

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Live Like This
Matthew 5:17-48

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Words for the hymn **Purer in Heart, O God** are given at the end of the Worship Time materials. Make copies of these for three different readers and give the readers the material ahead of time if at all possible. Use children and youth if appropriate.

Bible Study Leader:

Use a white board or large piece of paper to display the five standards which you will be studying. You may have these written on the board ahead of time or you may write them as you study.

Worship Time Leader:

A number of hymns and praise songs are suggested. Choose those best suited for your group.

Music Sources:

Purer in Heart, O God, *The Worship Hymnal* #591; CCLI #297623 Public Domain
Refiner's Fire, *The Worship Hymnal* #592; CCLI #42698
Take my Life (Holiness) *The Worship Hymnal* #589; CCLI #1617154
Take Time to be Holy, *The Worship Hymnal* #587; CCLI #93748 Public Domain
Sanctuary, *The Worship Hymnal* #588; CCLI #24140

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Live Like This

Focal Text

Matthew 5:17-48

Background Text

Matthew 4:17-7:29

Main Idea

Jesus' followers are to live differently than the world's standards.

Question to Explore

By what standards are we to live?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to contrast Jesus' view of the good life with that of the culture of Jesus' day and the culture of our day.

Gathering together:

Have three different readers read the following hymn. Use children and youth if possible.

Purer in Heart, O God

(First reader)

Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be:
May I devote my life wholly to Thee.
Watch Thou my wayward feet,
Guide me with counsel sweet;
Purer in heart, Help me to be.

(Second reader)

Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be:
Teach me to do Thy will most lovingly.
Be Thou my friend and guide,
Let me with Thee abide;
Purer in heart, Help me to be.

(Third reader)

Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be:
Until Thy holy face one day I see.
Keep me from secret sin,
Reign Thou my soul within;
Purer in heart, Help me to be.

(Words: Fannie Estelle Davison Music: James H. Fillmore Public Domain)

First thoughts:

Today we will be examining the teaching of Jesus related to important areas of our lives. We begin by thinking about the importance of acting from the heart – a pure heart. Our hymn reading helps us to meditate on that important consideration. Let us pray together

“Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be”.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Live Like This

Focal Text

Matthew 5:17-48

Background Text

Matthew 4:17-7:29

Main Idea

Jesus' followers are to live differently than the world's standards.

Question to Explore

By what standards are we to live?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to contrast Jesus' view of the good life with that of the culture of Jesus' day and the culture of our day.

Introduction to your personal study:

It has been said that the person who is nice to you but is rude to the waiter in the restaurant is actually not a nice person. Their rudeness towards any person, regardless of their status in society, reveals what is truly in their heart. The fact that they are nice to you may simply be a put-on for show.

God is not as concerned with our outward actions as he is with our heart. As God told the prophet Samuel, ***“The Lord does not look at the things man looks at, Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”*** (1 Samuel 16:7). The heart is the seat of someone's character. If the heart is right, then right actions will follow. Outward actions in themselves may simply be a lot of talk and self-manufactured holiness, like an apple that looks pretty on the outside but is actually rotten to the core.

Those in right standing with God have both **“clean hands”** (outward actions) and a **“pure heart”** (inward purity) (Psalm 24:4).

Today's lesson deals with God's standards for holiness. They always involve a heart that is right before God that will result in right actions towards others. Such as study can bring great conviction of sin of the true ugliness that actually resides in the heart. The good news of the gospel is that God desires to do heart surgery on each one of us (Jeremiah 31:33). He can take away the hardest of hearts and replace it with a heart that is tender and submissive to him (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26-27). With a transformed heart, we can live before him lives that are clean from the inside out.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the **“Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study”**, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Matthew chapters 5-7 comprise a major teaching by Jesus commonly called the “Sermon on the Mount” (5:1-2). The main subject of the sermon is a description of life in “the kingdom of heaven,” (5:3, 10, 19, 20). A citizen of a “kingdom” lives his life under the rule of the king. Thus, Jesus described how people who have claimed him as their king are to live. They are to be qualitatively different than those who have yet to submit to his rule in their lives. They have a different “Father” and different standards than that of the world.

