



Peninsula City Church

The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7

Matthew 5:33-42: A Kingdom View

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The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:33-42

An Introduction

Q. What was Jesus’ purpose for teaching this paradox, and how can it be applied?

As we continue to study this section of Matthew in context, hopefully, we will understand what Jesus was saying in some of the challenging sections. Matthew 5-7 has been called the Sermon on the Mount, but Jesus was teaching His disciples (or apprentices) rather than preaching; see Matt 5:2; 7:28-29. He was teaching them the role they would play in their partnership with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven. While teaching them, the crowd that had followed Jesus also had the opportunity to listen to His teaching, Matt 4:25-5:2; 7:28-8:1.

Imagine that as Jesus was teaching His disciples, you, as one of the crowd, were listening closely to what He had been saying. You have been hanging on every word Jesus said, but now He is saying things that do not make sense to you. What does He mean by “It has been said...but I say to you?” Is Jesus greater than Moses, who received and wrote out the Torah (Lit. instruction)? What He is saying gives the impression that He is comparing His Words with what the Torah states. Is Jesus wanting His followers to believe Him over the Torah? Why is He saying these things to His followers? Is He rebelling against the religious leaders of His day? You sit and listen, and your mind races with these thoughts.

Here, Jesus presented His disciples with His perspective of the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) in a way that they would not have heard it taught before. Remember that the Torah was originally given on Mount Sinai, Ex 19-20. In contrast, Jesus here presented His interpretation of some aspects of the Torah on a Mountain in Galilee, Matt 5:1. The teaching we will look at here was given using a comparative method that was paradoxical and challenging. Matthew was the only one to present this material since Luke in Lk 6:20-49 did not go that far. In this message, we will begin by exploring two matters. We will go into more detail at a later date.

- The Context: Some Paradoxes
- Oaths: Matthew 5:33-37
- Two: Going the Second Mile Matthew 5:38-42

1. The Context: Some Paradoxes

Q. Is there a methodological structure highlighting the teaching that can aid in understanding these paradoxes?

For Jesus, obeying the Torah through a relationship with God and others was more important than legalism or mere reaction to it. Remember, Jesus was the only One who could and did fulfil all of the requirements of the Torah. The objective here was not for His disciples to hurt God by disobedience but to honour Him by obeying Him. Matthew 5:21-48 recorded Jesus using six illustrations to demonstrate the fulfilment of the Torah and the Prophets. Here, we will review two of these illustrations. The following briefly outlines Jesus’ methodological structure in His teachings in Matt 5:21-48. See the following table for those six illustrations and the two that will be reviewed here in this paper,

Methodology	Passage	Topic	Summary
Comparison	5:17-48	Part of the largest method that Jesus used in this section	
	5:17-20	The Eternal Torah	Jesus Fulfilled the Torah
	5:21-26	Murder & Words	It all begins within the heart of a person

	5:27-32	Adultery & The Heart	It all begins within the heart of a person
	5:33-37	Oaths & Yes/No	Oaths are not acceptable
	5:38-42	Those Who Hurt You	Go the second mile (So to speak)
	5:43-48	Enemies Hate or Love	Love everyone regardless

As stated previously (June 23rd and July 21st, 2024), the author documented that Jesus chose six illustrations to examine with His disciples. The purpose was for them to understand how to live righteously and not as the religious leaders of the day, Matt 5:20. They were to live as mentioned in the Torah and the Prophets. In this section, Jesus used the Midrashic phrases (Midrash is the hermeneutic method of constantly repeating or learning oral tradition to gain the meaning of and behind the text). For example, Jesus uses the phrases “You have heard that it was said...” and “But I say to you...” which we need to understand within the context of the Hebrew Bible. In other words, the section was spoken by Jesus in light of the Torah and the Prophets (can mean the Hebrew Bible) 5:17-48, of which Jesus is the fulfilment.

**You have heard that
it was said... But I
say to you...**

Remember that we saw that Jesus had come to fulfil the Torah and the Hebrew Bible and not do away with it. That is,

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law (Torah) or the Prophets (Former and Later); I did not come to abolish (teardown) but to fulfil” (Matt 5:17 NASB).

So, for Jesus to understand what the Hebrew Bible said would help in obeying it; remember, Jesus was the only One who could understand what the Torah said and the interpretation and application of it. The objective was to grasp God’s Word at the heart level first and then in action.

