



## First Baptist Church Selmer

SERMON ON THE MOUNT • JESUS & RELATIONSHIPS • MATTHEW 5:33-48 • 10/12/2025

### MAIN POINT

We are accountable for our responses even when others may do wrong to us. Our response may be the very thing God uses to win that person to Christ.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Are you a very organized person or one who likes to "go with the flow"?**

**Do you keep a task or "to-do" list? Why or why not? How does having a list keep you organized?**

Some of us live according to "to-do" lists. Time management experts tell us that lists are a great way to keep track of and prioritize the things we need to accomplish. The blessing of such lists is that you have a target to shoot for, and you can mark your progress. However, an unfinished "to-do" list can be a source of discouragement, not because the tasks weren't important, but that other things pop up at times that you simply didn't anticipate.

We can't stop the interruptions or demands other people make in our lives. But how we react to those interruptions is completely within our control. Jesus is concerned about our responses. The ways we react in irritating situations will—or won't—show us to be distinctly Christian. Jesus calls us to a standard that is consistent, honest, and filled with grace.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:33-37.

*33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' 34 But I say to you, 'Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." (ESV)*

**Share a time when someone broke a commitment to you. How did you feel?**

**Share a time when you broke a commitment or promise to someone. How did they respond to you? How did you reconcile the relationship?**

As we continue with the Sermon on the Mount, we see Jesus pushing us to examine our integrity by the promises we make. The Old Testament law repeatedly commanded people to keep their word and be truthful (see Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23). But by the time of Jesus, people were making distinctions in their promises and oaths: some were super serious, while others were not.

**Why do you think Jesus brings up the topic of promises in His Sermon on the Mount? Why did Jesus care about His children keeping their promises?**

If someone made a promise using God's name, he was bringing God into the promise; thus, it became a serious promise he must keep. But if someone simply gave his or her own word on a matter, it was considered much less serious. Jesus made the point that God is always involved even when a person gives his or her word. Whenever we make a promise, we do so both in the presence of God but also with the responsibility of not dishonoring the family name.

**Do you have the tendency to overcommit yourself? Why or why not?**

**What motivates us to say, "I promise" or "I swear"?**

As believers, our words and lives reflect the Name of God because of the testimony we have as children of God.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:38-39.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, 'Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.'" (ESV)

**How does this passage deny our sense of entitlement?**

**Why does it feel right to our flesh to return equal justice to the original offender?**

The Old Testament records this "*eye for an eye*" law three times (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21). The phrase is called the *lex talionis* or "the law of retaliation." God gave this law as a way to limit vengeance, not give license to it. The law was designed to prevent conflict from escalating. Furthermore, the law never intended for the wronged individual to seek justice or vengeance on his or her own. This "*eye for an eye*" law served as a corporate guide—a guide for judges as they decided appropriate punishments through court proceedings. The Israelites had abused this principle, however, and were applying it to their everyday interactions. Jesus turns this principle on its head by clarifying both the law's usage and intent. He told us we are not to retaliate when we are humiliated or insulted—justice is in the hands of God, and His hands alone (Rom. 12:17-21).

**How do verses 38-39 imply that we must deny our "right" to personal justice?**

**How do these verses challenge us to trust God with every offense made against us?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:40-42.

40 "And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you." (ESV)

As if it weren't enough to say we should not seek revenge, Jesus went the extra mile in His teaching. He said we should do the same thing—go the extra mile—even for those who want to take advantage of us. We should overwhelm such people with kindness. We tend to think about obedience in terms of minimums. What's the minimum amount of stuff I have to do to get by? Jesus' point is that we shouldn't focus on the minimum; instead, we should focus on how we can be a blessing to others.

*In The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Louis A. Barbieri tells us, "A righteous man would be characterized by humility and selflessness. Instead, he might go 'the extra mile' to

maintain peace. When wronged... he would not strike back, demand repayment, or refuse to comply."

**How do we prepare ourselves now to respond well when others make demands of us?**

**How is going the extra mile—going above and beyond—an act of faith? How does it take trust in God's justice and provision?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:43-48.

*43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (ESV)*

**Why do you think Jesus mentioned loving our enemies, not just our neighbors?**

**How can loving our enemies reflect our relationship with God?**

**How is God's love demonstrated through His children in how they respond to people who are not only hard to love but are considered enemies?**

The Pharisees' love was one-sided. They taught that it was right to love your neighbor but also appropriate to "*hate your enemy*." The phrase "*hate your enemy*" was added to the original command by the legalistic scribes of the day. Nowhere in Scripture will you find this phrase spoken through the prophets, the Law, or Jesus Himself. The scribes were wrong in their interpretation of the original Biblical revelation, and Jesus speaks to clarify this error.

We also see in verse 45 a theological truth called *common grace*. "Common grace is the good kindness of God that he shows to all people, regardless of whether they have experienced the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ alone. It is called common because it comes to all people - believers and unbelievers alike... People are born in sin and so do not deserve any blessing from God, only judgment. That God would allow people to live and experience many blessings of life is a great kindness" (*A Theology of Biblical Counseling* by Heath Lambert).