Focusing on the Meaning:

“Unless your righteousness surpasses that the Pharisees” (5:17-20)

Jesus' opponents would be quick to accuse him of not believing or practicing the Old Testament law (e.g. Matthew 12:1-8). So Jesus began his teaching ministry by affirming the authority of the Old Testament, **“I have not come to abolish them [i.e. the Law and the Prophets] but to fulfill them”** (v. 17). The arrival of God's kingdom in Jesus does not do away with God's prior teaching, in fact, **“not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished”** (v. 18). Jesus had come to **“fulfill”** the Old Testament scriptures, the prophecies as well as the law – all of scripture. Not only did he obey the law by living a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), but he also “fulfilled” the law by bringing it to its God-intended completion.

There are certain aspects of the law that are no longer necessary because of what Christ accomplished. For example, the teaching about death and the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins has now been fully accomplished in the “once for all” sacrifice of Jesus (Hebrews 9:11-14). The teaching has been fulfilled “once for all” and is no longer binding on those who have received Jesus' sacrifice by faith. All of God's word is “inspired” and “profitable” (2 Timothy 3:15-17). It is the expression of God's revealed

character and will; therefore, none of it can be dismissed. Instead, all of it must be interpreted in light of how Jesus fulfills the intent and meaning of God's word and in light of how Jesus divinely interpreted God's word. Not only was he the focus of the scripture, but he was also Lord over the scripture as he claimed the divine right to interpret it as God intended. Every ***"for I tell you"*** (5:18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44) is an expression of that right.

The **Pharisees** were some of the most devoutly religious people in Jesus' day. They were committed to fulfilling the demands of the Old Testament law by following an elaborate tradition that prevented a follower from even coming close to disobeying it. They built a "hedge" or "fence" around the law. For instance, since God's law says that people should not misuse God's name (Exodus 20:7), the tradition prevented God's people from even speaking God's name. The ***"teachers of the law,"*** or ***"scribes,"*** not only copied and preserved God's law, but they also taught it (Matthew 7:29), saw themselves as the chief interpreters (Mark 7:5-8), and expounded on the Bible doctrines (Matthew 17:10). They were the scholars and biblical theologians of Jesus' day.

Jesus said, ***"unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven"*** (v. 20). This was a shocking statement, because no one was more meticulous in keeping God's law than these two groups. Jesus was actually referring to the kind or quality of a person's righteousness, rather than the amount of meticulous keeping of God's law. A person becomes truly righteous when they respond in faith to God's grace (Genesis 15:6). True righteousness comes by allowing God to reveal his own righteousness through us from the inside out. The apostle Paul described it as ***"Christ lives in me"*** (Galatians 2:20). The religious leaders thought that by their outward righteous actions they could somehow live lives that were holy enough to please God. Instead, Jesus described them as ***"whitewashed tombs"*** that were clean on the outside but were rotten on the inside (Matthew 13:27). They were seeking to produce a self-manufactured holiness that fell short of God's standard (Romans 3:23). Such people needed to be transformed from the inside by surrendering to God's power and grace. Nothing else would please God.

"First go and be reconciled to your brother" (5:21-26)

Jesus then followed with teachings that contrasted the faulty interpretations and applications of God's law with his own divine interpretation of it. The teachers of the law and Pharisees prided themselves on their interpretations of God's requirements so all devout people could follow God correctly. Their interpretations tended to fall short, however, because the righteousness they called for was based upon external legalistic obedience without calling for an inward heart response. The righteousness Jesus spoke of emanated from the inside out, from a heart that had been transformed by God.

"You have heard it was said . . . 'Do not murder' . . . But I tell you" (vv. 21-22). God's law spoke against premeditated and deliberate murder (Exodus 20:13), and a righteousness based simply on outward behaviour would be content if a person simply

did not kill another. According to Jesus, however, such righteousness did not go far enough, because it did not deal with the heart. Since each person is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6), it is possible for a person's life to be diminished or removed in ways other than physical murder. The first way is through anger. ***"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment"*** (v. 22). The very source of murder is anger (1 John 3:15), and when we are inappropriately angry with people, we attempt to rob them of their identity and value as God's special creature. Such anger can eventually lead to physical murder. Those who live under God's reign (v. 20), must not settle simply by not killing people, but rather we must purge anger from our relationships.

