your understanding).

Parallel Passage:

Matthew 17:20 Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this **mountain**, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Show Herodium (which many point out was within eyesight of Jesus’ disciples when he made this statement) and how Herod moved a mountain literally to cover the multi-story tower palace he built himself by just commanding it to be done.

What he was saying was this: “You can do greater things than Herod if you have even a weak faith in the strong plank that Jesus is. So let's live that way.

