



## Group Discussion Guide

*For group meetings from May 2 afternoon through May 9 morning*

### The Sermon on the Mount, Week 3

#### Matthew 5:21-16

*"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."*

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

This week we have been introduced to the first of six statements by Jesus that begin in a similar fashion. In these statements, our Savior refers to the Mosaic Law and then offers his own teaching about each of these commandments. The first of these statements deals with murder and anger. Jesus quotes the commandment given in Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17, which simply states, "You shall not murder." In addition, Jesus references the truth that there is judgment for sin and explains that those who murder are subject to being judged and receiving consequences for their disobedience. Then, he gets to the heart of the matter as he shares that everyone who directs anger at another person, insults another person or calls someone a full will be subject to judgment, including punishment in hell.

He then uses the example of a worshiper offering a gift to God at the altar, and how this gift should not be offered if someone else has something against this one who is coming to God in worship. It is significant that Jesus replaces responsibility on the one who is seeking to worship, and this also is the individual who potentially committed an offense that caused another person to "have something against" that individual. This demonstrates that we should live in such a way as not to offend others, and that we should take an account of our relationships to ensure others do not have something against us. Granted, there are limits to what we can do in this regard, but we should certainly make a sincere and concerned effort. In fact, Jesus says that restoring the relationship is so important that the worshiper should leave the gift at the altar and go and make things right with the offended person before coming back and presenting the gift.

Jesus closes this section with being in the situation of dealing with an accusation. He teaches that the one being accused should work with the accuser to reach a settlement before the case goes to court. Once the case goes to court, there is the potential for the accused to be sent to prison and remain there until payment is made. Again, this underscores the importance of restoring a broken relationship and avoiding the consequences that come from allowing that brokenness to continue.

### **Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 16:18-20**

These passages connect directly to the teaching of Jesus. Exodus 20:13 simply commands, "You shall not murder." Deuteronomy 16:18-20 gives the details of how judges were to be set up within the nation of Israel and emphasizes the need for these judges to be impartial so that they truly could administer justice.

### **Genesis 4:1-10**

It did not take long for the effects of sin to have a deadly impact on mankind. Cain, the oldest son of Adam and Eve, became angry at his younger brother Abel and murdered him. Cain's anger stemmed from jealousy; God had not accepted Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground but did accept Abel's offering of animal sacrifice. When confronted by God, Cain refused to take responsibility for his sin and God declared that He already knew what Cain had done.

### **1 John 3:11-15, James 1:19-21**

John writes that the timeless message to love one another is essential for followers of Jesus. He uses Cain as an example of what not to do, and also uses his hatred for his brother as an example of how the world hates those who are righteous. He explains that loving others is evidence that one has "passed out of death into life" and he equates hatred with murder. He reminds his readers that no one who commits murder "has eternal life abiding in him."

James instructs believers to focus on listening, and to resist the urge to speak and become angry. He shares that human anger does not produce the righteousness of God, and that believers must empty themselves of wickedness and fill themselves with the Word of God that brings salvation.

### **Ephesians 4:25-32**

Paul gives specific instructions to believers, that we must push away the desire to lie and instead focus on speaking the truth with one another. The apostle also gives teaching about anger; we must be able to have "righteous anger," and we must not hold onto anger because this will give the enemy an opportunity to harm us. Our actions should be honest and our speech should build others up. We must not cause the Holy Spirit to grieve. Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and slander have no place in our lives. We are to show kindness to others and offer compassion and forgiveness as we remember how Jesus has forgiven us.

## Discussion Questions

1. Do you think that Jesus “raises the bar” of the Mosaic Law that forbids murder when he teaches that anger towards another person will bring judgment? Why or why not?
2. How does Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:22 frame your understanding about how we are to view and treat other people?
3. What do you learn about the importance of relationships from Jesus’ examples in Matthew 5:23-26?
4. Justice has become a popular topic in our culture. How do we determine what is true justice?
5. What does Genesis 4:1-10 teach you about the connection between anger and murder?
6. Based on what John writes in 1 John 3:11-15, does hatred towards others demonstrate that a person is not a follower of Jesus? How are we to apply this passage personally?
7. Consider what James writes in James 1:19-21. What role does the Word of God play in helping us to obey God by pushing away selfish sinful desires?
8. Do you think it is possible for a human being to have “righteous anger” (Ephesians 4:26)? How can we maintain a heart of forgiveness towards other people (Ephesians 4:32)?