

## How a Righteous Life Makes a Better Marriage, #3

**Intro: Let's continue our study of how living a righteous life results in a better marriage by studying the Sermon on the Mount.**

**Avoid the pitfalls of materialism.**

***One of the primary sources of conflict in marriage is money.***

Money is what couples fight about most. They battle over how to manage it, who should manage it, how to spend it. Almost all marital decisions are somehow tied to money--from taking a new job or buying a house to what kind of car to get.

Couples may often, based on personality, have significant differences on the importance and use of money. Some people are savers, thinking long over purchases in order to store away money for the future. Others are spenders, who can't resist a good sale and who would rather enjoy today than save for tomorrow. Many marital problems are rooted in these differences, both of which may reflect materialistic attitudes.

Marriages can suffer from excessive debt which is the result of the belief that the attainment of material things brings happiness. They overwork and over commit to buy what cannot bring lasting happiness. They neglect one another to attain these things and then when the marriage ends they distribute their wealth to lawyers and discount it to strangers to get out of the relationship, losing virtually everything they worked to obtain! This is madness!

***Jesus taught his disciples the importance of resisting the traps of materialism.***

Jesus taught that the most important thing in life is to serve God and to lay up treasures in heaven.

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:18-21)*

Jesus taught that no amount of money can give us security for our future. Instead we must learn to trust our care to Him.

*“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)*

***Think about how marriage would be changed if couples would get a handle on material things and make spiritual things they primary emphasis.***

**Be fair with criticism!**

***“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can***

*you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:1-5)*

*The point of Jesus' words is that we can be unfair in our criticisms of others. We can hold others to standards that we don't live by. In fact, Jesus shows that while we may nit-pick others, we may have gigantic faults of our own that we do nothing to correct.*

*There is no relationship of life that needs this advice more than marriage.*

Couples often become first-class nit-pickers. They can criticize one another for the most trivial things. Little daily habits that amount to nothing become major sources of conflict as couples allow these minor things to escalate into ongoing resentments and angry fights. Let's learn not to make mountains out of mole hills when dealing with our mate.

Do not use double standards. Do not have one set of rules for you and another for him/her. Do we do the very thing that we sometimes criticize our mate for doing? If so, we have a double standard that needs to be corrected.

*What if every couple tried really hard to avoid saying critical things about one another? What if they instead affirmed the good and expressed appreciation for it? Such marriages would be much happier and secure.*

**Conclusion:** We can inoculate our marriages from divorce by devoting ourselves first to the Lord. Doing so will help us become the person God intended for us to be and transform our behavior toward others.