The second way we can diminish or harm someone's life is through insulting them. Calling a Christian brother ***"Raca"*** or ***"you fool"*** will place someone under God's judgment. Calling someone a name, especially in public, strips that person of their self-identity and replaces it with something offensive. Such is treating a brother with contempt and presenting them as something other than a precious child of God. Instead of being simply satisfied that one has not committed physical murder, Jesus wants his followers to cherish each brother as valued and valuable.

What will prevent a person from diminishing another's life? First, be reconciled with "your brother." ***"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift"*** (vv. 23-24). As you come before God in worship and realize that your brother has "something against you" God wants you to seek reconciliation first. This speaks of an occasion when you have offended another person, not when they are simply offended. Reconciliation is the responsibility of the offender (Matthew 18:21-22; Mark 11:25). God will not receive their worship if they maintain broken relationships in their lives.

Second, we can prevent diminishing someone else's life by seeking reconciliation with "your adversary." ***"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court."*** Before you go to court, seek ways of making reconciliation, creating friendships out of adversarial relationships. Anger that refuses to seek reconciliation and is content to leave problems unresolved allows sin to destroy relationships that God wants reconciled. The intent of God's law is to heal relationships, both with Christian brothers and with outsiders. God's followers are to be "peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9), and that means that relationships are important to God.

"Adultery with her in his heart" (5:27-32)

Jesus then went to the subject of marriage and how God's holiness would call for more than simply outward actions. ***"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'"*** Jesus directly quoted from the seventh commandment (Exodus 20:14), but in his discussion he also alluded to the tenth commandment, ***"You shall not covet your neighbour's wife"*** (Exodus 20:17). Adultery involved sexual intercourse with

someone else's spouse. Outward righteousness would be content with the lack of actual sexual intercourse. Jesus focused upon the principle of the command, which is a commitment to the sanctity of marriage, ***"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart"*** (v. 28). It is not enough simply to abstain from sexual intercourse. Holy marriage means being faithful to one's spouse in every aspect of one's life, including the heart. Thus, one should never want another person or give oneself to another person. Lust resides in the "heart." The heart is the seat of one's character, where thoughts and decisions take place. The heart makes the mouth speak, the hands work, and the feet move. Thus adultery takes place in the heart before it ever involves the body. God's definition of adultery is thus not only physical sexual intercourse but also being unfaithful with the heart and mind.

Jesus illustrated the seriousness of lust and its destruction of the marriage bond with two graphic illustrations (vv. 29-30). Using intended exaggeration to make his point, Jesus pointed out that a follower of Jesus must be ready to take serious measures to preserve their soul. He is not advocating physical mutilation, because sin resides in the heart (v. 28). But instead, a person must be willing to take whatever measures necessary to maintain the unity of the bond of marriage by removing either the visual ("**your right eye**") or the physical stimulation ("**your right hand**"). Marriages are that important to God and should be to God's people.

If marriages are that important, then everything should be done to preserve them. Divorce was common in the ancient world (as it is today in many societies). God regulated the practice (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) by protecting the woman that she not be summarily dismissed by a husband who had become displeased with her. The man seeking a divorce must officially divorce her, giving her the right to remarry and not allowing her to be thought of as a runaway adulteress. By Jesus' time many Jews took this as God's license to divorce "for any and every reason" (Matthew 19:3-12). Jesus focused upon God's original intent for marriage, that it be a permanent relationship (Genesis 2:24). Only when the marriage bond has been violated by ***"marital unfaithfulness"*** should divorce be seriously considered. This marital unfaithfulness includes any sexual activity, mental or physical, that would divide the relationship.

