

Guided Bible Study: Week 2

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 5.17-18: Jesus spoke an even deeper truth than those who heard Him firsthand likely realized. Jesus perfectly fulfilled all the actual requirements of the Old Testament Law. He never sinned. The Pharisees often got upset because He didn't pay attention to their traditions that they had elevated to the level of requirements, but Jesus wasn't concerned with what men tried to bind on people without God's approval.

Everything that God says in His word is going to happen will happen. Everything God says in His Word is true. It is not our place to pick and choose what is valid or what to believe.

Matthew 5.19: (Discuss) Do you try to obey God? Do you obey Him even when you don't like something He says? If we want God to think we are "great" obey the Bible even when it's tough, unpopular, or not "politically correct". There are people, today, who try to convince us that some of what the Bible says is too old fashioned and unenlightened, particularly on some moral and social issues. Even some religious leaders teach this. Jesus says to stick with the Bible. Will you?

Matthew 5.20: The Pharisees and teachers of the law were leaders. They were proud and they had a lot of traditions. They wanted people to respect them and follow them because of how strictly they held to their traditions they had built up around the Old Testament Law. Jesus says we need to get beyond the rituals and really live like Him. (Discuss: Do we ever think going to church and praying is enough? Do we think how we live and think doesn't matter? Do we think we are really good because we are religious, regardless of how we treat other people?) In the coming verses Jesus is going to show that what's in our hearts is as important as how religious we are.

Matthew 5.21-22: Do people ever make you mad? How do you treat them? Do you cuss them out or call them bad names? You know that murder is wrong, but Jesus says to avoid getting so mad at people that we harbor ongoing anger and say bad things to them.

Matthew 5.23-24: Under the Old Testament Law, which was still in effect when Jesus was physically on earth, the Jewish people worshipped by bringing sacrifices and offering them on an altar at the temple. We don't worship that way, today, however, this has a lot to say to us. (Discuss how we can apply this in our lives, today.) If we were careful to settle matters with our fellow Christians quickly it would cut down on a lot of problems between Christians that can carry over and hurt the church!

Matthew 5.25-26: Back in the First Century (and much more recently than that) people were sometimes put in jail for not paying their debts. You have to realize that to make these verses make sense. We don't live under such a system, today. Nevertheless Jesus wants us to get matters settled honestly and peacefully. Particularly when the dispute is with a fellow Christian, the Bible teaches us to settle matters between us and others even if we take some loss. It says to do this rather than damage our witness by opposing each other in court. [See I Corinthians 6.1-8]

Matthew 5.27: This teaches men to control their thoughts about women. That is easier said than done since, in this area of life, men are stimulated by sight. Not purposely going to sites and sources where there is known to be immodesty (or worse) is one key to controlling thoughts. Developing a Christ-like heart and Christ-like motives is another, not seeking just to "get" but to give. Realizing that women are just as created in God's image as they, themselves are, and are not just objects for their pleasure could also help men have purer thoughts.

Matthew 5.28-30: With the possible exception of some weird cult, there is no history of this ever actually being carried out in the history of Christianity. Everyone understands Jesus was using a figure of speech, a bit of exaggeration, to get His point across about how important it is to have clean thoughts and to treat others honestly and well. Our eyes and our hands are very important to us. (Discuss ways our eyes and hands are important.) The fact that we'd be better off without something so valuable as an eye or a hand than to go on sinning tells us how important it is to live like Jesus instead of living lives of sin.

Matthew 5.31-32: (Consider also **Matthew 19.1-9.**) God's intention is for marriage to be between one man and one woman and to last as long as they are both alive. It is not the Bible's purpose to answer every "what if" situation. Suffice to say, marriages should not be easily and quickly dissolved. Couples should not divorce just because they "fall out of love"; instead they should work on loving and fix their problems. Certainly no one should leave a spouse or be unfaithful to a spouse because of falling in love with someone else. The intent of verses like these is to teach the permanence of marriage. If people have made mistakes in this area in the past, they should rely on God's grace and do things right from now on. [This is a deep and involved subject. This treatment of it is not meant to address every question on the subject.]

Matthew 5.33-37: Let me say up front that this probably has nothing to say about an "oath of office" or an oath in court. We read in historical materials that in Judean culture in Jesus' time on earth, people made frequent use of oaths and often used them to mask deceit as well. This disrespected God's name. It also ruined the example of the person who swore and didn't carry through honestly. Jesus' point is that His followers should be so honest that they don't even need an oath to be trusted. Have a reputation for being honest and live up to that reputation. Discuss whether you tell the truth and are honest with people, including in business.)