



LIFE Group Discussion Guide

September 6, 2026

Matthew 5:17-20

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?
- What Scripture has been shaping you recently?
- Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?
- What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?
- What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?
- What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?
- What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

OPENING

Have you ever followed a rule simply because you had to, instead of because you understood why it mattered? What was the difference?

Sometimes people think following Jesus is mostly about keeping rules. Jesus teaches something very different. In Matthew 5:17–20, He explains that He didn't come to get rid of God's Word but to fulfill it. He also teaches that God wants more than outward obedience—He wants hearts that truly love and follow Him.

Today we'll learn that Jesus fulfilled God's Word and calls us to follow Him with hearts that love God, not just lives that look good on the outside.

SCRIPTURE

Read **Matthew 5:17–20** together.

Ask students to listen for:

- What Jesus says about God's Word
- Why Jesus came
- What Jesus teaches about true righteousness

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Jesus was speaking to people who highly respected God's Law. Some people thought Jesus was trying to replace the Old Testament. Instead, He explained:

- God's Word is completely trustworthy.
- He came to fulfill everything God had promised.
- Following God is about more than simply obeying rules.
- God wants hearts that truly love Him.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were known for following many rules, but Jesus pointed out that they often missed the most important thing—a genuine relationship with God. Jesus teaches that real obedience begins in the heart. When we love God, we naturally want to obey Him—not because we have to, but because we want to.

The main point is: God isn't looking for students who simply follow rules—He's looking for students whose hearts belong to Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why did Jesus say He came to fulfill the Law instead of abolishing it?

Jesus completed God's plan by perfectly obeying God's Law and fulfilling the promises and prophecies found in the Old Testament.

What does this passage teach us about the Bible?

God's Word is true, trustworthy, and still important for our lives today.

What was the problem with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees?

They often focused on looking religious on the outside while their hearts were far from God.

What's the difference between obeying God because you have to and obeying Him because you love Him?

Obeying out of obligation is about avoiding consequences. Obeying out of love comes from trusting God and wanting to honor Him.

What are some ways students can look like good Christians on the outside without growing on the inside?

Going to church but ignoring God during the week, saying the right things without living them out, pretending to have everything together, or trying to impress others instead of growing closer to Jesus.

How does spending time with Jesus help us obey Him?

The more we know Jesus through prayer, Scripture, and worship, the more our hearts are changed to become like Him.

Why is a relationship with Jesus more important than simply following rules?

Rules alone cannot change our hearts. Jesus forgives us, gives us new life, and helps us live the way God desires.

APPLICATION**Are there times when you focus more on looking like a Christian than actually growing closer to Jesus?**

Encourage honest reflection.

What is one area where God wants to change your heart instead of just your actions?

Examples:

- Attitude
- Forgiveness
- Honesty
- Kindness
- Purity
- Respect for parents
- How you treat classmates

What is one practical step you can take this week to grow closer to Jesus?

Examples:

- Read your Bible every day.
- Spend time praying.
- Memorize a verse.
- Obey God in an area you've been avoiding.
- Talk with a trusted Christian adult about your faith.

DIG DEEPER

Why do people sometimes focus more on appearances than on their hearts?

How can reading God's Word help transform the way we think and live?

Why can't good behavior alone make us right with God?

How does Jesus change our hearts instead of simply changing our actions?

What would it look like if every student in our LIFE Group followed Jesus from the heart this week?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Jesus didn't come to start a new set of rules. He came to fulfill God's plan and change people's hearts. God wants more than students who know the right answers. He wants students who genuinely love Him and desire to follow Him every day. When our hearts belong to Jesus, our actions begin to reflect Him.

Ask yourself:

Am I just going through the motions?

Do I love Jesus more than I love looking like a good Christian?

What is one area where God wants to change my heart?

Challenge your LIFE group members this week to spend time with Jesus every day and ask Him to change your heart so your actions reflect His love.

Remember: Following Jesus isn't just about keeping rules—it's about having a heart that loves God and wants to honor Him.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next week we will discuss **Matthew 5:21-26** as we continue the series, *The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached: The Sermon on the Mount*.

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray together:

- Thank God for sending Jesus to fulfill His plan of salvation.
- Praise Him for the truth and reliability of His Word.
- Ask God to help students love Him with all their hearts, not just obey Him on the outside.
- Pray for courage to live out their faith with sincerity and integrity.
- Pray that students would grow in their relationship with Jesus and influence others by the way they live.
- Pray specifically for the invitation portion of our worship services—that hearts will be open, the Spirit will move powerfully, and people will respond in obedience to Christ.

COMMENTARY

Matthew 5:17-20

In Matthew 5:17–20, Jesus defends His relationship to the Old Testament, explaining that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, that God's word remains permanently binding, and that true kingdom righteousness must exceed that of the religious elite.

Fulfilling the Law (v. 17–18)

- Jesus states He did not come to abolish (destroy or undo) the Old Testament writings, but to bring them to their intended goal, completion, and realization.
- Every single detail and prophetic promise of the Law and the Prophets remains vital and valid until everything is fully accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection.

Practicing and Teaching the Commands (v. 19)

- Jesus emphasizes that a person's value in the kingdom of heaven is connected to how seriously they take God's commands.
- Relaxing or teaching others to ignore even the seemingly minor instructions of God places a person in the lowest rank of the kingdom, whereas practicing and teaching them marks one as great.

Surpassing Pharisaic Righteousness (v. 20)

- The scribes and Pharisees followed an external, meticulous, and legalistic adherence to rules.
- Jesus shocks His listeners by declaring that entry into the kingdom of heaven requires a deeper, heart-level righteousness that completely surpasses theirs—pointing forward to the radical internal obedience He unpacks throughout the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.