

**CORE Seminar**  
**Spring 2024**  
**Sermon on the Mount**  
**Course 4: Matthew 5:31-48**

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**ICE BREAKER**

Choose an ice breaker from the *Spring Community Group Guide* or go to [www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers](http://www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers) to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

**HANGOUT NIGHT**

Spend time discussing next week’s Hangout Night:

- What you are going to do?
- Who will host?
- What will everyone bring?

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome back to the Sermon on the Mount – **week 4**. Last week, we were in **Matthew 5:13-30**. **Today**, we are going to cover the rest of **Matthew 5**.

To quickly review:

- **Week 2** – we started with the Beatitudes, this list and progression of character traits that one of God’s people or a Kingdom Citizen should have.
- **Week 3** - we talked through that study about how we are supposed to be the Salt and Light. Flavor and light in a bland and dark world. We moved on and saw how people were missing the very heart of God’s law. We saw that Jesus came to abolish the law but to fulfill all of the law. Jesus was really exemplifying the heart of it to a people that hadn’t really understood it up to that point.

They tried to turn it into culture of petty rule following when the heart of God through the law was so much greater than that. And seeing that heart, that God’s heart for the law was different than what these people were seeing, will hopefully now affect our heart as we seek to be obedient to God’s standards. And that’s what we looked at last week. How it wasn’t just about following the letter and details of

the law, it was about our heart in following the Lord and our heart towards other people. Jesus took the time to teach a lesson that dealt with His concerns for the condition of our hearts. Because it's possible to follow the letter of the law, but still have a heart extremely polluted with sin.

Now, as we move through the Sermon on the Mount, I don't want us to move on from a section [Beatitudes or **verses 13-30**] and forget that all of this Sermon was given at once. In light of this, we should continue to read the Sermon with the entirety of the Sermon in mind – make sense?

We need to know the Godly attributes we should possess as citizens of Heaven. Attributes – such as salt and light – that cause us to act different and contrast the world's blandness and darkness. And in each of these areas we have an opportunity to look different than the general way of society. But we're not looking different simply to be different or to be "better" than anyone else. We look different, because it gives glory to God and hopefully invite opportunities to talk about Him to others that don't know Him yet.

And this week, Jesus is going to be giving us some practical examples of how a Kingdom Citizen with a changed heart should be living – and definitely look different than the society around us.

So, let's pray and then we'll dig into Scripture.

## PRAYER

Ok – let's open our Bibles and dig into the remainder of **Matthew 5**

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 5:31-32**

***<sup>31</sup> "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.***

Ok – we mentioned just a moment ago that citizens of the kingdom of heaven should look different. And so, looking at our passage, Jesus' first opportunity for difference is in marriage.

- And why marriage? What was going on in the culture that brought this topic into Jesus' teaching at that moment?

You see God has always taken marriage seriously, but unfortunately as His people we haven't always viewed it with the same seriousness that He does, and we definitely as a culture are still that way today.

Last week, remember how we stated the religious leaders created all kinds of ingenious ways of working around the intentions of the Law and God's Word. Marriage was no different and really they fell into two camps:

- **Divorce is *against* the law:** You had some Jewish schools that taught basically what Jesus is teaching here – that a marriage should never be broken. The only exception they would consider divorce if there were some sexual sin that was committed by one of the spouses. They would argue that sexual sin is one of only two exceptions actually written into the Bible. BUT, they would also argue that reconciliation could still be achieved.
- **Divorce is *permitted* in the law:** Some schools argued **Deuteronomy 24:1**, and without any real consideration of the rest of scripture, states that it is permissible to divorce your wife and they ran with it. They didn't consider other Scripture OR the heart of God in the law. They basically ended up saying that whatever reason that I feel like that we need to divorce over, I simply need to give a certificate of divorce, and everything is going to be ok in the eyes of God.

But, Biblically, when we consider how serious God takes these things – how serious God takes marriage – then we need to realize that just because we may divorce in the eyes of our human law, doesn't mean that God sees the divorce as official under His law.

And so, here's how this becomes a salt and light issue for us as followers of Jesus Christ. If society is going to take the stance that divorce isn't a big deal, then we have a responsibility – as regenerate members of the Kingdom of Heaven – to bring a view of marriage back to the table that is true how God intended it.

And let me just say on the topic of marriage, that the heart of this should be that we – as salt and light – carry the testimony of God's love through marriage. So, if you have been divorced [*or if you are having problems right now*] please know that God is gracious and forgiving. Also know that from wherever you are right now, that He cares about your heart. And maybe we need to go Him and maybe we need to take care of some things, but He cares about your heart and He still very much cares about your future. Maybe there's some things that we can't change, but we can get headed in the right direction right now.