In today's world, we have seen the terrible consequences of some men and some cultures who tolerate, encourage, and even indulge in verbal, physical, and sexual abuse of wives and even children. Jesus does not deal openly with that in this specific paragraph of teaching. Where such treatment exists, separation and even divorce may be necessary to protect women and children. We should never encourage a woman who is in a serious and dangerously abusive relationship to continue in that. To do so would be to violate many places where the New Testament teaches the loving and protective commandments of our Lord regarding men and marriage. Abuse is marital unfaithfulness in one of its most serious forms. We must never use this one passage of scripture as a "proof-text" to force women to submit to an abusive and destructive relationship, for their sake and for the future emotional and spiritual health of the children who might be involved.

Jesus' discussion here is not one on the pastoral care of people who have suffered the trauma of divorce, either by their own making or as victims. If it were, then something more along the lines of how Jesus dealt with the woman of Samaria (John 4:1-26) or the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11) would have been displayed. Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, ***"Where are those who would condemn you? I do not condemn you. Now go, and from now on sin no more"*** (John 8:10-11). God may ***"hate divorce"*** (Malachi 2:16), but He most certainly does not hate divorced people. God hates sin, but He does not hate the sinner. To those who are broken, contrite, and ready to repent, He offers the grace of His forgiveness. ***"Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds"*** (Romans 5:20).

Regardless, those who are following after Jesus must be committed to marital faithfulness. In this passage Jesus described that as being faithful with one's body, faithful with one's mind and heart, and faithful in one's commitment. Love, protection, self-sacrifice for the good of the other, and no toleration of any kind of abuse must rule in every Christian marriage.

"Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes', and your 'No', 'No'" (5:33-37)

The Old Testament took oaths and vows very seriously. A person could swear by God's name as a form of solemn commitment to one's promise (Leviticus 19:2; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21-23). Once a person has made such a promise, they were demanded to fulfill it (Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2). Although God never required such oaths, when handled rightly they received his approval. The Jewish leaders devised a highly structured system for determining which promises were more important than others. By Jesus day, some said that only oaths taken in God's name were binding and any oath sworn by something less important (e.g. ***"heaven," "earth," "Jerusalem,"*** etc.) was not binding.

Jesus responded, ***"But I tell you, Do not swear at all . . . Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes', and your 'No', 'No'."*** The intent of God's teaching on oaths was about the integrity of a person's character. God's people should be serious about any commitment they make. Those focused on outward righteousness might be satisfied with an ethic that excuses legal loopholes in commitments made. Jesus deals with the heart of the matter. A person of godly character always speaks the truth and is dependable and trustworthy in everything they say – whether or not they take an oath to solemnize it. The simple word of a follower of Christ should be truthful, dependable, and reliable, simply because it is spoken. A "yes" or "no" should be enough. Oaths and promises are not disallowed in the New Testament (Galatians 1:20), but Jesus' point is that a person's simple word and commitment should be sufficient to be believable. It should not need an oath, a legal document, or a contract to be binding. Swearing by something other than God in order to deceive ***"comes from the evil one"*** himself.

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (5:38-48)

***“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth’.*”** God instituted the “law of retaliation” (i.e. *lex talionis*) as a way of regulating inappropriate punishment (Deuteronomy 19:20-21). In other words, if someone is harmed, they could retaliate only to the extent that they were harmed. No over-punishment was allowed. Such a rule was to be imposed by civil authorities and courts in order to exact punishment, but it was not to be administered by individuals (Deuteronomy 19:15-21). God’s people were not to seek revenge or bear a grudge, but instead love their neighbour (Leviticus 19:18).

Today, living under God’s grace for us through Jesus Christ, we no longer are subject to all the “Law”—the long list of Jewish rules and commands issued in the Old Testament (the old covenant). Instead of retaliation, Jesus taught, ***“But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person.”*** Instead of “taking” revenge, a follower of Jesus is to “give.” The evil person attempted to take, but a disciple should be willing to give and serve, not thinking about rights or retribution.

Jesus then used four illustrations of this principle of how his followers should seek to advance God’s kingdom through their actions. The first one is when a disciple is insulted publicly, ***“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”*** Jesus’ followers should not retaliate against evil with evil (Romans 12:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15) but be willing to suffer an even greater indignity and vulnerability.