But it is one thing to experience the common grace that God provides for all humanity versus the saving grace through salvation when one places their faith in Jesus Christ. "Verses 46-48 speak of this greater love seen in a child of God in response to the great love that every believer experiences through salvation. Loving your enemies does not make you a child of God. Loving your enemies shows you are a child of God." - *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What is one commitment you've made that you wish you hadn't? Recommit yourself to keeping your word even though it's going to hurt.**

**Is one relationship particularly difficult for you right now? Pray and ask God to bless that person this week. Even better, call or text them to let them know you've been praying for him or her.**

**What is one specific way you can turn the other cheek to a person who has offended you this past week?**

## PRAYER

Commit to trusting God with your offenses this week. Give over to Him the wrongs that have been made against you, and choose to forgive the person who has wronged you. Commit to being a blessing, going the extra mile, for those in your life this week.

## COMMENTARY

| MATTHEW 5:33-48

5:33-37 Oaths to the Lord (i.e., "I swear") were considered binding, but since Jews avoided use of God's personal name and instead used reverent substitutions, clever liars could take an oath that seemed to appeal to God without technically doing so (23:16-22). Jesus taught that swearing oaths is wrong since swearing by heaven... earth... Jerusalem, or even one's own head, is inappropriate because it implies that we have the authority to destroy things if the oath is broken, over which God alone has authority. Swearing against God or His belongings aligns us with the evil one who attempted to assume God's position as Ruler of the universe.

5:38-39 Jesus explained that eye for an eye (Ex 21:24; Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21) was given not as a mandate for personal vengeance but as a principle to guide courts in determining appropriate punishments. The slap on your right cheek was a back-handed slap that was both insulting and injurious. For this act, Jewish law imposed a fine that was double the one for an open-palmed blow on the left cheek. Thus, we see that Jesus urged His disciples not to seek vengeance even against the most offensive kind of blow. The words don't resist an evildoer do not indicate, however, that we should not seek justice or defend ourselves when threatened with serious bodily harm.

5:40 Frivolous lawsuits were rare in first-century Israel, and so the suit described here was probably a legitimate one that the plaintiff was likely to win. Ordinarily, defendants are upset if the judgment goes against them, but Jesus commanded His disciples to seek reconciliation with their opponents by going above and beyond the legal requirements in order to make amends. Jewish law permitted an opponent to sue for possession of an offender's inner garment, the shirt. Typically, it was a sleeved tunic that extended to the ankles and was made of wool or linen. These could be valuable and were frequently used for bartering or making payments. The coat was an outer robe or wrap. It was the more essential piece of clothing since it provided warmth and could double as a blanket for the poor. Based on OT texts such as Ex 22:26-27 and Dt 24:12-13, Jewish law insisted that the coat was exempt from seizure by the courts. Taking the coat was too severe a punishment. Jesus thus commanded His disciples to do even more than the courts allowed when seeking reconciliation with an opponent.

5:41 Jesus likely had in mind the much-resented practice of compulsion, in which Roman officials could force their subjects to perform menial tasks such as hauling a load on their backs (27:32). It is often said that soldiers could legally compel a subject to carry a load for only one mile before letting them go, but no surviving text establishes this as law. Most likely, compulsion was usually limited to a mile simply out of common sense: people are tired after hauling a load for a mile, and soldiers who pressed for more than this risked fostering dangerous resentment among subjugated peoples. In contrast to this, Jesus said His disciples should carry their oppressor's pack out of obligation for the first mile, but then exceed all expectations by going a second mile as an act of love and service.

5:42 Since this entire paragraph is devoted to Jesus' teaching against retaliation, this verse likely prohibits disciples from seeking vengeance against opponents by refusing to help them in a time of need. By giving the necessities of life to an enemy, disciples may restore broken relationships (Rm 12:19-21).

5:43-45 Jesus' last example of the *"righteousness [that] exceeds"* (Matt. 5:20) is one of the most challenging teachings He ever gave. Jesus quoted a Scripture His audience knew. You shall love your neighbor (see Lev. 19:18, and later, Jesus called it the second most important command, Matt. 22:39). Here, Jesus included an additional part of the saying people knew but which had no basis in Scripture. The command to hate your enemy was a perversion of the command to love one's neighbors. Yet because we find it easy to despise our enemies, we can understand why religious people of Jesus' day thought it right to hate their enemies.

The verb love is a form of the famous Greek noun *agape*, meaning a high, pure, sacrificial concern and kindness to the one loved. Jesus added a specific example of love for enemies: Pray for those who persecute you. We are to ask God's blessing on those who wish us ill. If they do not know God's salvation, we are to ask that they come to Christ.

5:46-47 The Greek verb forms for love here also relate to the noun *agape*, as in verse 43. This shows that even lost people can have a sacrificial concern for others as long as there's a mutual expectation involved. Jesus' follow-up question is, Don't even the tax collectors do the same? And the obvious answer is yes. Thieves often look out for other thieves.

The second question is, if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? The obvious answer is "Nothing." Social interaction comes pretty naturally when we're with friends and family. Jesus' "expansion question" is Do not even the Gentiles do the same? The obvious answer again is yes. Thus, even in such mundane matters as day-to-day social interchange, Christ's followers may have the opportunity to express love that goes beyond the ordinary.

5:48 This verse summarizes everything Jesus taught in the illustrations of the *"righteousness [that] surpasses"* (v. 20). If you want to follow Jesus' teaching on matters such as murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and love for others, then look to your Heavenly Father. You are His children, and children reflect the family to which they belong. Perfect means "mature, whole, complete." Sinless perfection is impossible in this life, but we can strive to become godlier, more like our Heavenly Father's character. When we consciously grow in righteousness, we show to whose family we belong.