So, marriage, was Jesus' first example where we can live differently than the world.

**QUESTIONS:** *The Jewish schools had two different teachings on divorce. Which view of divorce and remarriage seems to have the most biblical support to you and why?*

- *Do you see a weakness in either one of their arguments?*

*Why are God's requirements for marriage so strict? [The regulations for marriage are strict in order to discourage divorce. In a society with no regulations and no fault in regards to divorce, it has become rampant and an attractive option in a difficult marriage. Scripture teaches marriage is a covenant which should reflect God's covenant with us.]*

*How should the church respond to those who have gotten a divorce? [We should make clear that divorce is not an unforgivable sin. Christ died for every one of our sins, and God's love and grace are often experienced in even greater ways in our failures. As the church, Christ's body, we must love and comfort those who have suffered through a divorce. We must help them understand that God doesn't throw anything away. He uses everything for our good and his glory. Often from our greatest struggles, comes our greatest ministries.]*

Any questions?

Let's move on to **Matthew 5:33-37**

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 5:33-37**

***<sup>33</sup> "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <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 take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.***

And this one is really pretty straight forward, so we won't spend nearly as much time here. But Jesus is telling us to be people of integrity. People who when we say "Yes" or we say "No", we mean it, and we live in a such a way that people would come to trust that to be the case. And so, just like we can be a light through the marriage relationship, we can also be a light by living with integrity. Again, perhaps going against the grain of culture, but for the purposes of Christ.

**QUESTION:** *Why should our yes or no be more sufficient than making an oath? [As we live our lives as the children of God - with the Holy Spirit guiding us - our transformed character should make our yes or no sufficient on its own. We have no authority to use God's name to attach to our own private affairs and declarations.]*

Any questions?

**Have someone in your group read Matthew 5:38-42**

***<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.***

This is an interesting point. Jesus is like previously you were told that every action got an equal and opposite reaction. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But He’s telling us that it doesn’t need to be that way any longer. And He’s not saying, just let people beat up on you, and really that phrase “slap on the right cheek” was more of a phrase used to talk about a serious insult than it was an actual physical slap on the cheek. It’s like when we say, when someone’s insulting, “that’s like a slap in the face”. But Jesus is like, let’s think about these things differently. We’re not just trying to get back at people, we’re not just trying to claim all of our personal rights, we’re living hopefully to make a difference for the cause of Christ. And that should be our motivating factor to consider and follow these things.

And Jesus gives an example here, that comes from the people that He is talking to living under a truly oppressive government.

**Read Matthew 5:41 again...**

Rome was the ultimate governing authority at this time, and they happily taxed and oppressed these people in various ways. One such way and it’s likely the example that Jesus was using here, is that a Roman soldier was given the authority to force a Jewish person to carry their pack for one mile, but no more than that. And now I don’t think there was any limitation saying that they couldn’t grab another person for the next mile. But it was limited to one mile per person.

And now Jesus in a radical change of world view was like we can take that act of oppression, them forcing you to carry their pack, and own the moment, by saying, you know what, you can force me legally to carry this pack for one mile, but I’m going turn this into an act of love and blessing and carry it even further by my own choice. This is going way out of bounds against our natural instincts and against the way of the culture, but Jesus keeps raising the bar even higher and higher

**QUESTIONS:** Why did the law create punishments “an eye for an eye”? [The original law was good in that it was guard against excessive retribution. It meant the people could live their lives knowing that an orderly system of law and order applied to their society. However, over time this was twisted to become a form of right to bring retribution to one's enemies.]

In verse 39 does Jesus mean even if the person is harming another person, such as a child, or mother, or brother?

In verse 42, are we to give everything we own away if we are asked?

- If not, what does this imply?

Any questions?

Have someone in your group read Matthew 5:43-48

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those that use you, and persecute you. Jesus has been escalating the requirements of our character throughout this entire passage. Again, this goes entirely against anything that we would probably do naturally. People are going to treat you wrong at times, people treated Jesus wrong too, and He left us an incredible example!!

**QUESTIONS:** Where does the Bible say “Hate your enemies”? [There is no such scripture, but Israel nevertheless claimed that there is such an underlying assertion in the law.]

Who would the Jews have said was their neighbor?

- Who would have been their enemy?

Who does Jesus say is our neighbor?

- Who would be our enemy?

“Love your neighbor” is a quote from the Old Testament [Leviticus 19:18].

- What practical things were they called upon to do to love their neighbor?

**What was our status with God before we became a Christian? [Romans 5:10]**

- **If God did not love His enemies would there be any Christians?**

**Is Jesus asking the impossible in Matthew 5:48?**

- **Define sanctification. How does sanctification help you understand verse 48?**

**CONCLUSION & PRAYER**