Topic	You have heard it said...	But I say to you... Correct Interpretation
Oaths	Matt 5:33	Matt 5:34
2 nd Kilometer	Matt 5:38	Matt 5:39

What was Jesus doing by using the phrases “You have heard that it was said...” and “But I say to you...”? As seen in a previous message on (June 23rd, July), one suggestion is that He was building a fence around the Torah. He did this by using the illustrations mentioned here. But why would He need to build a fence around the Torah? If we read the sections that Jesus mentioned, “You have heard it said,” we will see that each matter links back to a truth mentioned within the Torah. If this is the case, did He use a gentler command to bring the matter from an external command to an internal heart issue?

**step back & see
Jesus Who is the
fence that you will
need to go through**

Here, though, we will propose that Jesus was that fence, and anyone intending to break the command needed to go through Jesus. So, Jesus’ teaching here appears to be a good methodological foundation to grasp to keep from breaking the Torah. Remember that the fences were meant to help people avoid breaking God’s Torah. As a result, as proposed here, Jesus was the fence around the Torah or Word of God for safety reasons. Jesus would have encouraged His

disciples to step back and see the person they were dealing with at the time. They were to do this out of a merciful relationship and not just legalism.

In light of this, the next two illustrations follow the pattern of the paradoxical statements used by Jesus Christ thus far. That is, “You have heard that it was said...” and “But I say to you...” Anyone would think He would want to be as straightforward as possible so His disciples could understand what He is saying. But Jesus seems to have made things uncomfortable and challenging for them. Is something else happening here? Why did Jesus speak using paradoxes? What is a paradox anyway? Well, a paradox is said to be,

“A situation or statement that seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics.”¹

The word is made up from two Greek words (*παρά* para and *δόξα* doxa), (*παράδοξος* paradoxos). Para is a primary preposition to introduce something, implying being ‘against’ or ‘in contradiction to.’ Meanwhile, doxa can mean dignity, glory, honour, praise, worship, or even opinion or thinking. It has been said that,

“Conversely, a statement may sound contradictory, but upon further reflection, it reveals a deeper truth. And then some paradoxes just defy all logic and reasoning.”²

So, let us now look at these two paradoxes and see what we can learn.

2. Oaths and Integrity: Matthew 5:33-37

Q. What was Jesus’ teaching here regarding oaths?

So, what was the matter Jesus was trying to deal with here? It would appear that He was speaking paradoxically when He said, “It has been said...but I say to you.” These two statements seem to be contradictory. However, when we look at them deeper, Jesus deals with the heart’s intent and not merely an action. It appears that Jesus was not excluding making an oath, but if one does to keep it, as the following passages point out: Deut 6:13; Is 45:23; Jer 4:2; 12:16.³ It has been said that,

step back & see the one who you dealing with, do you have deceitful intent?

“The Pharisees were notorious for their oaths, which they made on the least provocation. Yet they made allowances for mental reservation with their oaths. If they wanted to be relieved of oaths, they had made by heaven...by the earth...by Jerusalem, or by one’s own head, they could argue that since God Himself had not been involved, their oaths were not binding.”⁴

It has been pointed out that,

“The Pharisees taught that there were two kinds of oaths- the violation of one being perjury and that of the other an innocent matter, or at most but a slight offence. If the name of God was in the oath, it was binding... If the name of God was not in the oath, it need not be kept.”⁵

However, the heart issue He was dealing with here was that of integrity. That is the integrity of the one who has made the oath. There is no specific Torah or biblical passage in the Hebrew Bible that

¹ “Paradox.” <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/paradox> (30th July 2024).

² Hernando, James D. *Dictionary of Hermeneutics: A Concise Guide to Terms, Methods, & Expressions*. (Springfield, MO: GPH, 2005), 163. “Paradox.” <https://smartblogger.com/paradox-examples/> (1st August 2024)

³ Pikman, Vladimir. “Jesus and the Torah.”(*Unpublished Paper*). (January 2012), 6 n. 17.

⁴ Walvoord, John F. & Zuck, Roy B. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*. New Testament Edition. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1984), 31.

