

Sermon on the Mount - October 6, 2024

Relate Deeply

Matthew 5:17-37



The law has many purposes, including protecting people, establishing standards, setting boundaries, resolving disputes, guiding behavior, and maintaining order. What about religious law? What was the purpose of the Ten Commandments? Some say the purpose was to tell us how to treat God and each other. The Hebrews expanded their laws beyond the commandments to the point where they were used to control, exploit, and punish. Jesus knew that the purpose of God's law had been lost and its spirit needed to be revived. He came to fulfill the law and to free the people from the burden of sin.

Fulfillment

Read Matthew 5:17-20.

- What do you think Jesus meant when he said he came to fulfill the law?
- Is the law restrictive or freeing?
- In our society, how do people “teach” others to disobey the law?

Spirit of the Law

Read Matthew 5:21-26. In Jesus' time Jews would bring sacrifices to the temple when they needed forgiveness for a sin. Jesus has an important point to make about how to handle sin and repentance.

- Jesus equates anger with murder. What is he saying about our hearts, our emotions, and our attitudes in connection with sin?
- Why is it important to Jesus that we repair relationships with others before we come before God for forgiveness? How would you compare God to the judge and the court?

What's Your Motive?

Read Matthew 5:27-32. You may recall that in Jesus' time only men could seek a divorce. There was disagreement among the different groups as to what constituted a legitimate reason for divorce. Some men were using frivolous excuses to toss aside an undesirable wife, thus dooming the woman

to a life of dependency, poverty, or prostitution. They were using “the law” to justify their selfishness and mistreatment of women.

- How does Jesus clarify the danger of sinful thoughts? What can we do when those thoughts invade our minds?
- When our motives are selfish, we make bad choices. When you find yourself tempted to make a decision based on a sinful motive, what strategy has worked for you to prevent an action that you would regret later?
- Lawyers are often accused of using “loopholes” in the law to help avoid prosecution and/or punishment of their clients. What “loopholes” do we use to make excuses for our sins?

On My Honor

Read Matthew 5:33-37.

In Jesus’ time, swearing an oath was commonplace. They could not swear on God, but they often swore on heaven, earth, Jerusalem, etc. to indicate that they guaranteed what they said was true. Jesus wasn’t a fan of oaths. If you were truthful, trustworthy, and righteous then your word should be enough.

- Why do we swear oaths in court today? How do you feel about that? Is it necessary?
- What does it say to you when a person “swears to God” that they are serious or truthful?
- How do you live a life such that you never need to swear an oath?

Love the Law

Read Psalm 119:97-106.

- Considering what we have discussed in this lesson from Matthew, what is the message that Jesus and the psalmist are giving us about how to live God’s law?
- With Christ’s insight into the spirit of the law, how can you show your love for God’s law like the psalmist in this passage?
- What does following God’s law mean in your life?

Living It

What part of this lesson was the most difficult for you?

What action can you take this week to show your love and appreciation for God’s law?

Arrange with a growth group buddy to be accountable.

Share your story with the group next week.