

Righteousness That God Requires

Kingdom Culture | Part 2 | Matthew 5:17-20

INTRODUCTION

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus called His followers out of the culture of this world and into a Kingdom Culture. He told them they were the salt of the earth and the light of the world — called to preserve God’s holiness and reflect His goodness in a decaying world. Salt makes no impact when it remains in the shaker, and light does no good when it’s hidden. But living as bright and salty disciples requires that we resist getting too comfortable in this world. God didn’t design us to be satisfied here — He called us to soar as disciples who make it nearly impossible for those around us to miss the truth of Jesus. In Matthew 5:17–20, Jesus draws a line between the religious culture that is wrong and the Kingdom culture that is right, giving three clear warnings.

NOTES

KEY POINTS

1. Watch Out for Those Who Deny God’s Truth (Matthew 5:17–18)

Jesus said, “Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.” He affirmed the Old Testament as God’s permanent, eternal truth. While some in His day thought He was lowering the standard of righteousness, Jesus made it clear: He wasn’t here to tear down the Law but to fulfill it — because the Law cannot save, but the God of the Law can.

God’s Word never changes. Jesus reminded His disciples that not even the smallest letter or stroke will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. As truth goes, so goes morality. In a culture where belief in absolute truth has plummeted, we must hold firmly to God’s Word as the unchanging standard.

2. Watch Out for Those Who Disobey God’s Truth (Matthew 5:19)

Jesus warned that greatness in God’s Kingdom will not be measured by gifts, popularity, or success, but by how we perceive, practice, preach, and promote His Word. Those who obey God’s commands and lead others to do the same will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who disregard His commands and influence others to do likewise will be called least.

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If you want to be great in God's Kingdom, submit to His Word fully, live out His commands daily, and teach His truth faithfully. Our eternal status will be shaped not just by how we obey, but by how we influence others toward obedience.

3. Watch Out for Those Who Distort God's Truth (Matthew 5:20)

In Jesus' day, the scribes and Pharisees were considered the model of righteousness. They were religious, rigid, and obsessed with following the rules — even adding hundreds of extra laws. But they distorted God's Word by teaching that being right with God was about keeping rules, rather than receiving His grace.

Jesus taught that true righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees. It is not earned through legalism or works but received through faith in Christ. He fulfilled the moral law by His life, the ceremonial law through His death, and every prophecy concerning the Messiah. Righteousness is possible not by our doing but by God's gift — grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

NOTES

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can you personally guard against denying, disobeying, or distorting God's truth?
2. What are some practical ways you can teach and model obedience to God's Word for others in your life?
3. How does understanding righteousness as a gift, not something we earn, change the way you approach your relationship with God?
