

How does understanding that kingdom righteousness transforms the heart rather than just behavior change the way you approach obedience to God?

In what ways might you be guilty of external compliance to God's commands while harboring sin in your heart, similar to the Pharisees Jesus critiqued?

Jesus teaches that anger toward another person is equivalent to murder because it devalues someone made in God's image. How does this perspective challenge the way you view conflict in your relationships?

What specific steps can you take this week to pursue reconciliation with someone you have been angry with or who has something against you?

How does our culture's emphasis on personal rights and holding grudges conflict with Jesus's command to run toward reconciliation rather than wait for it?

Jesus says that looking at someone lustfully is committing adultery in your heart. What does this reveal about God's concern for our thought life and private compromises?

What extreme measures might you need to take to guard your heart against lust and protect the purity of your marriage or future marriage?

How can viewing the Sermon on the Mount as a mirror rather than a checklist change your approach to spiritual growth and self-examination?

In what areas of your life have you been managing sin rather than killing it, and what would it look like to take Jesus's radical approach seriously?

How does recognizing that every person bears God's image impact the way you speak about or treat those who annoy you, disagree with you, or have wounded you?

# Small Group Guide: Summer on the Mount

## Matthew 5:21-30 - Kingdom Righteousness: Murder & Adultery

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### Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

**Icebreaker Question:** What's the strangest or most outdated law you've ever heard of? Why do you think we tend to focus on the letter of the law rather than the spirit behind it?

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### Introduction (5 minutes)

This week, we continued our "Summer on the Mount" series, examining Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. We're learning what life looks like when Jesus is our King. In this passage, Jesus takes two of the Ten Commandments—"do not murder" and "do not commit adultery"—and shows us that kingdom righteousness goes deeper than external behavior. It transforms the heart.

**Key Verse:** "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." - Matthew 5:20

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### Discussion Questions

#### Part 1: Kingdom Righteousness Goes Deeper (15 minutes)

1. **What was your initial reaction to Jesus's statement that our righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees?** Why would this have been shocking to Jesus's original audience?
  2. **How does Jesus's pattern of "You have heard it said...but I tell you" challenge the way we typically think about obedience to God?**
  3. **The sermon stated: "Kingdom righteousness goes deeper than behavior. It transforms the heart."** What's the difference between behavior modification and heart transformation?
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#### Part 2: Anger and Murder (20 minutes)

Read Matthew 5:21-26 together

4. **Jesus traces murder back to its root: anger in the heart.** Can you think of examples (without naming names) where you've seen anger progress from resentment to ridicule to rejection?
5. **The sermon distinguished between righteous anger and sinful anger:**
  - Righteous anger says: "What happened is wrong"
  - Sinful anger says: "You are worthless"

**How can we tell the difference in our own hearts?**

6. **Jesus says we should pursue reconciliation urgently—even interrupting our worship to do so (v. 23-24).** Why is reconciliation so important to God? What makes it so difficult for us?
  7. **Who came to mind as you heard this passage?** Is there someone you need to pursue reconciliation with? What would that first step look like?
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### **Part 3: Lust and Adultery (20 minutes)**

**Read Matthew 5:27-30 together**

8. **Jesus says that lust in the heart is already adultery.** How does this challenge our culture's view of sexuality and marriage?
  9. **The sermon said: "Most people don't wake up one morning intending to destroy their marriage. They simply fail to guard their heart."** What are some of the "thousand private compromises" that threaten marriages today?
  10. **Jesus uses extreme language about gouging out eyes and cutting off hands.** What point is He making? What does this tell us about how seriously we should take sin?
  11. **What are practical "extreme measures" we can take to guard our hearts against lust?** (Consider: accountability, boundaries with technology, covenant eyes, etc.)
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### **Part 4: The Heart of the Matter (15 minutes)**

12. **Both anger and lust fail to honor people as image-bearers of God.** How does remembering that every person bears God's image change the way we treat them?
  13. **The sermon presented the Sermon on the Mount as a mirror, not a checklist.** What did this mirror reveal to you today about areas of your life not yet surrendered to King Jesus?
  14. **The good news is that Jesus doesn't just expose our hearts—He died for our sins and can give us new hearts.** How have you experienced Jesus's transforming grace in your life?
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## Key Takeaways

- **Kingdom righteousness addresses the root, not just the fruit.** Jesus cares about our hearts, not just our actions.
  - **Anger is murder in seed form.** We must pursue reconciliation quickly before bitterness takes root.
  - **Lust is adultery in the heart.** We must guard our hearts and take extreme measures to protect purity.
  - **Every person bears God's image.** How we treat others reflects how we honor God.
  - **We all fall short.** Our greatest need isn't better behavior—it's a new heart that only Jesus can give.
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## Practical Application

Choose one or more of these action steps to complete this week:

### For Everyone:

- Read Matthew 5-7 in one sitting this week. Ask God to show you one area where He wants to transform your heart.
- Memorize one of these verses: Job 31:1, Philippians 4:8, or 2 Corinthians 10:5

### Regarding Anger:

- Make a list: Is there anyone you're harboring anger, resentment, or bitterness toward?
- Take the first step toward reconciliation this week—make the call, send the text, schedule the coffee.
- Practice seeing difficult people as image-bearers of God. Pray for them daily this week.