⁵ Freeman, James. E. *Manners and Customs of the Bible*. (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1972), 338.

speaks to this issue, but it can be found in a few passages.⁶ Jesus spoke of the swearing falsely due to the lack of integrity and the powerlessness to keep the oath. The passage states,

³³ “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told (Lit. *it was said to the ancients*), ‘You (*you and your vows are singular here*) shall not make false vows (or *break your vows*), but shall fulfil your vows to the Lord (*Ex 20:7; cf. Lev 19:12; Deut 23:21,23*).’ ³⁴ But I say to you, make no oath at all (*flippantly*), either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by (or *toward*) Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your statement (Lit. *Gk logos, or word*) be (*an emphatic*) ‘Yes, yes’ or (*an absolute*) ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil (or *from the evil one*)” (Matt 5:33-37 NASB).

Then, the Kenneth Wuest’s Expanded Translation says,

³³⁻³⁷ Again, you heard (*once and for all*) that it was said by those of a previous time, ‘You shall not perjure yourself, but you shall discharge (Lit. *deliver or give back*) your oaths with reference to the Lord.’ But I say to you, ‘Do not put yourself under oath at all, neither by heaven, because it is the throne of God nor by the earth, because it is the footstool of His feet, neither by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. Neither put yourself under oath by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or black, but let your word be, Yes, Yes, No, No; and that which is more than these things is of the evil which is in active opposition to the good” (Matt 5:33-37, Wuest).⁷

Topic	You have heard it said, but I say...
Oaths	Matt 5:33; cf. Ex 20:7; Lev 19:12; Deut 23:21-23; Cf. Deut 23:22; Num 30:2; Eccl 5:5

Jesus lists some things they may have sworn and sworn by that they would have known. It began with the throne of God, the highest authority sworn by done to Jerusalem. We have all probably done this at some point in our lives. Even as children, maybe you crossed your heart and hoped to die, or pinky swore, or even swore on your mother’s grave, etc. What Jesus was driving at here because of our lack of integrity to keep the oath. He said do not even go there. So, where could Jesus have gotten this idea for what He said here? Well, it has been pointed out in the Torah that,

²¹ “When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay paying it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you. ²² However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you” (Deut 23:21-22 NASB).

Also, see the following passage,

“It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay” (Eccl 5:5 NASB).

So, Jesus was challenging His disciples regarding their integrity in this area of their lives. He was showing them how to take an integrity test. A test would help them align their heart’s intent with the Kingdom of Heaven. Interestingly. As I wrote this section, the following is a Pastor’s integrity test on my computer: amazing, hey, haha. I thought it had some good insights, especially in making and keeping oaths, so I have included them. See the following,

⁶ Keener, Craig. *S. A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1999), 192-193.

⁷ *The Gospel of Matthew, by Kenneth S. Wuest, from The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 12.

“When it comes to making decisions, big or small, the Bible offers plenty of wisdom. One principle it reiterates is what I call the Integrity Test. When you’re making a decision, ask yourself, “Would I want everyone in my community to know about this decision?”

If the thought of other people finding out about your decision worries you, then you are probably making the wrong decision. Bad decisions lead to secrecy, and that kind of secret always leads to pain in your life. Proverbs 10:9 says,

“Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out” (NIV).

Notice it does not say ‘might be found out’ or even ‘probably will be found out.’ You will be found out! You have seen how this happens: You are about to make a bad choice. You know it is wrong, but you think, ‘I’ll go ahead, and do it because no one will ever know.’ Then, as soon as the decision is made, you think, ‘Somebody’s going to find out!’ And you feel the fear that comes from that. That is when you have violated the Integrity Test.

When you have integrity, your public life and your private life match. What is in your heart is the same as what other people see on the outside. What you say and what you do are in harmony.

The next time you are faced with a decision, whether in your church or in another area of your life, follow the Integrity Test.

- Ask, ‘Am I okay with other people finding out about this decision?’
- ‘Can I make this choice with a clear conscience?’
- ‘Do I believe this is wrong?’



Pastor, God has given you the wisdom of the Bible and of the Holy Spirit because he loves you. The Integrity Test will help keep you on the path that God knows is for your good.”⁸

So, Jesus was instructing His disciples that when dealing with someone, the best way to have integrity is to,

“Let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no;’ anything beyond these is of evil (or *from the evil one*)” (Matt 5:33-37 NASB).

That is, Jesus’ disciples should only say either yes or no. When they said yes to someone, they had better have meant it and not change their minds later. The same goes for saying no to someone. In other words, do not use deceit; be honest and speak honestly. It has been pointed out that,

“We should not have to use an oath to validate what we say. If we do, that is a reflection of our integrity. If we have a good name, our ‘yes’ or ‘no’ should be sufficient. God’s Words are sure, and to be Christlike (like Christ) and godly (like God), ours must be too.”⁹

It leads us to the following illustration that Jesus used to demonstrate their proper heart intent.