The second illustration is in a legal setting, ***“if someone wants to sue you.”*** Instead of defending themselves or seeking retaliation, a follower of Christ should give freely to the person who is unfairly attempting to take away even the most basic necessities for living (e.g. ***“your cloak”***).

The third illustration comes from a military scene. In the ancient world, the occupying military could demand that a commoner carry the soldier’s backpack ***“one mile”*** (cf. Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21). Jesus stated that in response to such a demand, ***“Go with him two miles.”***

The fourth illustration of this principle is when someone begs or borrows money, ***“Give to him who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”*** If the person is in need, give to them instead of demanding repayment. Followers of Christ should be marked by their intense generosity, not their selfishness. They should seek how to serve others rather than making cases for why they should not have to serve. Jesus himself set our example (1 Peter 2:23-24).

Elsewhere in the New Testament we see that how God’s wisdom may temper the requests and demands placed on us by others. The apostle Paul at times used his rights as a Roman citizen to avoid being beaten (Acts 22:22-39; 25:11-12). Thus, there may be times when one of Christ’s followers could seek to avoid personal harm. Also, Paul taught that “If a person will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). In other words, sometimes people seek a handout from Christians and expect the church to provide for them when they are able-bodied and should seek a job to provide for themselves and their families. Giving or loaning to such a person would be simply

foolhardy and not helpful to them at all. The best way to “serve” them is to encourage them in their God-given responsibility to work for a living. God commanded, “Six days you shall labour” (Exodus 20:9). At the same time, there exist situations where even capable, able-bodied persons cannot find work. God expects us to be wise in determining physical and financial needs of others.

God’s word clearly taught that his people should **“love your neighbour”** (Leviticus 19:18). The Old Testament also clearly taught how God hates evil and how those who have chosen to do are evil are his enemies (Psalms 4:5; 5:4). Even the psalmist expressed his hatred towards God’s enemies (Psalms 139:21-22; 26:4-5). But Jesus taught the true intent of scriptural teaching with, **“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven”** (vv. 44-45). God hates evil, but he would rather bring reconciliation than punishment. God’s benevolence is shown to all, **“the righteous and the unrighteous.”** He loves all (John 3:16) and desires all to come to repentance and find his mercy and grace rather than his judgment (2 Peter 3:9). Anyone who would claim God as their “Father” must love others as he loves them. His kind of love should be extended to everyone that he loves, not just those who return the love or to the members of one’s own family.

Admittedly, loving one’s enemies is difficult and would be an ethic impossible to obtain under a person’s own efforts.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

As you lead this Bible study, you want your church to deepen their understanding of the following: The standard for our conduct and love should not be as **“tax collectors”** or **“pagans,”** but God himself. Jesus stated, **“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** The goal of all of the Christian life is God’s perfection. We are to emulate God in every area of our lives, in outward actions and inward motivations. But God never requires of us what he does not first provide. The Christian life is a constant process of **“working out”** our salvation **“with fear and trembling”** with the constant promise that at the same time “it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13).

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Live Like This

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Matthew 5:17-48

Background Text

Matthew 4:17-7:29

Main Idea

Jesus' followers are to live differently than the world's standards.

Question to Explore

By what standards are we to live?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to contrast Jesus' view of the good life with that of the culture of Jesus' day and the culture of our day.

Connect with Life:

Ask the group, "What do you think when you hear the word 'integrity'?"

Explain that the word means to be "complete, whole, or undivided." It means that someone is the same on the inside as on the outside.

Seek suggestions on this: "Do you know someone like that?"

Explain: Today's lesson focuses upon God's standards of holiness. God demands a heart that is right, and that will result in right actions. In other words, Jesus' followers are to live differently than the world's standards.

Now explain: If that is the case, then by what standards are we to live? Hopefully, today we will encounter some answers for this.

Guide the Study:

Give a brief background to the "Sermon on the Mount" found in the "Teacher Preparation".

1. The standard of inward righteousness (vv. 17-20).

Request a volunteer to read verses 17-20.