### Regarding Lust:

- Identify your areas of vulnerability. What are the situations, times, or triggers when you're most tempted?
- Take one "extreme measure" this week to guard your heart (install accountability software, delete an app, end a friendship that's becoming inappropriate, etc.)
- Married couples: Have an honest conversation about how you can better protect the purity and oneness of your marriage.
- Singles: Establish or renew your commitment to purity. Consider finding an accountability partner.

### For Your Heart:

- Spend time in confession this week. Ask God to reveal the roots of sin in your heart.

- Journal about this question: "What does my anger or lust reveal about what I'm really worshiping?"
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### **Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

Pray together as a group, focusing on:

- Confession of areas where we've failed to guard our hearts
- Asking for God's help in specific areas of struggle
- Thanking Jesus for His transforming grace
- Praying for courage to take the next step of obedience

### **Consider closing with this prayer:**

"Jesus, we thank You for showing us the way. We confess that we often focus on external behavior while neglecting our hearts. Reveal to us the roots of anger and lust in our lives. Give us courage to pursue reconciliation and purity. Transform us from the inside out. We cannot do this on our own—we need Your Holy Spirit to change us. Thank You for Your grace that saves and Your mercy that gives us another day to live for You. In Jesus's name, Amen."

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### **For Next Week**

Continue reading Matthew 5-7 daily. Next week we'll examine the remaining four examples Jesus gives of kingdom righteousness.

# 5-Day Devotional: Kingdom Righteousness

## Day 1: Beyond External Compliance

**Reading:** Matthew 5:17-20

**Devotional:** Jesus didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill it by revealing God's intended meaning. The Pharisees mastered external compliance, yet Jesus calls us to something deeper—transformed hearts. Kingdom righteousness isn't about checking boxes or avoiding punishment like dodging a speeding ticket. It's about genuinely desiring to honor God from the inside out. When we focus solely on outward behavior, we miss the heart transformation Jesus offers. Today, ask yourself: Am I simply avoiding sin, or am I pursuing holiness? The difference reveals whether you're performing religion or experiencing relationship. Jesus invites you beyond rule-keeping into heart-changing surrender. Let Him examine not just your actions, but the motivations behind them. True righteousness surpasses mere compliance—it flows from a heart captivated by the King.

## Day 2: The Roots of Murder

**Reading:** Matthew 5:21-26; Genesis 1:26-27

**Devotional:** Every person you encounter—the annoying coworker, the difficult family member, the political opponent—bears God's image. Jesus traces murder back to its root: anger that devalues another human being. We may never physically harm someone, yet we assassinate with sarcasm, wound with words, and kill with contempt. Righteous anger says, "What happened is wrong." Sinful anger declares, "You are worthless." The difference is profound. Jesus doesn't simply command us to stop being angry; He calls us to reconciliation. Don't wait for the other person to make the first move. When Jesus is King, you run toward peace, not away from conflict. Who have you devalued in your heart? What relationship needs reconciliation? Kingdom people humble themselves, own their wrongs, and pursue peace. Address the root before it bears deadly fruit.

## Day 3: Guarding Your Heart

**Reading:** Matthew 5:27-30; Proverbs 4:23

**Devotional:** "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Jesus applies this wisdom to sexual purity, revealing that adultery begins long before bodies touch—it starts in the heart. Lust treats people as objects to be used rather than image-bearers to be honored. In our image-saturated culture, temptation is unavoidable, but entertaining it is a choice. You cannot stop birds from flying overhead, but you can prevent them from nesting in your hair. Jesus uses shocking language—gouge out your eye, cut off your hand—because we have a shocking ability to be casual with sin. He's not advocating self-mutilation but radical action. What subscriptions need canceling? What apps need deleting? What accountability do

you need? Don't manage sin—kill it. Guard your marriage, your mind, your future with extreme measures. Purity is worth it.

## **Day 4: The Mirror of Truth**

**Reading:** James 1:22-25; Psalm 139:23-24

**Devotional:** The Sermon on the Mount functions as a mirror, revealing who we truly are when we stand before King Jesus. It's not a checklist for good people but a diagnostic tool exposing our need for transformation. When we honestly examine ourselves against Jesus' standard, we all fall short. This isn't meant to discourage but to direct us to grace. The King who exposes our hearts is the same King who died for our sins and offers us new life. Today, invite God to search your heart. Where are you still holding territory back from His reign? What areas remain unsundered? The beauty of the gospel is that confession leads to cleansing, and exposure leads to healing. Don't look away from the mirror in shame—look to Jesus in faith. He doesn't just show you your sin; He offers you His righteousness.

## **Day 5: A New Heart, A New Life**

**Reading:** Ezekiel 36:25-27; 2 Corinthians 5:17

**Devotional:** Your greatest need isn't better behavior—it's a new heart. This is the stunning promise of the gospel: God doesn't just modify your exterior; He transforms your interior. He removes the heart of stone and gives you a heart of flesh. He places His Spirit within you, enabling you to walk in His ways. This is what it means to live under King Jesus—not white-knuckling obedience but experiencing Spirit-empowered transformation. The Christian life isn't about trying harder; it's about surrendering deeper. When Jesus is King, everything changes—not just what you do, but who you are. You become a new creation. Old patterns lose their power. New desires emerge. Today, thank God for the transforming grace only Jesus provides. Ask Him to continue His work in you, shaping your heart to reflect His kingdom. Trust that He who began a good work will complete it.