⁸ “Taking the integrity test— a simple strategy for tough decisions.” https://cf.pastors.com/monday-encouragement-201a?utm_campaign=07+29+24+-+Monday+Encouragement+201&utm_content=Taking+the+integrity+test-+a+simple+strategy+for+tough+decisions&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ActiveCampaign (30th July 2024).

⁹ Wommack, Andrew. *Life for Today: Study Bible and Commentary Gospels Edition*. (Colorado Springs, CO, 2012), 77 n. 20.

3. An Equal Response or Not: Matthew 5:38-42

Q. What was Jesus' teaching here regarding retribution?

The following illustration reviewed here is what Jesus had to say to His disciples in Matt 5:38-42 on the matter of what has been called "an eye for an eye." It dealt with the idea of retribution or revenge, wanting justice. It dealt with the concept of an equal or proportionate response against someone who has hurt or grieved them. It has been pointed out that,

"This law was given to protect the innocent and to make sure retaliation did not occur beyond the offence."¹⁰

Jesus told them that the Kingdom of Heaven way was for them not to be vengeful. That is, Jesus, amazingly,

"Urges nonresistance to evil, giving three specific examples that instead of expecting an equal payment, people must exercise forgiveness, mercy and generosity."¹¹

He then went on to give some examples of what He intended. See the following passage say,

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth (*Ex 21:23-27; cf. Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21*).'³⁹ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you (Lit. *slap with the hand, only used here and in Matt 26:67 in the NT*) on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue (Lit. *judge*) you and take your shirt (Lit. *tunic, i.e., a garment worn next to the body*), let him have your coat (Lit. *cloak, i.e., an outer piece of clothing*) also.⁴¹ Whoever forces (Lit. *will force*) you to go one mile, go with him two.⁴² Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you" (Matt 5:38-42 NASB).

step back & see the one who has hurt you and ask yourself, "Have I got vengeful intent?"

Then, the Kenneth Wuest Translation has expanded these verses and says,

³⁸⁻⁴² "You heard that it was said, 'An eye in substitution for an eye, a tooth in substitution for a tooth.' But as for Myself, 'I AM saying to you, Do not set yourself against the evil which is in active opposition to the good, but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him also the other. And to the one who desires to summon you to be put on trial and have judgment passed upon you for the purpose of taking away your undergarment, yield up your outer garment also. And whoever commandeers your services as a courier for a mile, be going off with him two miles. To the one asking you for something, give, and from the one who desires to borrow money from you at interest, do not turn away'" (Matt 5:38-42, *Wuest*).¹²

Topic	You have heard it said, but I say...
2 nd Kilometer	Matt 5:38; cf. Ex 21:24-27; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21; Cf. Prov 20:22; 24:29; 25:21

What Jesus had to say here would have been particularly challenging for His disciples. Their initial response would have been retribution or revenge, as they wanted justice. However, Jesus told them to step back and see the one for whom they might have vengeful intent. He said, "Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." Really, they were expected to do that, and it

¹⁰ Walvoord, & Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 31.

¹¹ Pikman, "Jesus and the Torah."(*Unpublished Paper*), 6 n. 18.

¹² *The Gospel of Matthew, by Kenneth S. Wuest, from The New Testament: An Expanded Translation.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 12.

would not be easy to do. It was not the action that Jesus was interested in but their heart's intent. It is not a new idea, as it can be found in the Hebrew Bible.

“Do not say, ‘I will repay evil;’ Wait for the LORD, and He will save you” (Prov 20:22 NASB).

“Do not say, ‘Thus I shall do to them as they have done to me; I will render to the person according to their work’” (Prov 24:29 NASB).

²¹ “If your enemy is hungry, give them food to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; ²² or you will heap burning coals on their head, and the LORD will reward you” (Prov 25:21-22 NASB; see also Rom 12:20).

“I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting” (Is 50:6 NASB).

Jesus's way of responding would not be the usual way that would have been the norm. When He said, “Do not resist an evil person,” it would have been entirely outside of their cultural understanding. However, Jesus was introducing them to the Kingdom of Heaven culture. So, when He said, whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to them to be slapped. For someone to slap the right cheek means that it would have been a backhander. On this matter, it has been said that,

“Scholarship has seized on Matthew's use of ‘right’ and pointed out that, for a right-handed person using the dominant hand and facing the one being struck, this would mean that the blow would be delivered with the back of the hand. If this is the scene envisaged, then the insult involved might be as important or more than the hurt itself.”¹³

However, offering the other cheek meant that the person doing the slapping needed to face the person they were about to slap, look them in the eye, and hit them with an open hand.