Ask: "According to verse 17, did Jesus come to do away with the Old Testament? Instead, what did he come to do with them?"

Seek opinions for this: "In what way(s) did Jesus 'fulfill' the Old Testament law?"

If they have trouble answering the question, point them to **Hebrews 9:11-14** and ask if we need to offer sacrifices further or if Jesus 'fulfilled' them.

Encourage an answer: "Is God's word in the Old Testament still inspired and profitable for us?"

If they have trouble answering, point them to 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

Have them look through the entire passage for today (verses 17-48).

Ask: "What phrase occurs in these verses (18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44)? ["but I tell you"]

Follow with these questions:

"What kind of authority does Jesus claim with these statements?" [the authority to give God's interpretation of the scripture].

"What, then is the correct way to interpret the scripture?" [according to Jesus].

Inquire: "According to verse 20, what kind of righteousness does Jesus expect of his followers?" Be prepared to give some background information on the Pharisees and teachers of the law given in the "Teacher Preparation".

Ask: "What was the focus of the righteousness of the religious leaders, outward righteousness or inward righteousness?"

Continue: According to Galatians 2:20, how might inward righteousness be obtained?"

2. The standard of reconciled relationships (vv. 21-26).

Have someone read verses 21-26.

Request answers:

"According to verse 21, did Jesus nullify God's command about murder?"

What did he do with it?" [made it stronger]

"Where does murder take place before it does with the hands?" [in the heart]

"According to verse 22, besides killing someone, what is another way we can diminish or harm their lives?" [calling them names]

"According to verses 23-24, what does Jesus want to do with our broken relationships before we come to worship?" [go be reconciled]

"According to verses 25-26, should we only seek reconciliation with a Christian brother?" [no, also with an adversary]

"According to Matthew 5:9, what does Jesus want his followers to be?" [peacemakers]

3. The standard of marital faithfulness (vv. 27-32).

Have someone read verses 27-30.

Ask: "According to verse 27, does Jesus nullify God's command against adultery? [No.]

Add: Instead, what did he do with it?" [made it stronger].

Then ask: "According to verse 28, where does adultery take place before it does with the body?" [in the heart].

Seek answers to these questions:

"Is someone truly faithful to their spouse if they have simply abstained from sexual intercourse with another person?" [no].

"What is the point that Jesus is making about how seriously we should abstain from sexual sin?"

Is he literally teaching about physical mutilation, or is he exaggerating to make a point? Point out that sin takes place “in the heart” (v. 28), where physical mutilation is not possible. Point out how Jesus commands to stop the visual or physical practice that would lead to sin.

Have someone read verses 31-32.

Briefly explain the biblical concept of divorce found in the “Teacher Preparation”.

Now ask: “According to verse 32, under what conditions should divorce even be considered?” [marital unfaithfulness in whatever form that may take].

You may want to read the following paragraph taken from the “Teacher Preparation” and ask your group if they agree with the writer’s understanding of spousal abuse being marital unfaithfulness.

In today’s world, we have seen the terrible consequences of some men and some cultures who tolerate, encourage, and even indulge in verbal, physical, and sexual abuse of wives and even children. Jesus does not deal openly with that in this specific paragraph of teaching. Where such treatment exists, separation and even divorce may be necessary to protect women and children. We should never encourage a woman who is in a serious and dangerously abusive relationship to continue in that. To do so would be to violate many places where the New Testament teaches the loving and protective commandments of our Lord regarding men and marriage. Abuse is marital unfaithfulness in one of its most serious forms. We must never use this one passage of scripture as a “proof-text” to force women to submit to an abusive and destructive relationship, for their sake and for the future emotional and spiritual health of the children who might be involved.

Urge someone to answer this: “Did Jesus command his followers to divorce under these conditions?” [no, but it might be allowable] Be prepared to discuss other regarding divorce discussed in the teacher notes.

If needed, discuss pastoral care towards people who have been affected by divorce.

4. The standard of truthfulness (vv. 33-37).

Have someone read verses 33-37.

Give a brief explanation about the concept of taking oaths in the Old Testament and in Jesus’ day.

