

## INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 5:17-48, Jesus continues to build on the foundation He laid in the previous verses. Because you know you are nothing without God, you mourn over sin, you put yourself second, you hunger and thirst to have right standing with God, you overflow with mercy, you have an unmixed heart, you are a peacemaker, you suffer persecution for the sake of the Savior, and you ARE salt and light – now He gives us a different perspective on “the law”. He confronts the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, and teaches that true righteousness is a matter of the heart, not just conformity to “the law”. Therefore, hate and lust are as sinful as murder and adultery. Our intentions matter when we make a promise. Our attitude toward our enemies should be steeped in meekness and mercy, not arrogance and revenge. So how do you reframe your faith through God's standard?

## SCRIPTURE

<sup>17</sup>Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup>For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. <sup>19</sup>Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>21</sup>You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup>But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. <sup>23</sup>Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. <sup>27</sup>You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup>But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup>If your right eye causes you to stumble, 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. <sup>30</sup>And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. <sup>31</sup>It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup>But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. <sup>33</sup>Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ <sup>34</sup>But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; <sup>35</sup>or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. <sup>36</sup>And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. <sup>38</sup>You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ <sup>39</sup>But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. <sup>40</sup>And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. <sup>41</sup>If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. <sup>42</sup>Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. <sup>43</sup>You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup>But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup>that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup>If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? <sup>48</sup>Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:17-48

## GROUP QUESTIONS

1. If living a “perfect” life is 100, what is your number?
2. Read Matthew 5:17-48. What do you think is at the core of what Jesus is saying in this passage?

## Study Questions for Community Groups

3. Jesus taught that it is your heart that matters most, not your head knowledge of right or wrong. Read the following verses and note what the passage has to say about your heart / motivation. What do you learn from these verses?

Deuteronomy 6:5 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Samuel 16:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 4:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 16:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 7:21-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 4:12 \_\_\_\_\_

James 4:3 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Joe mentioned three points in his sermon: 1) *When it comes to God's standard, it's not about what I give up, it's about what I get;* 2) *It's not about doing the right thing, it's about being the right person;* and 3) *It's not about how close to the edge I can go, it's about how close to God I can get.* Which of these points resonated with you the most, and why?

5. Where have you been walking close to the line instead of walking close to God? What will you do about this?

### APPLICATION

Meditate on Matthew 5:48: *"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* Do a study this week on what this means. (Be sure to check out 2 Timothy 2:21 and Hebrews 9:14.) Ask God to give you the right motivation to obey this command.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus states that He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. What do you think this means?
2. Read Matthew 4:1-11. How does Jesus use Scripture? What does that say about his opinion of it? Is this significant to you? Why or why not?
3. Jesus says in Matthew 5:20, *"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."* How can your righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees? (See Romans 4:22-25, 1 Corinthians 1:30, and 2 Corinthians 5:21.)
4. In Matthew 5:21-37, Jesus explained God's standard on three issues: murder, adultery, and lying. How is God's standard contrary to what is acceptable in today's culture? How seriously does Jesus view a violation of His standard (5:22, 29, and 37)? Does knowing this affect how you view anger/hatred, lust, and breaking promises?
5. Matthew 5:38-47 can be one of the most difficult passages to put into practice. In it, you are commanded to love your enemies and to not retaliate when someone wrongs you. Why is it so hard to do this?