

All In with Jordan Easley

Murder Conviction

Kingdom Culture | Part 3 | Matthew 5:21-26

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

We are walking through a series of messages called Kingdom Culture, based on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. So far, Jesus has told us that we are to be salt and light, and that true righteousness is not about law but about grace. But beginning in Matthew 5:21, Jesus goes from being general to being very specific. Over the next several weeks, He addresses six critical areas that deal directly with the roots of our hearts. And the very first subject He addresses is murder. While most people would deny being guilty of murder, Jesus shows us that murder is more than an act—it's an attitude. Murder doesn't start with your hands; it starts with your heart.

KEY POINTS

1. The Progression of Anger (Matthew 5:21–22)

Jesus begins by quoting the Law: “You have heard... Do not murder.” But then He deepens the meaning: “But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment.”

Murder is more than a crime of the hands; it is a condition of the heart. Anger can be righteous when it reflects God's own anger against sin, injustice, and oppression. But anger becomes sinful when it leads to hatred, division, and malice. Jesus warns that even insulting or demeaning words place us under judgment. To treat someone as worthless is to harbor the same guilt as a murderer. John echoes this truth: "Everyone who hates his brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him" (1 John 3:15).

Unchecked anger will be judged by God. We may think we can get away with harboring bitterness or spewing venomous words, but Jesus reminds us: we won't.

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2. The Priority of Reconciliation (Matthew 5:23–24)

Jesus makes reconciliation a higher priority than even worship. He says that if you come to the altar and remember someone has something against you, leave your gift there, go be reconciled, and then return to worship.

This means we will not be right vertically with God until we are right horizontally with others. A divided heart cannot bring a worthy sacrifice. Barriers like pride, disobedience, or refusal to forgive keep us from experiencing closeness with God. Reconciliation requires three steps:

- Recognize the rift (be aware of broken relationships).
- Respond with repentance (seek forgiveness).
- Restore the relationship (pursue peace before you worship).

God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others are inseparably connected. Jesus even calls us to limitless forgiveness: "seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22).

3. The Price of Unresolved Conflict (Matthew 5:25–26)

Jesus illustrates the urgency of reconciliation by pointing to someone settling a debt before reaching the courtroom. In Bible times, debtors often faced life sentences in prison because they could not repay what they owed once locked away. In the same way, if we refuse to settle conflicts now, we risk facing judgment later—when it is too late.

Jesus' warning is simple: Settle it now or suffer the sentence later. Bitterness and unresolved conflict imprison us spiritually and can blind us to the face of Christ, just as Leonardo da Vinci discovered when painting The Last Supper. Only after reconciling with his enemy could he see clearly enough to paint the face of Jesus.

Reconciliation is always cheaper than regret. Jesus tells us: Do it now. Go make things right. Then return to worship with a clean heart before God.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Jesus equates harboring anger and insulting others with murder of the heart. How does this change the way you view conflict in your own life?
2. Why do you think Jesus places reconciliation as a higher priority than worship?
3. Is there someone you need to reconcile with today? What step can you take—recognize, repent, or restore—to make things right?