Ask: “According to verse 34, should a follower of Jesus even need to take an oath to be believed?” [no]

Add this question: “What does Jesus mean by ‘Let your Yes be Yes and your No, No’?” [always speak the truth]

5. The standard of unconditional love (vv. 38-48).

Have someone read verses 38-42.

Give a brief explanation of the “law of retaliation” from the “Teacher Preparation”.

Search out answers to these questions:

“Instead of retaliation, according to verse 39, what should a follower of Jesus do?” [do not resist an evil person] Explain how a slap on the cheek was a public insult.

“According to verse 39, how should a follower of Jesus respond when publicly insulted?”

According to verse 40, instead of defending yourself and seeking retaliation when someone sues you, how should a disciple respond?” Be prepared to explain the background of being forced to go one mile.

What would going the extra mile accomplish with an enemy?

According to verse 42, how generous and unselfish does Jesus expect his followers to be? Be prepared to discuss how the rest of the New Testament demonstrates how God’s wisdom can help in determining what is best to do in these situations.

Have someone read verses 43-48.

Request someone else to read Leviticus 19:18.

Encourage the group to answer and perhaps discuss these things:

According to verse 43, what is missing from the Old Testament command? [hate your enemy]

Instead, what did Jesus teach in verse 44 that we should do for our enemies? [love and pray for them]

If we do this, according to verse 45, who would we resemble? [your heavenly Father]

According to verse 45, to whom does God extend his love and grace? [to all]

According to verse 48, what should be our goal in our actions towards others? [God's perfection] Have the group read Philippians 2:12-13.

Ask: "What promise can we claim that will give us hope in living out God's perfect character?" [God is at work in us]

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Provide these thought questions to your learners: In light of what we have studied in God's word today:

What does God want me to *believe*?

What does God want me to *do*?

Is there a *promise* I need to claim?

Is there an *example* I need to follow? Or to avoid?

Close in prayer.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Live Like This **Matthew 5:17-48**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Use a dictionary to look up the following: **rules, law, standards.**

Although the word “standard” may refer to the way a product must be produced or the ideals and aspirations by which an organization may be run, it basically contains the idea of an inner goal. Think of the five standards mentioned in today’s Bible study and determine to focus on one or more in your devotional time this week.

- 1. The standard of inward righteousness (Matthew 5: 17-20).**
- 2. The standard of reconciled relationships (vv. 21-26).**
- 3. The standard of marital faithfulness (vv. 27-32).**
- 4. The standard of truthfulness (vv. 33-37).**
- 5. The standard of unconditional love (vv. 38-48).**

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Live Like This***
Matthew 5:17-48**Beginning the Service:**

Sing **Refiner's Fire** or **Take Time to be Holy** or both to begin your worship time.

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

From the world news of this week, choose two or three items for which your group can pray.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

God at work in us
Philippians 2: 13-14

Therefore, my dear friends...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Our Bible study in Matthew 5 emphasized teachings of Jesus about living the Christian life. The author of our study emphasized these as standards. These were:

1. The standard of inward righteousness (Matthew 5: 17-20).

©2001-2010, Eternal Interactive, LLC, All Rights Reserved. www.homechurchonline.com

Live Like This – 06-16-03-en

Unless otherwise noted, scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of International Bible Society.

2. The standard of reconciled relationships (vv. 21-26).
3. The standard of marital faithfulness (vv. 27-32).
4. The standard of truthfulness (vv. 33-37).
5. The standard of unconditional love (vv. 38-48).

Standards are not the same as rules. Rules have an outward source; an outward authority. They are things that others determine need to be done. For a game to be played, rules are set. Everyone abides by those rules and fairness leads to a winner of the game. When someone fails to play by the rules, disruption is caused; anger and hurt feelings erupt and the game ends in discord.

Laws are rules agreed upon by lawmakers acting on behalf of the citizens of a country or other governed area. Laws take into consideration what is best for the majority of the people. Laws are changed from time to time as society's values change. Disobedience to laws which have been agreed upon result in fines, prison sentences, and public disapproval. A society works well when people within the society obey the laws.

Standards are more inwardly based. Standards are influenced by rules and laws, but they reflect a person's hope for living up to values which are important to him or her personally.

This concept is, in fact, expressed in the first of the standards listed in our study: the standard of inward righteousness. ***"The Lord does not look at the things man looks at; Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).***

The writer of the background material expressed it this way: "True righteousness comes by allowing God to reveal his own righteousness through us from the inside out. The apostle Paul described it as ***"Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)***. The religious leaders thought that by their outward righteous actions they could somehow live lives that were holy enough to please God". They were wrong. When we set a standard for living, we must acknowledge that we can only meet that standard by depending on God to help us.

Christ would have our lives governed by standards of holiness which are heart and character based. We would act honourably in every situation even if no one was watching and there were no penalties for failing to live up to our standards. The penalty would be our own disappointment for having failed to be what Christ wanted us to be.

Living up to these self-chosen, God-ordained principles is not easily done. The verse in Philippians which is our focus verse tells us to ***continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*** Living up to a standard involves our will – we commit

to doing so with fear and trembling. But it also involves God at work in us to cause us both to will and to act according to the good purposes which he has for us.

A second emphasis made in the Bible study was on **The standard of reconciled relationships**. We long for peace in the world yet we often have personal relationships where anger and unforgiveness exist. We pay the price for these unreconciled relationships both in personal contentment and in the impact it has on our witness to others. “Why,” the unsaved world asks, “can’t Christians get along?” Again, our Philippians passage reminds us that meeting this standard depends on letting God work in us to will and to act according to his good purpose. We are quite unable to forgive another person without God’s grace in our lives.

A third standard emphasized is **The standard of marital faithfulness**. What a difference it would make in the homes of our world if every man and every woman who committed their lives to another in a relationship would hold to the standard of marital faithfulness. Again this is not a standard from outside of one – a rule to be obeyed to satisfy church officials or the demands of the law. It is an inward commitment which guides one in times of temptation to remember that their heart and life had already been committed to another. The Philippians passage comes to remind us that God is with us in this – to will and to act according to his good purpose.

The standard of truthfulness is the fourth emphasis made. A family is trying to teach their four children that every untruthful act or statement has a consequence. It may be that another person will be disappointed in you; it may be the grade you earn on a test is not a true reflection of what you know; it may be that people lose faith in anything you say because at some point you have been untruthful. God works in us in this matter as well to give us strength in time of temptation and to help us see the long-term consequences of an untrue act or statement.

The standard of unconditional love is the final standard which Jesus teaches in this Matthew passage. These were radical teachings in Jesus’ day and scarcely less radical in our day. To turn the other cheek; that is, to allow someone to put you down or steal your idea or get ahead of you in the line that leads to success is a ridiculous thought in today’s world. Only as God is at work in us to will and to act according to his best plan for us can we tolerate the idea of unconditional love for anyone – much less for the unlovely people who make up some of our daily relationships and much of the world.

Call to Commitment:

These then are standards by which Jesus wants us to live our lives. They are not rules or laws, but internal values which we accept because we want our character to reflect “Christ living in us”.

But to meet these standards we must rely upon this promise:

Therefore, my dear friends...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Concluding the Service:

Sing the song **Sanctuary**. If you do not have music for it, use the words found on CCLI and read the words to the group.

If you cannot access this song, use one stanza of the hymn **Purer in Heart, O God** to conclude your worship time.

Hymn to be read during the Gathering Time

Purer in Heart, O God

(First reader)

Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be:
May I devote my life wholly to Thee.
Watch Thou my wayward feet,
Guide me with counsel sweet;
Purer in heart, Help me to be.

(Second reader)

Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be:
Teach me to do Thy will most lovingly.
Be Thou my friend and guide,
Let me with Thee abide;
Purer in heart, Help me to be.

(Third reader)

Purer in heart, O God, Help me to be:
Until Thy holy face one day I see.
Keep me from secret sin,
Reign Thou my soul within;
Purer in heart, Help me to be.

(Words: Fannie Estelle Davison Music: James H. Fillmore Public Domain)