Then He also said, if anyone wants to sue you, let them have everything.

“If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let them also have your coat” (Matt 5:40 NASB).

Really, was Jesus expecting His disciples to do that? Yes, He does. However, some instructions were on what to do when taking a person's shirt.

²⁵ “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to them; you shall not charge them interest. ²⁶ If you ever take your neighbour's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to them before the sun sets, ²⁷ for that is their only covering; it is their cloak for their body. What else shall they sleep in? And it shall come about that when they cry out to Me, I will hear them, for I AM gracious” (Ex 22:25-27 NASB).

Jesus knew that they would need to be returned by sundown; if they were not, the person who took them would fall foul of the cultural norms. Also, it would have been a violation of the Torah.

Then, when He said, “Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with them two,” they would not have thought that way. In the time of Jesus, a person could be made to carry the pack of a ruler a thousand steps. As far as Roman soldiers doing this to those around the time of Jesus, it has been said,

“We have no specific knowledge of the forms in which this was practiced in Roman Palestine, but since Persian times, impressing people and animals without notice for temporary service to the authorities had been customary and legal; the practice has been well documented.”¹⁴

¹³ Nolland, John. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 258.

¹⁴ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 259. See also Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, 338-339.

Yet, Jesus told them to go two thousand steps. It was showing the one who had forced them that they were living a higher standard of life. That was the Kingdom of Heaven life.

Finally, Jesus used another example of the Kingdom of Heaven life when He said,

“Give to them who asks of you, and do not turn away from them who wants to borrow from you” (Matt 5:38-42 NASB).

It would not have been an easy thing to do, especially if they did not own much. The disciples needed to understand that all they had was not theirs to own but was on loan from God. They needed to live with open hands for God to put in them and take out whatever He desired.

What Jesus said in these two illustrations must have seemed like pie in the sky when they die. However, it was not merely imaginative things that Jesus was talking about. He wanted them to see that it was part of their daily lives. It is what the right way up the Kingdom of Heaven looks like as they live in a world that is upside down. They would have the opportunity to “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand” (Matt 4:17 NASB). They needed to see things from a higher perspective based on what they had known and then turn to God, the King of the Kingdom of Heaven, whom Jesus was talking about.

Some concluding thoughts

So coming back to the opening question,

Q. What was Jesus’ purpose for teaching this paradox, and how can it be applied?

We have seen that the so-called Sermon on the Mount (since, as we have seen, Jesus was teaching, Matt 5:2; 7:28-29) is an incredible insight into the Kingdom of Heaven. Sometimes, it seems like a paradox but be assured it is not. As far as Jesus was concerned, it was the Kingdom of Heaven reality to be lived out here on earth. We need to be people who have integrity. Hopefully, the ideas within these pages will help us step back and see the person we are about to hurt. What Jesus has asked His own to do here will not be easy, but we still need to try. We need to live by yes and no and not make false oaths with loopholes. We can all want justice and seek retribution or revenge if we have been wronged. We all know that it can be hard to turn the other cheek.

We all need help applying what Jesus said in these two illustrations. So, the heart’s intent far exceeds the action of making and trying to keep an oath, retribution, or revenge and wanting justice. We need to set our heart on simply saying yes or no with integrity. We also need to ask for the strength to turn the other cheek as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. We have not been able to do these things to date, but today is a new day. We can always come back whenever we fail here, ask for forgiveness, and try again. The reason is that, as Jesus said,

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt 5:20 NASB).

Jesus also said in chapter six of Matthew,

“But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt 6:33 NASB).

Notice the vital link between righteousness and the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, from today onwards, we need to let the Holy Spirit guide our reading and studying these chapters to change our lives. We need to ‘Stop and reflect.’ We have seen what has been said on this matter. But what has the Holy Spirit been saying to you today? That is, what is the one thing that stands out to you? We all need to apply what we have learned; otherwise, it is merely all academic. Then, we need to respond to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to us.

In response, we need to ask through this process:

- What personal application can be found in the passages?
- What is God teaching me today?
- That is, "What is God saying to me?"

How should I respond to what is being said, or so what?

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond