

Guided Bible Study: Week 3

During the time we cannot meet publicly due to the Corona Virus emergency, Rick is going to post a guided Bible study on here to help fill the void left by not having Sunday School and Wednesday night classes. We encourage you to read the passage in the Bible together with your family. Questions and brief comments to help guide your study appear here. We are going to feature Jesus' SERMON ON THE MOUNT from Matthew chapters 5-7. We will post the study for a new section of this passage each week.

Matthew 5.38-42: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was the standard under the Old Testament Law. Jesus teaches us who follow Him a much more peaceful response. He teaches "turning the other cheek" and giving in when a dispute arises. Whether this refers to criminal activity or just the normal flow of life in which disputes and just mean people come our way has long been a matter of discussion. (What do you think?) Certainly, in I Corinthians, Christians are taught not to sue each other but rather get things settled. However, Romans 13 tells that the civil authorities are here for the purpose of keeping order so I don't take this to be teaching we should never call the authorities or press charges. It speaks more to the subject of personal revenge and telling us not to take that.

The last part of this section teaches generosity with our time, effort, and possessions. **DISCUSS:** Do you give a little extra beyond what is required? How does this show Jesus to people around us?

Matthew 5.43-48: [DISCUSS: Whom do you love? Is there anyone you don't love? Do you love those who are mean to you or hate you?] As Jesus points out, even worldly people love those who love them. He calls us to be like God and love everyone. Is someone putting you down for following Jesus? Pray for them. Is someone mean to you? Do nice things for them. This is a way to be like God. When God sends rain does it fall just on the land of the good strong Christians? Is it light where people who follow Jesus live and dark everywhere else? No, God sends His blessings on everyone. We should likewise lovingly bless everyone we

encounter. Who knows? Loving an enemy might lead him or her to Christ and to becoming a friend!

Matthew 6.1: Our “acts of righteousness”, as Jesus calls them, are to be directed to God. They are not intended as a means for us to show off. If we make a show of these things our audience, and the approval of our earthly audience, is all the reward we get. Instead, quietly do things for God’s glory.

Matthew 6.2-4: [DISCUSS: Isn’t making a charitable contribution or helping someone good publicity for the church or for our business?] Maybe it is but that should never be our motive. We should be giving because we love those who receive our gifts and we want God to be glorified. Likewise with projects that help people. As some may suffer loss of income or lack of mobility during the Covid-19 crisis, we could have several opportunities to help people. DISCUSS some ways you could help someone without calling attention to yourself? How about deciding on something to actually give or do?

Matthew 6.5-6: The Pharisees liked to make a show of praying publicly so people would look up to them. An earthly audience is all their prayers got them. Instead, Jesus taught us to be humble when we pray and not to call attention to ourselves. [DISCUSS: So is it right to pray in public?] This should not be taken to forbid praying together with others but rather to say the biggest emphasis in our prayer lives should be our personal times with God in prayer. The book of Acts contains a number of instances in which the apostles and others prayed together. These references show us that this was not an outright ban on public prayer but, rather, teaching to be humble and sincere and not show off.

Matthew 6:7-8: Our prayers need not be long and repetitious. They are not to become rituals that we merely babble. They are to be sincere and used to tell God we are depending on Him. [DISCUSS: Do we ever tell God anything He doesn’t already know? If not, why pray?] Prayer is more a matter of bringing

glory to God as we acknowledge our dependence on Him than ever managing to inform Him of our needs. Is this how you approach prayer?